

In This Issue

Message from the Director	1
Introduction—E-government: From Bubble to Rubble?	2
Beyond the Catchphrase: What is E-government — What is it Not	3
Putting Into Context: the Inter- national Policy Framework for E-government	3
What We Have Accomplished so far: the Benefits of E-government	4
E-government as a "Free Lunch"? 6 Challenges Encountered and Lessons Learned	6
Guiding Principles for Successful E-government	7
Where to Now? Dynamics, Trends, and Issues on the Horizon	9
DPADM's Role and Contributions	10
Other meetings related to E-government for Development	12



United Nations

E-government for Development

E-government, the application of information and communication technology (ICT) within and by the public sector, provides government, the citizen and business with a set of tools that can potentially transform the way in which interactions take place, services are delivered, and public administration reform and good governance goals are met. The strategic use of ICT in government can result in a more coordinated, inclusive, effective, efficient, transparent and accountable public administration. Many of these attributes are key to improved economic development and competitiveness. Moreover, in enhancing the quality and delivery of public services through ICT, government may be better positioned to reduce poverty, redress inequality and promote sustainable development. Equally important, e-government, when viewed as part of a broader focus on e-governance, can offer new channels for participation and engagement by citizens, and can enhance the prospects for deepening democracy. In all of these ways, e-government can serve as an important tool in meeting the Millennium Development Goals.



Yet, there are many challenges in realizing e-government's potential. They include cultural and political barriers; organizational and institutional deficiencies; the need for sound legal and regulatory environments; creating processes for identifying citizens' needs; proper infrastructure and access; adequate financial and human resources; and knowledge management strategies.

Over the past several years, the Division has sought to address both the opportunities and challenges of e-government through analysis and building governments' capacity in a number of areas, including: identifying *emerging issues* in e-government development; formulating *national and regional e-government strategies* and action plans; developing and implementing *e-government readiness and benchmarking methodologies*; determining *feasibility of e-government applications*; and ensuring linkages between *e-government, e-governance and e-democracy*.

In an effort to both capture the many lessons learned from these initial stages of e-government development and redirect ongoing e-government efforts towards a more development-oriented outcome, the Division's forthcoming 2003 World Public Sector Report will focus on "E-Government at the Crossroads". Under the conceptual framework of creating a societal context for human development, as outlined in the UN Millennium Declaration, the report will examine the early achievements of e-government development in the world as well as some of the "unintended consequences". It will focus on the use of the full potential of e-government for human development and highlight especially the issues of e-participation and privacy. The report will also include the results from the 2003 Global E-government Survey.

Fuado Bertoni

Introduction

E-government: From Bubble to Rubble?

As with many other concepts prefixed with the ubiquitous 'e-', such as *e-commerce* or *e-learning*, e-government gives expression to a sense of fundamental change, the feeling and vision that the advent of novel information and communication technologies will transform the way we learn, do business or, in this case, the way we govern ourselves.

However, right now the mood seems to have changed. Exuberant hopes have been superseded by a sense of sobriety, even disappointment, about the lack of immediate and sweeping results. So far, the Internet has not supplanted all intermediaries in the global market place. It has not erased all barriers of access to higher education and it has not swept away repressive-style government all over the world.

We should not be surprised.

As the history of technology teaches us, time and time again the arrival of so-called threshold technologies inspired human imagination and fueled utopian visions; and time and time again these early hopes failed to materialize in ways initially imagined, within the time frame envisaged, or for the clientele expected. The bursting of the Internet stock market bubble has had its antecedents in the growing and eventual bursting of the railroad bubble in 19th century England or even earlier, the waterway canal bubble.

Yet history also tells us that this is no reason to be discouraged. In the long term, threshold technologies do usher in dramatic changes to the way we live our lives and conduct our affairs. In the long run, both the canal and railroad systems dramatically reconfigured human settlement patterns, economic production and the overall experience of space and time.

Novel information and communication technology (ICT) will be no different. Given the current sense of disenchantment, it is worthwhile stepping

back for a second to remind ourselves what information and communication technology has brought:

- In 2001, more information could be sent over a single cable in a second than in 1997 was sent over the entire Internet in one month.
- The cost of transmitting a trillion bits of information from Boston to Los Angeles has fallen from \$150,000 originally to 12 cents today.
- E-mailing a 40-page document from Chile to Kenya costs less than 10 cents, faxing it about \$10, sending it by courier more than \$50*.

