UNITED NATIONS



Distr. LIMITED E/ESCWA/ICTD/2008/2 14 April 2008 ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

REPORT

WORKSHOP ON ESTABLISHING PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS FOR ICT INITIATIVES RIYADH, 17-19 FEBRUARY 2008

Summary

While partnership is considered an important mechanism for building the information society in the ESCWA region, stakeholders have not yet harnessed the numerous challenges and opportunities associated with cooperating and partnering together. There are several practices for cooperation within any newly-founded partnership; different stakeholders address similar issues differently within the scope of their mandate and strategic development goals. Specific partnership models, including the public-private partnership (PPP) model, can be adopted to build on the individual strengths of the two sectors.

The Workshop on Establishing Public Private Partnerships for ICT Initiatives (Riyadh, 17-19 February 2008) was jointly organized by ESCWA, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) office in Riyadh and the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) in Saudi Arabia. The Workshop involved 32 participants, including policymakers and industry leaders in information and communications technology (ICT). Its main objective was to increase the capacity of public and private institutions in ESCWA member countries of the Gulf subregion in terms of establishing PPPs focused on building the information society at the national and regional levels.

The first two days of the Workshop included six training modules on the strategic, operational and organizational aspects of PPP, with topics covering rationale and objectives, legal and regulatory frameworks, project finance, and tendering and procurement, among others. Additionally, participants presented case studies aimed at highlighting examples of successful PPP projects in the region. The third day was devoted to presentations from MCIT to introduce the framework of their e-government initiative, which is being officially implemented through PPP; and a panel discussion recommending priority areas and modalities for promoting PPPs.

The Workshop recommended setting priorities for PPP projects in the Gulf subregion and building trust between the public and private sectors. The need for transparency and accountability from both sides was also stressed, as was the importance of the Government's role in leadership and law enforcement.

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Introduction

- 1. Partnership is considered one of the most important mechanisms for building the information society and is the basis of the Regional Plan of Action for building the Information Society (RPoA), which was developed by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). The partnership model suggested in RPoA involves the following stakeholders: high-impact entrepreneurs; mature national, regional and international firms; governments; universities; investors; donors; and international and/or regional organizations.
- 2. The stakeholders for building the information society in the ESCWA region have not yet harnessed the numerous opportunities associated with cooperating and partnering together. Development and investment patterns in the region tend to favour such secure sectors as real estate and commercial trade over more innovative and technically complex sectors, including the information and communications technology (ICT) sector. While countries of the region share a common language and culture and complementary resources, very few projects have taken advantage of these commonalities in order to build the information society.
- 3. There are several practices for cooperation within any newly-founded partnership; different stakeholders will address similar issues differently within the scope of their mandate and strategic development goals. The size of some projects could require multi-stakeholder partnerships that involve the public sector, the private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other international agencies, thereby combining their strengths in various areas in order to achieve the desired objectives. Specific partnership models, including the public-private partnership (PPP) model, need to be adopted to build on the individual strengths of the two sectors.²
- 4. The PPP model is heavily influenced by cultural, behavioural and historical values of the region and its countries. This region has very few success stories in PPP. In recent years, there have been attempts among ESCWA member countries to develop ICT partnerships. Examples of these PPPs span different dimensions from joint investments in Egypt, to build-operate-transfer (BOT) models in Lebanon, to recent revenue-sharing schemes in the Syrian Arab Republic. Some of these attempts represent success stories, while others have not contributed enough to the national and regional goals. It is essential to study and analyse best modalities for PPP, and to benefit from lessons learnt in order to maximize the odds of success for current and potential PPPs in the region.
- 5. At the initiative of ESCWA, the Workshop on Establishing Public Private Partnerships (PPP) for ICT Initiatives was held in Riyadh, 17-19 February 2008, and was jointly organized by ESCWA, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) office in Riyadh, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) in Saudi Arabia.
- 6. The Workshop is in line with Millennium Development Goal 8 on "developing a global partnership for development"; ESCWA's Strategic Framework 2006-2007 "expected accomplishment (b): activated partnership for implementing ICT projects to achieve socio-economic development, with particular emphasis on the Millennium Development Goals"; and the RPoA, which was developed by ESCWA.
- 7. The Workshop aimed primarily at building the capacity of public and private institutions in ESCWA member countries in terms of establishing PPPs focused on building the information society at the national and regional levels. The Workshop involved 25 participants from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), including ICT policymakers and industry leaders.

