

# ITU Webinars

## Sustainable digital transformation in the Arab region

29 September 2021

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia



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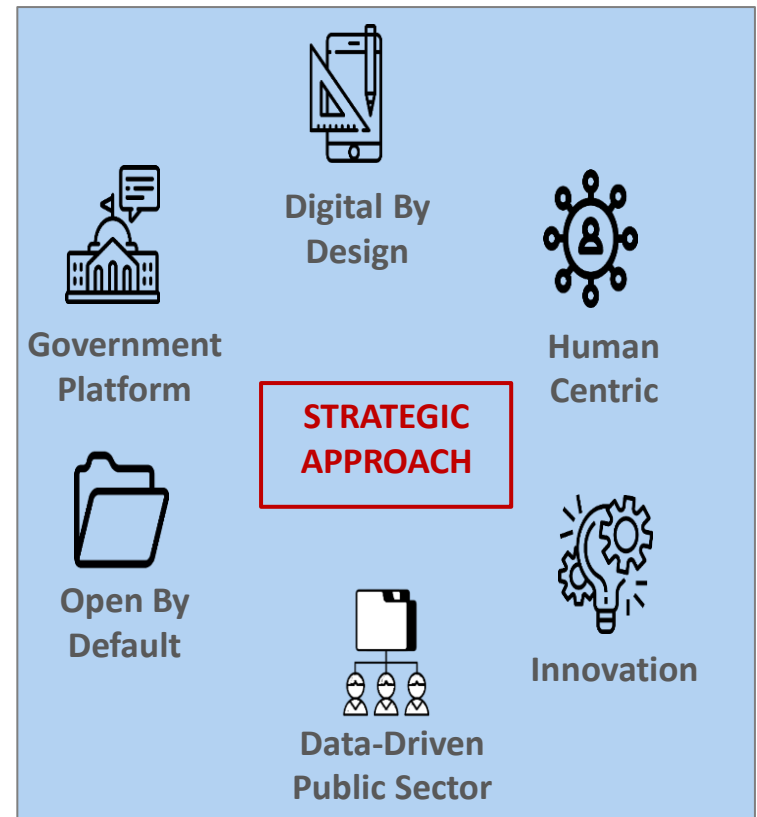
## Sustainable Digital Government Transformation in the Arab Region

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# Digital government transformation & Sustainability

- ✓ **Digital Government Transformation** is to rely on the power of technology and its potentials to enhance government processes and deliver innovative services.
- ✓ **Key success factors:**
  - having the right, **digital-savvy leaders** in place
  - **building capabilities** for the workforce of the future
  - **empowering citizens** to work in new ways



# Digital government transformation & Sustainability

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- Digital transformation, has become a necessary reality for organizations to stay **relevant**.
- Sustainability and digital transformation are **complementary**, if not entirely interdependent.
- Digitalization is no longer restricted to administrative services, as governments are increasingly incorporating topics of **resource consumption** impact and various **environmental** categories.
- Digital transformation very much linked to SDG 9, 16 and 17.
- The question today is how we can harness the power of technology to facilitate **sustainable and inclusive growth** around the world ?

# Digital government transformation & Sustainability



- Leadership and commitment of the government to DX
- Continuous follow-up and update of policy and strategy for DX
- Availability of appropriate ICT infrastructure
- Responding to citizen needs, or citizen-centric services.
- Suitable human-capability and continuous training of government employees
- Monitoring and benchmarking
- Harnessing the emerging technologies for developing digital government services and smart cities.

# Digital government transformation & Sustainability



## Cloud computing is the new sustainability solution

- Increased agility & better sustainability
- Reducing cost & realizing economy of scale
- Ease of collaboration, & enhanced user experience.

## AI support sustainability

According to WEF, it's estimated that the value unlocked by AI in helping design out waste for food, keeping products and materials in use, and regenerating natural systems, could be up to \$127 billion a year in 2030.