ICT does equip us with unprecedented capabilities for generating data, processing information and sharing knowledge.

Some aspects of the emerging changes might be unintended, and some undesirable. However, uncertainty does not equate arbitrariness. Another lesson that the trajectory of other technologies teaches us: *policy matters and can make a difference*, in particular during the early days of adoption, when governance expectations, structures, roles and usage practices are still in the making. Technological change is neither automatic nor deterministic. It does not simply override social, economic or political relations, nor is it simply overridden by them. A realistic understanding of what technology can do needs to be coupled with an understanding of its complex interaction with these systems, as well as with other institutional, cultural and organizational factors, and a commitment to drive forward policies that turn potential into action. Moreover, we must ask ourselves *to what end is e-government being developed and for whose benefit*.

E-government has reached these critical crossroads. It is thus more timely than ever to assess e-government to date, determine where we would like to take it and what policies could help us get there.

In this spirit, the newsletter will give a taste of the state of e-government, and provide both a practical outlook on the policy challenges to be addressed and a depiction of DPADM's contributions to turn potential into action.

*All data from the Human Development Report 2001, chapter 1.

Beyond the Catchphrase: What is E-government – and What is it Not

E-government means many things to many people. Some narrow definitions focus on the deployment of the *Internet* to restructure citizen-government relationships and the political franchise. Very often, however, it is difficult to draw a clear-cut line between Internet use for external and internal communication, or between the Internet and other novel information and communication technologies. For these reasons, a broader notion of e-government as *the use of novel information and communication technology (ICT) in the public sector* is more practical. This more encompassing concept entails the use of ICT to:

- Make internal administrative processes more efficient;
- Enhance the delivery of public services; and
- Strengthen democratic accountability, control and collective decision-making.

In other words, e-government refers to the sum of internal processes and external relationships that public authorities maintain with citizens, business, or foreign public entities.

E-government is usually distinguished from *e-governance*. The latter refers to the use of novel ICT in the process of governance, including any kind of collective governance arrangements, but not necessarily limited to the public sector. E-government should also not be confused with *Internet governance*, which refers to the sum of arrangements that govern the Internet itself.

Finally, e-government overlaps heavily with, but is not fully equivalent to, e-democracy, which itself is linked to the concept of e-governance. E-democracy focuses on the *overall democratic potential* of novel ICT. This also encompasses applications that are only semi-public, such as online deliberations and online self-organization within specific communities, or applications that take place in the wider environment of public decision-making, such as political communication, media, mobilization and organization.

E-government can contribute to, and in some ways can be seen as a part of, e-governance and e-democracy, in that it provides citizens, civil society and the private sector with certain tools, mechanisms and information with which they can make decisions, act, improve their well-being and exercise their rights.

Putting into Context: the International Policy Framework for E-government

What policy documents provide guidance for the development and objectives of e-government?

Here are some major milestones:

The **United Nations Millennium Declaration** (2000) provides an important reference point. It links the vision of a peaceful, prosperous and just world, specifically the achievement of selected development goals, to “good governance within each country”. Member States express their commitments “to spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law, as well as respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms ... to strengthen the capacity ... to implement the principles and practices of democracy” and “to work collectively for more inclusive political processes, allowing genuine participation by all citizens in our countries”. Furthermore, it confirms the resolve of the Member States “to ensure ... the right of the public to have access to information”. Placing the development of e-government in this context provides the set of goals against which progress can be measured.

Ultimately, e-government is about the empowerment of people and the contributions it can make to their development. The Millennium Declaration establishes a domain for this kind of e-government development, that is, for all people everywhere. It also describes the modality that serves this purpose, that is, participatory, deliberative democracy. All this places ICT application in public administration operations in the position of a servant of *people-centred governance*, a vehicle for bringing people closer to the United Nations’ vision of peace, prosperity and justice for all.

The **G8 Okinawa Charter on the Global Information Society** (2000) re-emphasizes this commitment to democracy and equity and includes as an urgent task the “active utilization of I[C]T by the public sector and the promotion of online delivery of services, which are essential to ensure improved accessibility to government by all citizens”.

