

# Newsletter

## PUBLIC MANAGEMENT



NUMBER 9  
September  
2009

This is the fourth in a series of six thematic bulletins dedicated to each chapter of eLAC2010

### CONTENTS

E-government for State reform .....	02
Column: eLAC's thematic coordinator for public management ...	04
XI Regional Conference on Women to analyze gender policies .....	04
New indicators established for measuring e-government in the region .....	05
Column: Coordinator of the eLAC Working Group on e-government .....	05
Red GEALC seeks to consolidate its political support .....	06
Forum to implement Ibero-American Charter sets out new roles for governments .....	07
Training public servants and civil society in e-government .....	07
Social Information Platform supports planning and transparency in Guatemala .....	08
Lessons of a failed attempt to implement e-government from the "bottom-up" in Nicaragua .....	09
New Colombian ICT Law consolidates work towards eLAC goals .....	10
ICT-related news briefs .....	11
Latest publications on ICTs in public management .....	12



Photo: USAID

### E-government for State reform

The main article discusses the adoption of ICTs in public administration processes, as well as the need for simultaneous public policies to reform the State. It also outlines the research and activities of the e-government component of the "Inclusive political dialogue and exchange of experiences" project, being executed by UN-ECLAC under the @LIS2 Programme of the European Union. (Pages 2 & 3)



Photo: Red GEALC

### Red GEALC seeks to consolidate its political support in the region

Over the past five years, the E-Government Leaders of Latin America and the Caribbean (Red GEALC) have elaborated mechanisms to boost cooperation in e-government among all countries in the region. In recent months, the network has concentrated on its greatest challenge yet: securing greater political support. (Page 6)



Photo: USAID

### Social Information Platform supports planning in Guatemala

An interactive platform connects the databases of various Guatemalan ministries, allowing users to rapidly make queries, generate reports or statistics and create thematic 3D maps – information and projections that are crucial for decision-making, planning and transparency in public administration. (Page 8)



Photo: Yves Chaix

### Lessons of a failed attempt to implement e-government from the "bottom-up" in Nicaragua

While one can learn much from success stories and best practices, failed projects can also offer important lessons. Consultant Yves Chaix shares his own experience and fruitless efforts to implement e-government in Nicaragua, without the necessary political support. (Page 9)



Photo: MINTIC Colombia

### New Colombian ICT Law consolidates work towards eLAC2010 goals

The Director of the Government Online Programme, of Colombia's ICT Ministry, describes her country's news and progress towards each of the 12 goals in the public management chapter of the eLAC2010 Regional Action Plan. (Page 10)

Editor / translation: Jennifer Ross  
Design: Francisca Lira



## E-government for State reform

By Oscar Cetrangolo, coordinator of the e-government component of ECLAC's @LIS2 project

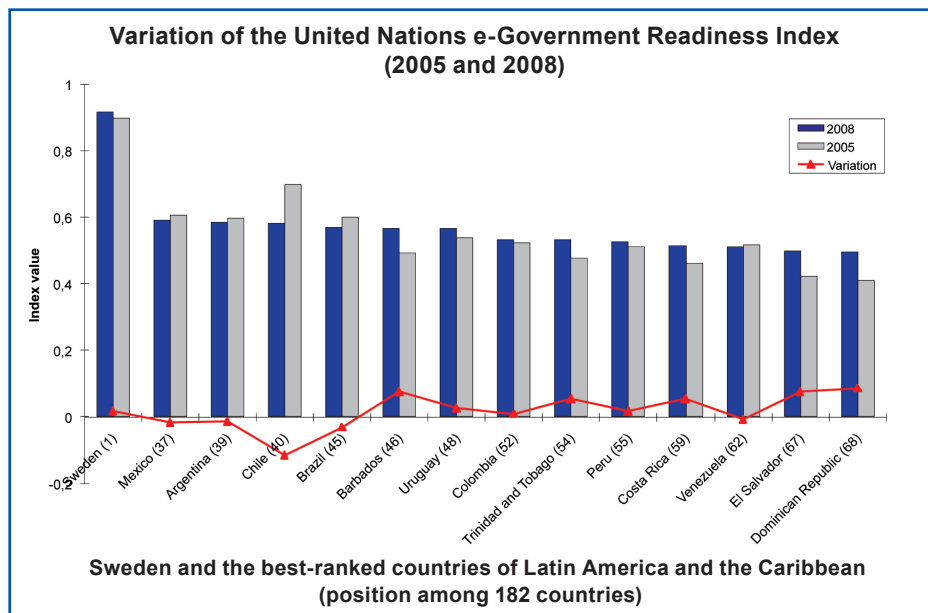
The most unequal region in the world – Latin America – also has the greatest difficulty in gathering taxes and reaching the level of financing its governments require in order to enact indispensable public policies. The challenge of achieving more equitable and cohesive societies necessarily involves the construction of more efficient States that include public policies with a significant redistributive impact. To this end, the application of new information and communications technologies (ICTs) to public administration can and must serve to achieve this objective.

Without a doubt, Latin America and the Caribbean have made important strides in the development of electronic governments and, in some isolated cases (income tax declarations and State purchasing, for example) this progress can be considered as the motor that has given impetus to the use of digital applications. Nevertheless, the region is far from mirroring the results of more developed countries. On the contrary, there are already signs that the divide between them is growing. In 2005, the global classification according to the United Nations E-government Readiness Index (UNPAN, 2005, pp. 196-199), placed Chile, Mexico, Brazil and Argentina among the 35 best-ranked countries. However, in the 2008 Report (UNPAN, 2008, pp. 174-177), not a single Latin American or Caribbean country was classified among the top 35.

