



E-government – using technology to reach those furthest behind

While artificial intelligence, robotics and other new technologies are sparking what some call the Fourth Industrial Revolution, large parts of the world are yet to enjoy the benefits of the first three. Such basic necessities as clean water and electricity are still elusive for billions of people. But a new survey by UN DESA analyses how the latest technologies can benefit even the furthest left behind – through e-government.

Released on 18 July, the 2018 E-Government Survey concluded that countries in all regions of the world have improved their e-government services delivery to vulnerable populations thanks to the greater ease of gathering, processing and disseminating data and information, and to the decreasing cost of mobile subscriptions and fast-evolving technologies.

The Survey found a steady increase, since 2012, in the number of country websites with information and online services about specific programmes benefiting women and children, persons with disabilities, older persons, indigenous people, and people living in poverty.

In the 2018 e-government development ranking, Denmark, Australia, and the Republic of Korea came out on top, scoring very high on the E-Government Development Index (EGDI), which measures countries' use of information and communications technologies to deliver public services. The Index captures the scope and quality of online services, status of telecommunication infrastructure and existing human capacity.

This year, 40 countries made the top tier of the index, compared to 29 states in 2016. These countries also lead in their respective regional rankings in Europe, Oceania and Asia. Mauritius is leading in Africa and the United States in the Americas.

Globally, almost two thirds of 193 United Nations Members States now demonstrate a high-level of e-government development with EGDI values in the range of 0.5 and 1. The share of countries with low e-government levels, in the range of 0 to 0.25, has dropped by a significant 50 percent, from 32 countries in 2016 to 16 countries in 2018.

For the first time, the role of cities has been underlined. Local governments are indeed the policymakers and catalysts of change. They are also best-placed to bind the SDGs with local communities.

In addition to the rapid e-government growth at the global level, a persistent positive trend towards higher levels of e-government development is also seen at the regional and local levels.

Yet, despite some gains and major investments in e-government development made by many countries, the digital divide persists. Fourteen countries out of sixteen with low scores are African and belong to the least developed countries group. The regional average index scores for countries in Africa and Oceania are significantly lower than the world average EGDI of 0.55, comprising 0.34 for Africa and 0.46 for Oceania.

This indicates that the digital divide could deepen between people who have access to Internet and online services and those who do not, jeopardizing the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind.

“The majority of the world’s population remains offline, which increases the risk that vulnerable groups without Internet access will fall further behind in the rapidly progressing digital society,” warns the report. However, it also notes the many opportunities to enhance social and digital inclusion through e-government.

The convergence of innovative technologies such as Big Data, Internet of Things, cloud computing, artificial intelligence and machine learning, is promoting a dramatic shift towards more data and machine-driven societies. Furthermore e-government and ICTs are recognized as an enabler in supporting all phases of natural disaster risk management from prevention, reduction, preparedness to response and recovery.

Today, fast-evolving technologies represent a new challenge for e-government. The solution will come from an unprecedented cooperation between the public sectors, populations and private stakeholders.

Cybersecurity is a key factor in the transformation to resilient e-government. The digital transformation must be thoughtfully strategized and continuously updated to ensure security and relevance along the path to sustainable development.

For more information:

2018 E-Government Survey



Landmark agreement on Global Compact #ForMigration

International migration brings both opportunities and challenges to countries of origin, transit and destination. According to the latest estimates by UN DESA, the number of international migrants worldwide reached 258 million persons in 2017, an increase of almost 50 per cent since 2000.

“Migration is an expanding global reality”, said Secretary-General Mr. António

Guterres. “Managing it is one of the most urgent and profound tests of international cooperation of our time.”

With the adoption of the [New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants](#) on 19 September 2016, the UN General Assembly agreed to develop a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. Preparations for the compact included regional and thematic meetings and consultations with stakeholders between April and November 2017.

Following a stocktaking meeting held in Mexico in December 2017, the General Assembly embarked in early 2018 on a six-month process of intergovernmental negotiations, led by the Permanent Representatives of Mexico and Switzerland. On 13 July 2018, the General Assembly reached consensus on a [final draft](#) of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, which is set to be formally adopted at an intergovernmental conference in Marrakesh, Morocco, on 10 and 11 December 2018.

The compact is a framework for international cooperation to address migration in all its dimensions. By facilitating safe, orderly and regular migration, it seeks to curb the incidence and impact of irregular migration. The compact also aims to protect the safety, dignity and human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants.

In addition, the landmark document seeks to minimize adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to emigrate. It also aims to leverage the potential contribution of migration to sustainable development in countries of origin and destination.