## ----- Status -----



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# Digital Development in the Arab Region

The Arab region is heterogeneous in digital development.

We can identify at least 3 clusters

- 1<sup>st</sup> cluster GCC: most developed
- 2<sup>nd</sup> cluster include Jordan, Tunisia, Lebanon, Morocco and Egypt
- 3<sup>rd</sup> cluster: other countries (crises and least developed)

## Information Society in the Arab region



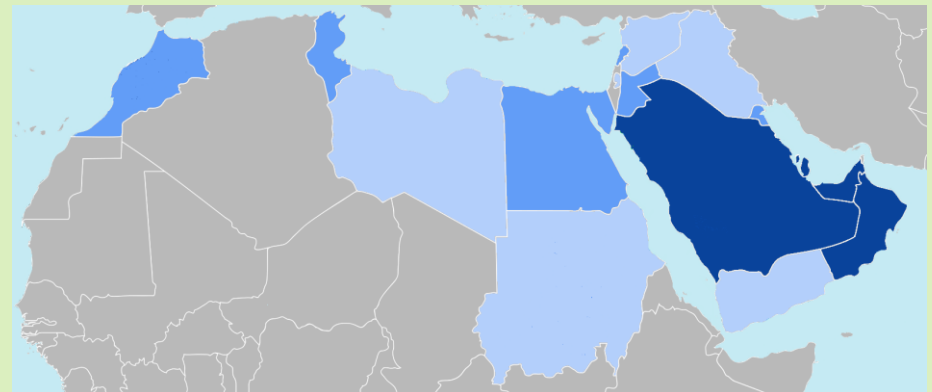
