eGovernance

InfoSheet nº4

This InfoSheet is part of a series on digitalisation and relevance to EU International Partnerships and development cooperation programmes. The Toolkit is designed to provide key definitions, main opportunities and challenges for global development presented by digital transformation, case studies and suggested further reading. Learn more on Cap4Dev

A key component of the role of digital technologies in accelerating progress towards each of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is that of contributing to advancing and transforming public institutions and their service delivery.

The concept of eGovernance (Electronic Governance[1]) refers to the integration of ICT and digital technologies in the administration of a country. Its goal is to support and simplify governance for all parties: government, citizens and businesses, ultimately contributing to achieve good governance. It involves effective planning, management, coordination and supervision of the whole process of digital transformation of public institutions. eGovernance can improve management and reporting of financial information, increase the speed of dealing with various processes, reduce costs, enhance communication with citizens, and potentially serve as a catalyst for increased accountability and enhanced citizen participation in public processes.[2] These may include, for example, obtaining a birth certificate, handling taxes, applying for university or getting information about public policies and activities.

Thanks to its leadership on eGovernance issues, the EU's approach can be an important reference in the context of international partnerships. The following principles are at the basis of the EU's approach towards eGovernance: human-centric approach and citizen centricity, the once-only principle[3], privacy and data protection, respect of human rights online and offline, cybersecurity, inclusiveness, and the Digital Single Market (DSM) approach. These topics are currently at the core of a strategic global tug-of-war regarding the future direction and principles underlying digitalisation.

Many countries are only in the initial phases of adopting ICT to streamline the delivery of government services. This is even more so in partner countries with less developed institutions. The adoption of eGovernance is as much an administrative process as a technological one, which needs strong political ownership and commitment. eGovernance is a tool for good governance, but it is not always a driver. It is a dynamic process that is susceptible to a variety of cultural, legal and political forces within different institutional environments.[4]

This info sheet contains a range of references to policies, EU building blocks, action plans, media sources, etc., as well as some case studies, which can help development practitioners in improving understanding and preparing relevant activities.

Enablers and challenges

eGovernance has been actively developed and promoted by the EU for many years and the EU enjoys a leadership role on the topic. For example, the European eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020 'Accelerating the digital transformation of government' aims at helping to remove existing digital barriers, **reduce administrative burdens and improve the quality of interactions with government.** Furthermore, it is a key element in the success of the Single Market which in itself is an important reference for the EU's international partnership discussions - for example when developing the foundations for cross-border **trade**. Technical building blocks[5] targeted by the Action Plan include eID electronic identification, eSignature, and eDelivery. The resources section of this document also refers to studies and policies of use for international partnerships.

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[1] Please note that eGovernance is to be distinguished from 'Internet Governance'

[2] ADB, EGovernment in the Asia-Pacific region, 2001

[3] The once-only principle means that citizens and businesses provide diverse data only once in contact with public administrations, while public administration bodies take actions to internally share and reuse these data – even across borders – always in respect of data protection regulations and other constraints. Source: toop.eu

[4] Warf B., Geographies of E-Government in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2014

[5] A joint declaration on cooperation was signed between the ITU, Estonia, Germany and DIAL to develop a "Reference Digital Government Platform" as a "Digital Public Good" for enabling governments to build and deploy digital services and applications in a cost efficient, accelerated and integrated manner. This is set to accelerate the digitalisation of governmental services, particularly in low-resource settings. The building blocks are generically defined software components that in combination provide key functionalities to facilitate generic workflows common across multiple sectors. They can include: identification/authentication, registries, security, information exchange, payment services, etc.

Overall, it is clear that digital technologies can be enablers of development rather than solutions to structural political problems, helping governments that are willing and able to serve their citizens better, although they are unable to make unwilling governments more accountable. In fact, a correlation between the promotion of eGovernment and internet censorship has been observed. **Awareness of the potential of eGovernment in advancing good governance** has however been increasing.[6]

The availability of basic **infrastructure** such as electricity and digital connectivity and the existence of government services are important enablers of eGovernance initiatives. Even when digital infrastructure is lacking, preparatory work can be undertaken to assure an enabling environment for eGovernance strategies and programmes – for example through **policy and regulation** regarding the business environment, competition, skills, cybersecurity or data usage, even while connectivity and infrastructure are being developed. This is important for instance to ensure technological / information sovereignty well in advance of infrastructure roll-out.

