



**United
Nations**

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



Capacity Development and Consultation Workshop
on a

Vanuatu National Data Governance Framework

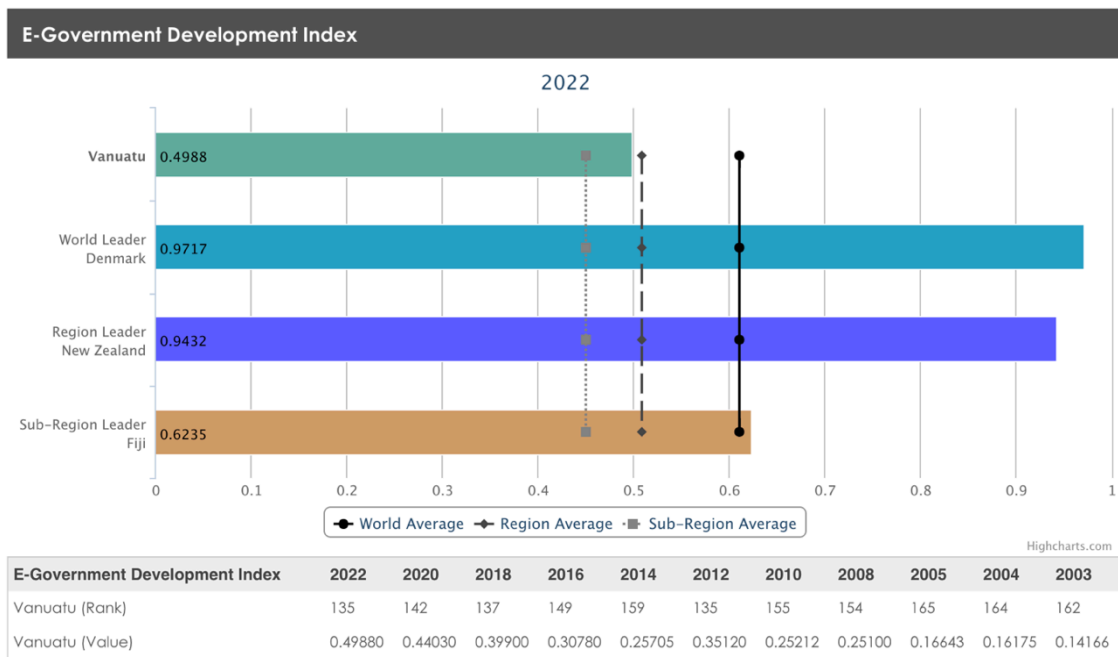
Concept Note

Vanuatu National Data Governance Framework

1. Background

Vanuatu is a lower middle-income country and a Small Island Developing State (SIDS). It has been progressing strongly in its development, having graduated from the Least Developed Country (LDC) category in December 2020.¹ With regard to digital government development specifically, the 2022 United Nations E-Government Survey noted that there had significant improvements in Vanuatu, with the country’s E-Government Development Index (EGDI) ranking 135 (up from 142 in 2020) placing it in the highest quartile of mid-level ranking countries (the “Middle High” rating class)² and higher than the sub-region average in EDGI.³ It also rose from a low to middle-level ranking in 2022 in the Survey’s Open Government Data Index (OGDI).⁴

Figure 1 Vanuatu’s EGDI 2003-2022 ⁵



¹ See “Vanuatu Graduates from Least Developed Country Status”, United Nations website, 4 December 2020 [accessed 3 April 2024] -

<https://www.un.org/ohrlls/news/vanuatu-graduates-least-developed-country-status>

² To gain better insight into the situation of subgroups of countries with similar levels of performance within their respective EGDI groups, each EGDI group is further divided into four equally defined rating classes, or quartiles. VH, V3, V2 and V1 for the very high group; HV, H3, H2 and H1 for the high group; MH, M3, M2 and M1 for the middle group; and IM, I3, I2 and I1 for the low group.

³ United Nations 2022, UN E-Government Survey 2022: The Future of Digital Government, p.168.

⁴ The Open Government Development Index (OGDI) is derived as a supplementary index to the Online Service Index (OSI). It extends the dimension of the Survey by focusing on the use of open government data (OGD).