**First cluster:** most GCC: UAE, Bahrain, KSA, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait



**Second cluster:** Tunisia, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon



**Third cluster:** countries under crises, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Sudan, Yemen and Libya



# Digital government transformation in the Arab Region

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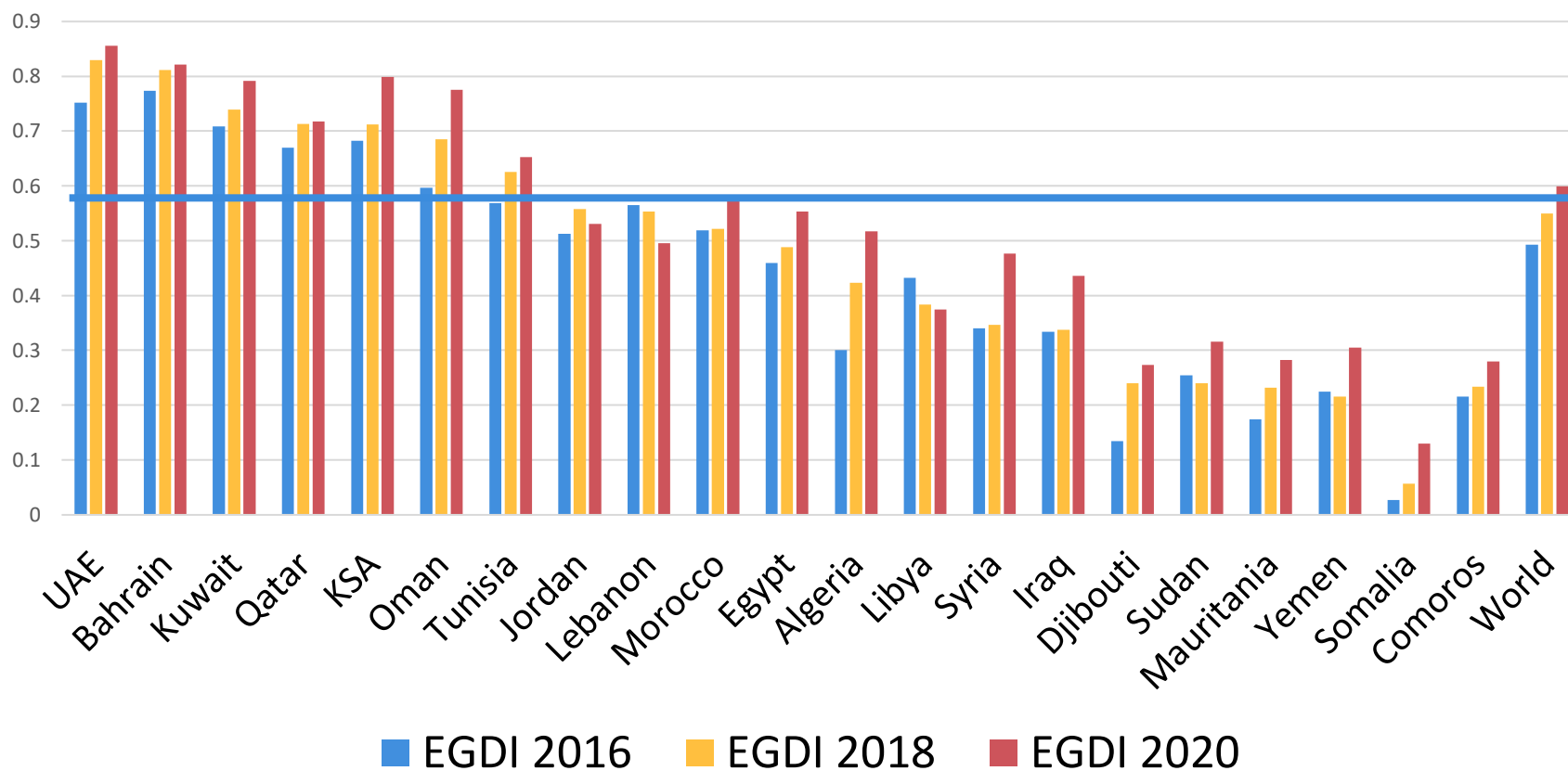