¹ Based on a strategic framework, the Regional Plan of Action (RPoA) is specifically designed to trigger partnerships in the ESCWA and Arab regions, and to induce interactive participation of a broad spectrum of stakeholders. It takes into consideration the challenges associated with maintaining an integral and sustainable effort for building the information society in the region, with the aim of strengthening inter-Arab cooperation in a framework of partnership that embraces all stakeholders.

² However, there are also public-public and public-international partnerships and their combinations. In all such partnerships, national or regional barriers need to be removed.

8. During the first two days, six training modules were given by an expert from the Institute of Public Private Partnerships (IP3) on the strategic, operational and organizational aspects of PPP. Topics covered the rationale, objectives and policies for PPPs in ICT; legal and regulatory frameworks; risk and feasibility analysis; tendering and procurement techniques; project finance; and performance monitoring and regulation of PPP projects. Additionally, ESCWA showcased examples of PPP success stories in the region. On the third and final day, MCIT presented the framework for its e-government initiative, "Yesser", which is currently being implemented following a PPP paradigm and which has been officially adopted as the driving mechanism for e-government services and transactions in Saudi Arabia. The Workshop also included two panel discussions on the first and final days, and presented recommendations on priority areas for PPP in the region.

I. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9. As a result of the Workshop discussions, particularly the panel discussion, the participants agreed on the following:
- (a) The role of a legal and regulatory framework for PPPs is vital to its success. While most GCC countries have embraced the importance of PPP projects and have set up the process to initiate the PPP track for ICT projects, the majority still do not fully recognize the importance of PPP policies as a starting point for the PPP process. Consequently, governments need to be the driving force behind the creation and implementations of PPP policies;
- (b) There are several challenges and obstacles in using PPPs in ICT projects in the region, including a lack of understanding, particularly on the public sector side, regarding the true costs and benefits of PPP in ICT projects. As such, there is a need for capacity-building and education within governmental institutions on the benefits of PPP in providing e-services. Moreover, PPP in itself can act as a vehicle for change in management and capacity-building within governments;
- (c) PPP requires genuine partnership between the public and private sector, rather than merely the client/contractor relationship that is prevalent. There is often a sense of skepticism and mistrust between the two sectors that needs to be addressed and replaced with a more open and collaborative approach. Concerted efforts need to be made on both sides to build trust. For example, Government institutions could provide incentives to the private sector by compensating private firms for proposals. Private firms need to be reassured that their novel ideas and proposals will not be exploited and that they will have a chance to provide a return on their creativity;
- (d) Trust alone is not sufficient for the success of PPPs. Governments have an important role in assuming leadership, promoting transparency and enforcing laws. The e-government initiative by Saudi Arabia, for example, was supported by a decree from the Council of Ministers and is being sponsored by King Abdullah;
- (e) The role of the private sector in creating and implementing PPPs needs to be clearly defined. While firms are often viewed as contractors executing specific tasks, with substantial resources to draw from, in fact these firms need to be embraced as full partners and contributors in the development of the information society. The private sector must be viewed as innovating and responsible partners rather than as profit-driven institutions. Additionally, they need to be challenged and encouraged to come up with innovative business models for the provision of efficient and low-cost e-services to customers;
- (f) Promoting innovation is perhaps one of the most difficult challenges for the successful use of PPPs. Innovation needs to be fostered through incubators and by promoting entrepreneurship, especially within the public sector;
- (g) E-services must focus on customer satisfaction and citizen-centricity, as indicated by success stories from within and outside the region. Given that e-readiness indices for ESCWA member countries rank below average in terms of the provision of e-services, a change in the mindset of Government institutions is also required in order to make it a top priority to provide the most efficient and cost-effective services to citizens;

