Capacity Development Webinar on

"Developing Institutional Capacities in Digital Transformation for a More Inclusive and Equitable Recovery"

14-15 December 2020
Time: 8:00am – 12:00pm EST

Background

In addition to unleashing unfathomable opportunities for sustainable development, the digital age has also highlighted the vitality of digital solutions allowing societies to function and businesses to continue in the times of COIVD-19 pandemic. Online services and remote working arrangements were among the few of the measures addressing the isolation, keeping people informed and engaged during the COVID-19 response and recovery.

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 related institutional requirements 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), landlocked developing countries (LLDC), and countries with economies in transition. More than any previous technological transformations, the digital age is also one of inter-dependence, calling for international and regional cooperation among governments, industry, scientific and technological communities, as well as the private sector and civil society groups. Such inter-dependence is seen across the spectrums of trade and finance, communications, and digital government, among others.

The role of digital government in responding to the pandemic and enabling a more effective recovery has been instrumental in the context of resilient and sustainable development. Digital opportunities, however, come with inherent risks related to digital transformation, stressing the need to address emerging capacity requirements, including institutional capacities, and challenges for digital public policies. Unleashing capacities and strengthening the resilience while mitigating the risks is not only the sole responsibility of governments. It requires the engagement of all stakeholders working as platform and the adoption of more holistic, inclusive approaches that bring together existing initiatives, United Nations entities, regional and sub-regional bodies and other relevant stakeholders that promote digital capacity-building to improve support for Governments and other stakeholders

Not all governments are well equipped with the knowledge and ability to respond effectively to the digital age, in tapping the vast opportunities or mitigating the inherent risks. The pace and evolution of digitalization are surpassing the speed with which governments can put in place appropriate regulatory and policymaking frameworks to adapt and reap the benefits. Countries in special situations, such as LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS and countries with economies in transition are

often unprepared or ill-prepared for the onset of cybercrimes and cyberattacks, as well as waves of mis- and dis-information. Media reports suggest that data security breaches on occasion reach national scale, posing a societal risk in terms of privacy, financial safety and security and business continuity. Recent cyberattacks have targeted even healthcare facilities and educational institutions.

The question of capacity development, including institutional capacity, for digital transformation to achieve the SDGs in the selected countries is critical because without a willing, committed, ethical and competent public leadership, digital transformation will not bear fruit.

General Assembly resolution 73/218 of 8 January 2019 emphasized that "there is a pressing need to address the major impediments that developing countries face in accessing new technologies". It further stressed that "important and growing digital divides remain between and within developed and developing countries in terms of the availability, affordability and use of information and communications technologies and access to broadband". The resolution recognized that ICTs have the potential to provide new solutions to development challenges and to integrate developing and least developed countries into the global economy.

It is in this context that the capacity building webinar on Digital Transformation is organised, under the theme of "Developing Institutional Capacities in Digital Transformation for a More Inclusive and Equitable Recovery". This webinar is a follow-up to the recommendations made during the Expert Group Meeting "Addressing Emerging Requirements and Challenges for Policy and Decision-Making in Digital Transformation in Developing Countries" convened by UN DESA/DPIDG in December 2019[1]. It was called to the attention that the global community can best support the digital transformation of developing countries through forging effective partnerships with regional and national regulatory and development organizations, as well as the private sector, and improving local technical capabilities in the process, at both institutional and individual levels.

The webinar will bring into virtual collaboration government officials at the Director-General level (CIOs or equivalents), and experts and decision-makers from the private sector, civil society, academia in relevant digital fields, including digital government, digital economy, cybersecurity, science and technology and innovation (STI), institutes and industries with expertise in digital transformation public sector. A special effort will be made to promote digital transformation knowledge, tools and toolkits with a view to supporting the 2030 Agenda and in responding to emergencies.

The webinar will share lessons learned, including both success and failure, in address emerging requirements and challenges for policy and decision-making in the age of digital transformation. The new Compendium of Digital Government Initiatives in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, initiated and compiled by UN DESA through DPDIG, which has been published, will also be discussed during the Symposium.

---

[1] Event link: https://publicadministration.un.org/en/news-and-events/calendar/ModuleID/1146/ItemID/3026/mctl/EventDetails; see, for example, recommendations in EGM Report: "At the global level, a question was raised on how countries could get to know the various technical assistance and capacity development support on various issues related to digitalization? Within the UN system, there is a need for various agencies to work closer in a more systematic manner, supporting governments/Member States at national, sub-national and community levels. There is also a need to highlight new initiatives such as those in urbanization and smart cities and to engage new actors in working towards a transformative agenda."

Looking ahead, UN DESA will work with partners to facilitate the capacity building of public servants in public sector institutions to promote effective, accountable and inclusive institutions through digital transformation and developing new competencies to implement the 2030 Agenda. Sustained capacity development for digital transformation is necessary for empowering public sector institutions to implement the 2030 Agenda and so are the partnerships and collaboration that will be forged among the countries.

Objectives

The webinar aims to strengthen public institutional capacities in public policymaking for digital transformation in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It aims to strengthen the digital capacity of countries, especially the developing countries, and in particular the capacity of the LDCs, SIDS, LLDCs, and countries with economies in transition, to participate in, and benefit from, the growing opportunities of digitalization while mitigating the risks.

Format

The webinar will be convened over two days, from **14 to 15 December 2020**. There will be two sessions each day, with the first session running from **0800 to 1000 hrs. (EST), and the second session from 1015 to 1130 hrs.**

The webinar will be held virtually in English, through the Zoom platform as a video conferencing tool. It will also be live streamed through Facebook Live. Recordings will be posted on the event website after the conclusion of the webinar.

The webinar will be interactive and will engage participants in:
- Plenary sessions with framing keynotes from experts;
- Presentations, critical reflection, discussion and case analysis, based on the Compendium on COVID-19 responses and other background papers;
- Discussion panels

The follow-up actions, including key recommendations and summary of the discussion, will be disseminated through the UN DESA website.

Targeted Audience

The direct beneficiaries of the webinar are senior public service officials who are national focal points responsible for digital transformation, and public servants and leaders from LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS and countries with economies in transition, who play key functional roles in integrating digital transformation in their national sustainable development strategy and programmes.

The ultimate beneficiaries are senior government officials at the Director-General or Director level, working in related areas of digital government, ICTs, and/or coordinating agencies for SDGs and national development planning, among the LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS and countries with economies in transition. They will benefit from competent leaders and experts who are experienced and equipped with capacities and knowledge in addressing emerging requirements and challenges for policy and decision-making in digital transformation for implementing the 2030 Agenda.

Participants will be invited to share lessons learned, including both success and failure, in address emerging requirements and challenges for policy and decision-making in regard of digital transformation and to reflect on partnerships and digital governance capacity to accelerate recovery and to build a more resilient infrastructure and inclusive service delivery.

Expected Results

It is expected that participants would gain an enhanced understanding of the requirements and challenges for policy and decision-making in digital transformation in developing countries to implement the 2030 Agenda. The webinar also aims to strengthen the individual and institutional capacity of public officials in digital transformation, including capacity to integrate digital transformation in national sustainable development plans.