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<https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data/Country-Information/id/187-Vanuatu/dataYear/2022>

Figure 2 Vanuatu EGD 2022 ⁶

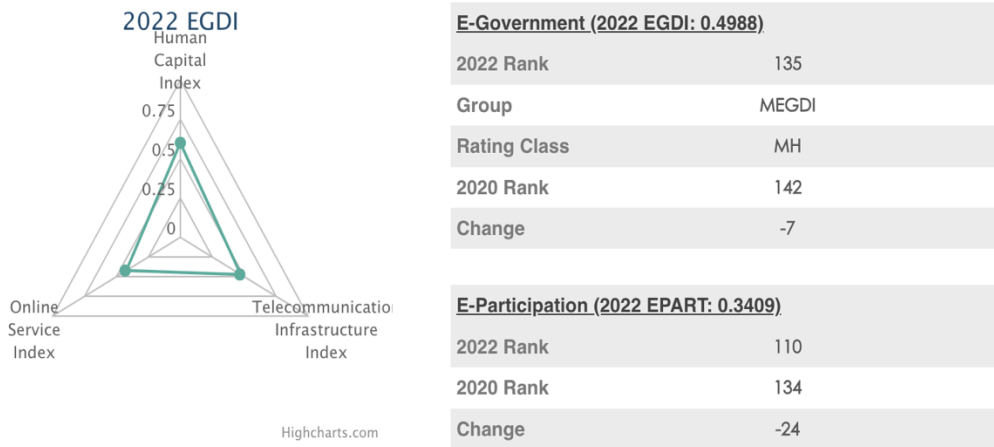


Figure 3 Vanuatu’s OGD 2020-2022⁷

	OGDI Group	OGDI ranking
2022	Middle OGD	0.3915
2020	Low OGD	0.1521

The data governance framework

This project makes use of the framework for data governance that the 2020 UN E-Government Survey provides. According to the report, data governance refers to a homogeneous set of principles and practices that guide the formal management of data assets within all public institutions. The key principles include effectiveness, accountability, and inclusiveness. The principles and elements serve as a guide to developing a data governance system. For doing that, they need to be operationalized using various strategies, some of which are directly relevant to data governance, and some are indirectly relevant. The direct ones, for instance, include data sharing, public disclosure of information, and data disaggregation. The indirect ones include transparent financial management and control, budgetary transparency, and participatory budgeting.

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<https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data/Country-Information/id/187-Vanuatu/dataYear/2022>

⁷ United Nations 2022, UN E-Government Survey 2022: The Future of Digital Government, p.168.; United Nations, 2020, UN E-Government Survey 2020: Digital Government in the Decade of Action for Sustainable Development, p.321.

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The framework provided in the E-Government Survey also emphasises the importance of inclusiveness in data governance. Firstly, inclusive data governance is essential in promoting e-participation, which is about using ICT to engage people in public decision-making, administration, and service delivery. Secondly, data is considered one of the three essential elements for e-governments to ensure no one is left behind. Those three elements are data, design and delivery.

The data governance framework model is based on four pillars and six elements. The four pillars include 1) policy, 2) institutions, 3) processes, and 4) people. The six elements cover 1) data standards and classification; 2) data sharing, exchange, and interoperability; 3) data security and protection; 4) data privacy and ethics; 5) data infrastructure; and 6) digital identity. The table below provides more details:

Key points	Descriptions
The four pillars of data governance	
Legal and policy framework	A set of laws and policies that provide principles and management intent into fundamental rules governing the creation, acquisition, integrity, security, quality, and use of data and information
Institutional framework	Institutional and organisational arrangements which define the roles, responsibilities, and coordination among key stakeholders
Processes and procedures	Processes and steps by which specific tasks of data management are performed in accordance with key principles in the broader data governance
People and resources	Human and financial resources are needed to support the implementation of the data governance and management tasks.
The six elements of data governance	
Data standards and standardisation	Data classification is a process of classifying data according to their sensitivity, whereas data standardisation is about ensuring uniform identification, collection, relating, validation, and sharing of data. They are crucial to breaking down data silos, creating interoperability, and ensuring data integrity.
Data sharing, exchange, and interoperability	Managing the movement and consolidation of data within and between applications and organisations in accordance with the regulatory framework.
Data security and protection	The planning, development, and execution of security policies and procedures to provide proper authentication, authorization, access, and auditing of data and information assets.
Data privacy and ethics	Procuring, storing, managing, interpreting, analysing, and disposing of data with careful attention to the protection of individual and business entities data privacy and in line with ethical principles.
Data infrastructure	Various components, including hardware, software, networking, and services needed to enable data consumption, storage, and sharing.
Digital identity	A safe, secure, and convenient way to prove who you are online for work, for education, for personal use, and when accessing government online services.