In the graph, we need only observe the distance between Sweden (the top-ranked country in the classification) and Mexico (the top-ranked country in the region – in 37th place in 2008) and compare it with the gap that existed between Sweden and Chile (top-ranked country in the region in 2005), to conclude that the gap is widening. It is striking that precisely the four South American countries that were previously among the best-ranked in the world, are those with the most pronounced drop in the value of their e-government readiness index. On the other hand, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, El Salvador and the Dominican Republic are among those that present the most notable improvements.

The domestic gaps within each country are also significant, often repeating the pattern of territorial inequality that exists with the coverage of various public services. It is worth noting that the digital divide between regions is due as much to the deficient development of connectivity and contents at a local government level as to the access problems of segments of the population with low-income and low education levels, those living in rural areas, and for certain types of businesses located in relatively less-developed regions.

Since the 1990s, new technologies (Internet in particular) have had a substantial impact on social behaviour in general, and more specifically, on the way governments can organize



Source: Hernán Moreno, on the basis of United Nations Indexes: *UN Global e-Government Readiness Report 2005 (UNPAN, 2005) and the UN e-Government Survey 2008 (UNPAN, 2008).*

and interact with the public. This does not imply a modification in the preoccupations and/or agendas of governments. On the contrary, they are simply presented in a different way. For a region with such serious wealth-distribution problems, the introduction of new technologies can be of great help, but it can also create new inequalities.

The real challenge is to foster the development of e-government while simultaneously implementing public policies aimed at reforming the State. Both processes must be developed in a way that enables their mutual feedback.

For our countries to take full advantage of the benefits of e-government, new bureaucracies must be created,

which incorporate the full use of ICTs in public administration, allowing citizens to do their diligences and paperwork electronically, from their home or place of work. For this, government agencies must achieve the effective interoperability of their systems, so as to improve the efficiency of their management processes, and so that their actions are made more transparent and effective.

All of these changes must also involve citizens in the oversight of public management so as to improve the function of our democracies. As such, governments must overcome the limits of old bureaucracies and address the shortfalls of those which only incorporate ICTs in a limited manner.

The European Union (EU) offers many examples and lessons for Latin America, given the greater degree of development it has achieved in virtually all of these areas and given the instrumentation of reforms in each of its countries – a process that involved reaching consensus on standards, regulations and legislations. It is for this reason that the “Inclusive political dialogue and exchange of experiences” project, being executed by ECLAC with financial assistance from the EU, offers such great potential for the region’s development. It also gives continuity to the @LIS2 (Alliance for the Information Society - phase 2) Programme which resulted from the political dialogue established in June 1999, in Rio de Janeiro, between the Heads of State and Government of the EU and of Latin America.

The general objectives of the project consist in encouraging the development of a sustainable, competitive, innovative and inclusive information society – goals that are strongly connected to efforts to reduce poverty, inequality and social exclusion, in line with the Millennium Development Goals. In this sense, the challenges for the e-government component of the project gain importance, particularly in the task of modernizing public administrations, both in terms of their internal efficiency and the services they provide to their citizens.

On the one hand, this involves raising awareness among the governments of the region and supporting them in the modernization of their processes for providing public services and managing the public apparatus, based on the interoperability of the networks and information systems of State institutions. On the other hand, it involves pushing for improvements in the conditions for exchanging information among entities within the public administration. This requires strengthening the governance side of e-government, through norms and institutions aimed at achieving information-exchange agreements, homogeneous practices and standards accepted by various public entities.

While progress towards tributary policies has been uneven, there are even more serious shortcomings in tributary administration. The need to increase income tax collection involves challenges that seemed almost insurmountable, until recently. The incorporation of ICTs into tributary administration is starting to show encouraging results which may even promise to resolve the current problems in the future.

In second place, the governments of the region have enormous potential to improve their efficiency. Unfortunately, progress towards this does not depend solely on the inclusion of new technologies in budgetary management. Rather, it requires the incorporation of ICTs at the same time as modernizations in the public sector’s human resources, while also increasing citizen’s control. The management of government acquisitions has no doubt been one of the areas of greatest impact on efficiency – a practice which should be expanded and consolidated.

Thirdly, the public sectors of the countries of the region need to enact changes to enable the gradual construction of new methods of social protection, to replace outdated forms of social security. New protection systems must ensure universal coverage of their services in a reasonable timeframe. The development of e-government is greatly expanding the policy alternatives in this area. For example, the potential for improvements in the registration of beneficiaries of various social programmes and the ability to cross-reference information between various areas of government are among the changes that have enabled many countries in the region to adopt conditional transfer programmes with a high impact on the well-being of the most-needy sectors of their population.

Fourthly, in the process of decentralizing the provision of public services, governments must be weary of the impact on equity and territorial cohesion. In theory, the success of these processes depends on local government’s capacity to gauge the preferences of their citizens and respond to their needs. This would not only improve programme-design but would contribute to the development of local democracy. On the one hand, it must provide channels for greater citizen participation. The public, in turn, will have greater possibilities to exercise effective control over public management. On the other hand, it will provide local governments with the tools they need to monitor their financial state and the transfers they receive from central government.

The challenges that remain are great and they will require simultaneous progress in many directions. However, the success of electronic government in the region will depend largely on governments’ ability to grant their citizens equitable access to these new technologies.