- (h) In order to encourage customer trust and satisfaction even further, the implementation of pilot projects is essential for proof of new concepts. End users need to make sure that tangible results are provided, thereby building their trust;
- (i) Transparency and accountability from both the public and private sectors are crucial factors to the success of any PPP project. Clear timeframes for implementation must be set and agreed upon by both the public and private sectors, with measures in place for revisions and progress updates. The Saudi e-government initiative, for example, aims to issue PPP progress reports every six months.

II. DISCUSSION TOPICS

10. The subjects addressed during the Workshop sessions are summarized below.

A. RATIONALE, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES FOR PPPS IN ICT

11. The first module defined the goals and objectives of public private partnerships, as well as their added benefits in ICT and, specifically, e-government projects. These benefits included avoiding costs to Governments, and improving efficiency and quality of services and technology transfer to the private sector. It further expanded on different techniques for forging PPPs: service contracting; management contracting; leasing; build-operate-transfer (BOT); build-own-operate (BOO); and concessions. It stressed the need for careful understanding of the needs, best fit, preparation and commitment required before selecting the best option for a PPP transaction.

B. LEGAL, REGULATORY AND INSTITUTIONAL OPTIONS FOR PPPS IN ICT

12. The second module addressed the role of PPPs within overall ICT sector policy and institutional reforms. It presented global statistics on PPP investments in telecommunications infrastructure, including telecoms investments by region and investments in ESCWA member countries. Moreover, the module highlighted PPP legal, institutional and regulatory (LIR) framework good practices and select PPP LIR frameworks for public sector support, in addition to risks associated with public sector support and how to minimize them. A case study, entitled "Partnerships Victoria", which is an LIR framework for PPP in Victoria, Australia, was also discussed and the most important lessons learned were summarized. Setting clear objectives, properly analysing risks and flexibility are among those lessons.

C. PPP PROJECT APPRAISAL, FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS AND RISK ALLOCATION STRUCTURING TECHNIQUES FOR ICT

13. The third module addressed PPP project identification and selection by highlighting constraints, common characteristics and examples of sectors where it has been applied. PPP feasibility analysis techniques were outlined, including technical, economic, financial and environmental aspects. Risk structuring techniques were discussed in the form of allocation matrices, which stressed the important point that it is best to allocate particular risks to the party (public or private) that is most able to manage such risks. A case study, entitled "BOO computerization of land transport office in the Philippines", was also presented in order to illustrate such key success factors in PPPs as encouraging a proactive approach, creating jobs and empowerment, promoting proper regulation and ensuring long-term competitiveness of public services.

D. TENDERING AND PROCUREMENT TECHNIQUES FOR PPPS IN ICT

14. The fourth module discussed the purpose, goals and objectives of PPP procurement. Different PPP procurement options, depending on the scale of the project, were outlined; and PPP procurement steps were identified, including appointment of the Government project team, implementation of the recommendations of the PPP feasibility analyses, preparation and issuance of pre-qualification documents and development of PPP bid documents. A case study on the five-year ICT Network PPP Procurement of Johannesburg, South Africa, was also presented to illustrate good practices for PPP tendering and procurement.

E. NEGOTIATING CONTRACTS AND FINANCING PPP PROJECTS IN ICT

15. The fifth module introduced the basics of project finance for ICT PPPs. It covered the procedure for preparing, conducting and finalizing contract negotiations, including the benefits of preparing a checklist for conducting and finalizing PPP contract negotiations. Additionally, it illustrated good practices and highlighted the importance of reaching financial closure. Project risks, including technological, financial, environmental and political risks were highlighted, along with ways to distribute these risks among the parties involved. Finally, the module touched on credit enhancement techniques for ICT PPPs, including raising tariffs, decreasing operating and maintenance costs; increasing equity, and partial risk/partial credit guarantees.