An international statement is to be expected from the upcoming **World Summit on the Information Society** to be held in Geneva (December 2003) and Tunis (2005). The 2003 **draft declaration** includes a section on e-government and suggests that “*Public administrations should use ICT tools to enhance transparency, accountability and efficiency – at all levels of government, and in particular at the local level.*”

Ultimately, that which should guide the work of e-government initiatives comes in the form of policies and activities that respond favourably to the following criteria:

- Does e-government support public sector reform and good governance?
- Does e-government add public value?
- Is e-government meaningful?

There are many ways to characterize the development of e-government. On the disappointing side (no public value created), we can talk about such development that is:

Wasteful – engages resources but does not result in optimization of government operations; or

Pointless – even if it optimizes government operations, it has no (or only minimal) effect on the development objectives preferred by society.

On the satisfying side (active engagement in public value creation), and especially from the perspective of the world-making process that has been outlined in the UN Millennium Declaration, we can talk about e-government development that is:

Meaningful – optimizes government operations and supports human development, i.e., empowers people/raises human capabilities; and in this framework, it equips people for genuine participation in the inclusive political process, and sup-

ports values considered as essential for human development in the 21st century.

Meaningful development of e-government gives the institutions of public administration additional capacity to strengthen the societal context conducive to human development.

What We Have Accomplished so far: the Benefits of E-government

The potential of e-government is well known and its fruits frequently cited. A DPADM survey of over 30 e-government managers listed the following benefits that motivated their development of e-government:

- **Overcome the complexity** of bureaucracy (overthrow the bureaucratic paradigm) and simplify the process of dealing with public bureaucracy;
- Help the public and business to connect to government information and services online – **provide seamless electronic public services**;
- **Catalyse the development and deployment of ICT applications** in the society by demonstrating the potentials of the networked society via real life projects addressed to the public at large, public authorities and business companies;
- In the context of economic reform, **increase efficiency, transparency and accountability** in the use of public resources – prevent fraud and corruption;
- **Participate in the digital economy** – advance in transition to the knowledge economy;
- **Lead by example** in adoption of e-business;
- **Improve the dialogue with the public** and heighten people’s interest in democracy and participation;
- **Increase knowledge** in society of the issues handled by the public administration;
- **Achieve greater openness** and transparency of the policy-making process; and
- **Test the new media** within the process of democracy.

With e-government moving from promise to practice, the benefits of e-government become tangible and are increasingly captured in project assessments. Yet, while the anecdotal evidence has been told and retold, there is also a call for empirical evidence that illustrates, in part, the return on investment in e-government. The following provides a brief overview of emerging *empirical* evidence on the benefits of e-government.

Slashing costs with e-government...

Many e-government applications have the potential to reduce overall administrative costs. Emerging case studies, mainly undertaken by government auditors, highlight realized savings:

- In the UK, moving land registration services onto the Internet has been found to reduce the costs of unit per work by almost 20%, making it possible to slash user fees by half.
- In Germany, 8% of recipients of government student grants have taken advantage of novel online repayment facilities in 2001, leading to estimated savings of Euro 4.5 million per year.

Business plans for initiatives under development also project significant cost savings. The US Internal Revenue Service aims to receive 80% of individual taxpayers' filings online by 2007 and expects to achieve financial savings of USD 170 million. Similarly, the introduction of online tendering in the UK is hoped to produce savings to the taxpayer of about GBP 13 million over a four-year period.

...enhancing services...

However, the objectives of e-government applications should not be abridged to mere cost savings. The major benefits can often be found elsewhere, such as in better service quality and availability.

Examples can be found in all branches of government and for many different stakeholder groups:

- The introduction of online government to business (B2G) services in Australia has

reduced the average time to register a business from 15 days to as little as 15 minutes. Likewise, the People's Republic of China has reduced the turnaround time for many B2G services from 2-3 months to 10-15 days in a pilot project under its "Digital Beijing" initiative.

- Providing the opportunity for electronic filing in some judicial matters in a UK pilot project has reduced the average time to provide judgment on a civil case from 21 to 5 days.
- The computerization of some public services in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh has shortened the process of land registration from between 7 and 15 days to a few hours, and the process of obtaining some birth and caste certificates from between 20 and 30 days to a few minutes.

