

STRATEGY 2025-2029

**Developing Digital Governance
for Global Justice, Resilience, and Sustainability**

Context

Digital governance has rapidly evolved due to technological advancements such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), big data, and the Internet of Things (IoT), fundamentally reshaping public service delivery and government-citizen interactions. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digital adoption, emphasizing the need for resilient digital infrastructures to ensure service continuity during crises. Governments are progressing beyond basic digitization toward more integrated, citizen-driven models, aligning digital policies with regional socio-economic contexts. Despite significant strides, digital transformation remains uneven, with disparities persisting in developing regions, particularly in Africa and small island nations.

Key challenges impede digital governance progress, particularly in the Global South. Outdated infrastructure, unreliable Internet connectivity, and limited technical expertise impede modernization efforts. Financial constraints exacerbate these challenges, restricting investments in digital infrastructure, training, and innovation — cultural and organizational resistance to change, coupled with bureaucratic inefficiencies, further slow digital adoption. Additionally, the lack of robust cybersecurity frameworks and evolving regulatory landscapes pose significant risks, making it difficult for governments to balance data protection, transparency, and accessibility.

Addressing inclusivity is crucial, as the digital divide disproportionately affects disadvantaged populations. Socio-economic factors, gender disparities, and low digital literacy hinder access to online services, reinforcing existing inequalities. Governments must implement policies that promote equitable digital access, enhance digital skills, and build trust in new technologies. Sustainable digital governance requires strategic investments in secure, adaptive, and inclusive systems to bridge gaps and meet the evolving expectations of citizens in an increasingly digital world.

UNU-EGOV's Mission and Vision

The mission of the United Nations University Operating Unit on Policy-Driven Electronic Governance (UNU-EGOV) is to support the United Nations and its Member States in strengthening governance through the strategic use of digital technologies. By conducting policy-relevant research, translating insights into actionable policies, and developing capacities across governments and organizations, UNU-EGOV fosters inclusive

social and economic development, environmental sustainability, and global peace. Its vision is to be a global leader in digital governance, particularly in addressing challenges in the Global South. Through innovation, collaboration, and advisory services, UNU-EGOV aims to bridge research and public policy, enhance sustainable governance, and promote active citizenship while solidifying its role within the UN system.

UNU-EGOV's Guiding Principles and Values

UNU-EGOV operates with core values of integrity, respect for diversity, accessibility, collaboration, innovation, academic rigour, and professionalism. Its guiding principles emphasise citizen empowerment, inclusion, and evidence-based policymaking, ensuring that digital governance solutions enhance human rights, participation, transparency, and resilience. By fostering global collaboration and adaptive governance, UNU-EGOV promotes

sustainability, well-being, and peace, leveraging technology to build effective, safe, and future-ready governance frameworks that benefit all segments of society. For the strategy 2025-2029, UNU-EGOV will direct her core activities to contribute specifically to Global justice, sustainability and resilience to encompass most of the guiding principles and values.





Looking Back: UNU-EGOV's Strategic Plan 2020-2024

Since its inception, UNU-EGOV has evolved through various research frameworks, initially focusing on administrative burden reduction, public service delivery, and smart cities (2014-2017). From 2017 to 2019, UNU-EGOV established its first Core Research Programme, which was structured around three main research axes and seven research lines. The most impactful lines were carried forward into the 2020-2024 Core Research Programme, emphasizing key areas such as e-governance, digital transformation, smart cities, data-driven policymaking, and digital inclusion.

The 2020-2024 programme was organised in three interconnected research lines: *Governance*, which focused on digital policies and regulatory frameworks; *Technology*, which explored emerging innovations like AI and blockchain for public services; and *People*, which emphasized human-centred digital transformation, tackling issues of equity, inclusion, and well-being. This framework balanced technological advancements with policy and social considerations, leading to significant contributions, including 171 publications and extensive global collaborations. Through this approach, UNU-EGOV reinforced its role in shaping digital governance research and policy worldwide.

