



**DESA**  
Social Policy and Development Division



## E-Participation: Empowering People through ICTs

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## Structure of Presentation

- **Overview of the EGM on e-Participation: Empowering People through ICTs**
- **E-Participation and ICTs for Social Groups**
- **E-Inclusion and Digital Divide**
- **The Way Forward: Recommendations**





## Overview of the EGM on e-Participation: Empowering People through ICTs

- The EGM took place in Geneva from 24 to 25 July 2013 as part of the preparations for the 52th session of the Commission for Social Development.

### **The meeting focused on how:**

- E-Participation and ICTs can provide an essential enabling environment for empowerment.
- E-Participation and ICTs can improve the process of participation in decision-making necessary to solve economic and social problems.



## Overview of the EGM on e-Participation: Empowering People through ICTs

### Challenges:

- There is a need to have in place policies that will encourage the public to participate.
- There are still regional differences in access to ICTs especially broadband coverage that is still poorly distributed with most consumers in developing countries.
- Social science research documenting effects of e-Participation is still incomplete.



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## Overview of the EGM on e-Participation: Empowering People through ICTs

### The EGM highlighted the following:

- The use of ICTs can provide new mechanisms for citizen engagement.
- The delivery of government services has been improved by the use of ICTs.
- ICTs should be designed to meet user needs, in terms of simplicity and openness, including for older persons, persons with disabilities and other social groups.



## Overview of the EGM on e-Participation: Empowering People through ICTs

- ICTs have the potential to open up and democratize societies. Government can use ICTs to influence people and people can use it to influence governments.
- There is a need to ensure access to an open, yet responsible Internet, government policies and practices that create an effective environment to use ICTs as a tool for empowerment.
- ICTs need to be used to engage publics in the discussions around the new Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals.







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## Overview of the EGM on e-Participation: Empowering People through ICTs

- For ICTs to be effective, government officials at all levels need to be trained in the technological and human demands of the information culture, including how to use the information provided to improve services.
- There is a particular need to ensure that services can be provided to social groups, including older persons, persons with disabilities and persons with limited access to ICTs.





## Overview of the EGM on e-Participation: Empowering People through ICTs

### Examples of e-Participation:

- Examples from countries such as Singapore, India, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, Colombia and Denmark have shown how public information and public services can be made available online.
- Examples of how ICTs can play a major role in public health issues especially for older persons.
- Civil society organizations, as well as communities have also found that ICTs make it possible to network, apply and use information to pursue their organizations' ends.





# E-Participation and ICTs

E-Participation is using Information and Communications Technology (ICTs) to facilitate participation in government processes.

ICTs are powerful tools that allow people anywhere in the world to communicate and access information and knowledge.



## E-Participation and ICTs for Social Groups

- **E-Participation and ICTs** are powerful tools for the three pillars of sustainable development namely: social, economic and environmental. They are crucial phases in the development of government processes.
- **E-Participation and ICTs** can empower people and improve the delivery of public services to all.
- **Access to ICTs** (especially broadband) should be available to all people in order to make it possible for social groups to take part in the formation of a people centered and inclusive government.





## E-Participation and ICTs for Social Groups

- Social Groups face difficulties in benefiting from **ICTs and e-Participation**. There is a need to enhance the digital skills for all to participate fully in society.
- Mobile services, open data, crowd sourcing, cloud computing and other innovations of this sort must be nurtured and supported and made available to all social groups.





## Digital Divide

- The **digital divide** – generally defined as the difference in levels of ICT access between developed and developing countries – still remains significant
- There is a need to bridge the **digital divide** and make broadband Internet access universal. It has been recognized within key international development goals, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)





## e-Inclusion

- **e-Inclusion** aims to achieve that "no one is left behind" in enjoying the benefits of ICTs and e-Participation.
- **e-Inclusion** focuses on participation of all individuals and communities in all aspects of the information society.
- **e-Inclusion** promotes the use of ICTs and e-Participation to overcome exclusion, and improve economic performance, employment opportunities, quality of life and social participation.
- One of the objectives of **e-Inclusion** is to develop innovative solutions to empower people to play a full role in society and to increase their autonomy.







## The Way Forward: Recommendations

- Access to and use of ICTs can increase empowerment generally and particularly of social groups.
- Scholars and practitioners need to encourage further research on the relationship between e-Participation and empowerment.
- Governments in partnership with the private sector, need to increase access to broadband communications, especially through mobile devices, particularly for social groups.



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## The Way Forward: Recommendations

- Governments that will utilize ICTs to provide services need to undertake carefully designed programs of training both decision-makers and technical personnel at all levels.
- Governments need to adopt policies and procedures that will encourage the public, individually and as constituency groups, to participate in decision-making processes using ICTs and that civil society groups train and encourage their members to participate actively.



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Harnessing the full potential of the benefits of e-Participation and ICTs is possible only if **all nations and the peoples of the world share this opportunity equally.**



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