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Kingdom of Swaziland

Workshop on ICT capacity building for Swaziland's Policy Makers: Training Workshop for Parliamentarians and Parliament Staff

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I. Introduction

1. As a follow-up of the request received by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) from the Parliament of the Kingdom of Swaziland for MPs' capacity building on their role in implementing ICT for Development (ICT4D) policy and activities; the ICT, Science and technology Division (ISTD) and ECA Sub-regional Office for Southern Africa, organized a five-day Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) capacity building workshop for Members of Parliament and Staff of Parliament from 14-18 December 2009 in Ezulwini. More than twenty Members of Parliaments and Staff participated in the training workshop (Annex 1). The workshop was organized under the framework of the African Information Society Initiative (AISI).

II. Workshop objectives

2. The specific workshop objectives were to familiarize MPs and staff to the concept of ICT4D by:

(i)   Familiarizing the Parliamentarians and staff of Parliament with substantive issues related to ICT for development from both policy and technology perspective in order to enable them to advocate for information and communications technologies (ICTs) in development. This objective is intended to also provide a good understanding for Parliamentarians of capabilities of current digital technologies and their implementation for policy makers.

(ii)   Fostering a better understanding of potential for using ICTs for social and economic development as well as providing development oriented framework for ICT-based and supported projects and intervention in some social sectors by describing the macro relationship between the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and ICTs;

(iii)   Fostering a better understanding of the potential for using ICTs for social and economic progress;

(iv)   Providing a development-oriented framework for ICT-based and ICT-supported projects and interventions in a range of social sectors.

(v)   Providing critical information about different aspects of national policies, strategies and legal instruments that promote the use of ICT for Development

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(ICT4D); discussing issues around developing and implementing these policies as well as demonstrating how Parliamentarians can monitor their progress.

(vi)   Discussing issues around developing and implementing ICT4D policy; and

(vii)   Demonstrating how governments can measure their progress in ICT4D policymaking and benchmark that progress against that of other countries.

(viii) Developing ICT skills through hands on to address special needs of Parliamentarians and staff of Parliament.

III. Opening

3. The workshop opened with introductory statements by Munorweyi Dhliwayo Senior Economic Affairs Officer/Head, Infrastructure and Sustainable Development Cluster of the ECA sub-regional   Office for Southern Africa. He delivered an introductory statement on behalf of Ms Jennifer Kargbo, Director of the SRO-SA and the Executive Secretary of ECA, Mr. Abdulie Janneh. He thanked the Government and the Parliament of the Kingdom of Swaziland in their efforts for harnessing ICT for socioeconomic development undertaking various capacity building activities and policy development. He explained that the role of Parliamentarians as publicly elected officials and lawmakers of the country placed them at the centre of the process of building an inclusive information society towards improving efficiency in delivering the MDGs and accelerating the achievements of development agenda objectives.

4. Mr. Girma Dessalegn, Associate Information network Officer, ISTD, ECA introduced the participants to the course by outlining each course objectives and its learning outcomes.

IV. Agenda

5. The workshop followed the agenda given below:

(i)   Opening Remarks

(ii)   The Linkages between ICT applications, the MDGs and meaningful development

(iii)   ICT for Development (ICT4D) Policy, Process and ICT Governance

(iv)   e-Parliament: Hands on ICT Skills for Parliamentarians and Parliament Staff

(v)   Closing Session

V.   Summary of training proceedings

a)   The Linkages between ICT Applications, the MDGs and Meaningful Development (Agenda item 2)

6.   This session described the macro relationship between the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and information and communications (ITCs) in development and argued the case for advocating ICTs in order to promote the MDGs. The presentation illustrated how ICT and related policy and strategies can contribute to improving efficiency in delivering the MDGs, and hence accelerating the achievement of development targets. Participants were also introduced to the African Information Society Initiative (AISI), an action framework to bridge the digital divide and speed the continent's entry into the information and knowledge global economy coordinated by ECA since its inception in 1996, followed by opportunities and challenges identified by AISI as related to the MDG targets. It also reviewed the region's progress toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), described the key features of ICTs; and provided an overview of how the strategic use of ICTs can help address problems of development.