...and strengthening democratic control

Besides speeding up and expanding the availability of services, e-government can also strengthen the accountability of service delivery through enhanced documentation, tracking and feedback mechanisms. Municipal electronic service delivery in Andhra Pradesh also provides for an electronic complaints mechanism that has been used more than 7,000 times in only one year of operation, with 97% of filings being successfully resolved. The city of Seoul has introduced a detailed monitoring and tracking system for online filings. Applicants receive detailed information on the processing status and the officer in charge with contact details. Subsequently, complaints about inappropriate staff behaviour have fallen by 50% in some sectors. Of course, accountability benefits are not restricted to e-services. Other segments of e-government, such as electronic freedom of information strategies, online referenda and consultation processes aim directly at more accountability and overall enhanced democratic quality of government arrangements. These benefits are even more difficult to quantify, indicating that a sole focus on cost savings is not sufficient. In many cases, added benefits might even outweigh and thus justify additional costs.

E-government as a “Free Lunch”? Challenges Encountered and Lessons Learned

These encouraging findings notwithstanding, reaping the benefits from e-government is neither guaranteed nor easy. Indeed, there are many analyses that suggest that the e-government failure rate is often as high as 60-80%. The emerging body of evidence points to a number of formidable challenges along the way and to valuable lessons learned.

- ICT has become a **part of the political agenda**;
- Effectiveness alone cannot constitute the goal of e-government development: it **must respond to the public’s needs** and it must be closely tied to raising the quality of people’s lives;
- Government and its ICT plans **cannot progress ahead of the public**, its interests and its skills; all e-government development must take place on people’s terms;
- Main difficulty – **integration of back-office systems and databases** of different government departments with the “customer interface”; without back-office integration, the customer interface is an empty shell;
- Main risk – the **culture prevailing in government offices**: staff members are fearful of increased control of their work-related behaviour; managers are fearful of losing control over information;
- **Prior exposure** of government departments to administrative reform programmes and change-management helps to successfully deploy e-government applications; and
- **Change must encompass business practices** (work flow) within government organizations: e-government applications make sense only if they support appropriate work processes.

While **intensive training** of civil servants and the public at large is necessary, rare usage (little practice) undermines the effectiveness of training and brings back ICT illiteracy.

The respondents of DPADM’s survey of e-government managers indicated the following as key lessons learned:

- Training by peers who are on the same footing as the trainees (same age group, same social status) has proven to give better results than efforts led by professional instructors who use overly technical language;
- **Design of e-government applications must be simple**, yet take care of all the critical details; it must allow the applications to run on all the operating systems and browsers;
- **Success is not a given** when one uploads a service to the Internet; one visible success is not automatically the cause of the next success;
- **Users of online services are difficult to attract**: no one can force people to use online services; they have to be convinced that doing so will be easy and advantageous;
- Development of **local services helps to raise interest** in online services, as does raising awareness via traditional media (TV, radio, printed media) about the availability of online access to government services;
- The digital divide directs online services away from those who need them most but do not have affordable access to the Internet (“**for-wealthy-only**” syndrome);
- A **balance has to be preserved** between the average use of online services and the quantity of these services being made available online;
- **Traditional forms of services** (“brick and mortar”) must be maintained alongside the digital initiatives;
- In e-participation, **unequivocally clear, understandable rules** must be established; anonymity must be avoided; participants must clearly see the extent to which their input is considered in policy-making; information must be constantly provided about new opportunities to participate in policy-making;
- **Networks and knowledge-sharing** are crucial for securing the quality and sustainability of online service;
- While **partnerships with business firms and CSOs** (shared financing, risk, ownership) are all important, partnership building requires focused advocacy efforts to break through prospective partners’ lack of understanding of opportunities offered;

- **Security** of online connections has to be of a very high standard, but it cannot jeopardize simplicity (too little security – too little trust; too much security – too expensive and burdensome); and
- **E-government is costly:** the cost factor is important and must be considered carefully, especially in jurisdictions with limited financial resources.