The use of digital technologies in urban areas can be helpful in tackling some of the pressures faced by cities in partner countries. Such technologies can also improve outcomes across every aspect of city operations and enhance the services the city offers to its residents. The development of **smart city** solutions has the potential to meet the ever-growing demand for services and infrastructure. The great need for infrastructure financial resources, the size of informal economies, and governance challenges at the different levels of government all need to be considered when deciding actions targeting digital transformation in cities.

Smart Cities will be the topic of one of the subsequent infosheets.

With regards to inclusion, challenges in access to and use of eGovernance services by citizens also need to be addressed through strategies developed by governments, potentially supported through international cooperation. Despite impressive investments in digital public service delivery in many countries, large divides persist both within countries and internationally, highlighting **socio-economic disparities and lack of inclusiveness.** At the national level, a greater use of eGovernment is associated with higher individual education attainment levels, being in employment, urban residence, being male and access to broadband.

Studies suggest that only around 20 percent of public ICT projects implemented up to 2015 were successful. There are numerous opinions and explanations for these stark numbers. Many blame the large gap between the regulatory, political, management and skill realities in government and the ambitions of eGovernment projects. Others point to the rigidities in government procurement rules, IT vendors' lack of understanding of government processes, and a failure to understand the country context. **User involvement, leadership support,** and a **clear statement of project requirements** are ultimately deemed as critical factors for success.[7]

Efforts in international cooperation should thus promote both the creation of eGovernment services and support to their enablers as well as addressing underlying challenges. Practical examples include developing solid eID schemes based on international standards allowing citizens to carry out secure online transactions and use of eServices.[8] This document contains a table of further resources, including the EU's eGovernment action plan and the ITU's, as well as other guidelines and roadmaps. Further actions financed and implemented by the EU in partner countries may focus on other factors enabling successful eGovernance. These include: good governance (including transparency and accountability), policy and regulations on ease of doing business for digital enterprises, education and skills for using and developing eGovernment services, institutional capacity building (e.g.for the national statistical system and the fiscal system, justice, Parliaments), data- governance and data-protection.

Regardless of the specific objective of interventions, digitalisation should be **mainstreamed through all relevant actions** targeting governance. Further information is provided in other documents published as part of this 'Introduction to Digitalisation for Development' series, for example on policy and regulation.

There are three predominant types of eGovernment services, corresponding to three steps leading to the digitalisation of public services:

1. Government to Government (G2G) services: government agencies share information among themselves.

2. Government to Business (G2B) services: government provides services to businesses, as their readiness is better than that of citizens. Private companies are generally better equipped with ICT and do their accounting with computers; for this reason, first services provided by governments are related to financial and fiscal transactions (e.g. VAT reports, customs clearance on export-import, reporting of employees' salaries to social security, pensions, taxes, etc.).

3. Government to citizens (G2C) services: generally starting with 'broadcast' information services, with citizens able to check their data from various databases, moving towards more sophisticated services over time.

ANALOGUE AND DIGITAL ELEMENTS OF E-GOVERNMENT

Analogue

- Legislation & regulations
- Government services (identification services, registers)
- Sustainable organization
- Fiscal framework
- Change management
- Political will

Digital

- Digital databases
- Interoperability
- Digital Identity
- Services portal
- Cyber security
- Document exchange
- Sectoral solutions

Source: Digital Dividends. World Bank report 2016

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[6] World Bank, World Development Report 2016: Digital Dividends, 2016
[7] Ibid.
[8] Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market and repealing Directive 1999/93/EC – see also Trust Services and Electronic Identification (eID) webpage