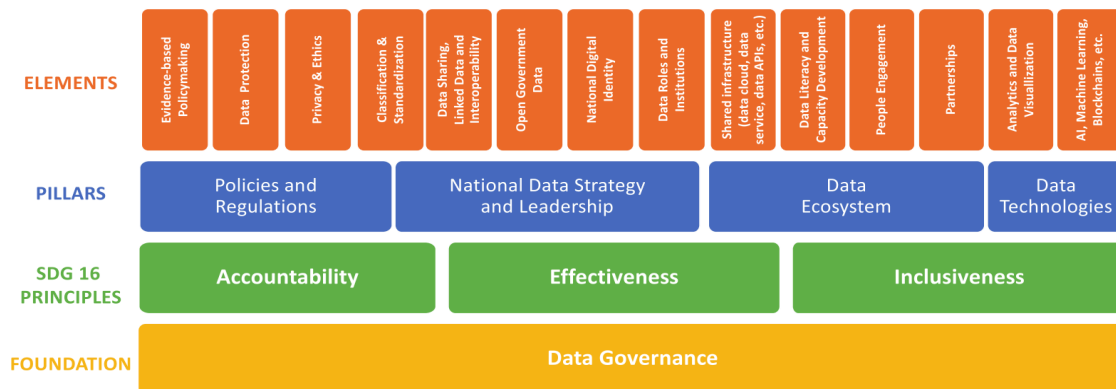
Source: (UNDESA, 2020) (D4D, 2022) (Digital Transformation Agency (Australian Government), 2023)

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While there is no one-size-fits-all prescription, there are common approaches that a country can consider when developing its data governance system. Various documents offer different versions of such approaches, all of which emphasise the need for a coherent policy direction, a clear institutional setup, capacity development, and regular monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation.

The dynamic relationship between policies, institutions, people, processes, and enabling technologies is what drives data governance. According to the UN e-Government survey (2020), an effective national data governance framework for e-government should be underpinned by four pillars: policies and regulations, a national data strategy and leadership, a data ecosystem, and investment in data technologies. With appropriate data governance, decisions based on available data do not place the Government or the public at risk because of low data quality, data falsification, data obsolescence, or security or privacy threats.

Illustrative data governance framework for e-government



Source: (UNDESA, 2020)

Development in Vanuatu

Over the past 20 years, Vanuatu has developed its telecommunications infrastructure and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) policies. Vanuatu's initial e-government plan was unveiled in 2008, outlining the establishment of the Government Broadband Network (GBN)—the primary infrastructure linking government offices in the main provincial centres and providing Internet access to these offices.⁸ This plan aligned with the enactment of the 2009 Telecommunications and Radiocommunications Regulation Act, which deregulated the

⁸ United Nations, 2018, Leveraging Investments in broadband for National development: The Case of Vanuatu, p.7 [accessed 3 April 2024] - <https://www.un.org/ohrls/news/leveraging-investments-broadband-national-development-case-vanuatu-2018>

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telecommunications market and established the independent statutory body Telecommunications and Radiocommunications Regulator (TRR).

Subsequent policies emerged within 2012 to 2014, including the launch of the integrated government (iGov) initiative in 2012, designed to enhance ICT governance, and the 2014 m-Gov strategy targeting e-government initiatives on mobile devices, which is seen as a model for other small island developing states in the region.⁹ In 2013, Vanuatu published the National Informational and Communication Technology Policy, which included access to ICTs in Education, access to ICT Infrastructure and Devices, and e-government as its top priorities. Cybersecurity policy and Universal Access Policy were also introduced.

