Capacity Development Webinar[1]

"Implementing a Multi-Pronged Strategy for Digital Transformation: Lessons from Asia"

7 July 2022
8:00 – 10:00 am (EDT)

Background

COVID-19 pandemic has shone a spotlight on both opportunities and challenges presented by digital transformation. Digital innovations have allowed people to remain connected, schools open virtually, businesses moving online, and governments providing essential public services through e-tools. But the pandemic has also accentuated and exacerbated the challenges of digital divides, leaving hundreds of millions of people offline, without access to basic services. Many micro, small and medium-sized enterprises remain locked out of markets, with deleterious impacts on local job- and income-generation.

Digital transformation has become essential to sustainable development. It is no longer an add-on policy objective. In his report on Our Common Future, the United Nations Secretary-General called for further investing in innovation and digital transformation to reshape our way of working, helping us to reach more people in need and better serve them[2]. Digital tools, whether applied in digital government, digital economy, digital data, are important drivers of sustainable development at all levels. In many countries, digital government has empowered citizens to benefit from lifelong public services, while improving service efficiency, inclusion, e-participation, and transparency. Digital government services also facilitate business startups and increasingly underpin dynamic digital economy, which has proven to be an important engine for economic growth and sustainable development. An early study by the World Bank found that a 10% increase in internet access correlates to a 1.38% increase in GDP in developing countries. Areas with Internet connectivity experienced more job creation and higher economic growth. Stimulating digital government and digital economy has become a strategic objective of many municipal and local governments. It is therefore critical that developing countries are enabled to utilize digital tools for advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at national, local and community levels.

Recent experience further suggests that a multi-pronged strategy will be needed for digital transformation to succeed and to benefit the whole society, especially the vulnerable groups. Such a strategy must start with increased investments in digital infrastructure, ensuring reliable and affordable high-speed internet connection. Governments alone will not be able to marshal the

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[1] The capacity development webinar on digital transformation is jointly organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, China National Academy of Governance and Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, under the 2030 Agenda Sub-Fund of the UN Peace and Development Fund.
[2] https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/assets/pdf/Common_Agenda_Report_English.pdf, p76.

financing needed for universal connectivity, and partnerships with businesses will be key to speeding up broadband access. A supportive policy environment will help nurture such partnerships. Multilateral development banks are likewise expected to contribute to the goal of universal connectivity.

Increasing financing for digital infrastructure must be accompanied by updated regulatory tools. Legislation must be put in place to ensure protection of human rights online and respect for privacy. Policy measures to help fight mis- and dis-information online and cybercrimes will go a long way to foster online trust.

Similarly, renewed efforts must be made to create and maintain skilled digital workforce, by strengthening digital literacy and capacity development of digital skills, including among girls and young women whose participation in the digital workforce remains inadequate. Such efforts will not only help enhance meaningful access to the Internet but also encourage broad-based active participation in digital government and digital economy to maximize potential benefits from digital transformation.

Successful digital transformation will need to build on sound data governance, which is required not only to protect privacy but also to facilitate cross-border data flow with trust. Data are increasingly seen as key to sound decision-making and timely, reliable, and disaggregated data are needed to regularly enhance digital government services, build dynamics into digital economy and maintain momentum for digital innovations. Data are now integral to every sector and function of government—as essential as physical assets and human resources. Much of the operational activity in government is now data-driven, and many Governments would find it difficult, if not impossible, to function effectively without data.[3]

Against this backdrop, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), through its Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG), in collaboration with China National Academy of Governance (CNAG) and Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS), is organizing a capacity building webinar on strengthening digital transformation through investing in digital infrastructure, fostering a digital workforce, improving digital government services, building a dynamic digital economy, and developing national digital data policies and strategies for ensuring data quality, access, security, privacy and usage. The webinar, drawing from experience in several countries in Asia, is supported by the 2030 Agenda Sub-Fund of the UN Peace and Security Fund.

Objectives

The objective of the webinar is to discuss challenges and share lessons learned at the country and municipal levels on how to accelerate digital transformation by developing a funding partnership for investing in digital infrastructure, by improving digital government services and digital economy, and by strengthening data governance. Several Asian countries with recent progress in these areas will be invited to highlight national and local experiences, share lessons learned and identify ways forward.

Format

The webinar will be held virtually and run for two hours. It will be conducted in English using video conferencing tools such as Zoom and Facebook Live.