The final draft of the Global Compact provides a shared vision and guiding principles, sets out 23 actionable commitments, spells out means of implementation and provides a framework for follow-up and review.

As one of its key objectives, the Global Compact seeks to strengthen migration data and improve the evidence base to better inform policymaking and discourse. To this end, it commits to develop a global programme to enhance national capacities in data collection, analysis and dissemination and requests the [United Nations Statistical Commission](#) to develop a strategy for improving migration data at local, national, regional and global levels.

The Global Compact establishes a capacity building mechanism to support implementation. Key elements of the mechanism are a connection hub to follow up on requests for support, a start-up fund to finance project-oriented solutions, and a knowledge platform to facilitate access to evidence and good practices.

For follow-up and review, the Global Compact calls for the establishment of the International Migration Review Forum. Every four years starting in 2022, the Forum will provide a global platform for Member States to discuss and share progress on the implementation of all aspects of the Global Compact.

For more information:

[Global compact for migration](#)

HIGHLIGHTS



What happens where: A new integrated geospatial information framework

Everything that happens, happens somewhere, but how do we know what is happening where? when? and why? The answers lie in geospatial information. That means information that pinpoints the location of geographic features, such as settlements, mountains or lakes, on the Earth and describes their relation to other features. It allows us to create a

digital image of our world, in which all social, economic and environmental activity takes place.

Geospatial information is a blueprint of what happens where. It integrates all the digital data that have a location component. From basic topographical features found on a map, to complex multi-layer datasets, such as crop production and monitoring, geospatial data can shed light on disparities in society that were previously hidden, and identify areas and communities with little or no social and economic opportunities.

Geospatial information shows us where social, environmental and economic conditions occur. Reliable and authoritative geographic information can help us to measure, monitor and manage the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), improving people's lives and protecting the planet.

It is difficult to imagine any national development planning or political decision-making without quality geospatial information, yet the availability and accessibility of data remains one of the biggest challenges with implementing the SDGs. Without relevant data on social, economic and environmental challenges, governments cannot make effective and evidence-based policies to more accurately direct resources, and ensure that no one – nowhere – is left behind.

The United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) has been working with a wide range of experts, UN Member States and the World Bank to improve access to quality geospatial information. On 1st August, the Committee will meet in New York to adopt a new strategic framework for the geospatial community – a key document that will help countries strengthen their management of geospatial information.

The Overarching Strategic Framework is a forward-looking blueprint built on national circumstances, and priorities. It focuses on policy, perspectives and elements of geospatial information and explains why geospatial information management is critical to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals at a national level.

Governments hold considerable amounts of geospatial information, including databases on access to education, communities most affected by poverty, areas at risk of disasters as well as mobile data that can keep people informed about disease outbreaks or weather patterns. But this information, though critical for development decisions, is often scarce, outdated or insufficiently integrated and shared. The Overarching Strategic Framework, together with the upcoming Implementation Guide and country-level action plans, chart a way to change all that.

The Framework aims to assist countries to move towards e-delivery systems, e-commerce, and e-economies. Its ambition is to improve services for citizens, develop capacity for applying geospatial science, improve informed decision-making, boost the development of private sector, help achieve a digital transformation, and bridge the geospatial digital divide between countries.

More information:

[Eighth Session of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management \(UN-GGIM\)](#)

GET INVOLVED



International Youth Day – Safe Spaces for Youth

What are safe spaces?

The theme of this year's International Youth Day on 12 August is "Safe Spaces for Youth". Celebrations on the day will highlight various types of safe spaces and their role in contributing to youth empowerment, inclusion and development.

But what are *safe spaces*? They are various platforms where young people can come together, participate, engage in diverse activities and enjoy the freedom of expression. When youth have spaces where they can come together without fear or intimidation, they can participate in constructive dialogue and meaningfully engage in issues that concern them. Safe Spaces can help youth nurture their common values and aspirations while embracing their differences.

The availability and accessibility of physical or virtual safe spaces can enhance young people's potential by providing common ground and opportunities for innovation and creativity.

Safe spaces can contribute to youth empowerment and inclusion

Having a space that feels safe can help empower youth and enable the inclusion of the most marginalized groups, like refugees and migrants, youth dwelling in slums, conflict-prone settings or humanitarian situations.

This positive role of safe spaces has been noticed and recognized in the international arena. The [Sustainable Development Goal 11](#) on sustainable cities and settlement and the [New Urban Agenda](#) both provide solid foundations for investing in safe, sustainable spaces that are inclusive of youth.

As young people become increasingly concentrated in urban areas, the role of public, civic, digital and physical spaces becomes even more important to ensure they do not get left behind.