- **All Arab countries made significant progress in the e-government and most have related strategies**
- COVID-19 have accelerated the progress in digital government services.
- **Sixteen Arab countries have dedicated portal for e-government**
- E-Participation is developing in the Arab countries at various levels
- **Citizen-centric approach, citizen participation and engagement should be enhanced.**
- Ten Arab countries have moved towards openness have dedicated portal for open government data.

# E-Government Development Index in the Arab Region



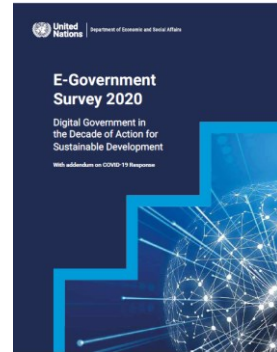
UN-DESA E-Government Development Index 2016, 2018, 2020



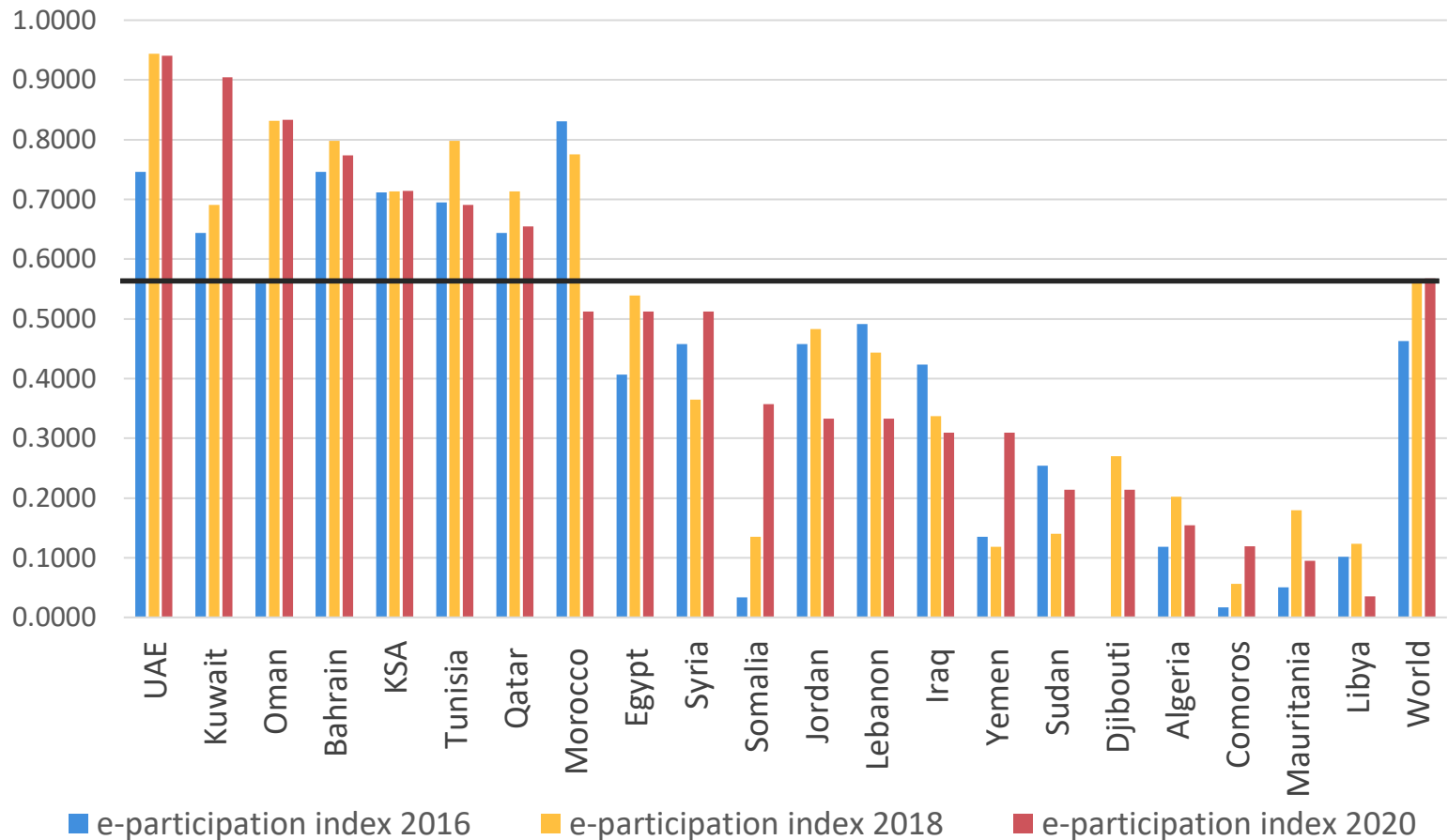


# E-Participation Index in the Arab Region:

Seven Arab countries have higher EPI than the World average.