Selected Resources on eGovernance

Organization	Resource	Description
EU	eGovernment Action Plan (2016-2020)	The Digital Single Market (DSM) Strategy and the new EU Digital Strategy are the main strategies defining an EU vision for integrating digital technologies in public administration and beyond. More details can be found in the previous Infosheet of this series on Policy and Regulation. The eGovernment Action Plan has been set in the DSM to advance eGovernment adoption in Europe and can serve as a reference action plan for EU external action.
	EU Human Rights Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline	The Guidelines guide development cooperation actions targeting eGovernance, ensuring they guarantee freedom of expression, and promote the rights of people in vulnerable situations, women, persons with disabilities and children.
	Guidelines and Roadmap for full deployment of e-governance systems in Africa	The report was commissioned by unit C5 (Cities, Local Authorities, Digitalisation, Infrastructures) of the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development to provide an insightful overview of eGovernance systems in Africa. It is available on demand or on Cap4Dev.
EU-AU Digital Economy Task Force (DETF)	DETF Report	The multistakeholder Digital Economy Task Force (DETF) includes European and African representatives from governments, international organizations, the private sector and civil society. The DETF report includes key policy recommendations and proposed actions, including on eGovernance, which address the need for building blocks, like digital identity records (eID), digital public registries, cashless government, open data and data protection. Although the report is based on African and European experience, its guidance is applicable in other partner countries.
International Telecommunication Union (ITU)	eStrategies Series	The Series includes key publications providing guidelines and toolkits on eGovernance, including: • E-Government Implementation Toolkit: e-Government Readiness Assessment Framework • M-Government – Mobile Technologies for Responsive Governments and Connected Societies • Digital Identity Roadmap Guide • Guide to developing a national cybersecurity strategy – Strategic engagement in cybersecurity
	Global Portal on Environment and Smart Sustainable Cities	The Portal provides an index to the wide range of actions underway to protect the environment and achieve the smart city vision. Focus is placed on smart sustainable cities, energy efficient ICTs, climate change, e-waste management and circular economy, and frontier technologies (e.g. Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things (IoT), Blockchain).

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)	2020 United Nations EGovernment Survey	The UN E-Government Survey is published bi-yearly. This latest edition has been published during the Covid-19 outbreak, which highlights the role of technologies in helping governments deliver effective and timely public services to their population.
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)	Digital Government Library	The library hosts technical reports, working papers, policy papers, and country studies. It also includes self-assessment notes to help policy and decision-makers understand the possible policies and practices that they can implement according to the different levels of maturity in the use of ICT, in line with the Recommendation on Digital Government Strategies.
Internet Governance Forum (IGF)	Best Practice Forums (BPFs) Outputs	The IGF is an multi-stakeholder platform that facilitates annual discussions on the interaction between public policy issues pertaining to the internet and its interaction with public policy issues. Within the IGF, a number of Best Practice Forums (BPFs) were created to gather input and provide insightful guidance for action on how to address challenges related to eGovernance. Topics addressed include cybersecurity, Big Data and Artificial Intelligence (AI), fake news and misinformation, gender and access.
United Nations (UN)	UN eGovernment Knowledge Base	The resource includes selected key publications on digital government and allows browsing and comparison of data at a regional, national and city level.