Opinion column:  
**The region's challenges for integrating ICTs into public management initiatives**



Photo: ONGEI

*Jaime Honores Coronado, Chief of Peru's National Electronic Government and Information Office (ONGEI) Thematic coordinator for public management, eLAC2010 - jhonores@pcm.gob.pe*

Public management involves a combination of actions undertaken by an entity in the pursuit of its goals, ends and objectives, based on its priorities. To this end, for local, regional and national governments, information and communications technologies (ICTs) have become one of the most important means for achieving such goals. Not all of the countries of the region are equally able to adequately implement public management within the desired timeframe. Their dimensions are different and geography can be an obstacle in cases where access is difficult. For others, the lack of financial resources represents a serious limitation. Nevertheless, all our populations have the same right to public management that meets their expectations, and if delivered through ICTs, this will be all the easier.

The use of ICTs to facilitate public management also constitutes a combination of challenges for the countries of our region. The first is to create the necessary conditions (in infrastructure and telecommunications) for the delivery of services. Second, the public must be able to make use of the services being provided through ICTs. Third, institutions must generate the contents that citizens require in order to interact with the State. Fourthly, a set of norms must be developed to validate the information that is flowing across the Internet. Finally, in using predefined standards, institutions must successfully exchange information among their databases and make it easier for the public to do official paperwork electronically.

This approach coincides with the parameters set out by the United Nations for ranking countries according to their development and implementation of e-government. According to the latest UN E-Government Survey 2008, the region's progress has been quite heterogeneous and its position with respect to the rest of the world ranges from 37th place (Mexico) to 165th place (Haiti), among 182 nations. With this same uniformity, we can observe progress on issues such as digital signatures, the establishment of standards for the exchange of information among State institutions, interoperability, single-window digital platforms, as well as access to websites and electronic documents. These achievements aim to change the paradigm of public management, which is currently centered on institutions, refocusing it towards citizens and providing value-added public services. So that the countries of our region can arrive at the Ministerial Conference in Lima in 2010 having achieved this is a task for us all.

**XI Regional Conference on Women to analyze gender policies for the information society**

The need to adopt gender-specific policies for the information society was addressed during the Preparatory Meeting of Presiding Officers of the Conference of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Port of Spain from 7-8 July 2009. Delegations highlighted the importance of ICTs for digital literacy, as well as for providing women with information on their rights, non-sexist content and the relevance of their inclusion.

The Presiding Officers agreed to analyze these issues in a side-event on "gender policies for the information society" during the XI Regional Conference on Women, to take place in Brazil in July 2010. Every three years, this subsidiary organ of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN-ECLAC) gathers high-level officials in charge of gender equity and equality in its 33 member countries across the region.

"The role of ICTs and the information society has not previously been addressed by this Conference," explains Sonia Montaña, Officer-in-charge of UN-ECLAC's Division for Gender Affairs (DGA), which also participates in the eLAC Working Group (WG) on Gender and ICTs. "Their inclusion in the agenda demonstrates the increasing priority these issues are occupying across the region, and particularly for feminists."

Agreements were also reached that will contribute to an important number of the activities laid out in the Work Plan of the WG on Gender and ICTs under the eLAC2010 Regional Action Plan. Made up of representatives from 17 countries, this group is working with UN-ECLAC's DGA and its Information Society Programme to fulfill its mandate, which is: "To work towards mainstreaming the gender perspective in the implementation of eLAC2010 and to promote the equal right for men and women to access information, as well as to define, use and adapt ICTs to their needs."

The Presiding Officers accepted UN-ECLAC's proposal to mainstream the gender approach in the elaboration of policies for the information society. It also ensured that there will be a space available for audiovisual and multimedia material on gender issues (and/or material produced by women) during the XI Regional Conference on Women. This aims to promote the exchange of experiences in using ICTs to achieve greater equity and equality between the sexes.

## New indicators established for measuring e-government in the region

More than 20 new indicators for measuring the state of electronic government (e-gov) in the region will be presented by the Working Group on ICT Measurement of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (SCA-ECLAC). Given that e-gov has improved transparency and efficiency of governments and that it allows greater public interaction with institutions, its measurement is of great importance in monitoring the progress of the information society. While some national agencies that work on issues related to e-gov have been measuring their own development, until now there have been no standardized and comparable indicators agreed upon by all of the countries of the region to measure e-gov in a consistent or harmonized manner.

The new e-gov indicators elaborated by SCA-ECLAC, in collaboration with the Observatory for the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean (OSILAC), measure not only the type of access and use of ICTs in governmental organizations, but they also seek to quantify the type of services offered to the public as well as spending on these new technologies. As a result, they establish questions on: the percentage of governmental organizations with corporate networks (LAN, WAN, intranet and extranet); the number with interoperability standards, versus the total number of government entities; the percentage that provide online services for citizens and businesses; the percentage of spending on ICT versus total spending, etc.

These regional indicators are the result of a long collaborative effort with National Statistical Organizations and some of the national agencies and ministries responsible for e-gov in the countries of the region. Created in 2005, the SCA-ECLAC's Working Group on ICT Measurement began elaborating specific e-gov indicators during the Fifth Workshop on Information Society Measurement in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Rio de Janeiro, 6-8 April 2009. The discussion centered around a list of indicators proposed by the Working Group on E-Government (WGEG) of the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development, in a document prepared by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. In May 2009, SCA-ECLAC's Working Group and OSILAC met in Santiago, Chile, and came up with more specific regional indicators, which were sent for feedback and revision by all countries who participate in OSILAC. The regional list of indicators is currently being discussed and will be presented to the Partnership as part of the global process of defining harmonized e-gov indicators.

