



**United
Nations**

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs

Capacity Development Workshop on

National Data Governance Framework and Digital Government in Sierra Leone

4-5 July 2024

Freetown, Sierra Leone

Concept Note

1. Background

The boundaries between the physical, digital, and biological realms are becoming increasingly blurred due to the rise of digital technology. This transformative force is rapidly reshaping the way individuals lead their lives, conduct work, and engage in communication. Nowhere is this more evident than in the public sector, where traditional distinctions between government and e-government have become increasingly obsolete, encompassing policies, institutions, strategies, and tools.

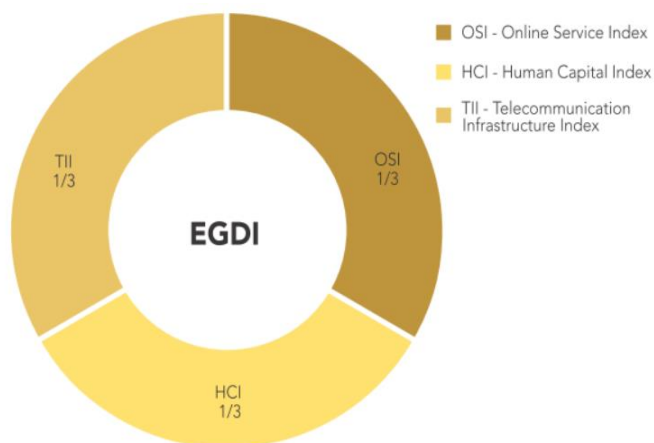
Although almost every country is undergoing the process of digitalization, the degree of development achieved varies. While institutions across all levels are dedicated to modernization and digital transformation, the approaches and outcomes differ significantly. Not every country can attain equivalent sustainable development gains through e-government initiatives, leading to uneven benefits for communities and vulnerable segments of the population.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing e-government divides, both between and within countries, manifesting at the regional, national, and local levels. The COVID-19 pandemic also revealed the vitality of digital government and digital solutions to address isolation and keep people informed and engaged. Given that there are both immense opportunities and inherent risks on what digital transformation can bring about, the need to address emerging requirements, risks and challenges for digital public policies and to ensure inclusive multistakeholder engagement has become more critical, especially for countries with special needs, including the least developed countries (LDCs), small island developing States (SIDS), the landlocked developing countries (LLDC), and countries with transition economics.

The world is also moving closer to becoming a truly digital society. At the global level, the quantity of data is expected to increase more than fivefold from 33 zettabytes in 2018 to 175 zettabytes in 2025, with 49 per cent stored in the public cloud. But at the same, the various digital divides between and within developed and developing countries continues to widen, which is inhibiting developing countries from contributing to and benefiting from integration into the global economy. Governments are among the largest producers and consumers of data in many countries, and they also play a critical role in data regulation. Much of the operational activity in government is now data-driven, making it difficult, if not impossible, to function effectively without data. However, many developing countries lack the institutional capacity to fully implement data management frameworks and data strategy, impeding them to fully reap the benefits of data governance.

As a flagship research and capacity development tool of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), the UN E-Government Survey evaluates how digital government can facilitate integrated policies and services across 193 UN Member States. The Survey supports countries' efforts to provide effective, accountable and inclusive digital services to all, bridge the digital divide and leave no one behind. The Survey measures e-government

effectiveness in the delivery of public services, providing a snapshot of relative measurement of e-government development of all Member States.

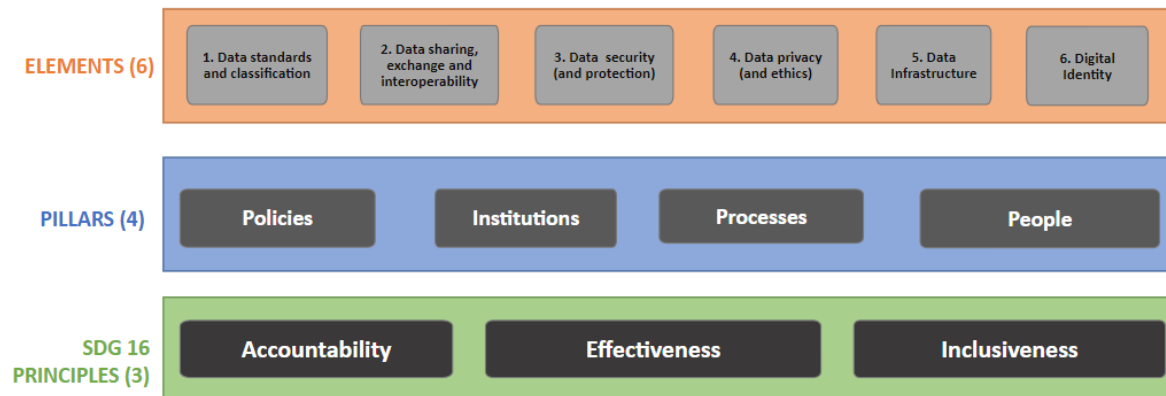


Methodologically, the EGDI is the weighted average of normalized scores on the three most important dimensions of e government, namely: (i) the scope and quality of online services quantified as the Online Service Index (OSI); (ii) the status of the development of telecommunication infrastructure or the Telecommunication Infrastructure Index (TII); and (iii) the inherent human capital or the Human Capital Index (HCI). Each of these indices is a composite measure that can be extracted and analyzed independently.