As UNU-EGOV transitions into the 2025-2029 period, its strategic focus evolves to address emerging challenges and opportunities in digital governance. Aligned with the UNU Strategy 2025-2029, this approach is rooted in knowledge creation, global partnerships, and measurable impact. The UNU-EGOV Strategy 2025-2029 is structured around five core activities, ensuring meaningful contributions to global governance challenges.

UNU-EGOV's Core Activities for 2025-2029



• Knowledge and Research

Driving high-quality, policy-relevant research that shapes digital governance theory and practice. By prioritizing impactful projects and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, UNU-EGOV aims to expand the global knowledge base in digital governance.



• Capacity Development and Education

Enhancing skills and competencies in digital governance, with a focus on the Global South. Capacity Development and Education includes training programs, academic courses, and workshops designed to empower public officials and institutions.



• Global Networks and Partnerships

Strengthening collaboration with governments, international organizations, academia, and civil society to foster knowledge exchange and cooperative solutions for digital governance challenges.



• Advisory and Consultancy

Translating research into actionable policy recommendations and solutions. UNU-EGOV's expertise bridges the gap between academic research and practical governance improvements.

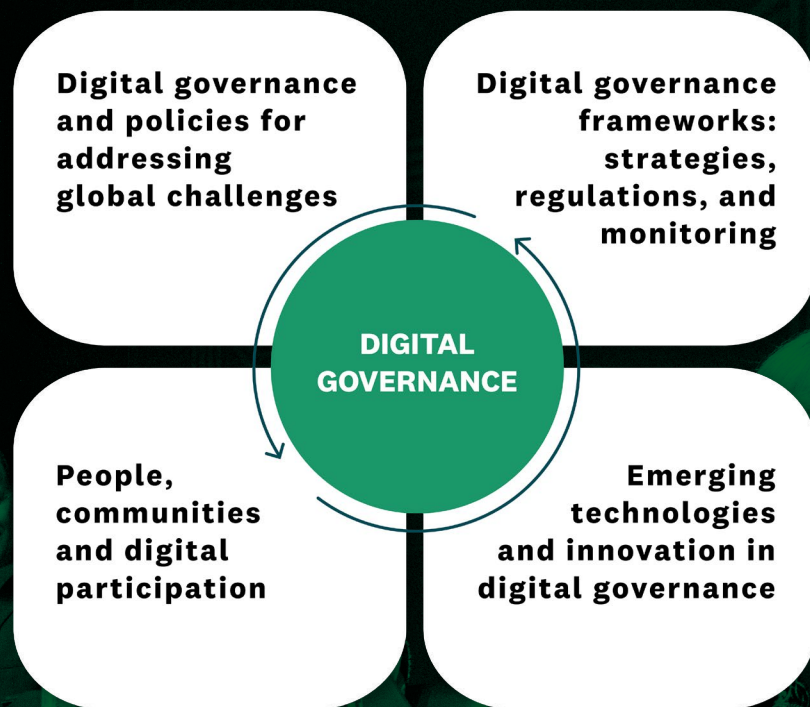


• Institutional Development

Reinforcing UNU-EGOV's capacity and sustainability by enhancing its institutional standing, governance structures, funding models, and human resources.