DPADM's E-government for Development Programme, which provides advisory services on the feasibility of e-government applications, has identified the following lessons learned with regard to implementation of e-government applications at the national level:

- General awareness of the potential impact that ICT can have on development and on government's operating capacity is already present at the highest political levels in most countries that the programme has interacted with;
- E-government tends to be considered the domain of a highly knowledgeable group of ICT experts in developing countries, which obviously carries the risk that the underlying or-

ganizational and human resource challenges are not sufficiently understood;

- Resistance to organizational change tends to be high within the affected institutions, and this stresses the importance of going through a rather lengthy preparatory phase to properly plan for all the actions, which will have to accompany the introduction of ICT in government operations; and
- Most of the e-government applications that countries would like to see put in place tend to be very complex and can also be quite expensive. Countries are advised to first put in place a clear strategic management framework in order to properly plan and guide implementation of these systems.

E-government at its best is first and foremost about producing public value. It is also about bureaucratic structures in government departments facing abrupt change brought about by technology. It tends to be a complex, prone-to-failure and costly undertaking, though no doubt one that is rewarding. Improved mechanisms for the monitoring and evaluation of e-government initiatives would make it even more so.

Guiding Principles for Successful E-government

Compelling reasons for a government to use ICT in its operations and to go online

1. **Priority development needs that require government involvement.** E-government applications are best embedded in areas that are perceived as closely related to the priority development needs of the society. This brings broad support and makes it easier to overcome inherent difficulties and sustain attention, commitment and funding.
2. **Efficiency and effectiveness as key success criteria of government involvement.** It is best if the role that the government plays in meeting the priority development needs is judged partly or predominantly by achieving efficiency and effectiveness, factors that ICT can facilitate. The link between ICT applications, optimization of government operations and achievement of important social development goals is a very convincing argument for the continued development of e-government.

Ability of the government to use ICT in its operations: to go online and stay online

3. **Availability of (initial) funding.** Even initial pilot e-government operations should start with a good understanding of costs involved and assured funding that follows careful analysis of opportunity cost. Whenever advisable and feasible, funding should be treated as a business investment and carry the expectation of returns.

4. **Skills and culture of the civil service.** Civil servants must be able (through ICT, change and project management, and partnership-building skills) and willing to support e-government, or at a minimum, must be eager to learn and adapt to change. The culture prevailing in the civil service determines the assessment of expected loss that e-government application can bring to individual civil servants and, *eo ipso*, the eventual strength and effectiveness of the anti-change lobby (if any).
5. **Coordination.** Needed “backroom” coordination and effort – within and between government agencies – must be undertaken before any e-government application goes online to avoid duplication, assure inter-operability and meet the expectations of users.
6. **Legal framework.** E-government introduces unique legal requirements and these should be realized and faced early on.
7. **ICT infrastructure.** Infrastructure needs should be assessed against the background of requirements and desired results of planned e-government development. Anything short of this limits both. Anything that goes beyond this carries the danger that the ICT infrastructure will be converted into expensive and idle office equipment.
8. **Political leadership and long-term political commitment.** The chief executive officer of the public sector must be committed to e-government, lead and build broad support for it, and be eager to learn. This generates the all-important positive signals that the civil service needs to receive from its top leadership.
9. **Public engagement.** The public should have a personal stake in e-government development. This should be reinforced by actively, genuinely and continuously soliciting people to participate in the development of e-government applications so that these are custom-crafted to the way people live and work.
10. **Plans for the development of human capital and technical infrastructure.** There should be a vision and plans for closing the existing divides in both skills and access. Otherwise, neither the public administration nor the society can hope to become ICT literate and capable – important ingredients for e-government success.
11. **Partnerships.** Early on, the government should see business firms and civil society organizations (CSOs) as its partners in securing financial resources, skills improvement, better access and adequate capacity to service the ICT network. Partnerships should never be forged at the cost of transparency, accountability or economic soundness of investments.
12. **Monitoring and evaluation.** Setting clear responsibilities and realistic benchmarks for e-government development, as well as for their transparent monitoring, is an important ingredient for eventual success and builds up the overall transparency and accountability framework in the public sector.