In addition, UN DESA has also has conceived the project supported by the UN Peace and Development Fund, entitled “Developing institutional capacities for digital data management and cooperation to advance progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals”, to support developing countries to assess key data management and governance challenges and strengthen government officials’ and stakeholders’ knowledge of sound and secure data management. This project seeks to address existing challenges and gaps in digital data management and cooperation, focusing on enhancing the institutional capacities of countries to utilize, manage and govern data in a comprehensive, objective and evidence-based manner, through regional and global cooperation.

Under the research framework established by UN DESA, data governance is supported by the three principles of Sustainable Goal 16 (accountability, effectiveness and inclusiveness) and examined through the lens of the four pillars (policy, institutions, people, and process) and six elements (see following illustration). This allows for a comprehensive and holistic examination of the various procedural components which together enable effective, accountable, and inclusive data governance.

UN DESA' s National Data Governance Framework



UN DESA | Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government

Development in Sierra Leone

As per the 2020 Digital Economy Assessment by the World Bank Group, the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) recognizes digital technologies as a key enabler for transforming the country at large, with a specific focus on its economy. The fundamental role of digital technologies was evident during the Ebola crisis, where mobile phones played a vital role in tracking, monitoring, and managing outbreaks. The COVID-19 pandemic has further emphasized the pressing need for robust digital infrastructure to deliver essential services and effectively trace, monitor, and manage the spread of the disease. In areas such as digital infrastructure, platforms, financial services, entrepreneurship, and skills, the GoSL has demonstrated commitment and exerted significant efforts to propel the country towards a digital economy.

Sierra Leone has crafted its National Innovation & Digital Strategy 2019–2029, recognizing the challenges and opportunities presented by the Fourth Industrial Revolution. With a youthful population, the strategy addresses global challenges such as climate change, migration, and economic disparities, emphasizing the transformative impact of emerging technologies like AI, IoT, Blockchain, and more. The digital transition, led by the government and partners, requires agility, resources, and security, with a vision co-created with the public for maximum benefit.

The National Innovation & Digital Strategy is underpinned by a core philosophy – Digitization for All, encompassing digital identity, digital economy, and digital governance. Sierra Leone aims to digitize various aspects, including identity, the economy, and governance, fostering financial inclusion, entrepreneurship, and efficient government processes. This extensive initiative, backed by robust digital data collection and analysis, requires collaborative efforts from the Government

and its partners to ensure reliable and accessible connectivity nationwide. Affordable services and devices will enable groundbreaking distributed innovation across sectors and regions.

The draft National Digital Development Strategy (NDDS) 2021 outlines Sierra Leone's imperative to leverage ICT for economic growth, inclusivity, and a knowledge-based society. It aims to coordinate efforts, bridge digital gaps, and enhance citizens' lives. However, challenges include potential lagging and digital divides, with uneven sectoral progress, limited coordination, and interoperability concerns. Addressing these challenges is crucial for Sierra Leone's digital transformation and sustained development

In addition to national digital development frameworks, over the past decade, Sierra Leone has diligently pursued open data and open government initiatives, conducting an Open Data Readiness Assessment in 2015. Noteworthy progress includes the establishment of the Open Government Initiative (OGI) in 2008, the enactment of the Right to Access Information Act in 2013, and joining the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in 2014. Assessment identifies achievements such as the formation of a cross-agency Open Data Council, legislative developments, and the launch of a national Open Data Portal. Despite challenges, the assessment emphasizes the potential for substantial positive impact if Sierra Leone focuses on specific, targeted actions in the coming year. However, slow access to information implementation raises doubts on the success of Sierra Leone's open data initiative, requiring strengthened data management for development.

Despite these efforts, Sierra Leone faces ongoing challenges, encompassing concerns with infrastructure, connectivity, and expertise in data management, cybersecurity, and e-governance. Additionally, outdated or absent streamlined legal and regulatory frameworks in emerging digital domains (data policy, cybersecurity), insufficient interoperability between existing initiatives and databases, lack of access to infrastructure (electricity and internet), and limited capacity in digital skill development remain prominent challenges.

Sierra Leone's rankings in the UN e-government index (185) and e-participation index (157) highlight areas for improvement. The country's EGDI value of 0.2633 and e-participation index of 0.2045 are lower than the average for Africa (0.4054 and 0.2595, respectively). Examining average EGDI sub-components for the region are the online index (0.3670), Telecommunication Infrastructure Index (0.3548), and Human Capital Index (0.4945).