## Opinion column: Tasks pending for the eLAC Working Group on e-government

*Kelly Neyra*  
Coordinator of the e-gov Working Group (Peru)  
kellyneyra@gmail.com



Photo: ALFA-REDI

In Latin America, the development of local, national and regional policies that give impetus to electronic government (e-gov) as a tool for State modernization is on the rise. To this end, the Regional Action Plan for the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean – eLAC2010 represents a regionally concerted strategy that conceives of information and communications technologies (ICTs) as instruments for economic development and social inclusion.

Considering the progress of the eLAC15 Working Group (from the 2005-2008 period) as well as the mandates of the eLAC2010 Plan, various tasks remain in relation to e-government:

- Strengthening exchanges on e-gov services and using such networks to implement interoperability standards;
- Ensuring that local governments interact with citizens and with other branches of the public administration via the Internet;
- Encouraging the use of electronic documents and digital signatures with evidential weight in government procedures;
- Establishing accessibility mechanisms for government portals that guarantee transactions and citizen access;
- Promoting electronic contracting mechanisms in the public sector; among others.

In light of the various commitments adopted during various high-level meetings, and the agreements at the II Ministerial Conference on the Information Society eLAC2010 (February 2008 in San Salvador), Peru became a protagonist in this area. It was chosen to host the next Ministerial Conference in 2010 and it took on the responsibility of coordinating the thematic area of public management, which covers contents and public services.

As part of our work plan, the WG on E-Government – which is lead by Peru under the supervision of the National Electronic Government and Information Office (ONGEI) – has established a digital group (using the dgroups platform) to encourage open participation and establish a space for debate among a permanent community of researchers at the regional level, as well as among central and local governments. This platform will also serve as an instrument for dialogue with civil society, the private sector and other actors. The goal is to coordinate joint efforts towards the implementation of e-gov strategies as well as to formulate proposals and conclusions for the Ministerial Conference in Lima, in November 2010.

## Red GEALC seeks to consolidate its political support in the region

Over the past five years, the Network of E-Government Leaders of Latin America and the Caribbean (Red GEALC) has initiated a series of mechanisms to generate and disseminate knowledge and encourage cooperation among all the countries of the region in the area of electronic government (e-gov).

More than 4000 public servants have participated in Red GEALC's various online e-gov training courses; the network has financed exchanges for 50 experts across the region through the Horizontal Cooperation Fund (FOCOH); and 195 high-level civil servants and governmental experts have been trained at nine in-person workshops in eight countries, with a participative agenda geared towards practical applications.

Red GEALC has developed an online database of e-government experts, with 300 specialists. It established the venture capital fund FUTRANS, to support the transfer of e-gov solutions from one country to another in the region, which mobilizes resources from the beneficiary country and attracts other potential investors. Moreover, the network has undertaken 15 horizontal cooperation projects, including the transfer of Jamaica's Customs Automated Services (CASE) for the modernization of Antigua and Barbuda's Customs System.

Red GEALC also created the Excellence in Electronic Government awards (excelGOB) and has produced several manuals and guides in Spanish as well as the English publication *Benchmarking eGovernment: Improving the National and International Measurement, Evaluation and Comparison of eGovernment*. The network expects to launch an information system for e-gov applications (e-Govex) and a mechanism to monitor its progress (e-GovMonitor).

Red GEALC originated in 2003 as a proposal of the Government of Chile to the Organization of American States (OAS) for a regional workshop on e-gov that would allow Chile to share its experiences with different Latin American countries. This initiative coincided with the objectives of a project being launched by the OAS and the Institute for Connectivity in the Americas of Canada's International Development Research Center (IDRC-ICA) to promote e-gov in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The idea of establishing a space for dialogue between the various e-gov leaders of Latin America (the Caribbean was not initially involved) arose from the participants at the mee-

ting in Chile. Both the OAS and IDRC-ICA organized a follow-up meeting (Brasilia, May 2004) during which the e-gov directors of the majority of the countries of Latin America decided to create the network and baptize it GEALC. After a long and animated debate, they invited the countries of the Caribbean to join.

"The member countries made the OAS the Technical Secretariat for Red GEALC because of its credibility and stability," explains Miguel Porrúa, e-government coordinator for the Secretariat of Political Affairs of the OAS. Today, Red GEALC is composed of the directors of the agencies responsible for the digital or e-gov strategy in each of the 32 member countries of the OAS, as well as their work team leaders. In recent months, Porrúa says the network has been focusing on what is "surely the most important and most challenging support solicited by the network's members yet: political support."

At Red GEALC's annual meeting, in March 2009, the region's e-gov managers participated along with, for the first time, the ministers in charge of these issues. The event was hosted by the OAS Secretary General, Jose Miguel Insulza. The conclusion was that the region still needs to "consolidate a space for e-government in the discourse of its most relevant actors, public opinion leaders, academic centers, public servant training institutions and international organizations."

Along these lines, Red GEALC maintains close collaboration with ECLAC as an active player in the negotiation and implementation of the eLAC Regional Action Plan. The network is equally working towards each of the 12 goals in the public management chapter of the current eLAC2010 Plan.