Compelling reasons for the users of e-government to go online and stay online

13. **Perception of added value.** Any design of e-government development must incorporate a calculation of the added value that the application intends to bring to individual users. It is best if this calculation proves to be congruent with that of the users.
14. **Access and skills.** It should be made easy in terms of time, cost and effort for the potential users of e-government to actually employ it. Imaginative solutions for increasing the level of this “ease of use ” must be part of any e-government development plan. They should include, but also transcend, individual access and skills.
15. **Privacy and security.** Privacy and security concerns – culturally defined as they are – must be addressed early on, openly and with demonstrated professional aptitude. The public is bound to expect a breakdown in this area, and any news (even informal) of one is bound to become a huge setback with long-lasting consequences.

Where to Now? Dynamics, Trends, and Issues on the Horizon

What are the contours of e-government of the future? Over the last five years, e-government has matured considerably. What typically started with a departmental website is being developed into an ever more sophisticated electronic government infrastructure. Domestic development trajectories and their pacing vary considerably. Nevertheless, a number of trends and objectives can be discerned that drive the development of e-government everywhere. E-government is becoming:

- *More expansive:* The number of government entities going online and the amount of information they provide is growing rapidly;
- *More guided:* Simply uploading or linking to information items is not enough. The expansion of e-government websites and the online information growth in general make editorial guidance a crucial factor for relevance and usefulness. Countries such as Australia or Canada have added editorial annotations to their resource collections and established clear and transparent selection criteria for links to external sources;
- *More interactive:* The mere reproduction of government information online is supplanted by more two-way modes of communication. Interactive elements that increasingly gain currency include enhanced feedback options, more e-mail interfaces, online consultation and deliberation initiatives, customizable information retrieval and notification services;
- *More seamless:* Information and services from different government entities are bundled into an integrated online information and services platform, hiding underlying organizational boundaries and complexities;
- *More user-group or life-situation oriented:* e-government moves from one-size-fits-all to a more differentiated approach. Online information is rearranged and recombined in ways to make it more relevant to specific user groups or for specific life situations by providing a one-stop information context; and
- *More transactional:* The advent of digital authentication and online payment facilities has paved the way for conducting many government-citizen and government-business trans-

actions online. Examples include the filing of tax declarations, the request for and issuing of licenses and certificates, and electronic procurement.

Taken together, these trends reflect a continuing development towards citizen-centred e-government. Technology is not used for its own sake or simply to digitalize existing functions and services. It is deployed to equip a highly complex, large-scale governance apparatus with more effective and more accessible usage controls.

Emerging issues

The challenges to the further development of e-government are considerable.

Addressing the twin challenges of **privacy and security** is already a priority today. However, it will become an even more critical task in the future, with e-government moving towards more seamless and customized systems, engaging the individual citizen in more encompassing ways and assuming an ever more important role for governance systems around the world. The digital environment provides unprecedented opportunities to record online communications and transactions, to create encompassing information profiles and to merge, analyse and share them. Confidential information about various aspects of individual lives is routinely exchanged online. They range from medical records and tax filings to criminal files and the expression of political preferences. Devising and implementing clear and effective privacy principles is therefore indispensable. It prevents e-government from turning into *big e-brother*. Moreover, citizens will only communicate sensitive information online when they are confident that the network infrastructure is secure and reliable. However, network security is not only important at the level of individual trust. With central governance procedures moving online, the very functioning of the administrative system is put at risk if networks and services are vulnerable to disruptions or attacks.

There are also qualitative and governance challenges in ensuring that meaningful e-government is better realized.

As e-government progresses, the role of "content", information and knowledge become

increasingly important, and to date remain somewhat neglected. As such, **knowledge management** has begun to emerge as an area of focus. While the systems that enable e-government to function are critical, so too is an examination of the actual information and knowledge that is being captured, generated, exchanged and, hopefully, utilized. Government workers should be seen as knowledge workers and the knowledge assets of government better employed. This requires the development of sound knowledge management strategies and practices that address leadership, organizational and cultural issues, as well as standards, interoperability issues and frameworks (e.g., taxonomies) that must be in place. Moreover, distinctions should be made and appropriate actions taken with regard to the different types of information and knowledge employed by the public sector (e.g., technical data, public information on services, and knowledge on policy implementation).

