



Expert Group Meeting on Information and Communications Technology Indicators Adoption and Data Collection

ICT Indicators in Education & E-Government

The Cabinet -- Information and Decision Support Center, Cairo 13-15 February 2007

Information Note

Background

The lack of a comprehensive comparable set of information and communications technology (ICT) indicators poses a major obstacle to strategic decision-making, for instance in identifying priority areas of policy action, assessing and revising ICT strategies, allocating resources, monitoring progress, evaluating impacts, and benchmarking national/regional/global development of the information society. In recognition of that, the “Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development” developed a list of core ICT indicators through an intensive global stocktaking process.¹ The Partnership list is comprised of *forty-two* core ICT indicators under *four* categories: (a) ICT infrastructure and access, (b) access to, and use of, ICT by households and individuals, (c) use of ICT by businesses, and (d) ICT sector and trade in ICT goods.² The agreed-upon list was recognized at the 36th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission, held in New York, during 1-4 March 2005. However, the list was not intended to be a final list, as it does not cover all vital sectors of the information society;³ hence, the focus of the EGM on core indicators for use of ICT in education and literacy and e-government readiness, as well as fostering the adoption and collection of data for these indicators in Western Asia and the Arab region.

This expert group meeting (EGM) follows-up on the outcomes of the Geneva and Tunis phases of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS),⁴ and on previous efforts by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA), the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), and other members of the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development in the area of capacity building for measuring the information society.

In particular, the “Capacity-building Workshop on Information Society Measurement: Core Indicators, Statistics, and Data Collection,” held in Beirut, during 7-10 June 2005, called for UIS to develop indicators on the use of ICT in education and literacy.⁵ Furthermore, UIS and UNESCWA organized a session on core ICT indicators in education and e-government during the Partnership

¹ *Measuring ICT: The Global Status of ICT Indicators – The Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development*: UN ICT Task Force 2005.

² *Core ICT indicators – The Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development*: UNESCWA 2005.

³ In particular, missing are indicators related to education and literacy, culture, science and technology, labor, health, agriculture, and public administration/government.

⁴ *Geneva Global Plan of Action*: WSIS-03/GENEVA/DOC/5-E; *Tunis Agenda for the Information Society*: WSIS-05/TUNIS/DOC/6(Rev.1)-E

⁵ *Capacity-building Workshop on Information Society Measurement: Core Indicators, Statistics, and Data Collection*: E/ESCWA/ICTD/2005/WG.1/6.

workshop on “Measuring the Information Society” at the WSIS in Tunis. The EGM builds on the outcomes of these two workshops.

Use of ICT in Education

This track is devoted to the measurement of use and impact of ICT in education. UIS will be presenting a proposal for a core list of indicators for measuring the use of ICT in education. The proposal of UIS is based on a number of international projects with well-elaborated methodologies, approaches, and definitions. In this sense, there are readily available data on the use of ICT in education, although some areas could still benefit from further discussion. These areas include the methodologies appropriate to different circumstances in different countries and/or regions, and the intermediate definitions so that school assessments and administrative data may be better targeted towards measuring the usage of ICT in education. Specifically, the EGM will address the availability of data on the use of ICT in education, and country experience in collecting ICT and education data with specific focus on issues such as sampling, design, etc, as well as the implementation of UNESCO household-based literacy assessment survey LAMP, including its ICT module NOW, in particular with regards to the data it provides on household use of ICT, and the importance of its relationship to literacy as a whole, e.g., computer literacy

As the proposal aims at determining a core set of international indicators, all countries may still require a nationally, or regionally, determined broader set of indicators. The EGM will consider the proposal of UIS for possible endorsement and adoption into the Partnership list of core ICT indicators. The proposed list will also be considered for harmonization with other national lists to establish a preliminary regional list on the use of ICT in education.

True assessment of the impact of use of ICT in education is still unavailable. Lack of education has been recognized as one of the ten largest challenges facing the world.⁶ As the objective of education is to “equip people with the range of competencies – which includes both cognitive and non-cognitive skills, knowledge, and attitudes -- necessary to lead productive, fulfilling lives fully integrated into their societies and communities,” the scope of the challenge of the lack of basic education may then be conceived as the failure of children to achieve mastery of the basic competencies necessary to thrive in a modern knowledge-based economy. It is within this framework that perhaps the impact of the use of ICT in education should be assessed and measured. Of particular interest is the interplay between the proposed set of ICT indicators and those recommended by UIS for assessing the education characteristics for individuals in population censuses,⁷ and how they can be utilized to provide evidence needed for evaluating the feasibility and impact of education policies.

E-Government Readiness

This track will consider two interlinking activities aimed at the development of e-government in the region. On the one hand, the meeting will present a forum for disseminating case studies and presenting proposals for indicators on the use of ICT in e-government and its readiness in the region, thus paving the way for establishing a preliminary regional list to start collecting data for these indicators. On the other hand, the meeting will provide a venue to involve interested stakeholders in a preparatory meeting to debate the challenges and opportunities for progress of e-government in the region, and discuss the compatibility of the concept of the e-government’s global model – connectivity to readiness to inclusion – in the region. The ideas and suggestions considered in this brainstorming

⁶ As identified through the Copenhagen Consensus process, which aims to assess and evaluate the opportunities available to address these challenges. Lant Pritchett, “Access to Education,” Chapter 4 in *Global Crises, Global Solutions*, Bjorn Lomborg (Editor): Cambridge University Press 2004.

⁷ Draft “Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 2”: UNSD 2006. The recommended education topics are literacy, school attendance, education attainment, and field of education and education qualifications

session could be considered as an input to the conceptual framework of a regional report on e-government readiness in the Arab States.⁸

Organization

The EGM is organized by UNESCWA, UIS, Knowledge Management Branch, Division for Public Administration and Development Management, Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations (KMB/DPADM/UNDESA), and the Cabinet – Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC), and will be held in Cairo from 13 to 15 February 2007.

Participants

The EGM will be attended by decision makers, ICT experts, statisticians, and researchers in the field of measurement of indicators in education and e-government, from UNESCWA and other Arab countries, regional and international organizations, including members of the Partnership, and academic and research institutions.

Language

The working languages for the EGM are English and Arabic. Simultaneous translation from English to Arabic and vice-versa will be provided.

Additional Information

Additional information is available online at the EGM's Webpage on the Internet through: <http://www.escwa.org.lb/wsis/meetings/13-15feb07/main.html>. Any inquiries or requests for additional information regarding participation and substantive matters should be addressed to:

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⁸ The Knowledge Management Branch, Division for Public Administration and Development Management, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (KMB/DPADM/DESA) – the lead agency of the United Nations for WSIS implementation of e-government – has embarked on the preparation of regional e-government readiness reports, which will benchmark countries in the region according to a global index, as well as present in-depth analysis of key issues in ICT for the development of e-government specific to the region. The regional report on sub-saharan Africa is now under preparation.

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