Celebrating International Youth Day 2018

The official celebration of the International Youth Day 2018 will be held in Nairobi, at the UN Gigiri Complex. The event will bring together young people, youth organizations, Member State representatives, civil society and United Nations entities to participate and share ideas on how to meaningfully create safe spaces for youth. If you cannot join that event, there are still plenty of ways to participate.

- Download the [International Youth Day Toolkit](#) to learn how you can stage your own events, build partnerships, bring awareness of the importance of safe spaces for youth. You can use the toolkit for ideas to mobilize support and engage your local community.
- Join the conversation on social media, by using the hashtags [#Youth Day](#), [#SafeSpaces4Youth](#) and [#SDG11](#).
- Follow [UN4Youth Facebook page](#) and [@UN4Youth on Twitter](#). You can also use the [World Map of Events](#) to find activities and events near you.

Help create Safe Spaces for Youth!

More information: [International Youth Day 2018](#)



Challenges and opportunities for indigenous peoples on the move

The theme of this year's International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is "Indigenous peoples' migration and movement." Despite the popular image of indigenous peoples as rural inhabitants, cities are now providing home for increasing numbers of indigenous populations. In some countries of Latin America, as much as

80 per cent of all indigenous peoples live in urban areas.

In most cases, indigenous peoples who migrate find better employment opportunities and improve their economic situation but alienate themselves from their traditional lands and customs. How can indigenous peoples on the move preserve their lifestyle, culture and language? We ask Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

What do we know about the situation of indigenous peoples on the move? What threats and opportunities does migration bring for them?

"While most indigenous peoples prefer to remain in their traditional territories, there are those who migrate to the urban areas or outside of their countries. Some key factors which lead them to migrate are economic (the quest for jobs) and political, including forced displacements, militarization of their communities, criminalization of their livelihoods, disasters and calamities which destroy their lands, among others. The main threats they face when they migrate include homelessness, unemployment, harassments and violence from state authorities or non-state actors like human traffickers and drug syndicates, imprisonment and death. Opportunities include peace and security, jobs, small-scale businesses and other livelihoods, and access to better social services such as health and education."

The negotiations of the Global Compact for Migration have just been completed. Does this landmark agreement address the situation for indigenous communities?

"There is one specific reference to indigenous peoples in the Global Compact, in which States commit to address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration by establishing policies and partnerships that provide migrants in a situation of vulnerability – including indigenous peoples – with necessary support at all stages of migration.

The affirmation that the Compact shall be guided by international human rights law and standards should mean that it includes indigenous peoples' human rights as well. Objective 1, which is on the collection and utilization of accurate disaggregated data should mean that this includes indigenous peoples. Objective 2 which calls for minimizing the adverse drivers and structural factors is highly important for indigenous peoples because the violation of their rights to their lands, territories and resources is a key adverse factor leading to their migration.

All the objectives of the Global Compact are relevant for indigenous peoples. However, it is important to include in the text a reference to Article 36 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which states:

1. Indigenous peoples, in particular those divided by international borders, have the right to maintain and develop contacts, relations and cooperation, including activities for spiritual, cultural, political, economic and social purposes, with their own members as well as other peoples across borders.

2. States, in consultation and cooperation with indigenous peoples, shall take effective measures to facilitate the exercise and ensure the implementation of this right.”

You mention the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which is also a key instrument to protect and advance the rights of indigenous peoples. How is the Declaration protecting indigenous peoples on the move?

“One of the distinct characteristics of many indigenous peoples is that their territories have been divided by national borders, which did not exist before colonization and nation-state building. Article 36, which I have mentioned earlier, should be implemented by States. The recognition and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples enshrined in the UNDRIP will play a major role in lessening the need for indigenous peoples to migrate. This may protect them from suffering the serious human rights violations that people on the move are often subjected to. However, if they choose to migrate, their rights to their identity, to work and protection against unemployment, to practice their cultures, to speak their own language and to be provided adequate and culturally relevant social services must be protected as well.”

Many indigenous peoples’ ancestral lands today are fragmented by national borders. How can they continue to move around freely on their lands?

“National laws in countries, where this is the reality, should recognize and affirm Article 36 of UNDRIP. Mutual agreements can be forged between countries whose territories lie on indigenous lands.”

Last but not least, what can we expect from this year’s commemoration on 9 August?

“Since this is the theme of the commemoration of 9 August, I expect that States will recognize the specific contexts and realities of indigenous peoples who are migrating and they should enter into good-faith dialogues with them to come up with plans on how to address the risks and threats indigenous peoples face when they migrate.”