There are also calls for greater attention to be paid to the relationship between e-government and the citizen, rather than merely viewing e-government as directed at “consumers” of public services. A citizen’s ability to engage his or her government in the formulation and implementation of policy related to public services is key, and **e-participation** represents a tool for doing so. E-participation implies, in part, that governments provide online mechanisms whereby citizens can provide feedback on government services, participate in town halls, comment on the development of policy documents, and even provide input on the development of e-government services, through mechanisms such as online polls and surveys, formal online consultation facilities, chat rooms, and other facilities. The ability to interact with government officials and express one’s needs cannot be underestimated when considering the qualitative improvement and relevance of public services, often a stated goal of e-government development.

Finally, an assessment of existing e-government services shows that very few governments have achieved **networked government**, often a goal represented at the end of the information presence–interaction–transaction e-government development continuum. Networked government implies more seamless integration and is predicated upon transforming inter-agency cooperation. Yet, reworking the terms of collective governance to-

wards a more open, interactive, multidisciplinary and collaborative style requires significant institutional changes and government reform. Therefore, as governments move toward this stage of e-government development, the modalities for achieving a networked government (internally and, as described above, also with the public) warrant greater consideration and guidance.

DPADM’s Role and Contributions

DPADM has early on identified the challenges and opportunities related to e-government. In response it has established a focus on knowledge management and e-government that provides a vast range of services to member countries.

DPADM in research and benchmarking

As outlined earlier, e-government is maturing quickly, and empirical evidence on how projects perform is slowly emerging. However, this research often takes the form of individual case studies, rarely synthesized for policy makers or analysed in comparative matter. DPADM has initiated a number of projects to fill this gap. The forthcoming 2003 World Public Sector Report will provide an evaluation of existing evidence on many aspects of e-government, translate findings into practical policy recommendations and flag upcoming issues in research and policy, including knowledge management in the public sector, privacy issues, e-participation and the alignment of e-government with good governance objectives. In driving forward primary research, DPADM has also developed an e-government survey and deployed it for what is to date the most comprehensive benchmarking exercise on e-government performance around the world. The latest update of this survey, which assesses the online e-government presence of more than 190 countries, will be published as part of the World Public Sector Report in autumn 2003. For use at the national level, DPADM has developed a diagnostic tool in the form of an e-government readiness assessment methodology which seeks to identify the challenges and opportunities facing governments that seek to formulate or expand e-government initiatives.

DPADM in advocacy and training

Effective e-government requires political leadership and a conducive policy environment, which in turn depends on access to objective high-quality information on e-government projects and strategies. As an independent intermediary with unique outreach capabilities through the UN network, DPADM is well positioned to assume the critical role of trusted information provider. To this end, DPADM sponsors and actively participates in a variety of consultative and policy-preparing processes. Examples include the Global Forums on Reinventing Government (Morocco, December 2002 and Mexico, November 2003), the International Conference on E-government for Development (Italy, April 2002) and the International Symposium on Network Economy and Economic Governance (China, April 2001). Upcoming events include the World Summit on the Information Society (Phase 1 in Geneva, December 2003) with side events on e-democracy and e-government.

These awareness and agenda-setting efforts are complemented by in-depth e-government education workshops such as the Diplomatic Training on ICT and E-Government (Italy, 2003). Moreover, in order to aide national implementation strategies, DPADM has synthesized best practices into comprehensive guidelines for drawing up national e-government action plans and collects information on insightful case studies on its website, UNPAN (United Nations Online Network in Public Administration and Finance—www.unpan.org).

DPADM in regional and national-level e-government development

Regional cooperation is key to maximizing the benefits for e-government. It helps to coordinate cross-border services and make them more effective. It facilitates the sharing of best practices and development costs. Seizing on these opportunities, DPADM has established regional e-government cooperation networks in Africa, the Caribbean and Central America.

Related activities include: workshops for high-level policy makers in order to raise awareness and facilitate regional knowledge sharing; support for e-government readiness assessments, in order to identify policy priorities; assistance in drawing up

regional action frameworks to translate policy objectives into actionable activities; and support for pioneering local flagship projects on the ground to provide proof of concept and experiment with innovative solutions.