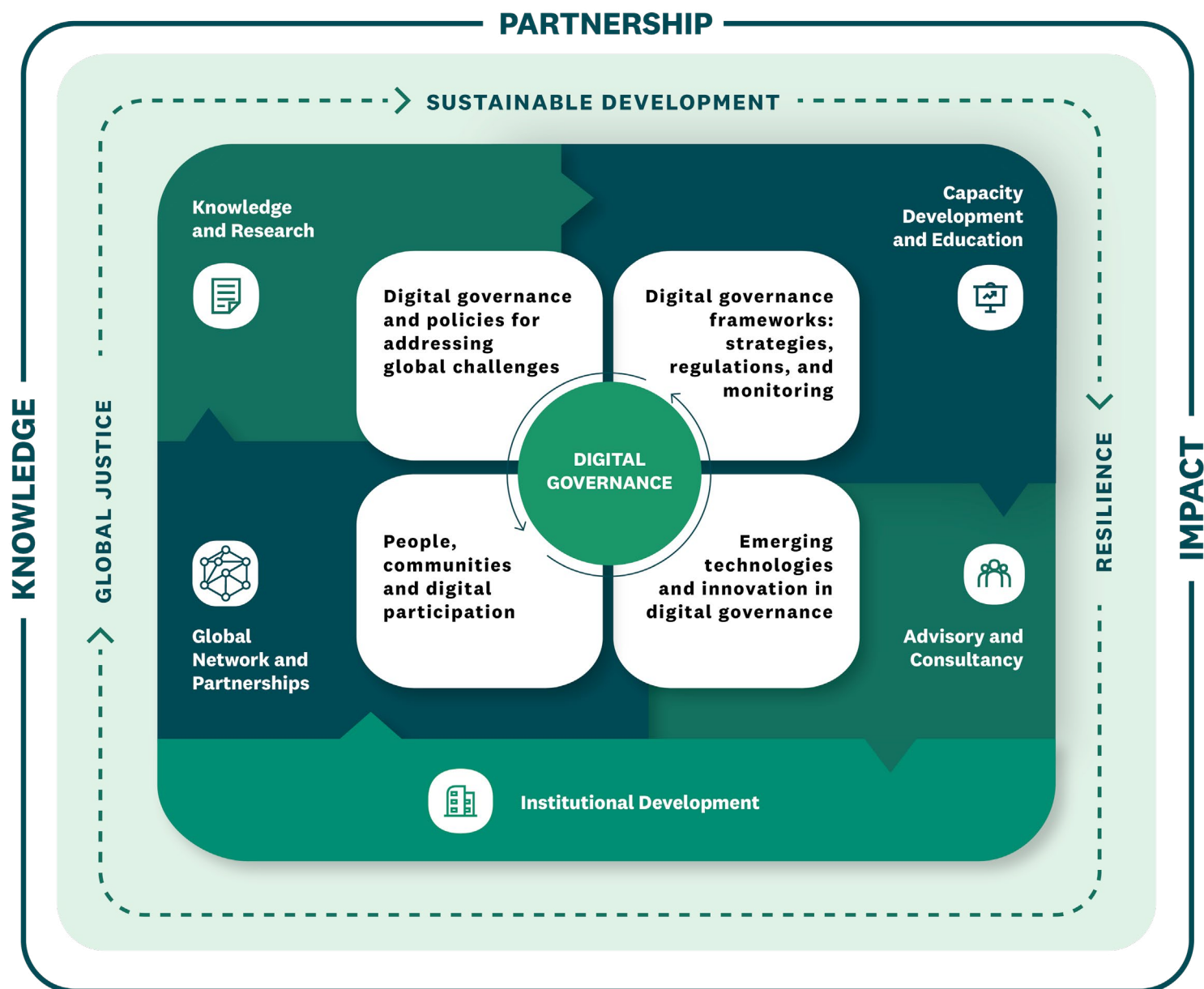
UNU-EGOV's Thematic Areas for 2025-2029

THEMATIC AREAS



The transition to UNU-EGOV's new strategy builds upon the strengths of the past core research program while expanding the scope to address broader global challenges in digital governance. This evolution includes a stronger focus on the specific needs of the Global South, aligning with UNU's commitment to addressing these countries' unique challenges. The new strategy integrates core values such as sustainability, inclusion, resilience, and justice, which are fundamental to our research and activities. These values guide UNU-EGOV's work in alignment with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the principles of the Global Digital Compass, emphasizing the importance of an inclusive approach, fostering resilience to global crises, and promoting justice and peace through improved governance. Additionally, UNU-EGOV is enhancing its evidence-based, interdisciplinary approach to bridge the gap between research and policy, ensuring that findings contribute to education, capacity development, and practical policy solutions. This transition represents a natural progression, enabling UNU-EGOV to adapt to the evolving digital governance landscape and increase its impact by addressing critical global and regional challenges.

UNU-EGOV's Strategy Framework



Advancing Digital Governance Research and Knowledge for Global Impact and Sustainability

The first strategic priority focuses on enhancing knowledge and achieving research excellence in digital governance. Research is at the core of UNU-EGOV's mission, focusing on generating valuable evidence-based insights to inform research, policy, and implementation on digital governance and public sector innovation.