For more information:

International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples



A sense of optimism and urgency, as annual review of SDGs progress wraps up

July saw more than 2,000 representatives of governments, businesses and civil society come together to assess progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) with a record of 125 Heads of State, Deputy Heads of State and Government, Ministers and Vice-ministers. The Forum gauged our current position on the way to 2030 and identified the areas where more work needs to be done.

The event wrapped up on 18 July with a mixture of optimism and a renewed sense of urgency. The Forum found that the lives of people around the world continue to improve as we implement the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Decreasing maternal and child mortality rates mean that we are saving millions of lives every year. The risk of child marriage has been declining, most rapidly for girls in Southern Asia, improving their chances of receiving quality education, community participation and staying in good health.

Despite these tremendous strides, much remains to be done. Escalating conflicts and natural disasters have – for the first time in years – intensified world hunger. Over 670 million people will still live without electricity in 2030 under current trajectory and 9 out of 10 city dwellers worldwide continue to breathe polluted air. Climate change and environmental degradation are particularly alarming, as carbon emissions continue to grow and the loss of biodiversity and deforestation have not been halted.

As the meeting drew to a close, the international community and other Forum participants displayed genuine optimism and faith in the global agenda. “Multilateralism is the only way to tackle the complex inter-connected and long-term challenges we are facing,” said UN Secretary-General António Guterres in his closing remarks.

He called on world leaders to use the transformative power of the world’s young people and emphasized the urgency of addressing the world’s refugee population. He cautioned governments that technology may be a double-edged sword, saying that it acts as a tool to deliver SDGs but can also exacerbate inequality.

In his remarks, UN Under-Secretary-General and Head of UN DESA, Liu Zhenmin, said he was “proud of the many advances we have been making. But we also emerge with a better awareness of where the gaps are. This knowledge will help us to focus efforts in the year to come,” he added.

“As we uphold the 2030 Agenda, let us not forget how we are all united around this historic agreement of unprecedented ambition and shared vision to leave no one behind,” he urged the Forum participants.

This year’s HLPF hosted a variety of special events, including the first-ever Local and Regional Governments’ Forum where sub-national actors discussed how they can

contribute to the SDGs. At the SDG Business Forum, chief executives of major companies shared their experiences with including the 2030 Agenda into their business models. Meanwhile, new collaborations for the SDGs were forged and old ones strengthened at the Partnership Exchange.

The 2018 HLPF also saw record 46 countries present their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), in which they detailed their actions and progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Each country's presentation was followed by questions from other states and from civil society representatives, in a unique process introduced by the 2030 Agenda.

Next year, for the first time since the adoption of the SDGs, the HLPF will meet under the auspices of the UN General Assembly, during its annual General Debate in September. Close to 40 countries have already volunteered to present their Voluntary National Reviews at the 2019 HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC in July next year.

For more information:

High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

MORE FROM UNDESA

Making Belt and Road Initiative work for sustainable development



Announced by the Chinese government in 2013, the Belt and Road Initiative maps out a grand vision for international development cooperation, covering five key areas—policy coordination, infrastructure, trade, financing and people-to-people connectivity. Ambitious financial commitments have been made by China to support the Initiative, and some 100 countries and international organizations have already participated in this initiative in various forms.

As bold infrastructure and trade undertakings begin to take shape, UN DESA's project on "Strengthening National Policy Capacities for Jointly Building the Belt and Road towards the Sustainable Development Goals" is helping the participating countries

ensure that the Initiative can accelerate their achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Located in Southeast Asia, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is one of the countries set to benefit from infrastructure megaprojects under the Belt and Road Initiative, such as the China-Laos Railway. Such projects could prove instrumental to the Laotian Government's efforts to industrialize and modernize the country, and ultimately to boost employment opportunities and lift large sections of the population out of poverty.

But, as Lao PDR prepares to graduate from the category of Least Develop Countries (LDCs) and forgo the associated trade privileges, its policy makers are looking for ways to maximize the direct benefit of the new infrastructure projects for their people.

"When the railway construction completes, China, Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) and other neighbouring countries will be connected together for sure. But, what is there for us? Will it be just a throughway, or bring something to Laos," said Mr. Phonhxiengdy, Director General of the Bank of Lao PDR.

"We need a cooperation corridor, not a transit corridor," echoed Dr. Leebouapao, Vice President of Lao PDR's National Institute for Economic Research. "That way, we can realize the true potential of the Belt and Road connectivity that can lead us to achieving the SDGs [Sustainable Development Goals]."

