



ARN Template

GLOBAL E-GOVERNANCE SUB-PRACTICE EVENT

1 – 3 SEPTEMBER, 2005-08-17

DAKAR, SENEGAL

Programme Officer (if different from author of ARN):	
Author of ARN:	Sultan Gadjiyev, Senior Programme Advisor, UNDP CO in Azerbaijan
Title of Project:	National E-Governance Network Initiative
Total budget for project::	2.090.000 USD
UNDP contribution:	730.000 USD
Timeframe of initiative Start date: End date:	July, 2004 April, 2007
Introduction	E-Government systems have proven to be beneficial to enhancing democratic governance and effective public administration. This project is a direct successor to the UNDP-supported NICTS project (completed in 2004 resulting in creation of the new Ministry for Communication and IT and adoption of the National ICT Strategy). Specifically, it builds on key recommendations endorsed by the above Strategy and the work of the Action Plan expert group. While this ARN is focused on this particular project, it is also linked both directly and indirectly to several important E-Governance based initiatives the Government and UNDP are jointly implementing in Azerbaijan targeting E-Governance application for transparency and accountability (Customs, Social Protection system, MFA, ICT for Research and Education, Standards and Metrology system).
Objectives	This project addresses the establishment of a nucleus for E-government network in Azerbaijan by addressing critical areas such as: a) the creation of a public data transmission network; b) the creation and adoption of National E-Governance Strategy and its implementation Action Plan. The project also performs general coordination of the above E-Governance initiatives and assists the newly established Ministry to ensure participation of the country into international ICT events and activities (e.g. WSIS). Appropriate training of trainers to ensure widespread compliance with the Civil Service Code of Practice throughout all levels of governments is also planned within the project. The project also addresses the first of two key national priorities (governance) identified in the Azerbaijan UNDAF (adopted April 2004), and is consistent with specific UNDAF Outputs, UNDP Country Programme Outcomes, and the MYFF.

Analysis	<p>Even though it is yet far too early for any victorious reports, this project is generally known to be successful. One of the major achievements of the project to date is a launch of the major national data transmission network implementation process - something the Government has been trying to start within the last 2.5 years. UNDP has assisted the Ministry in implementing respective procedures involving the best available national experience reinforced by skills and knowledge of UNDP international experts (identified through the ICTD practice). Another major avenue of the project activities is keeping ICTD alive and high in the Government agenda. This has been achieved through transformation of in-country CO managed ICTD practice into a Working Group of E-Governance Strategy, facilitation of the national E-Governance dialogue, leading role the project has played in a number of international and local forums and conferences (including two major events officially acknowledged to be an integral part of the WSIS preparatory process).</p> <p>Apart from constant and traditional support of the Government counterparts at all the levels (including central authorities), one of the most serious reasons to consider the project to be successful and enjoying unconditional ownership of the Government is financial contribution of the Government of the country. Having pioneered and promoted "converting black gold into human gold" slogan during the first phase of WSIS in Geneva expressing determination of the Azeri Government to utilize the country's natural resources for improving living standards, the project is more than 70% Government financed. At the same time, further increase of the Government funding to ensure efficient and effective training and awareness building component is expected. An important feature of the project for UNDP CO is that the organization has managed to become the Government's trusted advisor on ICTD and E-Governance issues since the Government is strongly valuing UNDP's soft assistance in the area, which has also facilitated growth in size and scope of the respective portfolio of our country Office.</p>
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<p>Lessons Learned</p>	<p>Current experience of the project “NICTS-II: National E-Governance Network initiative” as well as reflections of the lessons learned within the E-Governance activities undertaken by the Government of Azerbaijan in close partnership with UNDP and other partners, both local and international, are summarized in the following recommendations to be considered potentially useful for UNDP/other international development agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance of the sector: in our case, UNDP has got engaged into promoting importance of timely attention to ICTD as a development tool yet in 1997 (this issue has not been a part of the Government development plans) • Importance of the flexible hands-on approach to avail ourselves of both the organization’s political acumen and operational flexibility taking advantage of the interest and relevance of the sector to come up with new project • Partnership and alliances: strong ownership and commitment of the Government reinforced by very efficient relations established with a number of ICT players both national and international (e.g. OSI-AF (Soros Foundation), CEENET, CISCO, Microsoft, Development Gateway Foundation, UNESCO, UNECE, ITC of UNCTAD/WB) • Both direct and indirect impact: something to be described as a snow-ball of ICTD and E-Governance – overwhelming majority of ICT initiatives/projects in the country including those not directly partnered by UNDP have been triggered by UNDP’s earlier interventions. It sometimes had to deal with clear understanding of advantages, sometimes has been guided by institutional rivalry or even instructions from the central authorities. However, as a result, a number of the respective projects/programmes are currently underway and this process is hopefully to be reinforced and streamlined by the National E-Governance Strategy which is currently under preparation. <p>It should be mentioned that some of the above features as well as a number of additional considerations related to ICTD in Azerbaijan have been covered in the following publications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “How to build open information societies” Collection of best practices and know-how for Europe and CIS • Outcome Evaluation of UNDP programme: E-Governance in Azerbaijan: UNDP contribution to promoting transparency and accountability in public administration <p>While Outcome Evaluation has not been officially launched yet (ceremony to present this document is to be organized in September), it is also planned to share this with UNDP ICT sub-practice colleagues. It is believed that while being direct, open and even sometimes uneasy for the Government in terms of description of obstacles impeding ICT development in the country and its more efficient utilization for accountability and transparency, this document reflects on a number of features common or close to similar for the developing/transition economies countries despite reflecting specifics of the Azerbaijan’s development situation.</p>
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