Objectives

- Develop and publish high-quality and policy-relevant research across the four thematic areas, addressing pressing and emerging issues in digital governance.
- Organize public events and dialogues to enhance the visibility, outreach, and impact of research outcomes.
- Strengthen inter-institute collaboration to advance cross-cutting themes and shared research agendas.
- Contribute to global knowledge production for effective, inclusive, and gender-responsive digital governance, with particular emphasis on perspectives and innovations from the Global South.
- Provide targeted research support and analytical expertise to member states and partner institutions.
- Develop and maintain the Global Digital Governance Resource Platform (GDGR) as a key repository and knowledge hub.

Key components

- Research excellence and positioning: Establish UNU-EGOV as a global reference centre for research on digital governance and public sector innovation.
- Evidence-based policy and instruments: Apply research findings to support the formulation of data-driven policies, strategies, and regulatory mechanisms at national and international levels.
- Inclusion and equity: Generate research that mitigates digital divides and advances inclusive and gender-responsive governance models.
- Responsible innovation: Promote the ethical and sustainable application of emerging technologies in support of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Strategic Priority 1



In pursuing this strategic priority 1, ***Advancing Digital Governance Research and Knowledge for Global Impact and Sustainability***, UNU-EGOV aims to position itself as a global reference in digital governance. We are committed to influencing policy-making through evidence-based research that informs decisions at both national and international levels. Our research initiatives will focus on reducing the digital divide and promoting inclusive governance, ensuring that marginalized communities are represented and empowered. Additionally, we will advance the responsible use of emerging technologies to support Sustainable Development Goals. By achieving these outcomes, UNU-EGOV seeks not only to enhance its impact within the digital governance landscape but also to contribute meaningfully to global efforts in fostering equitable and effective governance practices.

Strategic Priority 2

Digital Governance Capacity Development and Educational Initiatives for Inclusion and Global Impact

The second strategic priority focuses on enhancing capacity development and education initiatives in digital governance, especially in the Global South. This pillar includes training, academic courses, seminars, and workshops that enhance the skills of students, public officials, and institutions, preparing them for digital transformation.

Objectives

- Establish and strengthen joint degree and educational programmes in collaboration with partner universities.
- Expand and diversify capacity-development offerings to meet the needs of public institutions, policymakers, and practitioners.
- Engage youth and underrepresented groups to foster inclusivity and broader participation in digital governance education and training.

Key Components

- Educational partnerships: Develop and maintain joint academic programmes and curricula with partner universities to advance digital governance scholarship.
- Professional development: Design specialized training initiatives, online courses, and MOOCs to enhance the skills of civil servants, policymakers, and digital practitioners.
- Youth engagement: Offer internship, fellowship, and mentorship programmes to cultivate the next generation of experts in digital governance.
- Learning platforms and events: Organize summer schools, workshops, and intensive training sessions focused on emerging digital governance challenges and opportunities.
- Inclusive outreach: Integrate inclusive educational approaches that ensure accessibility and participation from diverse regions and demographics, particularly youth and professionals from the Global South.



Strategic Priority 2



Implementing education programmes and capacity development is anticipated to produce significant outcomes that will enhance digital governance capabilities, especially in the Global South. Equipping public sector leaders with the necessary skills is critical to implement digital transformation initiatives effectively. Tailored approaches to capacity development contribute to improving policy development and implementation processes, ensuring that they are responsive to local contexts and challenges. Furthermore, strong networks will be established with educational institutions and organizations in the Global South, fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing in digital governance education. Collectively, these outcomes are essential to empowering local communities and promoting sustainable development and inclusive governance practices throughout the region.

Strategic Priority 3

Strengthening Global Partnerships and Networks for Navigating Global Challenges and Advancing Resilience and Sustainability

The third strategic priority focuses on building and strengthening global networks and partnerships to enhance UNU-EGOV's impact and reach in digital governance. This priority aims to position UNU-EGOV as a main bridge in the global digital governance network, facilitating the exchange of ideas, best practices, and resources. It emphasizes the importance of collaborative efforts in addressing complex digital transformation and governance challenges.

