

E-governance Café
Increased Access and Citizen Participation

Open Sessions - ATLANTA 2012 International conference on information and communication technologies and development

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Format: World Café

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Abstract

Governments are gradually providing more information but often neglect delivery and access. Access, interpretation and participation of all groups are key considerations to avoid marginalization. The session, through a World Cafe format, will involve experts and session participants to discuss examples of good practices in connecting citizens to government services.

Table 1

Youth Interests, Threats and Participation in Internet Governance (IG)

Table Host: Awa Innocent Ndah

Abstract During the past years, ICTs have ushered in speedy changes at all levels of development and thus leaves no one indifferent. The youths, a fast growing population continuously play multiple groundbreaking roles in the field of ICT and Development. Formulating their needs, identifying and eradicating threats; and increasing their inclusion and participation in IG becomes a continuous process that requires constant monitoring and evaluation. The overall goal of this discussion is to participatorily analyse and identify youths' special interests and threats so as to increase their participation and contribution in the general information society.

Objective Specific objectives include:

- Identification/formulation of youth interests.
- Look at ways to promote transparency and internet openness.
- Identify possible threats that can hinder effective youth participation.
- Identify ways to increase greater youth legitimacy in decision-making.
- Identify innovative ways to increase youth representation at local, national and international levels.
- Produce recommendations for all stakeholders involve in IG so as to promote the building of alliances and accountability.

Questions that will guide discussions will be generated from the overall goal and specific objectives.

Table 2

Host: Paul-Andre Baran, Director, Biblionet-Romania

Abstract In some countries, libraries provide such digital access to the public, including marginalized communities. Properly trained, librarians are helping guide those otherwise lost online. Paul Baran from Biblionet-Romania will share the example of how the Ministry of Agriculture is now depending on libraries to connect with farmers for subsidies and essential information, and raise the question of whether libraries might be depended on in more countries to provide connections between citizens and government. Questions to be discussed include:

- Why is the supply side of e-government so often prioritized over the demand side?
- What are strategies for ensuring demand, access and participation are part of the discussion of any e-government initiative?
- What inputs are necessary for existing public institutions to support e-government initiatives?

Table 3

Host: Dru Menaker, Senior Media Advisor, IREX

Abstract The media can play a critical role as a conduit connecting citizens and government, and technology expands the possibilities. E-Governance then creates access to information that sheds light on the use of public resources and other government activity. Journalists may be better equipped than citizens to obtain, analyze and disseminate this information – thereby helping broader populations to access it and make their reactions known to government. Media also can publicize and facilitate access to e-government services. Additionally, media can use ICTs to channel information from citizens to government. However, the potential for media to expand the impact of e-governance and build technology-based links between citizens and government is not fully developed, especially in under-resourced settings and for marginalized populations. The discussion will consider how technology could further augment media's role in increasing the impact of e-governance and draw out examples. Some questions this table will consider include:

- what strategies can the media use in order to promote open government?
- what role does the media have in developing countries to connect citizens to e-government?
- what tools can the media use in order to facilitate citizen appropriation of e-government services?

Table 4

Innovative ways of furnishing Open Government Data to the less empowered

Host: Martin J. Murillo

Abstract Digital technology, infrastructure and real-time information is gradually being adopted by governments around the world and potentially making them more transparent. The conveying of information related to transparency and the processing by the citizen for holding the government accountable are necessary conditions for reducing corruption and potentially empowering the citizenry. However, uneven distribution of information introduces the risk of empowering only subsets of the population within a nation and thus having an uneven influence

on policy, allocation of resources, and knowledge in general. This holds special relevance when government services are being automated, including participation which in most cases neglect rural areas.

Objective The goal in this table is to gather conference participants interested in sharing their knowledge and experience and further explore innovative ways Open Government Data can be provided and has been providing to the less empowered and to the general population that in some cases will not enjoy digital communications in many years or have limited access to such (i.e. SMS).