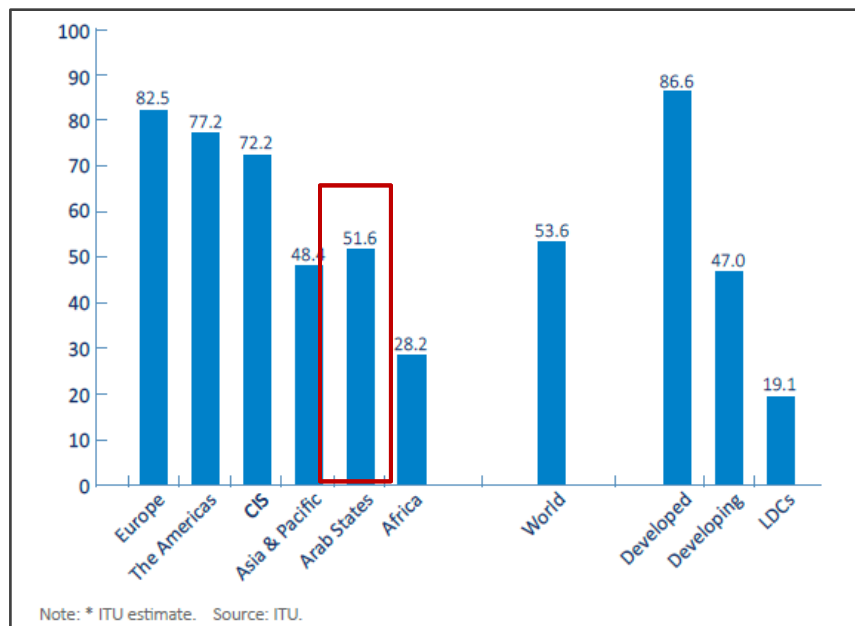


EPI 2016,18,20

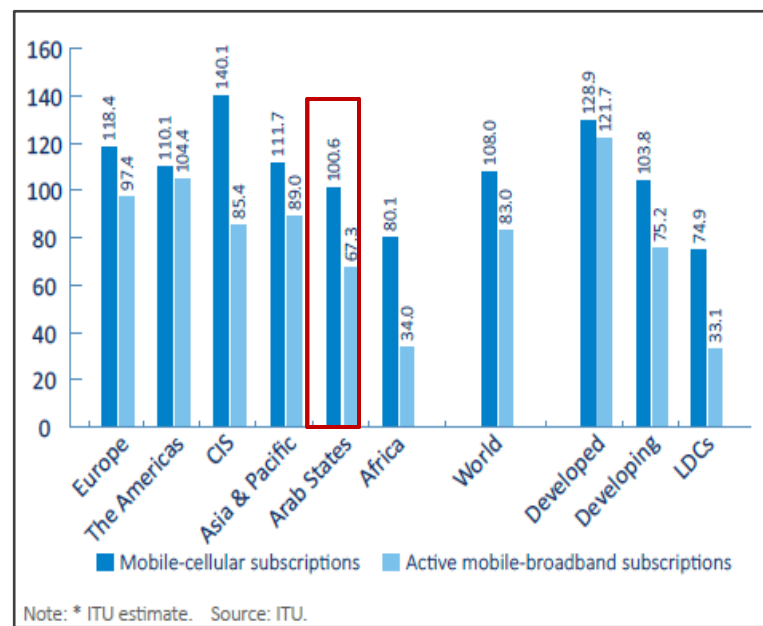


# Challenges: ICT Infrastructure in the Arab Region

- Digital infrastructure **varies among countries** : very well developed, acceptable, to under re-construction, **but mobile technology is on the rise in all countries**
- **Only few countries have plan for broadband in the Arab region**
- **Affordability** is rather low in most countries
- **Gaps are increasing** in the Arab Region: Gender, Rural-Urban