7.   The session also addressed ICT applications in different sectors particularly those directly concerned with the MDGs and identified principles of good practice from selected case studies of ICT application in priority development sectors. In order for participants to demonstrate their understanding of the rationale to use ICT to achieve development goals, the workshop provided examples of ICT applications in key sectors of development, in particular, for poverty alleviation such as agriculture, education, health, gender, government and governance as well as in disaster and risk management.

8.   The workshop further provided the participants with a development oriented framework of ICT-based and ICT-supported projects and interventions in a range of social sectors to demonstrate key issues determining success or failure of ICT4D projects and programmes.

9. In addition to providing opportunities of ICTs, the session also provided the participants with the opportunity to discuss challenges in effective application of ICTs for development.

b) ICT for Development (ICT4D) Policy, Process and ICT Governance (Agenda item 3)

10. This session focused on provision of critical information about different aspects of national policies, strategies and legal instruments that promote the use of ICT for Development (ICT4D). It discussed issues around developing and implementing ICT4D policy not only as a vision but also as a strategy and action plan to provide ICT4D, a proactive public policy impetus. It demonstrated how governments can measure their progress in ICT4D policymaking as well as benchmark that progress against that of other countries.

11. Different ICT development models were presented to the workshop. It was explained that new development strategy that emphasized government downscaling, deregulation and rapid liberalization and privatization was the approach that is pro-market. This approach, the workshop was informed was embraced by many in the field of ICT development and is also inscribed in the Geneva declaration of the World Summit for Information Society (WSIS).

12. The workshop also addressed issues around developing ICT4D Policy and walked the participants through the 4 phases of ICT policy which are: the formulation of a framework document; policy formulation document; the e-strategy development and the implementation of the plan (including monitoring and evaluation) which are the development phases of the National Information and Communication Infrastructure (NICI) policies.

13. These ICT policies included legal and regulatory reforms as highlighted in the New Partnership for Africa (NEPAD) where telecommunication infrastructure development is one of the key goals under the ICT framework. The workshop was appraised of the establishment of policy, regulation and institutional frameworks as necessary to creating a suitable environment for investment and efficient operations in the countries in the region.

14. The workshop further discussed the impediments to the establishment of effective regulatory frameworks which were enumerated to include failure to defining stakeholder roles and lack of leadership as well as lack of clarity in reforms. The workshop

concluded the session by encouraging the Government to take responsibility to setting investment climate such as policies, legislation, incentives and concessions.

15. In this session, the workshop examined in details the need to engage stakeholders such as individuals, groups or organizations and especially for governments to acknowledge the important role of the civil society organizations in ICT4D policy making. This multi-stakeholder ICT policy development, require that policy makers who seek to harness the potentials of ICT4D should find the right balance among state, market and stakeholders in development of national development strategies. As different ICT4D issues have different stakeholders, the participants were informed about the technique of stakeholder analysis which is used in multi-stakeholder policymaking to identify and describe stakeholders on the basis of their attributes, inter-relationships, and interests related to a given issue or resource.

16. The workshop elaborated on elements of a National ICT4D Policy which require consistency with national development goals as well as striking a balance in the benefits and the risks of an expanded ICT. Some of these elements, the workshop was informed, included issues related to development of human capital, building the ICT industry and e-governance.

17. The workshop explained the need for ICT capacity development as an important factor and a real asset in nations in Africa which require to be given a high priority in order to expand capacity in ICT educations and training in order to build indigenous capacity.

18. On building the ICT industry, the workshop pointed out how a nation's ICT industry is critical both as a major economic sector in its own right and as a driver of productivity and improved quality of service for the economy as a whole. The discussion of developing ICT industry was divided into three categories: 1) ICT manufacturing; 2) off-shoring and global software development and 3) content industry with participants required to prioritize each ICT industry sector and explaining whether the laws of the country encourage or inhibit the growth of the sector.