Multimedia

- What You Should Do To Build a Functional EGovernment – Estonia | Margus Mägi | TEDxBratislava
- Government of Seychelles: Explanation on how to use its eGovernment website
- OECD's Digital Government Review of Colombia
- Korea's eGovernment Best Practices
- A lecture on Rwanda's Digital Transformation from the Hon. Min. Paula Ingabire
- An introduction to EGovernment Platforms in Kenya from iHub
- Digital Government Programme of Taiwan
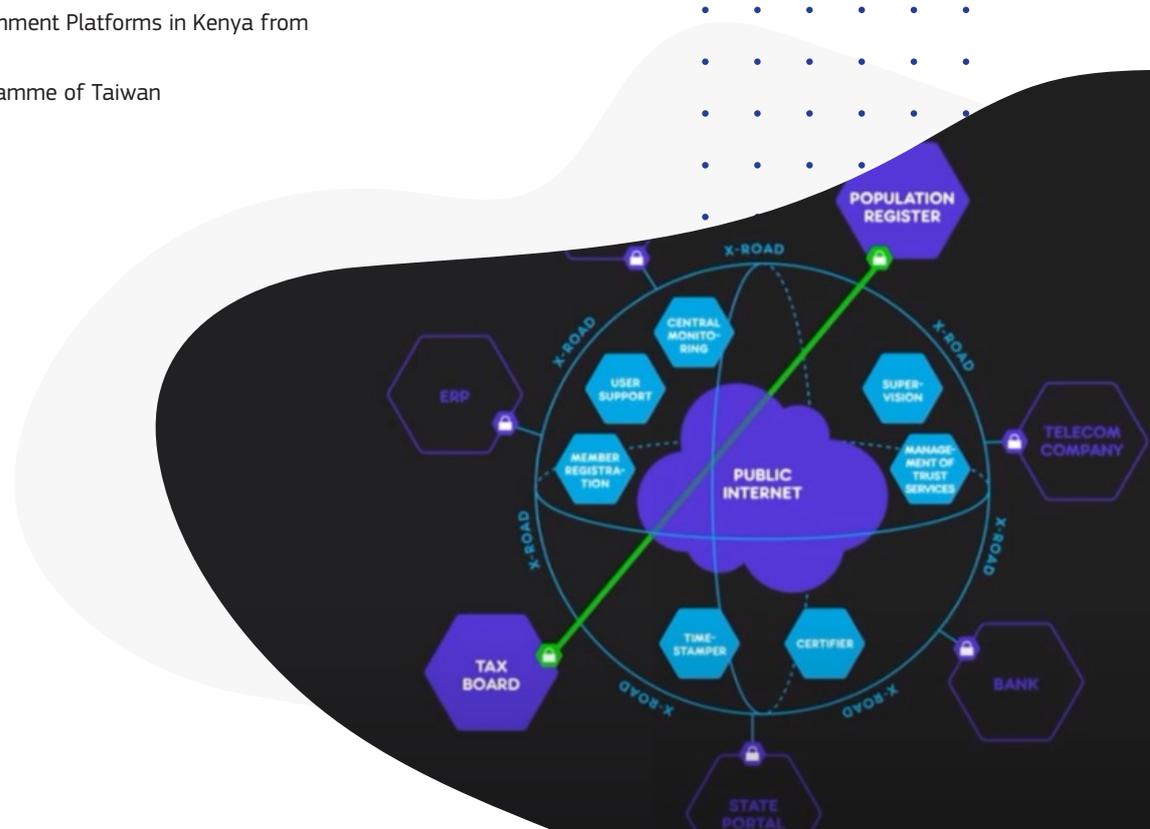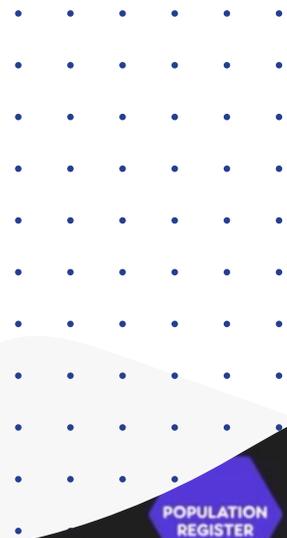
Irembo Digital Platform: the go-to place for e-government services in Rwanda