### Modernizing Municipal Management

As of August 2009, the MuNet e-Government Programme has provided technical assistance to 21 municipalities across the region in their implementation of electronic government. Created in 2003, by SEDI-OAS and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA-ACDI), the programme promotes the use of ICTs within local governments in order to strengthen their institutional capacities and contribute to regional socio-economic development. Its objectives include: augmenting government efficiency and transparency at the local level and contributing to the modernization of operations related to taxation, registration, licensing, permission granting, etc. To that end, MuNet trains mayors and managers of local governments, offers technical assistance for the formulation of local strategies, and facilitates the transfer of technology with its e-government application package e-Muni.

## Forum on implementing the Ibero-American Charter sets out new roles for governments

With a view to mapping out how to achieve the duties enshrined in the Ibero-American Charter on Electronic Government (CIGE), the Latin American Centre for Development Administration (CLAD) and the Government of Spain organized the first Forum on Strategies for the Implementation of the CIGE in Margarita Island, Venezuela, from 16 to 17 April 2009. The result of a consensus reached by all Ibero-American governments and CLAD, signed in Pucón, Chile in 2007, the CIGE defines and proposes a set of concepts, values and guidelines for the improvement of public management and government's interactions with their citizens.

During the forum in Margarita Island, new roles and actions were proposed for governments, related to: the development of infrastructure, the establishment of conditions for the preservation and continuity of plans, as well as the integration of networks and communities for practical exchange, as well as the need for constant improvement and innovation in public policies. At the same time, concrete actions were set out on interoperability,

the interface between computer systems and electronic public services, the promotion of freeware for electronic government and the development of common databases.

Various rights were also highlighted, including digital inclusion, rights related to the integral development of the information society, public access to information and services, and citizens' participation in public management and e-democracy – all of which were accompanied by recommendations for strengthening their implementation.

In order to further generate CIGE-implementation strategies, CLAD has also established a course as part of the academic programme for 2008-2010 of the Ibero-American School for Administration and Public Policies (EIAPP). Argentina's National Institute for Public Administration (INAP), through its Innovation in Training Programme provides the course through the Moodle TeleINAP Educational Platform.

## E-government training for public servants and civil society

In order to achieve an efficient and transparent electronic government, greater training is needed both for public servants (Goal #41 of eLAC2010 seeks to train 80% of civil servants, particularly decision-makers in the use of ICTs) as well as for key social actors (Goal #42 promotes such training among members of civil society organizations). To maximize the use and increase the potential of ICTs in public management, various courses and workshops are offered for these individuals across the region.

Since 2003, the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development (SEDI) of the Organization for American States (OAS) has been offering the course "Introduction to the Formulation of E-Government Strategies." As of October 2009, 36 editions of this course will have been completed, with a total of 3,500 graduates from all countries of the Americas. These students continue to interact and participate in other training activities through the OAS's Permanent e-Government Forum. Various governments have also offered exclusive editions of this course to train their own employees. During 2009, the OAS launched two new online courses on "Regulatory Aspects of E-Government" and "Interoperability and Inter-Institutional Public Processes." This October, a new course on "Management of E-Government Projects" will also begin. These new courses are financed with the help of Canada's IDRC-ICA and of the Inter-American Development Bank under its Initiative for the Promotion of Regional Public Goods.

The Inter-American Network for E-Government Training (RIF-GE) of the College of the Americas (COLAM), which is part of the Inter-American Organization for Higher Education (IOHE) offers a number of courses aimed at civil servants from national, provincial and local governments in the countries of the Americas. These include: a) Governability, Governance and Digital Government (GGyGD), b) Civic Training for the Information and Knowledge Society (ForCiSIC), and c) E-Government Planning and Evaluation from a civic perspective. Through its ForCiSIC Programme, RIF-GE also offers courses for members of organized civil society, community leaders, social actors, and leaders of institutions for higher education across the Americas.

Spain's Centre for Distance Education for Economic and Technological Development (CEDDET), offers a course titled "the transition towards a new e-Government," offered by its Network of Ibero-American Experts in Public Management (REI-GP), with the assistance of the Spanish National Institute for Public Administration (INAP) and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID). This one-week course, sponsored by RIF-GE and COLAM-IOHE, aims to familiarize participants with the Ibero-American Charter on Electronic Government (CIGE) as well as to determine the obstacles and opportunities for its implementation.

## Social Information Platform supports planning and transparency in Guatemala

In the majority of Latin America's public ministries, analysts spend a significant amount of time collecting data from various sources in different formats; standardizing codes, and then waiting days or even weeks while information units prepare and process the data. This leaves little time for analysis and can even jeopardize the quality of the final results.

In 2006, such problems lead various Guatemalan ministries to band together and create the Integrated Social Information Platform (PISI) in an attempt to connect all their databases and provide the tools needed to make queries, generate reports or statistics and rapidly analyze information. This platform is currently in use in Guatemala's education, health and social policy sectors.

This online platform allows users to select and cross-reference information from various social sectors without the intervention of computer specialists. The resulting information is displayed in a simple and attractive graphic format. One can even project 3D Google maps where data can be further processed, and thematic maps can be generated. Such projections allow one to contextualize information, which is essential when it comes to decision-making and planning.

A public administration that has access to current, accurate and trustworthy information can provide more efficient services, plan more effectively and better-allocate resources to achieve its goals. Having reliable information in a timely manner also leads to more relevant policies, which are more closely linked to the issues they attempt to address.

To develop a health and infrastructure policy, and make optimal use of its resources in the process, the Vice-Presidency of Guatemala needed accurate information about poverty, clean water services and mortality rates. After integrating the databases of the Ministry of Health and the Census data on infrastructure on the PISI, analysts were able to generate high-quality reports in just a couple of hours.