Objectives

- Expand partnerships with the Global South.
- Unlock funding for collaborations with the Global South.
- Revitalize and develop networks globally.
- Enhance contribution to member state policy-making.
- Deepen connections with the UN system.
- Establish work strands on emerging topics of relevance to policy-makers.
- Facilitate structured exchange between academia and practitioners.
- Contribute to inter-institute collaboration under one UNU brand.



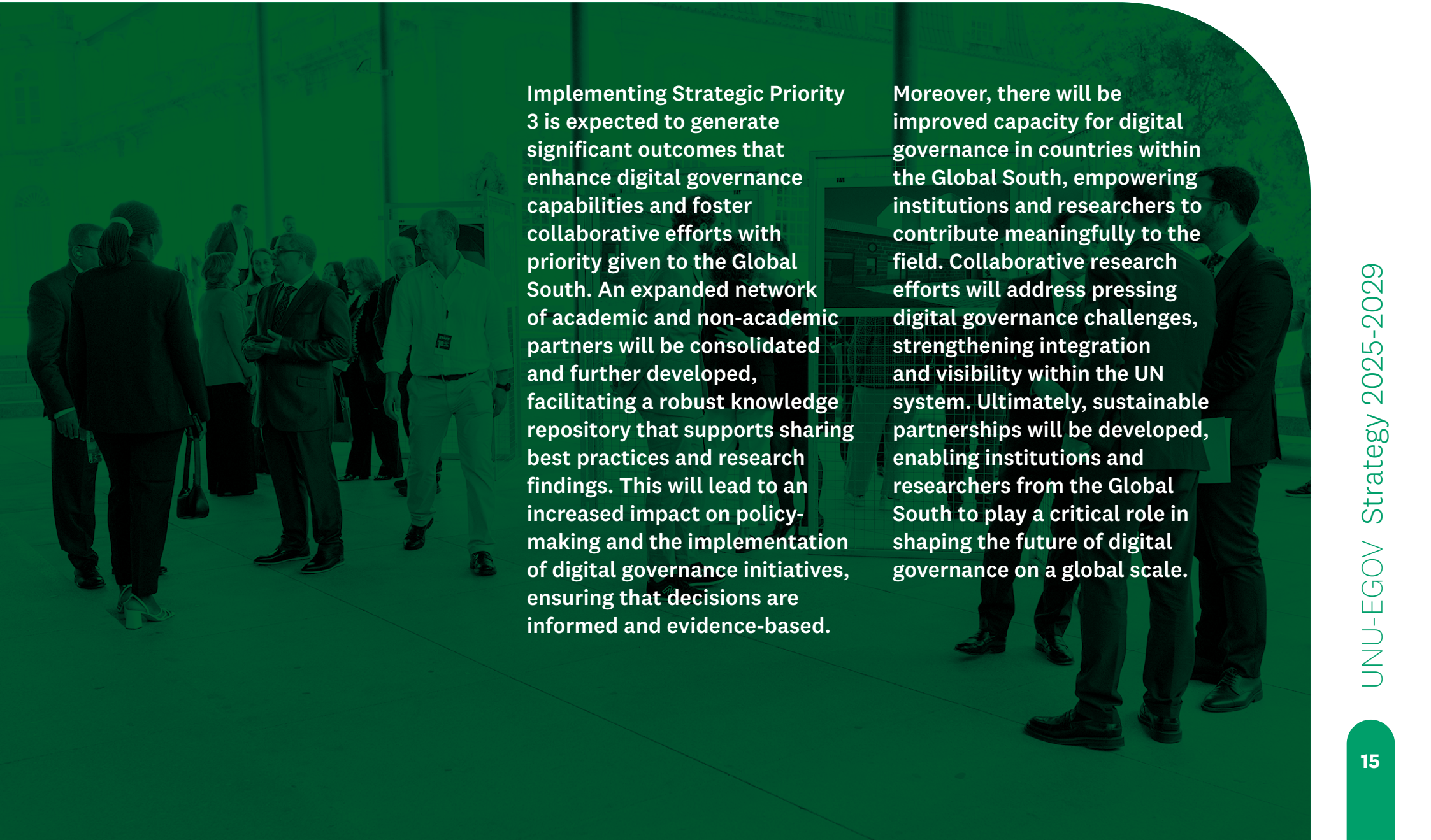
Strategic Priority 3

Strengthening Global Partnerships and Networks for Navigating Global Challenges and Advancing Resilience and Sustainability