19. The workshop also gave a brief explanation of e-governance which entailed the use of ICT in administration which includes public service delivery, regulation, law enforcement, security, improving bureaucratic efficiency and policymaking as well as the use of ICT in politics such as making decisions and establishing values that are binding upon members at local, national, regional and global levels. This definition of e-governance, the workshop was informed provided a broader perspective of

using ICT to involve citizens in decision making not only to deliver better public service.

20. The workshop explained the terms e-government and m-government and elaborated that m-government is a subset of e-government. It was explained that e-government is the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to improve the activities of public sector organizations while m-government refers to ICTs that are limited to mobile and/or wireless technologies like cellular/mobile phones, laptops and personal digital assistants (PDAs) connected to wireless local area networks (LANs). M-government has helped to make public information and government services available "anytime, anywhere" to citizens and government officials. Different types of "m" technologies such as m-communication; m-services; m-democracy and m-administration were explained.

21. Some typical challenges for implementing m-government in e-government were enumerated as infrastructure development, payment infrastructures, privacy and security, accessibility, legal issues and compatibility. In addition failure of e-government was seen to be contributed by lack of internal drivers, lack of vision and strategy, poor project management etc. Participants were also asked to made further account of causes of e-government project failure for their country.

22. The workshop also described to the participants the term ICT governance, its definition and what it entails. The workshop facilitator explained that ICT governance has 3 functions which are: 1) evaluation of ICT in the content of the organization and its needs and pressures; 2) the direction of proposed plans and policies for ICT, and 3) monitoring of performance of plans and conformance with policies. The workshop was informed that government which seek to maximize the use of ICT in pursuit of development goals need to develop an ICT governance framework which should comprise of 1) a set of principle; 2) a decision making hierarchy; and 3) a tailor-made suite of reporting and monitoring processes.

c) e-Participation: Hands on ICT Skills for Parliamentarians and Parliament Staff (Agenda item 4)

23. This session focused on providing necessary skills and knowledge essential for computer and Internet use, providing the knowledge about computer hardware and software, and the ability to handle files and folders as well as imparting the knowledge and the skill necessary to create a simple text, spreadsheet and presentation documents as well as the ability to search for information.

24. The ECA Training Officer addressed concepts of Information Technology by presenting the various technologies and accessories constituting the computer and some software examples for word processing, spreadsheet, database management, presentation, e-mail applications, web browsing applications, and some accessibility applications for the visually and hearing impaired parts of the society.

25. He also discussed networking issues in terms of local area and wide area networks including the Internet.

d) Closing (Agenda item 5)

26. The workshop ended with closing remarks from the ECA Senior Economic Affairs Officer, who thanked the participants and organisers for taking time from their busy schedules to attend the workshop which he hoped had achieved its objective to empower them to be able to promote ICTs in Parliament. He applauded them for their active participation from both the Parliamentarians and the staff of Parliament and thanked each for their contributions to the success of the workshop.

VI Observations and recommendations

27. The training workshop contributed to promoting the use of ICT's in Parliaments as a tool for democratic governance and increased access to information by Parliaments to enable effective debate, information sharing and enhanced public participation in the legislative and policy making process. It highlighted the role of Parliamentarians in e-strategy formulation planning and monitoring and strengthen the capacity of Parliaments to use ICT's to   access information and enhanced their representative, oversight and legislative functions. The training workshop also sharpened the ICT skills development component for the staff of Parliament by addressing their special training needs.

28. Based on the evaluation undertaken, the training went on very well and the participants stated that this was a useful programme which required follow up on some of the issues. They recommended that the training should be held away from the work place to ensure continuous attendance and a longer period be assigned for the training. The participants also suggested that there should be more dialogue between the facilitator and the trainees.

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Annex 2: Photo Gallery

Group photo of participants

Partial view of the workshop in session

e-Participation- skills development sessions