At the national level, DPADM has been engaged in technical assistance and advisory services in the development of national e-government strategies in several countries. Moreover, in the framework of the Italian *E-government for Development Initiative*, DPADM and the Government of Italy have entered into a technical cooperation trust fund agreement for the implementation of activities in the field of e-government for development. The programme established under this trust fund has the following goals:

- Strengthen the capacity of governments in developing countries to address issues related to information and communication technology, with particular emphasis on building capacities at all levels for the formulation of e-governance policies to meet the internationally agreed development goals, primarily those related to poverty reduction;
- Provide technical support to governments in developing countries for the identification and formulation of e-government projects;
- Support the governments in developing countries in the implementation of the identified projects; and
- Advocate for these E-government for Development activities in the participating countries.

Since the inception of the programme in September 2002, multiple missions have been undertaken in four beneficiary countries: Albania, Jordan, Mozambique and Tunisia, with studies focusing on priority applications as identified by national counterparts, such as e-procurement, government electronic networks, e-accounting, e-land registry, document management systems and e-taxation.

The demand for DPADM advisory services and technical assistance in the preparation of e-government projects is quite high, from the recipient national governments, local governments and other international development partners.

In addition, DPADM has been engaged in technical assistance and project implementation at the national level in both the development of national e-government strategies and in conducting feasibility studies for specific e-government applications.

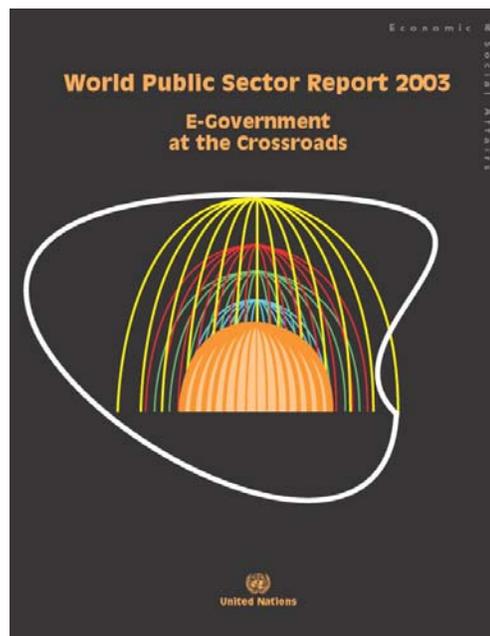
In sum, DPADM's work programme on e-government accompanies projects and initiatives from conception to implementation and evaluation. It covers global policy parameters and addresses vital conceptual issues. Yet it also attends to practical national concerns and concrete implementation strategies. With this encompassing portfolio of research, advisory and implementation services, DPADM assists member governments, proactively and comprehensively, in their attempts to harness the ICT revolution for enhancing collective governance in the service of human development. The challenges along the way are not negligible, but the potential benefits are exceptional. A spirited, proactive policy response can make all the difference, and DPADM is contributing its humble share to make it happen.

For more information on DPADM's e-government activities, including links to research, diagnostic tools and other resources, please see the following website:

<http://www.unpan.org/dpepa-kmb.asp>



Opening address by Mr. Guido Bertucci at the Conference on ICT and E-government for Regional Development and Integration in Central America.



The flagship publication of the Division for 2003: World Public Sector Report—E-government at the Crossroads.

Development Administration

Development Administration is published by the Division for Public Administration and Development Management, Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations.
www.unpan.org/DPEPA.asp

Correspondence should be addressed to:

Guido Bertucci

Director, DPADM or

Haiyan Qian

Chief, Information and Networking Unit, DPADM

2 UN Plaza

Room DC2-1714 or DC2-1712

New York, NY 10017

E-mail: bertucci@un.org

qianh@un.org

Authors/Contributors:

Jennifer Sisk

Jerzy Szeremeta

Dieter Zinnbauer

Production/Editorial Unit:

Tanima Bossart

Adriana Ribeiro



United Nations

Other meetings related to E-government for Development

Workshop at the "5th Global Forum on Reinventing Government" on "*New ICTs and e-Government*", 5-6 November 2003, Mexico City, Mexico.

Side Event at the World Summit on the Information Society on "*E-government at the Crossroads*", 11 December 2003, Geneva, Switzerland.

Side Event at the World Summit on the Information Society on "*E-democracy*", 11 December 2003, Geneva, Switzerland.