AIDE MEMOIRE

Developing Capacity for e-Participation: Engaging Citizens in Development Policy and Decision-making Processes through Information Communication Technologies (ICTs)

A National Capacity Building Workshop

Organized by
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)

In cooperation with
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Country Office Kazakhstan
Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan
Background

The Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM) of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) assists the United Nations Member States in fostering efficient, effective, modern, transparent, accountable and citizen-centric public administrations and public services through innovation and technology. The Division supports the United Nations intergovernmental policy deliberations by providing information on and policy-oriented analysis of the role of public administration and governance in the development process via the United Nations Committee of Experts in Public Administration (CEPA). The Committee is responsible for supporting the work of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) concerning the promotion and development of public administration and governance among Member States, in connection with the UN Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 global development agenda.

The United Nations General Assembly and ECOSOC, through their numerous resolutions on public administration and development, provide the mandate for DPADM to foster good governance and sound public administration by promoting transparency, accountability, corruption prevention and citizen engagement. The most recent of these resolutions, namely ECOSOC 2011/22 of 27 July 2011, requests the Secretariat—among others—to continue to enhance its support for capacity-Development in the public sector, promoting participatory governance institutions with a view to making public administration more open, faster, citizen oriented, transparent, accountable and responsive to citizens in all countries. The resolution also requests the Secretariat to continue implementing activities around the themes of public service delivery and the engagement of citizens.

Need for Developing Capacity for E-Participation

Member States are facing increased complexity in development challenges and are recognising broad public participation as a “fundamental prerequisite for the achievement of sustainable development.” At the same time, increasing segments of societies around the world are demanding active participation in public life.

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1 UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, Realizing the Future We Want for All: Report to the Secretary General. June 2012. See http://www.slideshare.net/undesa/realizing-the-future-we-want-for-all

As a response to these concerns, the Secretary-General has pinpointed the need for the United Nations (UN) to mainstream the democratic and participatory principles and practices into its capacity development programmes. Taking this into consideration, DPADM is supporting interested governments of developing countries in their programmes and projects to empower people to participate in the policy design and in the decision making process through Information Communication Technologies (ICTs).

The UN project on “Developing capacity for e-Participation: Engaging citizens in development policy and decision-making processes through ICTs” aims to assist developing countries from 2013 to 2015 in strengthening their capacity to exploit the ICTs for engaging citizens in public policy and service delivery through e-participation for development results. The project seeks to support governments in identifying challenges and opportunities for engaging citizens in development planning and management. It targets twelve countries, namely, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Mauritania, Morocco, Romania, and Singapore.

The above countries were chosen based on their e-participation scores as measured in the 2012 UN e-government survey while taking into account their overall e-government development ranking, socio-economic development levels as measured by their GDP/capita, and their Human Development Index (HDI).

Among these twelve states, further capacity building activities, through national workshops, will be held in Kenya, Kazakhstan, and Indonesia as they were selected as pilot countries. The aims of the Workshops are: 1) to present and demonstrate the intended uses and the potential for stimulating e-participation in development planning and management, 2) to provide and build capacity development and 3) to provide substantive training on self-assessment through e-participation tool, named “Measurement and Evaluation Tool for Engagement and e-Participation” (METEP) and finally, 4) to increase the expansion of METEP beyond the target countries by assisting them and sharing the experiences learned from the pilot states.

In this way, national workshops will focus on fostering effective, efficient, transparent, accountable and citizen-oriented public administration and public services. This emphasis responds to the framework of Rio+20 which recognizes the important role of engaging citizens in the planning and implementation of sustainable development policies while considering the specific situation of each country as there is no one-size-fits-all formula that will guarantee development effectiveness.

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3 ECOSOC Resolution No. 2011/26, 28 July 2011
Objectives and Outcomes of the National Workshop

As mentioned, the objective of the proposed national workshop in Kazakhstan is to strengthen the capacity of the Government of Kazakhstan and other stakeholders -- involved in the central, regional, and local development planning process, where feasible, -- through METEP self-assessment tool.

METEP is a diagnostic tool in the form of an interactive questionnaire designed to (a) assess the actual status of engaging with citizens for development matters by revealing the existing base line, (b) and help identify areas for improvement. The METEP’s ultimate objective is to promote participatory governance at all levels of government, where feasible, through targeted training, including training-of-trainers, and policy advice.

METEP is constructed as a forward-looking capacity support system that aims not only at assessing the level of readiness of government institutions for undertaking participatory activities, but also at measuring the progress made in their actual implementation. METEP also aims to assist the Member States better understand the state of play in using ICTs for civic engagement and public participation.

One major expected accomplishment of this event will be the enhanced knowledge of government policy-makers and relevant business and civil society leaders on the current concepts, approaches, and best practices in engaging citizens in the decision-making process in formulating national development plans including the use of ICTs through self-assessment tool METEP. Another expected accomplishment is the increased capacity of the Government of Kazakhstan to implement options for regulatory and institutional measures to engage citizens through e-participation in public policy and service delivery.

In sum, the workshop would enable participants to:

a) Be acquainted with the benefits of participatory governance for development and the METEP diagnostic tool that help reveal and understand such benefits.

b) Acquire abilities/tools to assess, measure, and analyse participatory governance practices, especially by using ICTs, processes and policies through constructing public engagement readiness indicators.

c) Learn lessons from local public engagement practices at various levels of government, where feasible; compare them with international experience; exchange knowledge and experiences across sectors and localities.
d) Develop competences to formulate development policies based on public engagement and participation in the information society taking a full account of the opportunities offered by the digital ICTs.

e) Improve process of engaging citizens through ICTs in policy and decision-making in order to make it participatory, inclusive, and deliberative.

Target Audience

Up to 30 government officials and professionals at mid to senior levels are expected to participate (e.g. advisors to government, chief executives; heads/deputy heads of departments/units, chief specialists/officers, etc.) representing national ministries from central and regional (where feasible) offices that are responsible for economic, financial and social policies, planning and development, public administration reforms and services. Each governmental institution is expected to be represented by government officials from policy offices (or equivalent units) that are responsible for legal frameworks related to citizen engagement and e-participation, and managers from offices that are responsible for development planning, public administration and the use of ICTs within their agencies in relation to citizen involvement.

Out of the above total of government participants, at least ten participants will be targeted from the central government offices of Ministry of Devolution and Planning, Ministry of Lands, Housing & Urban Development and Ministry of Information Communications and Technologies, twenty participants from regional and local offices of the above mentioned Ministries. The participants will be identified, selected, and recommended in coordination with the above government institutions and will be submitted to DPADM for review and approval.

It is expected that up to 15 participants from private sector, non-governmental and other related organizations will attend the workshop that increase the total number of participants up to 45.

Organization and Management

The workshop will include four types of sessions: plenary sessions, break-out group sessions, individual sessions, and field visits. The plenary sessions will be devoted to topic introductions followed up by open discussions and Question-and-Answer sessions as well as to reports from the break-out sessions. The purpose of the break-out groups is to discuss case studies, which will come from government agencies in Kazakhstan or from country experiences in the region, and develop a common understanding within the group of major issues related to measuring public participation. The individual sessions will be used by the participants to fill out METEP and codify what has been gained by each participant
during the workshop in terms of new competencies and knowledge. As mentioned above, field visits will include visiting select government institutions involved in activities at the crossroads of e-participation and development to better understand the real-world practice.

The workshop will be conducted in English. All documents and papers presented will subsequently be posted at: http://www.unpan.org

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