Introducing the

United Nations

E-Government Survey 2010

Leveraging e-government at a time of financial and economic crisis
Part 1  
Leveraging e-government at a time of financial and economic crisis

Chapter 1  **Stimulus funds, transparency and public trust**

By October 2009, more than $20 trillion in public funds had been committed to addressing the crisis by some 50 countries – equivalent to more than one third of world gross product. E-government has much to contribute in addressing public unease over this huge wave of stimulus funding. Governments have been exploiting online tools to enhance transparency and public trust, and track stimulus spending. Some 83% of the 115 crisis response websites studied (i.e. 31 national governments and the European Union, 63 sub-national governments, 2 international organizations and 19 non-governmental organizations) have as a common denominator the use of ICT to increase transparency – and they stand to gain much more if they tap the value of open data. The real potential of e-government lies in the free sharing of government information based on common standards, otherwise known as open data services. Most governments are not yet taking advantage of the practice of sharing information in this way, but it can help mobilize and leverage technological capabilities for public use at very low cost. A pertinent example is a local government contest with awards given for the best applications built on open data. At a cost of $50,000, participants developed 47 applications that would have required $2.6 million if developed internally by the district.

Chapter 2  **Roles for e-government in financial regulation and monitoring**

Deficiencies in financial supervision revealed by the crisis have spurred Member States to consider the possibility of improving regulation and monitoring. What is the potential of e-government to address such problems in the financial system? Regulatory reform aims to promote transparency, integrity and efficiency in the financial sector, and this is exactly what e-government is highly capable of doing. It can also add agility and provide real-time responsiveness to regulatory needs. While the capacity of e-government to handle speed and complexity is in the end no substitute for good policy, it may at least give citizens the power to question regulators and bring systemic issues to the fore.

Chapter 3  **E-service delivery and the MDGs**

To avoid deep cuts in public spending and curtailment of public services, governments may have no choice but to enhance efficiency and effectiveness. Just as ICT can introduce speed, agility and insight into regulatory functions, so too can e-services help governments respond to an expanded set of demands even as revenues fall short. E-government can inject much needed flexibility and quickly extend the reach of public services at a time of economic and financial stress, and a country’s capacity to achieve the MDGs can be greatly enhanced with the right e-government applications. Recent e-government actions and experiences in addressing employment, education, gender equality, health and environmental protection goals – five priorities of the Millennium Development Goals – demonstrate how it can be done. A notable development is the advent of m-health, which is a harbinger of more mobile public services to come. There are currently between 4 and 5 billion mobile phones in the world, and mobile phone use has been rapidly expanding, especially in Africa. A pertinent example is Rwanda’s HIV/AIDS electronic records system called TRACnet. Some 90% of users access TRACnet through mobile devices.
Part 2
The state of e-government around the world

Chapter 4  World e-government rankings

Citizens are benefiting from more advanced e-service delivery, better access to information, more efficient government management and improved interactions with governments, primarily as a result of increasing use by the public sector of information and communications technology. Many of the middle-income countries assessed in the Survey have revamped their national and ministry websites as tightly integrated portals providing citizens with a single point of entry to all e-government services. Encouragingly, 20% of the top-ranked countries in e-government development are from developing regions. However, many developing countries still need to devote additional energy to transactional services as well as the electronic means of engaging citizens in public consultation and decision-making. Based on a comprehensive assessment of national online services, telecommunication infrastructure and human capital, the survey presents the results of a comprehensive study of global e-government development together with insights into the ‘whats’ and ‘whys’ of e-government development in particular situations.

Chapter 5  Citizen empowerment and inclusion

E-government can be used by governments to empower and include citizens. Individuals and their democratic governance systems as a whole stand to benefit from better access to information and services, and more opportunities for their voices to be heard by decision makers. In focus here are the availability of e-services and the use of e-government tools to enhance participation in decision-making, to promote citizen empowerment and inclusion, including women’s equality. E-participation remains in a nascent state in many countries. Only 17% of the countries surveyed had online discussion forums and only 9% gave citizens access to online petitions. Governments may need to be more creative about the ways in which they interact with the public; perhaps by creating integrated ‘one-stop shop’ portals or actively soliciting views that can be used to design public services or to shape public policy. Fundamentally, e-government is not about “e”, but about the promotion of citizen-centric and participatory governance – helping people to improve their lives and have a voice in decisions affecting their future.

Chapter 6  Measuring e-government

Reliable and relevant e-government measurement can offer crucial signposts to help policy makers and practitioners make informed decisions. Although the United Nations e-government development index is widely recognized, it is not the only measure available. To improve consistency in definitions and methodologies for monitoring of e-government development across countries, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs has joined an international partnership helping to build consensus on indicators and address some of the challenges faced in current international benchmarking efforts.
United Nations E-Government Survey 2010
Leveraging e-government at a time of financial and economic crisis

The United Nations global survey of e-government presents a systematic assessment of the use and potential of information and communication technology to transform the public sector by enhancing transparency, efficiency, access to public services and citizen participation in all countries and at all levels of development. By studying broad patterns of e-government around the world, the report identifies leading countries in e-government development. It also suggests a way forward for those that have yet to take advantage of its tremendous power.

The 2010 edition of the survey was prepared against a backdrop of financial and economic crisis that is putting tremendous pressure on governments to do more with less. The report examines transparency of stimulus funding and finds that open data – the free sharing of government information based on common standards – could do a great deal to assuage unease and regain the public trust. The authors also argue that e-government technology, while no substitute for good policy, may provide regulators with a much-needed means of grappling with the speed and complexity of financial markets. Similarly, e-government can add agility to public service delivery and help governments respond to an expanded set of demands even as revenues fall short and deficits soar. This report, the fifth in the United Nations e-government series, tells us how.

The United Nations E-Government Survey is a product of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The department, through its Division for Public Administration and Development Management, has published this world report on e-government since 2003 and is regularly called upon to advise national administrations on ways to expand public sector use of ICT to advance on internationally-agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

For more information
Visit the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs at:

Visit the UN Division for Public Administration and Development Management at:
http://www.unpan.org/dpag/

Visit the UN E-Government Knowledge Base at:
http://www2.unpan.org/egovkb/