The sub-regional average for EGDI is 0.3856, and for e-participation, it is 0.2706. The average EGDI sub-components for the sub-region are 0.3782 (online index), 0.3819 (Telecommunication Infrastructure Index), and 0.3967 (Human Capital Index). In contrast, Sierra Leone's EGDI sub-components are online index (0.2801), Telecommunication Infrastructure Index (0.2639), and Human Capital Index (0.2459), indicating that Sierra Leone's EGDI values fall below the regional and sub-regional averages.

In view of the above, UN DESA in collaboration with **the Presidential Delivery Unit, the Ministry of Public Administration and Political Affairs and the Ministry of Communication, Technology and**

Innovation, the Government of Sierra Leone, will be hosting a two-day capacity development workshop with representatives from governments, private, public sector, civil societies, academia and other key stakeholders, on the subject of digital data governance and digital government.

The Workshop will provide a timely opportunity to engage government officials and other stakeholders, focusing on digital government, data and data governance with the objective of strengthening the capacity of public sector employees in the concerned governmental organizations with regards to understanding of how to improve the performance of digital government and strategize related initiatives.

2. Objectives of the Workshop

The objectives of the National Consultation Workshop are:

- Build capacities in understanding and implementing UN DESA's e-government development framework, guided by the UN E-Government Development Index (EGDI)
- Explore the existing opportunity and gap assessments for proposed focus areas, emerging from dialogue and interaction among workshop participants, including the proposed UN DESA data governance framework of 4 pillars and 6 elements.

Four (4) pillars of Policy,

Institutions, People/Partnerships, Processes

- Policy: existing policy and regulatory framework;
- Institutions: existing institutional framework
- People: existing data ecosystem and mapping of stakeholders
- Processes: existing data processes

Six (6) elements:

- Data standards and classification
 - Data sharing, exchange and interoperability, including open government data
 - Data security (in relation to overall national cybersecurity)
 - Data privacy (and ethics)
 - National data infrastructure (e.g., datacenter, cloud, data services, etc.)
 - Linking data governance to digital identity (or a lack thereof)
- Identify the next course of action in strategic planning and implementation for setting up a national data governance framework.
 - Engage stakeholders from different agencies and other non-government stakeholders to participate in the official dialogue and knowledge exchange on proposing a national data governance framework for Sierra Leone.

3. Thematic Areas

A. The primary thematic areas of the EGDI (Day 1)

- The EGDI framework
- The three components of EGDI (OSI, TII and HCI)
- The five categories of OSI (Institution framework (IF); data/content provision (DP); service provision (SP); e-participation (EPI); technology (TEC)
- Other complementary indices: (i) Open Government Development Index (OGDI); (ii) Local Online Service Index (LOSI)

B. The primary thematic areas of the National Data Governance (Day 2)

Four (4) pillars of National Data Governance:

- Policy: existing policy and regulatory framework;
- Institutions: existing institutional framework
- People: existing data ecosystem and mapping of stakeholders
- Processes: existing data processes

Six (6) elements of National Data Governance

- Data standards and classification
- Data sharing, exchange and interoperability, including open government data
- Data security (and data protection)
- Data privacy (and ethics)
- National data infrastructure (including e.g., datacenter, cloud, data services, etc.)
- Linking data governance to digital identity)

4. Expected Outcomes

The following are the expected outcomes of the Workshop:

- To build institutional and individual capacities in understanding and implementing UN DESA's e-government development framework
- To build institutional and individual capacities, with participants to get insight on issues of national data governance (for government data)
- To build a shared understanding on issues of the data governance in the public sector
- To identify the strengths and weakness of the existing national data governance

- To identify the next course of actions and potential interventions with a proposed timeline

The outputs of each of the sessions and a follow up action plan will be captured in the summary report. A policy brief may be issued by UN DESA in consultation with Ministry of Communication, Technology and Innovation, the Government of Sierra Leone.

5. Date and Venue

Date/time: 4-5 July 2024

Venue: **Freetown, Sierra Leone**

6. Participants

It is expected that the participants for the workshop to include:

- Senior government officials
- Non-governmental experts from the private sector, civil society, think tanks, academia, with knowledge and experience in national data governance frameworks
- Experts from other countries
- Staff representatives from UN Resident Coordinators' Office and other related UN agencies
- Regional and Sub-Regional Partners (APRM-AU, ECOWAS)
- Experts and staff members from UN DESA and Government of Sierra Leone

Ministries and agencies to be invited: TBD

7. Languages

The Workshop will be conducted in English.

8. Surveys and evaluation

Pre-workshop surveys and post-workshop evaluations will be circulated. A follow-up questionnaire could be sent out to participants after the Workshop.

9. Organizers and Facilitators

The Workshop is jointly organized by the Division of Public Institution and Digital Government (DPIDG) of UN DESA, Minister of Public Administration and Political Affairs and the Ministry of Communication, Technology and Innovation, Government of Sierra Leone.

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