Vanuatu's 2019 Voluntary National Review¹⁰ and the "Vanuatu 2030" National Sustainable Development Plan 2016 to 2030, committed to increasing the availability of online government services and the use/access of ICTs generally. In 2021, the National Cyber Security Strategy 2030 was published as a partial effort towards a standard National Security Strategy. Currently, the International Telecommunications Union's Smart Islands project is providing support to the development of a Digital Government Masterplan Framework with a whole-of-government approach.¹¹

Government Ministries have undertaken actions that impact data governance processes. In 2014, the Strategies for the Vanuatu Statistical System was published by National Statistics Office,¹² outlining data development actions aimed at improving the statistical information base, emphasizing data quality, availability, integrity, reliability, accuracy and consistency, and management. The Health Sector Strategy 2021-2030, called for quality data collection, analysis and dissemination systems for health information through improved systems and expanded capacity of the health sector workforce to understand and utilise data for planning and decision-making.¹³ The National Geospatial Data Policy, led by Ministry of Lands & Natural Resources aimed to create an enabling environment for centralization, coordination, management and dissemination of geospatial data.¹⁴ In addition to these initiatives, Vanuatu has policies on data protection, privacy and cyber security, but no over-arching national data governance policy or strategy.

⁹ Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2020, ICT for Development in the Pacific Islands, p.36.

¹⁰ <https://hlpf.un.org/countries/vanuatu/voluntary-national-review-2019>

¹¹

<https://www.itu.int/hub/2021/02/least-developed-no-longer-how-digital-transformation-drove-vanuatus-ldc-graduation/>;
https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/AsiaPacific/Documents/Events/2021/Regional%20Dialogue/S4/Vanuatu_Smart%20Islands%20v4.pdf

¹² According to the Bills For the Statistics Act 2022, The Vanuatu Bureau of Statistics will succeed the Vanuatu Statistics Office as the official statistical office of the Government.

¹³ Government of The Republic of Vanuatu, 2020, Health sector strategy 2021-2030, p.27.

¹⁴ Government of The Republic of Vanuatu, 2020, The National Geospatial Data Policy 2020-2030, p.8.

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Overall, these efforts in digital and data governance are significant and will contribute to further policy developments, and collaboration in data classification, standardization, data privacy, data sharing, and digital identity.

IN this context, UN DESA in collaboration with the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) of Vanuatu, will be hosting a national consultation workshop with representatives from governments, private, public sector, civil societies, academia and other key stakeholders to develop a national data governance framework.

2. Objectives of the Workshop

The objective of the National Consultation Workshop is three-fold, as follow:

- 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 Vanuatu.
- Discuss 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.
- Identify the next course of action in strategic planning and implementation for setting up a national data governance framework.

3. Thematic Areas and Guiding Questions

The primary thematic areas of the Workshop are as follows:

Four (4) pillars of National Data Governance: 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 of National Data Governance:

1. Data standards and classification;
2. Data sharing, exchange, and interoperability;
3. Data security and protection;
4. Data privacy and ethics;
5. Data infrastructure
6. Digital identity

Guiding Questions for focus group discussions:

- a. For the specific focus areas, what are the key strengths and weaknesses in the existing national data governance (or data governance related) processes?
- b. For the specific focus areas, what are the opportunities and potential risks in building national data governance?
- c. In relation to the specific focus areas, which concerns might be considered in planning and implementing national data policy and strategy?
- d. How do we co-create a coordinated multi-stakeholder approach in national data governance, including the effective participation of the private sector and civil society?
- e. Which approach should we follow: a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach, or a silo approach (e.g. achieving quick wins) in national data governance?

4. Expected Outcomes

The following are the expected outcomes of the Workshop:

- To build institutional and individual capacities, with participants gaining insight on issues of national data governance (for government data)
- To build a shared understanding on issues of data governance in the public sector
- To identify the strengths and weakness of the existing national data governance / data governance related processes
- 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 OGCI.

5. Date and Venue

Date/time: **2-3 May 2024**

Venue: **The Melanesian Hotel, Port Vila, Vanuatu**

(lunch and coffee breaks will be provided at the Workshop venue)

Number of participants: **60 (approx)**

(Note: by invitation only; including organisers, resource persons and support staff)

6. Participants

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

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- 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
- Experts and staff members from UN DESA and Government of Vanuatu

7. 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.

8. Organisers and Facilitators

The Workshop is jointly organised by the Division of Public Institution and Digital Government (DPIDG) of UN DESA and the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO), Government of Vanuatu