



# ESCWA Tackles Solutions to E-Service Challenges



Institutional backing, public trust and partnerships are key pillars for a thriving Information and Communications Technology (ICT) industry, particularly in the field of e-services and ICT applications in the public sector of the ESCWA region, concluded a meeting held by ESCWA experts at its headquarters on 20-21 July to review the situation of this sector and obstacles facing it and to propose steps for overcoming them and boosting the sector.

At the opening session, Chief of ESCWA ICT Division Youssef Nusseir highlighted the various aspects of ICT applications and e-services, tackling the issue of trust citizens need to have in them. He explained that this trust should be built on the legal, personal, institutional and other levels in order to instill in the minds of individuals the culture of e-dealings. Nusseir also noted that impediments to ICT technologies are mainly the financial and human resource shortages, affirming that the spread of, and access to, these technologies are more important than the availability of e-services. He pointed out that the rate of such

access in the Arab region was less than half of the global one.

The ICT chief said certain Arab countries such as Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Oman and Tunisia, have begun to accord greater significance to ICT, for which they had set up specialized agencies. Nusseir gave the example of Jordan to illustrate the importance of e-services, citing that passport renewals in that country now take 30 to 60 minutes online, compared to two or three days previously by conventional means.

The meeting emphasized the need for political support and governmental commitment, as well as partnerships between private and public sectors in order to implement strategic plans concerning the provision of e-services and upgrading ICT applications. It also tackled the need for laying down the necessary institutional infrastructure and frameworks to develop e-services and give them the required independence and authority. Such development of ICT applications and e-services also requires sustainability, which

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## ESCWA Conducts Training Workshops for DevInfo Trainers in West Asia

ESCWA organized two workshops to train trainers (ToT) on DevInfo 6.0, the 6th version of that training software program as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen the national capacity for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

DevInfo is a tool designed to support governments in monitoring the MDGs and can be adapted to include additional user-defined indicators that are linked to key national monitoring frameworks. This cost-free software offers an effective solution to address the needs of national partners to set up MDG-based information management systems. The updated version (6.0) released in 2009 offers a range of new

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can be ensured through increasing budget allocations for this sector by ministries and governmental institutions.

The meeting also recommended the development of national awareness plans on the importance of e-services for all social segments to boost public trust in them. It was underlined that the necessary infrastructure and enabling environment for e-services should be provided, including broadband connectivity and particularly the relevant laws and legislative regulations. One of the important points stressed during the meeting was the regional dimension in cooperation, integration, partnerships and experience-sharing in support of e-service development. ■



## ESCWA Conducts Training Workshops for DevInfo Trainers in West Asia (Cont.)

user- and administrator-friendly tools and features, including a fully web-enabled version for effective dissemination and presentation of MDGs and key development indicators.

### An Arab DevInfo Team

The trainings were conducted in collaboration with the United Nations Development Operations Coordination Office (UNDOCO) in New York and UNICEF's MENA Regional Office in Amman, from 13 to 24 July 2009 in Beirut.

The DevInfo ToT, which ran from 20 July to 24 July 2009, further enhanced the capacity of key professionals from national authorities and UN agencies in DevInfo technology, with the aim of establishing the Arab DevInfo Training Team (ADTT).

There is an urgent need for member countries to enhance their capacities in compiling, disseminating and exchanging data and



metadata. DevInfo provides the statistical community with a tool for an effective working partnership among different data producers at the national level, and in particular among line ministries to facilitate the exchange of compiled and harmonized official statistics. DevInfo facilitates the development and maintenance of a database warehouse for national development indicators used in policymaking. The database provides planners with evidence in user-friendly formats and sophisticated analytical presentations.

The DevInfo workshop for Users and Administrators, held from 13 to 17 July 2009, trained participants from national statistical offices, ministries and UN agencies on the User and Data Administration modules of the newly-released version, DevInfo 6.0. Participants also shared their experiences and good practices in customizing and implementing DevInfo at the country level. ■



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