The Government of Rwanda established a Public-Private-Partnership with Rwanda Online Platform, a local private company, to create the Irembo Digital Platform
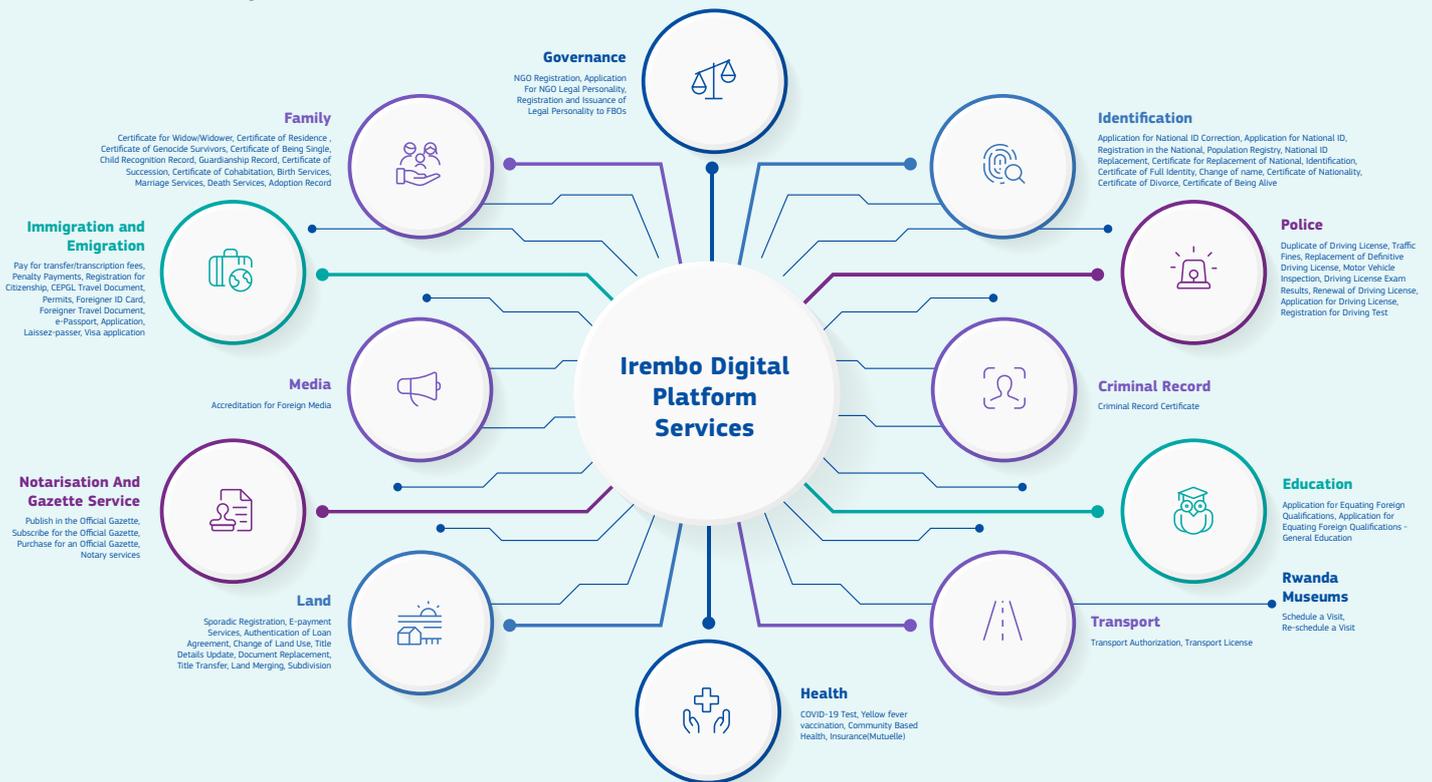
Irembo means "gateway" in Kynyarwanda language

The Irembo Digital Platform was launched in 2015 and offers 67 different e-services to Rwandan and foreign citizens via web.

Examples: Covid-19 test booking, Birth certificate, National ID, Land Use Certificates, Renewal of Driving License, NGO Registration
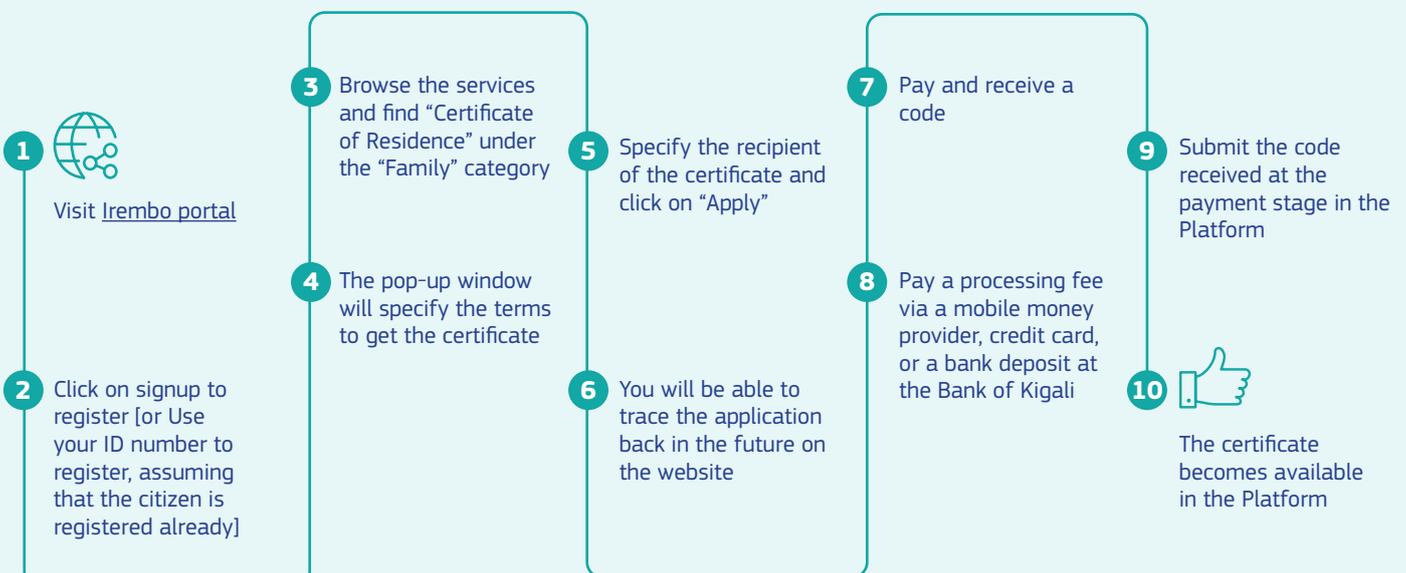
As of 2018, the platform had processed over 2.7 million transactions from 2.4 million unique users (roughly 20% of population)

