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Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



Digital Transformation Department

Government of the Kingdom of Tonga

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON DATA AND DIGITAL GOVERNANCE 2024

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Background

The Digital Transformation Department of Tonga plays a central role in the nation's efforts to modernize its digital infrastructure and processes. The department also engages in international collaboration, particularly in cybersecurity, e-governance, and data management, ensuring that Tonga stays aligned with global standards while addressing local challenges. Through partnerships and capacity-building efforts, the department is actively working towards a more digitally inclusive and resilient society.





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Lessons learned in implementing data/digital transformation strategy in Tonga

What Works:

- **Leadership and Stakeholder Engagement:** Strong leadership, combined with clear alignment of key stakeholders, has proven crucial for driving digital transformation forward. Government leadership, especially from senior officials, ensures that initiatives are supported and receive the attention they need.
- **Gradual Capacity Building:** Capacity-building efforts, such as training and upskilling local staff, have been effective. When local teams are empowered, they can sustain digital transformation processes without heavy reliance on external consultants.

What Doesn't Work:

- **Over-reliance on External Consultants:** Relying too much on external consultants without ensuring knowledge transfer has led to gaps in long-term sustainability. Local teams often struggle to maintain systems once external support is withdrawn.
- **Lack of Infrastructure Readiness:** Poor infrastructure, particularly in terms of internet connectivity and reliable power, hinders the full implementation of digital services, especially in remote areas. This has slowed down some initiatives.





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Two challenges that Tonga face, and would like to learn from other countries

Cybersecurity in a Digitally Evolving Environment

As Tonga accelerates its digital transformation, the risk of cyber threats increases, especially with limited local expertise in cybersecurity. Managing cybersecurity threats, protecting government and citizen data, and responding to cyber incidents effectively are critical concerns.

Digital Inclusion

Ensuring equitable access to digital services across the population, particularly in rural and remote communities, remains difficult. Many areas lack the necessary infrastructure, such as reliable internet connectivity, and some individuals face barriers in digital literacy, making it challenging to benefit from new technologies.





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Learning opportunities from other countries

Cybersecurity in a Digitally Evolving Environment

It would be helpful to learn how other countries, particularly those with small populations and limited resources, have strengthened their national cybersecurity capabilities. This includes establishing robust incident response teams, implementing cybersecurity strategies, handling data breaches, and building cybersecurity awareness among the population.

Digital Inclusion

It would be valuable to learn how other countries have successfully bridged the digital divide by implementing inclusive policies, improving infrastructure in remote areas, and offering digital literacy programs. Understanding how to create access for all citizens, regardless of location or socio-economic status, could help guide local strategies.





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Recommendation for further discussion in UN forums;

Establish a global, **collaborative platform** for digital governance, providing frameworks for **policy alignment, capacity building, and best practice sharing.**

Global Collaboration that would foster international cooperation, enabling countries to work together on common challenges in digital governance. This approach encourages knowledge-sharing and innovation, especially for nations with fewer resources.

Policy Alignment that will provide frameworks for policy alignment which will help countries adopt consistent digital governance standards,

Capacity Building by emphasizing capacity building, the platform could offer training and resources to countries that need to strengthen their digital skills and infrastructure, helping them become more self-sufficient.

Best Practice Sharing to ensure that successful strategies can be replicated and adapted in various contexts, helping countries learn from each other's experiences.





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Thank You

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Спасибо

Gracias