Key Components

- Network expansion: Grow and maintain strategic partnerships with academic institutions, international organizations, and policy actors, especially in the Global South.
- Formalized collaboration: Develop and implement partnership agreements and collaborative research programs with key institutions and networks.
- Dialogue platforms: Create regular forums and platforms for dialogue, joint planning, and exchange of best practices, including regional digital governance fora and ICEGOV conferences.
- Joint initiatives: Launch and coordinate joint research projects, publications, and capacity-building activities across institutional and regional boundaries.
- Mobility and scholar exchange: Facilitate staff, researcher, and practitioner exchanges to enhance knowledge transfer and capacity development globally.
- Regional hubs: Establish regional hubs and collaborative networks to address context-specific challenges and promote resilience and sustainability in digital governance.

Strategic Priority 3



Implementing Strategic Priority 3 is expected to generate significant outcomes that enhance digital governance capabilities and foster collaborative efforts with priority given to the Global South. An expanded network of academic and non-academic partners will be consolidated and further developed, facilitating a robust knowledge repository that supports sharing best practices and research findings. This will lead to an increased impact on policy-making and the implementation of digital governance initiatives, ensuring that decisions are informed and evidence-based.

Moreover, there will be improved capacity for digital governance in countries within the Global South, empowering institutions and researchers to contribute meaningfully to the field. Collaborative research efforts will address pressing digital governance challenges, strengthening integration and visibility within the UN system. Ultimately, sustainable partnerships will be developed, enabling institutions and researchers from the Global South to play a critical role in shaping the future of digital governance on a global scale.

Strategic Priority 4

Bridging Knowledge and Practice: Strategic Advisory Services for Global Digital Governance Challenges

The fourth strategic priority focuses on leveraging UNU-EGOV's expertise to provide advisory and consultancy services in digital governance. Network building and partnerships are essential in facilitating advisory services with governments from member states, international organizations, or other entities. This priority aims to translate UNU-EGOV's research and knowledge into practical, actionable solutions for governments and organizations. It emphasizes the importance of context-specific advice, particularly for countries in the Global South.

Objectives

- Provide expert guidance to governments, international organizations, and partners on key digital governance challenges.
- Offer tailored solutions and evidence-based recommendations to address the specific needs of member states.
- Conduct comprehensive assessments and evaluations to inform the design and improvement of digital governance initiatives.
- Deliver technical assistance to support the development and implementation of effective and inclusive digital transformation strategies.

Key Components

- Support the development of robust policy frameworks and regulations related to digital governance.
- Provide insights on best practices in digital government, digital public services, and citizen engagement.
- Leverage institutional expertise and collaborative networks to strengthen the capacity of public sector leaders.
- Contribute to the effective and sustainable implementation of digital governance initiatives worldwide.



Strategic Priority 4

The implementation of Strategic Priority 4: Advisory and Consultancy Services is expected to produce significant outcomes that enhance digital governance capabilities across the Global South. The efforts aim to reduce the digital divide between the Global North and South while increasing the representation of Global South perspectives in global digital governance discourse.

Partner countries will experience sustainable and long-term digital transformation, supported by effective knowledge transfer and strengthened South-South cooperation. Enhanced policymaking and implementation in emerging areas will result from tailored advisory services, leading to increased funding and resources for digital governance initiatives in the Global South. Ultimately, these efforts are anticipated to produce measurable improvements in digital government rankings and higher scores in international surveys for partner countries, reflecting the tangible impact of UNU-EGOV's advisory and consultancy services on digital governance practices worldwide.