Percentage of individual using Internet, ITU, 2019\*



Mobile-cellular and mobile-broadband per 100 inhabitant, ITU, 2019\*

# Main Challenges related to digital government transformation in the Arab Region

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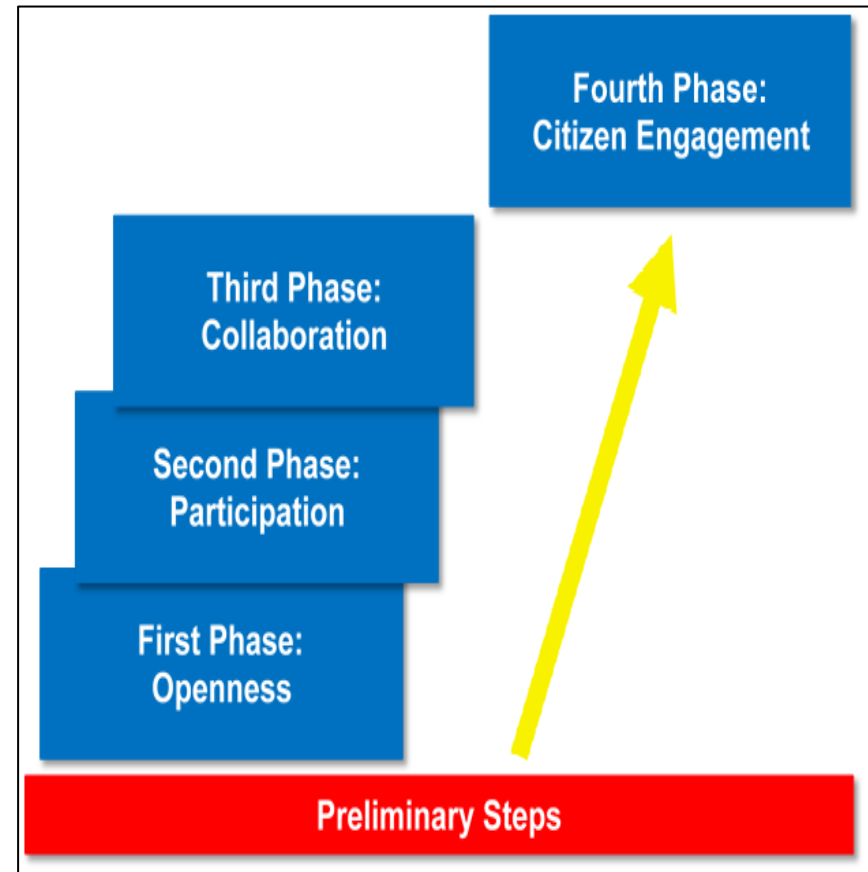
- **Cyber security, privacy and personal data protection require special attention in the Arab region.**
- The use of emerging technology is still nascent in many countries. Only few countries have plans for AI, Blockchain or Big data.
- **Reliance on Data: big data, open data could be developed.**
- **Human capabilities require continuous development** in the Arab region, especially among: government employees & citizens and among experts for the exploitation of emerging technology.

# ESCWA Regional Initiative:

## Fostering Open Government in the Arab Region

### Open Government Principles:

- **Openness:** better transparency and accountability
- **Participation and Collaboration:** enhanced interaction between government and citizen
- **Engagement:** Public can contribute ideas and expertise. Government can make more informed decision and policies.



# Fostering open government in the Arab Region



- Arab states have been facing continuous challenges in the recent decades.
- **Citizens are expecting**
  - from their leaders: highest level of transparency, accountability.
  - to participate in public affairs and have a say in the developmental matter.
- **Open Government could help in:**
  - accelerating progress for the achievement of SDGs, especially SDG 16.
  - giving citizens better role on :
    - how they are served: public services in water, health and education;
    - how infrastructure projects are built, and others.

# Fostering Open Government in the AR, 2017-2021

<https://www.unescwa.org/sub-site/open-government-arab-region>

- Guideline for fostering Open Government in the Arab Region
- Capacity Development Materials on: Participation, Collaboration and Engagement & on Open Data
- Legal Framework for open government and open data
- **In collaboration with OECD, Report on “Economic and social impact of open government: policy recommendations for the Arab region”**
- Portal on Open Government in the Arab Region



# Opportunities for the Arab Region

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1. **COVID-19** is a real opportunity for accelerating the transformation to digital government transformation.
2. **Emerging Technologies** and new trends and applications will support sustainability.
3. **Data** and its important role in digital government transformation
4. **Development Agenda 2030** and its SDGs

# Priorities for Sustainable Digital Government in the Arab region

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- Development of plans for ensuring sustainability of **infrastructure/broadband** and enhancing affordability, especially in post-conflict and least developed countries.
- Accelerating the development of **online government services**, in many countries
- Adopting **citizen-centric** services
- Enhance the **use of data** (open data and big data) while respecting privacy and personal data
- Developing **e-Participation and e-Engagement**
- **Building capacity** especially on emerging technologies



# Thank you

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