Digital Government Transformation in the Arab Region: Challenges, Opportunities & Initiatives

Dr. Nibal Idlebi
Chief of Innovation Section
Digital Development in the Arab Region

The Arab region is heterogeneous in digital development. We can identify at least 3 clusters:

1. **1st cluster GCC**: most developed
   - UAE, Bahrain, KSA, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait

2. **2nd cluster**: include Jordan, Tunisia, Lebanon, Morocco and Egypt

3. **3rd cluster**: other countries (crises and least developed)
   - Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Sudan, Yemen and Libya

Information Society in the Arab region

- **First cluster**: most GCC: UAE, Bahrain, KSA, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait
- **Second cluster**: Tunisia, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon
- **Third cluster**: countries under crises, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Sudan, Yemen and Libya
E-Government Development Index in the Arab Region

UN-DESA E-Government Development Index 2016, 2018, 2020
Challenges: ICT Infrastructure in the Arab Region

- Digital infrastructure **varies among countries**: very well developed, acceptable, to under re-construction, but mobile technology is on the rise in all countries
- Only few countries have plan for broadband in the Arab region
- **Affordability** is rather low in most countries
- Gaps are increasing in the Arab Region: Gender, Rural-Urban

Percentage of individual using Internet, ITU, 2019*

Mobile-cellular and mobile-broadband per 100 inhabitant, ITU, 2019*
Main Challenges related to digital government in the Arab Region

- Cyber security, privacy and personal data protection require special attention in the Arab region.

- The use of emerging technology is still nascent in many countries. Only few countries have plans for AI, Blockchain or Big data.

- Reliance on Data: big data, open data could be developed.

- Citizen-centric approach, citizen participation and engagement should be enhanced.

- Human capabilities still needs development in the Arab region, especially among: government employees & citizens and among experts for the exploitation of emerging technology.
EGDI in the Arab Region:
OSI is weaker than other sub-indicators in most Arab countries except for Kuwait, Oman & Syria.
E-Participation Index in the Arab Region:
Seven Arab countries have higher EPI than the World average.
Regional Initiatives:

1- Fostering Open Government in the Arab Region

Open Government Principles:

- **Openness**: better transparency and accountability
- **Participation and Collaboration**: enhanced interaction between government and citizen
- **Engagement**: Public can contribute ideas and expertise. Government can make more informed decision and policies.
ESCWA Project on Open Government, 2017-2019

https://www.unescwa.org/sub-site/open-government-arab-region

- Fostering Open Government in the Arab Region
- Capacity Development Material on Participation, Collaboration and Engagement
- Capacity Development Material on Open Data
- Legal Framework for open government and open data
Meetings, Workshops and Advisory Services

• An Expert Group Meeting (April 2017, Beirut)
• 2 Regional Workshops (September 2018 & June 2019, Beirut)
• 4 National workshops: Sudan (2018) and Jordan (March 2019), Syria (July 2019), Palestine (Jan 2020)
• Three advisory services related to national plan for open data: Jordan, Syria and Palestine.
Regional Initiatives:

2- Government Electronic and Mobile Services

- Developed in collaboration between ESCWA and the Prime Minister Office in the UAE.
- A tool for measuring progress achieved at the national level in achieving the transformation towards digital government.
- Index that measure the maturity of other
  - Service **Availability and Sophistication**
  - Service **Usage and Satisfaction**
  - Public **Outreach**
Government Electronic and Mobile Services

- ESCWA started the deployment of GEMS in collaboration with its member countries in 2016
- In 2018, 12 Arab countries measured GEMS
- A report summarizing the outcomes of this measurement was published in 2019.
The ADDR and Process (links with WSIS and SDGs):

- Reviews the spread of digital technologies in the Arab countries
- Allows the identification of gaps and the areas for further development.
- In 2019, 10 countries participated in the process which enables the production of a regional report on digital development.
- The process will continue in the coming years …..
The **ADDR include 5 clusters:**

- Digital strategic framework
- Infrastructure, governance and legal environment
- Digital economy and economic development
- Digital transformation and social development
- Culture and media
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<tr>
<th>Project Activity</th>
<th>Summary of Achievements</th>
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| Developing the AIGLE OnLine training Platform (AOLP) [https://www.unescwa.org/sub-site/aigle](https://www.unescwa.org/sub-site/aigle) | ➢ Four modules in Arabic language.  
➢ Distant and auto-learning.  
➢ Two training of trainer’s (TOT): Attended by 104 trainers from 14 Arab countries.  
➢ 1573 government officials were trained.  
➢ A hub for countries and regional case studies. |
Opportunities for the Arab Region

1. **COVID-19** is a real opportunity for accelerating the transformation to Digital Government.

2. **Emerging Technologies** and new trends and applications

3. **Data** and its important role in digital government

4. **Reconstruction** in post-conflict countries

5. **Development Agenda 2030** and its SDGs
Priorities for the Arab Region

- Formulation of **strategy/plan for digital government**
- Development of plans for improving **infrastructure/broadband** and enhancing affordability
- Bridging **digital gaps**: Gender, Rural, Content, Disability
- Accelerating the development of **online government services**
- Adopting **Data-Centric** services
- Enhancing **Legal & regulatory framework** related to data
- Developing **e-Participation and e-Engagement**
- Continuing the improvement of **measurement**
- **Building capacity** especially on emerging technologies
Thank you

Contact. Nibal Idlebi
Email: idlebi@un.org