Services offered by the Platform

Governance
NGO Registration, Application For NGO Legal Personality, Registration and Issuance of Legal Personality to FBOs

Family
Certificate for Widow/Widower, Certificate of Residence , Certificate of Genocide Survivors, Certificate of Being Single, Child Recognition Record, Guardianship Record, Certificate of Succession, Certificate of Cohabitation, Birth Services, Marriage Services, Death Services, Adoption Record

Identification
Application for National ID Correction, Application for National ID, Registration in the National, Population Registry, National ID Replacement, Certificate for Replacement of National, Identification, Certificate of Full Identity, Change of name, Certificate of Nationality, Certificate of Divorce, Certificate of Being Alive

Immigration and Emigration
Pay for transfer/transcription fees, Penalty Payments, Registration for Citizenship, CEPGL Travel Document, Permits, Foreigner ID Card, Foreigner Travel Document, e-Passport, Application, Laissez-passer, Visa application

Police
Duplicate of Driving License, Traffic Fines, Replacement of Definitive Driving License, Motor Vehicle Inspection, Driving License Exam Results, Renewal of Driving License, Application for Driving License, Registration for Driving Test

Media
Accreditation for Foreign Media

Irembo Digital Platform Services

Criminal Record
Criminal Record Certificate

Notarisation And Gazette Service
Publish in the Official Gazette, Subscribe for the Official Gazette, Purchase for an Official Gazette, Notary services

Education
Application for Equating Foreign Qualifications, Application for Equating Foreign Qualifications - General Education

Land
Sporadic Registration, E-payment Services, Authentication of Loan Agreement, Change of Land Use, Title Details Update, Document Replacement, Title Transfer, Land Merging, Subdivision

Rwanda Museums
Schedule a Visit, Re-schedule a Visit

Transport
Transport Authorization, Transport License

Health
COVID-19 Test, Yellow fever vaccination, Community Based Health, Insurance(Mutuelle)

The 10 steps to receive a certificate of residence

1 Visit Irembo portal

2 Click on signup to register [or Use your ID number to register, assuming that the citizen is registered already]

3 Browse the services and find "Certificate of Residence" under the "Family" category

4 The pop-up window will specify the terms to get the certificate

5 Specify the recipient of the certificate and click on "Apply"

6 You will be able to trace the application back in the future on the website

7 Pay and receive a code

8 Pay a processing fee via a mobile money provider, credit card, or a bank deposit at the Bank of Kigali

9 Submit the code received at the payment stage in the Platform

10 The certificate becomes available in the Platform

Colombia's Urna de Cristal

This case study deals with Open Government[10] first and foremost, and to a lesser extent with e-governance. However, in the general interest of development cooperation practitioners, it has been added here to enrich the discussion and to underline how eGovernance can support good governance.