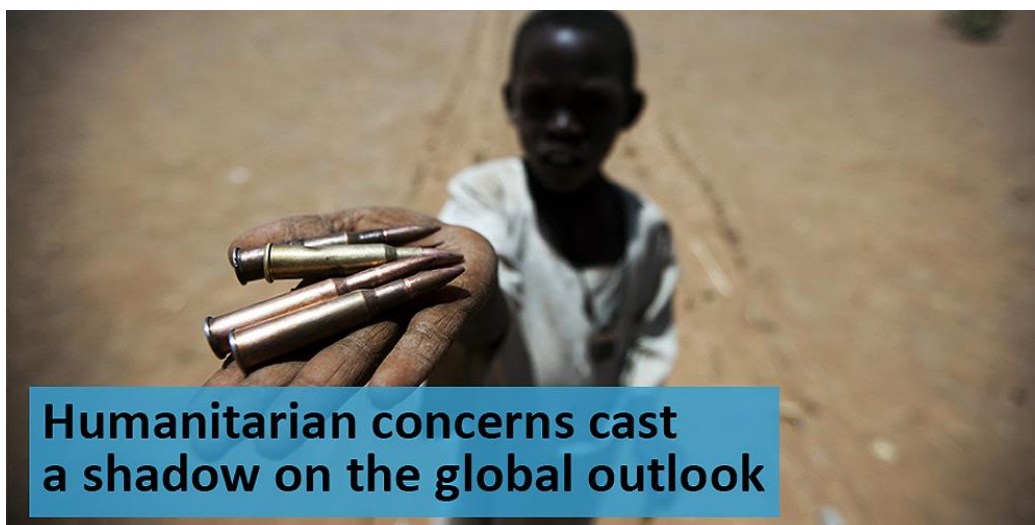
Stepping in UN DESA's project, which is being rolled out in several pilot countries along the Belt and Road Initiative, including in Lao PDR. It aims to strengthen the capacities of policy makers to assess the potential effects of Belt and Road and to help them formulate policies that maximize the Initiative's benefits while managing the potential risks.

This July, UN DESA's project team conducted a scoping mission to Lao PDR to introduce the project and to discuss country-specific focus areas with Government officials from various ministries. The team also briefed the UN Country Team as well as relevant multilateral and bilateral development partners.

The Government and international counterparts requested UN DESA to develop a user-friendly assessment modelling tool, that could be used by many parties to formulate policies or make budget proposals. The meeting participants also recommended to hold several regional meetings at various levels to monitor progress and share knowledge on how to maximize the benefits of enhanced connectivity brought on by the railway.

More information: [Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation](#)

Humanitarian concerns cast a shadow on the global outlook



Since mid-2016, the world economy has been experiencing a strong and broad-based recovery, and experts predict an even further uptick in growth. However, the global economic improvement has been eclipsed by elevated risks and humanitarian concerns, including an increase in armed conflicts.

While “trade war” between major economies has been making the headlines for posing a threat to the future of the international economy, the number of violent conflicts have also been on the rise. Recent data shows that the total number of internal and regional conflicts has almost doubled since 2007.

The relationship between conflict and development is complex, with causality running in both directions. Poverty and inequality tend to increase the likelihood of conflict, while economic marginalization and weak job opportunities trigger social discontent. On the other hand, violence is itself a cause of instability, which can hurt the economic performance of afflicted societies.

A high risk of conflict is a strong deterrent for investors, dampening investment prospects in parts of Africa and Western Asia. Long-standing conflicts, such as in Afghanistan, Syria, and Yemen, have resulted in massive losses of physical and human capital, while weakening institutional capacities.

Conflicts in the Commonwealth of Independent States weighed heavily on their prospects of development as well. The extensive damage to physical capital and transport networks continues to disrupt trade and production in both Ukraine and Azerbaijan.

For many developing countries, high defence and security expenditures can also divert scarce public resources away from much-needed investment in infrastructure, health and education, undermining progress towards the achievement of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda.

Often triggered by instability and conflict, migration remains a major political, economic and financial issue. About 85 per cent of refugees are hosted by developing countries, placing severe strain on the limited domestic resources in these countries. The European Union has also seen a major spike in first-time asylum applications, which has generated considerable political and financial pressures.

The Government of Uganda is also grappling with the influx of refugees and migrants from conflict-affected areas. The Eastern-African country provides one of the most progressive refugee assistance programmes in the world, granting refugees the freedom of movement, workers' rights and access to farmland to engage them in economic activity. This assistance policy shows that high economic growth can be achieved alongside inclusive policies.

For more information:

Monthly Briefing on the World Economic Situation and Prospect

UPCOMING EVENTS

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|-----------------------------|--|
| 1-3 August, New York | Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management, Eighth session |
| 9 August | International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples |
| 12 August | International Youth Day |

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