At the end of the session, it is expected to have top recommendations for governments and civil society on best practices to provide data to the less empowered citizenry. For instance, graphs are not understood by everyone, specially if levels of education are low. Examples of appropriate ways of communication could be: Utilize a combination of modern and legacy ICTs such as radio and TV, including satellite TV; utilize modern tools to dynamically translate documents to tens of native languages and air it through more “democratic” ICTs such as (community) radio, TV and other means; utilizing acting, games and multimedia to convey information to illiterate people, etc. We invite participants to share their experience or ideas on other ways of conveying digital data do the less empowered subset of the population.

Table 5

E-GOVERNANCE: The Media in the promotion of e-participation in developing countries.

Host: Kweku Koranteng

Table Abstract The influence of ICT over the democratic development of national politic cannot be over-emphasized. However, information communication technologies (ICT) and its attendant implications, continue to be largely ignored in studies on Africa’s political scene. Yet the potential of modern ICTs to profoundly alter political, social and economic relations is extensive. This session briefly discusses the main themes and issues that arise from an exploration of New and Legacy ICTs and their relationship with democracy. It offers an introduction to the subject within the context of democratic development within developing countries.

To Policy Makers/Practitioner/Experts

- What do you think is the way forward in using ICTs to support good governance in the developing world? What is your government doing in this respect?
- Does your government have policies and programmes to promote engagement with citizens and businesses through ICTs and more particularly the Internet?
- An open government and A public government which is more important in your promotion of good governance – in other words, can a government be open without being public?
- How is your government extending e-governance services to rural communities, especially to those in remote towns and communities?
- How is your government extending e-governance services to persons with disabilities?
- How is your government addressing issues concerning the privacy of citizens’ data over shared services networks in the public sector agencies?

To Citizens

- What do you think is the way forward for using ICTs to support good governance in Developing countries?
- Can mobile technologies be used promote interaction and engagement between government services and citizens?
- Are there any examples or best practices to be shared?
- What are potential benefits to be obtained?
- Can local online forums/social networks support deliberation and consultation between governments and citizens?
- Are there any examples or best practices to be shared?
- What are potential benefits to be obtained?
- How can governments make it safer for citizens to use such platforms? What are privacy and data security concerns?
- How can we ensure participation by less politically engaged groups?
- Would you like to engage with your Parliamentarian online..? What will you like to discuss with your Parliamentarian online?
- Do you know of any Parliamentarian from any developing country who uses online platforms to interact with citizens?

These are questions that are aimed at stimulating discussion on the issues e-participation via practitioner and citizen perspective

Table 6
eGovernance Implementation Model
 Host: Irfanullah Arfeen

Abstract There are many ICT interventions which can assist government of underdeveloped nations to improve their public services by providing citizens access to new technologies, relevant skills, and improved ICT infrastructures. The government of Pakistan initiated many eGovernance initiatives to improve public access to information but not able to get the desire results. In these initiatives, pilots projects, in particular have been at least partially successful, and very useful in understanding and learning how to best utilize ICT. However, these pilot projects could not be replicated on a larger scale basis. These successful pilot projects interventions have not prevented large projects from failing. Thus there exists a large gap regarding the effective implementation and knowledge of medium and large-scale eGovernance initiatives. There appears to be a need to investigate the required project needs for such eGovernance projects. Implementing eGovernance in the Public Sector is about changing the traditional government into a more integrated and efficient one.

In the last few decades, role of the government have changed significantly. The relationship between the government and the citizens is getting more complex. The type, quality etc of services required by citizens are changing rapidly to keep pace with the increasing needs of citizens to have proper documentation to meet security, credit, travel, voting, health, education, etc.

In addition, this study explores the impact of ICT Policy and eGovernment strategy for improving the quality of public services. The most important outcome of this research study is the development of an eGovernance implementation model represents a new and practical approach or methodology for assessing the eGovernance initiatives.