F. TECHNIQUES FOR PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND CONTRACT COMPLIANCE FOR ICT PPPS

16. The sixth module highlighted techniques for the regulation and performance monitoring of PPPs. It stressed the importance of setting up PPP units, which are institutions that enforce contracts and monitor the level of services provided. Moreover, it illustrated the types of regulation used, namely, regulation by contract and regulation by commission. Other topics covered included methods for managing requests for adjustments in contract prices through the rate of return regulation or price-cap regulation; measuring and monitoring ICT contractor performance; and managing requests to revise and renegotiate contracts. With a view to ensuring achievability, the module stressed the importance of using such key performance indicators as the number and timings of ICT connections, volume of electronic transactions provided and the number of justified complaints from customers.

G. PARTICIPANT CASE STUDIES AND PRESENTATIONS

- 17. On the second and third days, participants from member countries presented case studies on successful PPPs across the region in two different sessions.
- 18. The presentation by Mr. Ahmad-Bassam Oueidat, entitled "PPP for ICT development in Lebanon", was distributed among the Workshop participants and highlighted several Lebanese PPP initiatives in ICT. It stressed the importance of PPP mechanisms in implementing Lebanon's national e-strategy and outlined several key reasons for the use of PPP, including allowing public administrations to focus on core policy and business issues while the private sector partner takes over ICT production issues; helping to reduce risks through the formal assessment of solutions available in the market; helping e-government to improve online services; and enabling the private sector to gain insight into the structure and functioning of the public sector, thereby improving specific government-oriented solutions. The presentation also gave examples of successful PPP projects in ICT, including the "PC for All" Project, PCA Internet Point of Presence (PiPOP) and Berytech, which is the Lebanese incubator for technology and health funded by the European Union (EU) and represents perhaps the most prominent example of using PPP for ICT initiatives in Lebanon. The presentation concluded with an overview of the design and implementation stages for PPP in e-government applications, as well as challenges and opportunities.
- 19. ESCWA's regional adviser, Mr. Abdulilah Dewachi, discussed the guiding principles and modes of ICT partnerships in the presentation, entitled "Building ICT partnerships". Placing partnerships in the context of WSIS and highlighting the regional status in terms of barriers to success and current investment priorities, he pointed out that most of the investments in the ESCWA region are in real estate and trade, with knowledge industries ranked significantly lower. The presentation also gave examples of partnership in ESCWA ICT projects, including Networking Academies for Iraq's Universities and ICT in Education for Iraq.
- 20. UNDP consultant, Mr. Khairil Yusof, presented alternative mechanisms for achieving the goals of PPPs, namely, by highlighting the benefits of using open technologies and contrasting them with the use of vendor-specific solutions in implementing PPPs. He noted that PPPs could be a successful and lucrative partnership for both the public and private sectors. In the Asia Pacific region, for example, public sector spending in PPP is expected to exceed \$32 billion by 2011. Moreover, PPP can provide the private sector with access to Governments, who are not merely ICT users but have the power to influence entire

economies, and can act as a vehicle for the marketing and deployment of vendor products. The presentation further highlighted the problems associated with proprietary solutions, including vendor lock-in, and presented the alternative types of open technologies that can be used (open source, open standards and open content). Such challenges to the use of open technologies as the difficulty of monitoring usage and outputs were also addressed.