Strategic Priority 5

Strategic Growth and Institutional Strengthening: Positioning UNU-EGOV for Future Digital Governance Challenges

Strategic Priority 5 focuses on Institutional Development, emphasizing the need for strategic growth and institutional strengthening to position UNU-EGOV for future digital governance challenges. Recognizing that impactful knowledge creation and robust partnerships cannot be realized without a solid institutional foundation, this priority aims to enhance UNU-EGOV's capacity for long-term success.

Objectives

- Transition UNU-EGOV from an operating unit to a fully-fledged UNU institute, enhancing organizational autonomy and capacity to fulfil its mission.
- Establish new collaborative institutional structures that support expanded mandates and operations.
- Build, maintain, and strengthen a diversified donor base to facilitate strategic expansion into new and emerging regions.
- Increase the diversity of personnel, including greater geographic and disciplinary representation.
- Tailor communications to reach and influence key audiences for greater impact, visibility, and resource mobilization.

Key Components

- Institutional transformation: Strengthen and formalize internal governance structures and processes to support UNU-EGOV's evolution into an autonomous institute, ensuring operational effectiveness and responsiveness to new challenges.
- Financial sustainability: Develop and implement a sustainable funding model to ensure long-term financial stability, allowing UNU-EGOV to scale its activities and impact.
- Human resource development: Invest in attracting, developing, and retaining a diverse and skilled workforce in digital governance.
- Enhanced operations: Improve internal systems, digital infrastructure, and collaborative tools for efficient management and coordination among staff and partners.
- Positioning and visibility: Enhance visibility and position UNU-EGOV as a leading global centre of excellence, strengthening its ability to attract new partnerships and resources.

Strategic Priority 5

Strategic Priority 5 emphasizes the importance of building a resilient and adaptable organization capable of responding to the evolving challenges and opportunities in digital governance. The transition from an operating unit to a fully-fledged UNU institute will enhance its autonomy and operational capacity, allowing for greater recognition globally. This transition is anticipated to foster a wider network of partnerships with academic institutions, governments, and international organizations, thereby increasing UNU-EGOV's influence on global digital governance policies and practices.

Moreover, the strategic focus on institutional growth will expand global reach and influence, ensuring financial sustainability and diversification of funding sources. Enhanced research capacity and output will improve the organization's diversity and inclusivity, elevating public engagement and visibility. As a result, UNU-EGOV is expected to be recognized as the primary UNU entity for digital governance expertise, making measurable contributions to the UN Sustainable Development Goals through its initiatives. Ultimately, these outcomes will establish a solid foundation for sustainable development impact and reinforce UNU-EGOV's role in addressing the complex challenges of digital governance on a global scale.



Conclusion

In conclusion, the UNU-EGOV Strategy for 2025-2029 is a comprehensive document designed to enhance the unit's role in digital governance. The strategy focuses on five strategic priorities defining the Unit's objectives and key components. It also highlights how each strategic priority will focus on the Global South and the expected outcomes.

UNU-EGOV aims to address the pressing challenges faced by governments and societies in the digital age through the thematic areas studied in compliance with the core values of UNU-EGOV, UNU and the UN system. The strategy also underscores the importance of collaboration, inclusivity, and innovation, particularly in engaging with the Global South to bridge existing gaps in digital governance capabilities.

As UNU-EGOV transitions into a fully-fledged UNU institute, it will strengthen its institutional capacity and enhance its visibility as a centre of excellence. The anticipated outcomes include improved digital governance capabilities across partner countries, increased representation of diverse perspectives in global discourse, and measurable contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals. By prioritizing strategic partnerships and fostering knowledge transfer, UNU-EGOV is well-positioned to effectively influence global digital governance policies and practices. Ultimately, this strategy aims to consolidate UNU-EGOV's reputation and seeks to impact governance systems worldwide, ensuring resilience, sustainability, and inclusion, and equipping to meet future challenges.



UNU-EGOV

Campus de Couros,
Rua de Vila Flor 166
4810-445 Guimarães,
Portugal

📍 unu.edu/egov
✉ egov@unu.edu

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