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[3] UN E-Government Survey 2020, Chapter 6, page 145.

The recordings will be posted on the website after the conclusion of the webinar. The follow-up actions, including key recommendations and summary of the discussion, will be disseminated through the UN DESA website.

Targeted Audience

The target audience of the webinar includes government officials who are in charge of leading and coordinating national and local efforts to advance digital transformation, develop digital government and digital economy and strengthen data governance. Business leaders, academics and researchers are also encouraged to attend to share their perspectives through panel discussions and written contributions. The webinar also aims to engage civil society organizations, the scientific and technical community, and regional/international organizations that are engaged in advancing digital transformation for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Expected Results

The webinar aims to highlight challenges to and opportunities for sustainable development arising from the growing potentials of digital transformation. It is expected that by sharing lessons learned from several Asian countries with successful outcomes in investing in digital infrastructure, promoting digital government services and digital economies, and enhancing data governance, participants will achieve better understanding of underlying determinants and strategic components for successful digital transformation toward the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The background materials and expert studies as well as presentations by speakers will be compiled and posted online for broader dissemination and for potential use in training courses. Therefore, more specifically the webinar is expected to result in capacity building through: a) enhanced understanding of the determinants and strategies for pushing forward digital transformation; b) sharing of lessons learned in developing digital government and digital economies and better data governance; and c) identifying actional recommendations and ways forward in harnessing digital transformation in developing countries for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.through mutual learning and capacity development.

Key questions on harnessing digital transformation for achieving Sustainable Development Goals

- What are the current trends in financing for digital infrastructure and what are the financing requirements and gaps? How do we meet the growing investment needs of developing countries for digital infrastructure?
- What measures and steps do national and local governments need to take to develop and improve digital government services? How do we ensure that vulnerable groups are not left behind and offline, without access to such services?
- What measures and steps do national and local governments needs to take to stimulate digital economy growth that is broad-based, dynamic and inclusive?
- What regulatory frameworks are suitable for the changing digital data landscape to ensure that data governance addresses the human rights online and protection of privacy and data security, while encouraging and facilitating investments in and development of digital government and digital economy?

- How can governments in developing countries, both at the national and local levels, foster the growth of a diverse and versatile digital workforce? What are some of the innovative and effective approaches to build digital capacities?
- How can the United Nations system support developing countries in harnessing the growing potentials of digital transformation toward the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals?

Proposed Agenda	
Time (EDT)	**OPENING**
8:00- 8: 20 am	**Moderator:** **Mr. Vincenzo Aquaro,** Chief of Digital Government Branch, DPIDG/DESA **Opening Remarks** - **Mr. Zhenmin LIU**, Under-Secretary-General, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) - **Mr. Weibin GONG,** Vice President of China National Academy of Governance (CNAG) - **Mr. Zhen WANG,** Vice President of Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS), Director of Institute of Information Sciences
8:20-9:20 am (10 minutes each)	**PANEL PRESENTATIONS** **Moderator:** **Ms. Adriana Alberti,** Chief of Programme Management and Capacity Development Unit, DPIDG/DESA **Developing a coherent and multi-pronged strategy for harnessing the potentials of digital transformation for SDGs: country experiences** - **Mr. JUNG, Hyun Kwan, Senior Deputy Director, Regional Digital Service Division at the Ministry of the Interior and Safety (MOIS)**: Korea's experience in digital government at the national and local levels

	• **Mr. Yimin WANG, Director of Centre for E-Government Studies:** China's experience in developing digital government at the national and local levels • **Mr. Anir CHOWDHURY**, **Policy Advisor, Aspire to Innovate (a2i), ICT Division & Cabinet Division, Bangladesh**: Bangladesh's experience in digital transformation and digital government at the national and local levels • **Prof. Fuchun ZHAO, SASS**: China's experience in developing digital economy • **Mr. Wai Min KWOK, DPIDG/DESA**: Adopting National Data Governance Framework for Sustainable Development • **Mr. Deniz Susar, DPIDG/DESA**: The Role of Cities in Digital Transformation
9:20–9:55 am	**Open Discussion** • **Q&A from audience** • **Panelists**
9:55–10:00 am	**Closing Remarks** • **Wrap up by Mr. Vincenzo Aquaro,** Chief of Digital Government Branch, DPIDG/DESA