"To make important decisions, one must be able to distinguish between what is important and what is urgent – and for this, trustworthy data is needed, fast" says Sergio Somerville, a policy and planning expert who developed PISI for the USAID Project Dialogue for Social Sector Investment in Guatemala. In order to predict the public requirements for education, Guatemala's Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) integrated Census data on Population and Housing (1994 and 2002) onto its platform. Doing this allowed the Ministry to calculate and predict the demand for education in the coming years.

"This impacts important decisions, such as where to build new schools or establish new health systems, which helps us improve educational coverage and management," says Ramiro Martínez, Deputy Director for the Educational Information and Planning Division, which directly assists Guatemala's Minister of Education. "Before, we had two or three people responding to requests that dedicated 80% of their time to searching for data and spent only 20% on its analysis. Now one person can concentrate almost exclusively on analysis and provide detailed charts or graphs in minutes – or at least within the same day. This has increased our demand and productivity, sped up political decisions, and allowed us to really plan and prevent, thus better-preparing ourselves for the future."

Transparency and accountability are also increased by this platform, which connects directly to the data servers of ministries, in real time. "This allows you to see a graph or chart at the same time as a Minister or civil servant is seeing it," explains Somerville. "This reflects an enormous degree of transparency and I think we have yet to understand how truly transcendental this is."

PISI connects the databases of the Guatemalan ministries of: Education, Public Health and Social Assistance, Finance, the National Statistical Institute, the Secretariat for Programme Planning, and the Secretariat for Food and Nutritional Security, as well as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In the coming months, the ministries of Agriculture and Environment, the Ministry of Governors and the state-owned Bank of Guatemala will also be integrated in the platform.

In order to achieve such integration, an inter- and intra-institutional coordination strategy had to be coined, by which all of the ministerial actors involved had to come up with a common process for producing and administering their data. At the same time, they had to change their perception of how they interacted with information – and evolve from a concept of centralizing information-management in one person, to a more collective approach. An inter-ministerial commission will now be created to administer the growing platform.

PISI has helped unify efforts and better-direct resources for strengthening Guatemala's social services. The results are an important contribution to the analysis and construction of indicators, as well as for monitoring social policies, their management and sustainable development. It has also been exported to neighbouring countries, including El Salvador and Costa Rica, and will be implemented in Brazil in 2010.



## Lessons of a failed attempt to implement e-government from the “bottom-up” in Nicaragua



By Yves Chaix, consultant  
ychaix@ibw.com.ni

The only mistakes one can speak of with any credibility are one's own. As such, this article will need to be a little personalized. My apologies...

In Nicaragua, e-government has been characterized by revolving around specific people rather than institutions. My hiring in 2003 was the result of an individual initiative to put “state procedures and paperwork online”, a project which ended up producing a conceptual framework for the complete implementation of e-government in Nicaragua. At the same time, it was a personal decision of the former director of TELCOR's Project Coordination Unit to suggest that the World Bank take on this consultancy and another individual decision, of the then-director of CONICYT, to create the GO-BeNIC Commission.

### Conceptual framework for an orphan initiative

Twenty months and 2,000 pages later, the first problems arose. My consultancy was orphaned; no institution would assume it because none was tasked with its mandate. So what does a serious and professional consultant do in such a case? Submit his work, say goodbye to his colleagues and go home: cardinal rule of the profession.

Unfortunately I am neither a serious nor very professional consultant so I dedicated the next two years to the systematic violation of this rule in a fruitless attempt to make something happen. I supported the creation of the e-government commission and gave dozens of evangelizing workshops; I assisted with working groups; and in general promoted my own work (anathema!), until I finally had to surrender myself to the evidence: no institution – starting with the Presidency – was going to implement electronic government in Nicaragua.

So I opted to push e-government “from the bottom-up,” with the support of visionary public employees or State intermediaries evangelized by the GOBeNIC Commission to implement e-government at their level in their institution. Alas, this was not the best bet, given that more than half of these visionaries were laid off a few months after the change of government.

The elections of 2006 only ratified this conclusion, with Salvador Vanegas, Secretary of the Presidency affirming that e-government was not their priority. Despite this, Law 691 was recently published, on the simplification of administrative processes, without any reference to “e-government.” This law, in fact, covers half of the bases for e-government, without ever using the word. When laws are passed that relate to e-government but do not even mention the phenomenon, this obviously has an impact on the sustainability of their results, because they lack a conceptual framework.

### Project Terms of Reference did not specify e-gov

In Nicaragua, international lending agencies finance the bulk of ICT projects. Without the recognition of a conceptual framework, neither these lending agencies nor public servants would include the word “e-government” in the Terms of Reference of their projects. Lending agencies simply seek to assign resources and e-government only makes unnecessary noise for them. As a result, projects are conceived in a disjointed way, ignoring issues of interoperability. The number of projects that fit this description easily surpassed what I could personally handle and streamlined all efforts towards maintaining the status quo.

### E-government “from the bottom-up”? but at what cost?

In retrospect, it seems a major error to have imagined that a consultant could single-handedly implement e-government; however, the concept of e-government “from the bottom-up” remains open for discussion. Another of my great mistakes was to have ignored that reusable web services cost approximately 30% more than traditional implementations, and if the projects weren't financed externally, using my own means would be a recipe for economic and personal ruin.