- 21. ESCWA's ICT Policies Team Leader, Mr. Mansour Farah, also gave a successful example of PPP in the region in the presentation entitled "ESCWA's Regional Plan of Action (RPoA) for Building the Information Society". The main objective of the RPoA is to build sustainable and inclusive information societies in the region, propose a strategic framework, foster partnerships and achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The RPoA was the result of collaborative efforts starting with the Arab ICT strategy adopted by the Arab Summit in 2001 through to ESCWA Regional Preparatory Conference for WSIS in 2004. The presentation also highlighted the strategic framework for the RPoA, as well as the suggested methodology for projects and programmes, and the implementation modality. The Information Society Portal for the ESCWA Region (ISPER) was also introduced, which is aimed at enhancing partnerships in development work and at deploying modern online tools for collaboration among stakeholders.
- 22. Mr. Suhail Al-Almaee, e-government consultant at MCIT and PPP expert, gave a presentation, entitled "Saudi e-government PPP", in two parts, namely: a first part, which outlined the framework of the "Yesser" programme; and a second, which focused on building relationships. The presentation offered a definition of PPP, its rationale, objectives and challenges. It also presented the major project phases in the "Yesser" PPP framework, namely: readiness assessment, PPP policy framework, PPP manuals, PPP templates and gap analysis. Several PPP models were presented, including the shared revenue model that is the preferred choice in Saudi Arabia, and the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders were outlined. The second part of the presentation detailed the different stages of the PPP project life cycle as follows: inception, analysis, procurement, private partner, contract management, project management, auditing, management review and closure. The presentation concluded with setting the priority agenda for PPP within the e-government initiative, the most important elements of which are establishing a central PPP authority, addressing conflicts of interest, assessing risks and setting clear criteria for PPP selection.

H. GROUP DISCUSSIONS

- 23. Group discussions took place on the first day, moderated by Mr. Nawaf Al-Daigy, Manager of Change Management and Client Relations at "Yesser". The discussions touched on several themes, including the need to create a policy and regulatory framework as the starting point for developing ICT PPPs; the importance of attracting innovation and creating incentives for the private sector to be involved in the PPP process; the need for ICT capacity-building in Government institutions; the need for a change in the mindset towards the provision of e-services with a "citizen-centric" focus; and the significance of PPP not just in terms of securing funding, which is not a main concern in the Gulf subregion, but rather to facilitate technology transfer and change management within the public sector.
- 24. Several examples of successful PPP initiatives in the region, whether implemented or in their initial stages, were highlighted. The e-government initiative in Saudi Arabia was frequently cited. Other examples in Saudi Arabia include the Omra system, which was developed in 2001 by the private sector under the supervision of the Ministry of Hajj and remains a very effective and powerful tool, thereby connecting several ministries and agencies. The case of the Jeddah Municipality was equally raised to underscore the length of time some governmental transactions can take leading to customer frustration. With regard to other countries in the Gulf subregion, Bahrain started strategic planning in 2006 for its e-government initiative, which will be implemented through PPP and which aims to provide 165 online services within three years by collecting services from all ministries in one portal.
- 25. An expert panel concluded the final day of the Workshop, with the objective of recapping the key points learned during the Workshop and exploring the roadmap and future of PPP in ICT in the Gulf subregion. The panel discussion was facilitated by Mr. Ayman el-Sherbiny, Information Technology Officer in ESCWA/ICTD. The list of panelists included representatives from MCIT, ESCWA and the public and private sectors in GCC countries. Discussion centred on challenges and obstacles to PPP in ICT in the Gulf

subregion, the role of the private sector in ensuring the success of PPPs, and the need to change the mindset of the public and private sectors when partnering with each other. Moreover, the panel tackled specific milestones and pilot projects set by MCIT in the implementation of its e-government initiative. Recommendations were made to bring the full benefits of PPP to stakeholders entrusted to build the information society in the ESCWA region.

26. It was generally agreed that PPP is not a goal in itself, rather a means to an end. In the context of ICT, and particularly for building a regional information society, PPPs are considered as means to achieve socioeconomic development goals.

III. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. VENUE AND DATE

27. The Meeting was held at Al-Maqsourah for Banquets and Conferences in Riyadh during 17-19 February 2008.

B. OPENING

- 28. Mr. Ali al-Soma, Director General of the e-Government Programme at MCIT, delivered the opening speech and welcomed the participants to the Workshop. He emphasized the aim of disseminating knowledge on using PPPs for ICT initiatives in general and on e-governments transactions in particular. He pointed out that the Workshop was an initiative on the part of ESCWA and a collaborative effort with UNDP, "Yesser" and IP3, to exchange ideas and experiences and help participants from GCC countries to adopt PPPs in government services. He concluded with a brief outline on the e-government initiative PPP framework in Saudi Arabia.
- 29. Mr. Nasser Shammout, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative, highlighted the benefits and gains that ICT could provide in terms of increasing efficiency and productivity. Moreover, ICT services in particular needed PPPs in order to make them work. He went on to highlight UNDP's aims for capacity-building and using local expertise in promoting socio-economic development, and emphasized that UNDP liked to benefit from experiences in other countries, including those presented in the Workshop.
- 30. Mr. Mansour Farah, Senior Information Technology Officer and ICT Policies Team Leader of ICTD in ESCWA, elaborated on the aims of the Workshop, namely: to increase capacity-building in creating PPPs, with a focus on building the information society regionally and nationally; and to use PPPs for social and economic development. He pointed out that PPPs were affected by cultural and educational values, and that there were very few success stories in the region, despite some trials in PPPs for ICT. He concluded by mentioning that the Workshop would discuss operational and theoretical aspects of PPP, and would emerge with guidelines for PPPs in ICT.

C. PARTICIPANTS

31. The Workshop was attended by 25 participants from three ESCWA member countries in the Gulf subregion, namely: Bahrain, Oman and Saudi Arabia, including experts from the academic sector and public sector and business community. There were also seven participants from Malaysia, the United States of America and international organizations. The list of participants is contained in annex I of this report.

D. AGENDA

- 32. The agenda of the Meeting is summarized and set forth below.
 - 1. Opening and welcoming notes.
 - 2. Training modules (1-3):
 - (a) Rationale, objectives and policies for PPPs in ICT;
 - (b) Legal, regulatory and institutional options for PPPs in ICT;
 - (c) PPP project appraisal, feasibility analysis and risk allocation structuring techniques for ICT.

- 3. PPP for ICT development in Lebanon and challenges for e-government (replaced with a group discussion).
- 4. Training modules (4-6):
 - (a) Tendering and procurement techniques for PPPs in ICT;
 - (b) Negotiating PPP contracts and financing PPP projects in ICT;
 - (d) Techniques for performance monitoring and contract compliance for ICT PPPs.
- 5. Participant presentations:
 - (a) Building Partnerships in ICT;
 - (b) Public-Private Partnerships and Open Technologies;
 - (c) ESCWA's Regional Plan of Action (RPoA) for Building the Information Society;
 - (d) Saudi e-Government PPP.
- 6. Panel discussion on the future of PPPs in the ESCWA region.
- 7. Closing session.

E. DOCUMENTS

33. A list of the documents submitted to the Workshop is contained in annex II of this report, and is available on the ESCWA website at: http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetails.asp? referenceNum=644E.

Annex I*

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Annex II

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Title

1. Training modules:

Rationale, objectives and policies for PPPs in ICT

Legal, regulatory and institutional options for PPPs in ICT

PPP project appraisal, feasibility analysis and risk allocation structuring techniques for ICT

Tendering and procurement techniques for PPPs in ICT

Negotiating PPP contracts and financing PPP projects in ICT

Techniques for performance monitoring and contract compliance for ICT PPP

2. Presentations:

PPP for ICT development in Lebanon and challenges for e-government

Building Partnerships in ICT

Public-private partnerships and open technologies

ESCWA's Regional Plan of Action (RPoA) for Building the Information Society

Saudi e-Government PPP