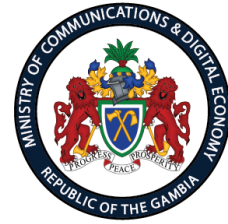




**United  
Nations**

Department of  
Economic and  
Social Affairs



Capacity Development Workshop on  
**National Data Governance Framework and  
Digital Government in the Gambia**

Banjul, the Gambia

Concept Note

## 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 economies.

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 time, 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.

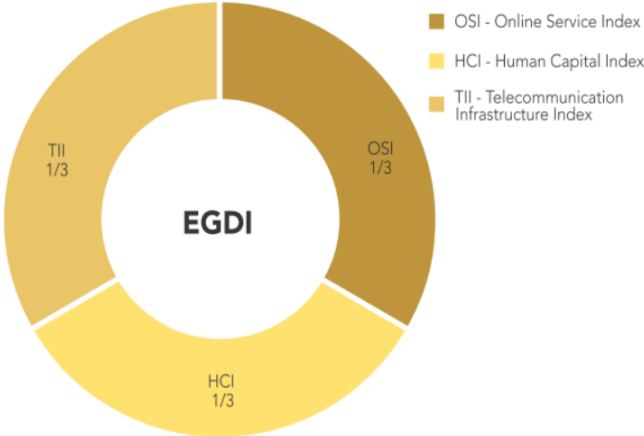


Figure 1: The three components of the E-Government Development Index (EGDI)

Methodologically, the E-Government Development Index (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 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 Development Goal 16 (accountability, effectiveness,

and inclusiveness) and examined through the lens of the four pillars (policy, institutions, people, and process) and six elements (See Figure2). 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

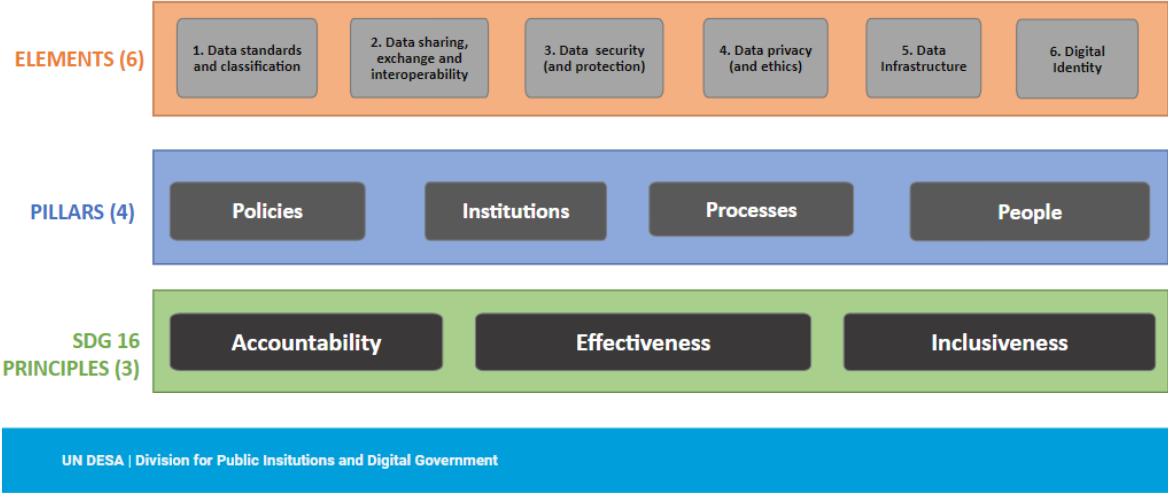


Figure 2: UN DESA's National Data Governance Framework

## Development in Gambia

The government of Gambia recognizes that to create a solid digital future, embracing technology is essential. This approach will enable more efficient, effective, accessible, and transparent government services that meet the needs of its citizens.<sup>1</sup> In recent years, The Gambia has developed several policy and strategy documents to support the growth of its digital economy, including the creation of common standards and protocols for data governance, interoperability, security, and privacy across various sectors and jurisdictions. Government institutions have also been restructured to lead the digital transition more effectively.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Information and Communication Infrastructure. E-GOVERNMENT STRATEGY 2021-2024, October 2020

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, National Digital Economy Master Plan 2023 – 2033

The Gambian National Digital Transformation Strategy is among a groundbreaking initiative designed to propel the country into a new era of digital innovation. This strategy aims to address current gaps in the digital economy and accelerate the realization of a prosperous Gambia by deploying and utilizing digital services to improve the socio-economic status of all Gambians. It is built on key pillars and cross-cutting issues, such as trust and security in cyberspace, with one of the primary strategic enablers being robust policy, legislation, regulation, and institutions to drive the digital economy agenda.