"Urna de Cristal" (i.e. Crystal Ball) is a participation and open government initiative of the Government of Colombia [1, 9, 10]. It was designed in 2010 by the Ministry of Information Technologies and Communications with the Presidency of the Republic, highlighting how important it is to be close to centres of institutional power in order to successfully push for change. The design was carried out in collaboration with the High Counsellor for Communications, the High Counsellor for Regional Affairs and Civic Participation, and the Secretary for Transparency. This large institutional collaboration allowed the alignment of the initiative with the regional public strategies, other national initiatives for transparency and the fight against corruption.

The initiative was intended to promote citizens' participation and the government's transparency by establishing a multi-channel platform that integrated traditional media such as radio and television with digital ones like websites and social media. Urna de cristal provides citizens with the ability to interact directly with the national government, asking questions to public servants, making specific proposals to improve projects, and receiving updates on public projects in which they are interested.

Currently the initiative is the main platform for civic participation in Colombia. Opening channels and developing participation exercises has brought high impact results that have contributed to a change in citizen relationship building with the national government. The initiative has initiated a number of themes for participation, including popular ones like sports and recreation: it included, for example, an open consultation to allow people to contribute to the preparation of a new law in the sport sector in collaboration with the Administrative Department of Sports, Recreation, Physical Activity and the Use of Free Time (Coldeportes).

Citizens' participation has been documented and is available on this website. Since 2018, this information is shared in the form of open datasets through the Data portal of the Government of Colombia.

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[10] OECD: Open Government: a culture of governance that promotes the principles of transparency, integrity, accountability and stakeholder participation in support of democracy and inclusive growth.

E-GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT INDEX (EGDI) 2020

Cabo Verde
upgraded from **medium to high**

Cabo Verde is among the leaders in digital government development among the 47 least-developed countries (LDCs). This is the result of the implementation of the national Digital Agenda, as part of the Strategic Plan for Sustainable Development (2018–2030). The Plan has contributed to economic diversification and the promotion of digital technologies through quality digital infrastructure, increased demand for services, and digital skills to improve competitiveness. The agenda is co–financed by the World Bank, with an amount of US$30 million over five years.