The lesson: don't try to implement electronic government if there is no political will within the State. You can always do something in a specific institution, if you can muster enough support; and later on, the success of that pioneering institution can serve as publicity for the rest of the government's institutions. However, my experience has shown that it is best not to talk about “e-government” with politicians: it simply evokes fear.

*\*The opinions expressed in this article are the sole responsibility of the author and can in no way be taken to reflect the opinions of ECLAC or its donors.*

## New Colombian ICT Law consolidates work towards eLAC2010 goals

By María Isabel Mejía Jaramillo, Director Government Online Programme, Colombia's Ministry of Information and Communications Technologies

With the recent ICT Law passed this 30 July 2009, the Government Online Decree has been transformed into one of the main guides for the information society in Colombia, and is leading the way for a collective process that will gradually increase citizens' relationship with the State. Next, we present Colombia's progress towards each of the 12 e-government goals in the Regional Action Plan eLAC2010.

**Goal 37:** Exchanging knowledge and best practices on the availability of e-government solutions is fundamental for joint efforts in the region. In this sense, Colombia not only maintains an active participation in Red GEALC but it is advancing with bilateral cooperation agreements on e-government with various countries, including Dominican Republic and Costa Rica.



**Goal 38:** Colombia has developed a Governmental Intranet, to facilitate the flow of information between entities with the appropriate levels of performance and availability, using a standards-based interoperability platform for the interaction of solutions and information systems between various entities.

**Goal 39:** Colombia is the only country in the region to have 100% of its local governments online. Our big cities, already offer multiple services online such as tax-payment and transportation-related paperwork. In smaller municipalities, important initiatives are underway, including a certificate for the beneficiaries system online.

**Goal 40:** Colombia has promoted a chain of procedures with methodologies for their identification, prioritization and optimization, prior to being automated. The Single Window for Foreign Trade, the integrated form for the payment of social security contributions, and the business-creation portal have already been implemented, and others are being developed.

**Goal 41:** The Government Online Programme supports institutions with their *Prepárese* portfolio of courses, through which 9,400 public servants were trained in online government during 2007; 15,850 during 2009; and 7,600 as of 31 July 2009.

**Goal 42:** Colombia has opted for a communications strategy that has increased public knowledge from 6 to 52% over the past year alone the *Vive Gobierno en línea* training initiative. Between

January and August of 2009, it has visited eight departments of the country, directly accompanying 35,000 citizens.

**Goal 43:** The use of electronic documents and digital signatures has been regulated since 1999 in Colombia through the Electronic Commerce Law. Moreover, a 2006 Agreement regulates the use of computerized and electronic media for administrative and judicial functions. It is worth noting that this year a new entity for open digital certification has been established.

**Goal 44:** Electronic means of payment have been developed using the same model as the private sector. Various online payment services exist, including the Online Judicial Certificate, with an average 36,000 users per month, or the integrated form for the payment of social security contributions.

**Goal 45:** Having websites with relevant, useful and timely information is the main goal of the Online Information phase. According to the contents defined in the Manual for the Implementation of the Strategy, 81% of the sectors of our national public administration are at a "high" level of implementation.

**Goal 46:** The Government Online Strategy works in an articulated manner with various public institutions to strengthen accessibility in, and to, the Government, an issue also dealt with in our *Prepárese* courses in 2009, with a class on introduction to the accessibility of Web contents.

**Goal 47:** At [www.contratos.gov.co](http://www.contratos.gov.co), 2,300 registered institutions, from all branches of government, publish information regarding their hiring and contracting processes, which included 53,365 processes worth US\$11,25 million dollars in the first seven months of 2009. The Electronic System for Public Contracting, which allows users to complete their contracting completely online, will start functioning in the last trimester of 2009.

**Goal 48:** The Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi has led the implementation of a combination of policies, standards, technologies and organizations that are working together to produce, share and use geographical information that is necessary for the country's development, under the denomination Colombian Infrastructure for Spatial Data.

## ICT-related news briefs

### ECLAC to help El Salvador implement e-government and its digital strategy

As part of a wide-ranging cooperation agreement signed by the President of El Salvador, Mauricio Funes, and ECLAC Executive Secretary Alicia Bárcena, ECLAC's Information Society Programme will provide technical assistance to El Salvador's new agency for Technological and Computer Innovation with implementation and planning for its digital strategy. It will also help execute El Salvador's e-government plan and help standardize the websites of State institutions. ECLAC will work with the Ministry of Education to elaborate pedagogical policies, and adopt educational technologies, distance education, and teacher training. Help will equally be provided in the area of e-commerce. [Source: ECLAC](#)

### New Ibero-American Charter on Citizen Participation in Public Management signed

The XI Latin American Conference of Ministers of Civil Service and State Reform, held in Lisboa, Portugal, from 25-26 June 2009, concluded that citizen participation in governance is integral to democracy, adopting the Ibero-American Charter of Citizen Participation in Public Management. This instrument, prepared and promoted by the Latin American Centre for Development Administration (CLAD), emphasizes citizens "rights" to participation and establishes mechanisms to ensure such rights are exercised. This Charter will provide direction to the governments of Latin America to assure the viability of citizen participation in public management. [Source: CLAD](#)