The other key initiative is the e-Government strategy, which outlines the objectives and processes for modernizing government service delivery to citizens. The strategy focuses on enhancing transparency, accountability, and good governance, with an emphasis on result-oriented service delivery.<sup>3</sup>

The government of Gambia, guided by its e-Government 2020-2024 strategy, has developed a government cloud strategy to improve service delivery and meet citizen needs. Recognizing the importance of transitioning to cloud-based solutions, the strategy emphasizes the use of public and private cloud services to balance legacy platforms with more responsive services. A key focus is on establishing a common ICT infrastructure, which is essential for achieving e-Government goals by reducing resource redundancy, ensuring interoperability, and minimizing risks to critical infrastructure.<sup>4</sup>

However, Gambia faces challenges in data management, exchange, and publication due to the lack of a centralized registry, standardization, and a legal framework for open data. To address these issues, the government has developed the Open Data Strategy for 2024-2027. The strategy aims to enhance data availability, disclosure, and re-use within the public sector and with third parties, such as the private sector and NGOs. It seeks to improve government transparency, data-driven decision-making, and innovation, while also raising data literacy and supporting economic development in The Gambia.<sup>5</sup>

Complementing these efforts is the government's recognition of the critical role personal data plays in driving economic and societal development. To protect personal data and uphold fundamental rights, particularly the right to privacy, and the government is committed to adopting measures that ensure public trust in its use, aligning with the Constitution of The Republic of The Gambia 1997.<sup>6</sup> Integral to this vision is the establishment of a National Digital ID system, which is essential for building a robust digital

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<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Information and Communication Infrastructure. E-GOVERNMENT STRATEGY 2021-2024, October 2020

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, Government Cloud Strategy 2023 – 2027

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, Government Open Data Strategy 2024 – 2027, The Government of The Republic of The Gambia

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Information and Communication Infrastructure, DRAFT DATA PROTECTION AND PRIVACY Policy and Strategy. The Gambia, 2019

economy. This system aims to enhance access to and delivery of public and private services for all citizens and residents, while also improving the government's ability to manage these services efficiently as transactions increasingly move online.<sup>7</sup>

In line with these efforts, The Gambia has made noticeable strides in global digital rankings, although challenges remain. In 2022, The Gambia ranked 174th out of 193 countries in the E-Government Development Index (EGDI), with a score of 0.3088, an improvement from 181st place and a score of 0.2630 in 2020. The E-Participation Index also saw significant improvement, rising to 143rd place with a value of 0.2386, compared to 189th place and a value of 0.0357 in 2020. Similarly, the Online Service Index improved from 0.0294 in 2020 to 0.1455 in 2022, and the Telecommunication Infrastructure Index increased from 0.3967 to 0.4508 over the same period. However, The Gambia remains below both regional and sub-regional averages in all EGDI components, except for the Telecommunication Infrastructure Index, which is above the regional and sub-regional averages. The Human Capital Index, notably, showed a slight decline from 0.3630 in 2020 to 0.3301 in 2022.<sup>8</sup>

However, the Gambia's digital economy faces significant challenges. Unreliable internet connections, stemming from unstable fiber optics and electricity infrastructure, hamper growth. The digital divide, marked by unequal access and affordability, further limits participation. The government's reliance on outdated analog systems, which lack interoperability and robust data management, obstructs the development of essential e-services.<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, the current legislative environment lacks a comprehensive legal framework for open data, leading to limited access and inadequate standardization or secure solutions for data exchange.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, insufficient infrastructure, limited human capital, and a private sector needing significant adjustments further impede the effectiveness of e-Government initiatives.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Gambia National Digital Identity Strategy (Draft Document). [online] available: [https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/TCND/Digital%20ID%20Transformation%20Strategy%20Gambia%20V\\_9.pdf](https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/TCND/Digital%20ID%20Transformation%20Strategy%20Gambia%20V_9.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "the Republic of Gambia" 2022. [Online] Available: <https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data/Country-Information/id/63-Gambia/dataYear/2022>

<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, National Digital Economy Master Plan 2023 – 2033

<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, Government Open Data Strategy 2024 – 2027, The Government of The Republic of The Gambia

<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Information and Communication Infrastructure. E-GOVERNMENT STRATEGY 2021-2024, October 2020

In view of the above, UN DESA in collaboration with the Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy of the Government of Republic of the Gambia, will be hosting a two-day capacity development workshop with representatives from governments, private, public sector, civil societies, academia, and other key stakeholders, on 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 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 the Gambia.

### 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 the Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy of the Government of Republic of Gambia.

## 5. Date and Venue

Date/time: TBD

Venue: TBD

## 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 (UN-ECA, APRM-AU, ECOWAS)
- Experts and staff members from UN DESA and Government of Gambia

## 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 and Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy of Republic of the Gambia

For any question, please contact:

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