Guinea
upgraded from **low to medium**

The country has a growing (medium) level of human capital development, as well as a medium level of infrastructural development. Nevertheless, it is still underperforming in the online delivery of public services.
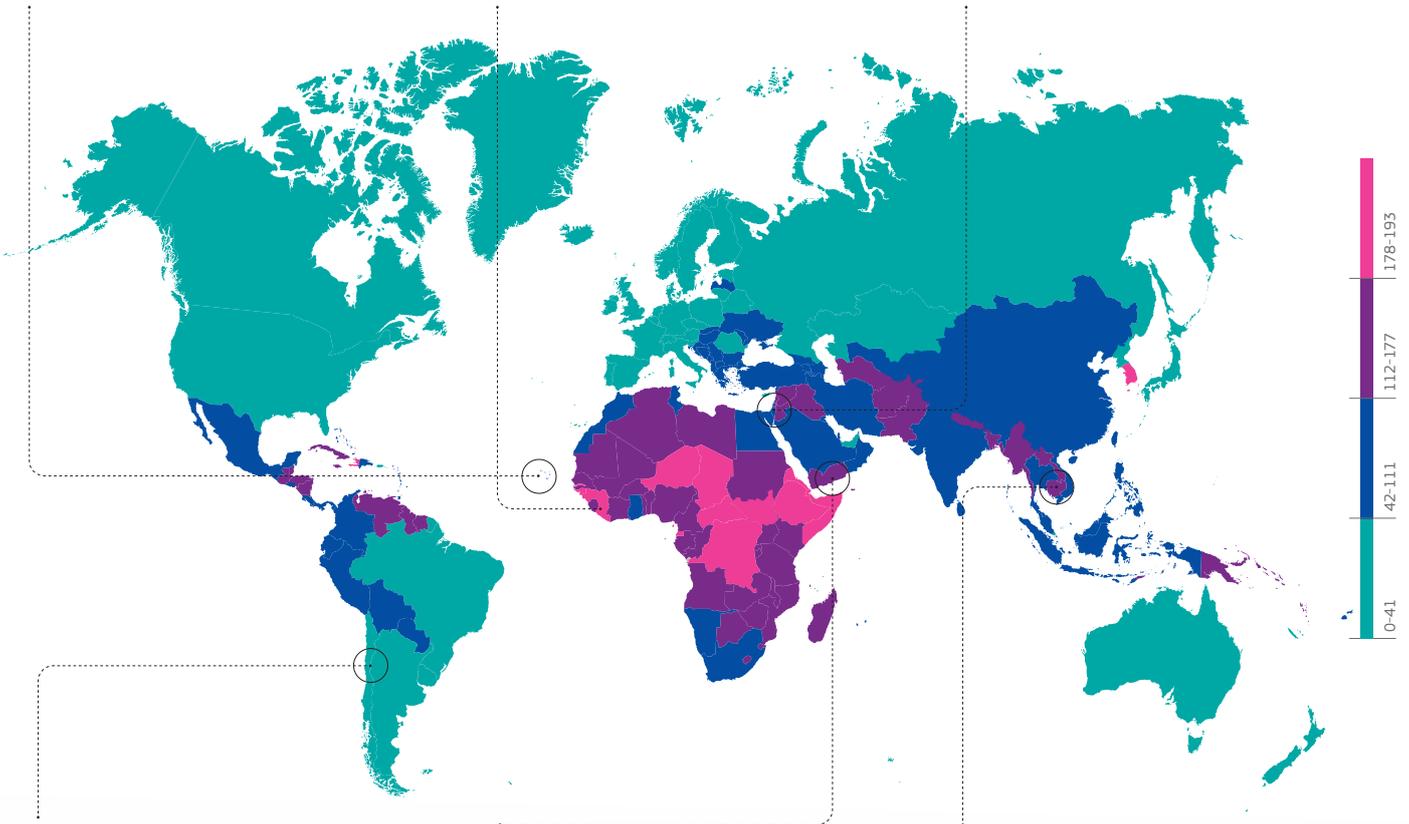
Lebanon
downgraded from **high to medium**

Despite a prolonged crisis in the country, this drop is more a reflection of methodological changes introduced in 2020 EGDI measurement (particularly to determine the Telecommunication Infrastructure Index and the Human Capital Index) than the consequence of any real disinvestment in digital government.

178-193	
112-177	
42-111	
0-41	

Chile
upgraded from **high to very high**

The improved telecommunications infrastructure, including in rural and remote areas of the country, and the high level of penetration of mobile devices and mobile Internet have been supporting e-government development in the country. Chile has also played an international leadership role supporting international and regional cooperation in the development of e-government, e.g. BY participating in the OECD E-Leaders Network and contributing to the Digital Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean (eLAC).

Yemen
upgraded from **low to medium**

Despite the ongoing conflict, Yemen has been making progress by focusing mainly on expanding ICT infrastructure and enhancing access to basic government services by citizens. The country was able to improve online service delivery despite relative low levels of infrastructure and human capital development.

Cambodia
upgraded from **medium to high**

The improvement of the telecommunications infrastructure and high rates of mobile phone penetration have played an important role in propelling the country's move from the middle to the high EGDI group. More specifically, the country developed an ad hoc E-Government Strategic Plan (2018-2023) as part of the broader Cambodia ICT Masterplan 2020 and Telecom-ICT Policy 2020. More recently, the government stated that e-governance is a priority to ensure service delivery during the COVID-19 outbreak.

E-government development **continues to advance**, with the global average EGDI value increasing from 0.55 in 2018 to 0.60 in 2020.

Between 2018 and 2020, there was an **overall improvement** across the different country groups:

- Increase of **least developed countries** (LDCs), **landlocked developing countries** (LLDCs) and **small island developing States** (SIDS) with high and very high EGDI values by 29%
- Increase of **lower-middle income countries** with high levels of e-development by 57%, and increase of their average EGDI scores by more than 15% (average EGDI scores growing from 0.43 to 0.50)

Key **critical factors for e-government development:**

- Financial resources (not the only one!)
- Strong political will
- Strategic leadership
- Commitment to expanding the provision of digital services

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