### 'Paraguay 2.0' on its way with the digitalization of the country's public services

To improve the relationship between the State, its citizens and business, e-government is taking hold in Paraguay, by means of a technical and scientific cooperation agreement between Paraguay and Mexico. Financed by the European Union, the initiative contemplates the use of ICTs for improving government productivity and efficiency. "The idea is to provide basic information about each process in each of the State's institutions, by Internet or other media such as the Call Centre, mobile government over PDA devices, and others," explains José Luis Legorreta García, director of México's Digital Government Strategy. Incorporating Web 2.0 concepts in public administration involves all of the ministries and public entities, and will allow for "greater public participation through tools such as chat, blogs, forums, etc." [Source: La Nación \(Paraguay\)](#)

### World Bank offers to finance telecommunications and e-government in the Caribbean

In an interview with BBC Caribbean, World Bank telecoms specialist Juan Navas-Sabater said that the Bank had written to governments in the region with funding proposals to improve Internet connectivity in the Caribbean. According to a recent World Bank report, while the Caribbean has high rate of mobile phone penetration (reaching 100% in some islands), there is a marked gap in Internet connectivity, for which the average is just 5%. In Jamaica, only one in seven people has a personal computer. As a result, the Bank is offering governments financing, which they can use to improve submarine infrastructure, create or stimulate a software industry, or maximize their e-government services. [Source: BBC Caribbean.com and Jamaica Observer](#)

### Electronic kiosks for government services now in place in Mexican State of Durango

Ten kiosks to be installed in plazas, malls and public buildings in the Lagunera region of Durango will facilitate the implementation of procedures and services such as obtaining a birth, marriage or death certificate in minutes, as well as report cards for the State's public elementary and secondary schools. These interactive kiosks will reduce the influx of citizens in government offices, decrease levels of corruption involved in official paperwork, and streamline services. To this end, the Comptroller's Secretariat will continue with the expansion of its E-Government Programme. To date, the State of Durango now has 25 interactive kiosks, 15 installed in the capital and ten more in municipalities. [Source: Milenio](#)

### Chile creates ranking to measure its progress towards e-government

Although Chile is a leader in Latin America when it comes to electronic government (according to the World Economic Forum), until now it did not have a tool to measure the country's technological progress. Nevertheless, last year 30 public organizations underwent an evaluation in order to construct the first ranking to measure the degree of maturity of this process of change. The methodology is the work of the Computer Engineering Faculty of the University of Federico Santa María, which worked with 100 civil servants in 30 public dependencies over the course of a year. Together, they evaluated each office individually, based on a list of 17 criteria. The Ministry of the Economy will institutionalize this model as of 2010 to evaluate 200 institutions per year. [Source: El Mercurio](#)

## Latest publications on ICTs in public management



**The Global Information Technology Report 2008-2009**  
*World Economic Forum. March 2009. 387 pp.*  
 This report ranks all the countries of the world in relation to their technological development, using various indexes that include the priority their government assigns to ICTs, their acquisition of advanced technology, their e-government preparedness, and the importance of ICTs in the government's vision of the future.

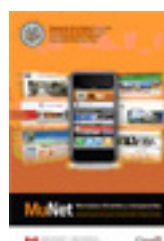


**Methodological Guide for the E-Government System 2009**  
*Estrategia Digital, Chile. 2009. 113 pp.*  
*(Spanish only)*

This guide presents the technical requirements of Chile's E-Government System, which seeks to contribute to the use of ICTs to improve public services and information, simplify institutional support processes and facilitate the creation of channels for increased transparency and public participation.



**UN E-Government Survey 2008: From E-Government to Connected Governance**  
*UNPAN/UNDESA. 2008. 246 pp.*  
 This survey assesses the e-government readiness of the 192 Member States of the UN according to a quantitative composite index of e-readiness based on website assessment, telecommunication infrastructure, and human resource endowment.



**MuNET: Transparent and efficient municipalities**  
*SEDI-OAS. April 2009. 80 pp.*  
*(Spanish only)*

This publication details the development of the MuNet Project, its activities undertaken in 21 municipalities, as well as its impact, lessons learned, and future projections.



**Study of the perspectives for harmonizing cyber-crime legislation in Latin America**  
*UNCTAD. June 2009. 75 pp. (Spanish only – in the process of translation to English)*  
 Given the growing interactions of governmental entities by electronic means, this study focuses on the creation and adaptation of legislative frameworks that promote confidence and security for online transactions in Latin America.



**Educating for Electronic Government: Learning experiences to share and transfer**  
*INAP-Argentina and RIF-GE July 2009. 99 pp. (Spanish only)*

This manual aims to activate a process of dissemination and knowledge-exchange, by presenting a general vision and case studies of the Training Innovation Programme (INAP) in its Electronic Government education and training processes.



**ICT4D 2009: Extending Reach and Increasing Impact**  
*World Bank. 2009. 313 pp.*  
 This study examines broadband and mobile connectivity and presents a framework for the application of e-government. It also analyses the experiences of various countries in terms of policies and institutional dispositions for e-government as well as the development of local ICT industries.



**Electronic Government in Mexico Public Administration Division – CIDE**  
*November 2008. 58 pp. (Spanish only)*  
 This document presents the current state of e-government in Mexico and identifies the progress and major challenges still faced for achieving better results. The document begins with a brief literature review to frame the data presented in the following sections.

This newsletter has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of ECLAC's Information Society Programme and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

ECLAC, SOCINFO Programme, Division of Production, Productivity and Management - Dag Hammarskjöld 3477, Vitacura, Santiago, Chile – Phone: +562 210 2239 or +562 210 2000 Fax: +562 210 2590 - Internet site: [www.eclac.org/socinfo](http://www.eclac.org/socinfo) - Email: [socinfo@eclac.org](mailto:socinfo@eclac.org)