

# Open Forum “Creating digital public infrastructure that empowers people”

## Background Paper

### Introduction

In the 21st century, digital technologies have revolutionized the way governments interact with their citizens and deliver public services. Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) refers to the foundational digital platforms that support vital society-wide functions, such as digital identification, digital payments, data exchange, and information systems. DPI has the transformative potential to empower people by providing efficient, accessible, and inclusive public services, fostering transparency, and driving societal progress. This background paper explores the concept of creating DPI that empowers people, emphasizing the importance of inclusivity, accessibility, and stakeholder collaboration.

### The Power of Digital Public Infrastructure

DPI plays a pivotal role in enhancing citizens' lives by enabling easy access to government services and facilitating secure digital transactions. With DPI in place, citizens can access essential services from any part of the country, reducing geographical barriers and increasing service efficiency. For instance, digital identification systems streamline administrative processes, reducing paperwork and bureaucratic delays. Similarly, digital payment platforms enhance financial inclusion, enabling citizens, including those in remote and underserved areas, to participate fully in the economy.

DPI also bridges the gap between the public and private sectors, fostering interoperability and seamless data exchange. This collaboration enhances the efficiency of public service delivery and creates an enabling environment for data-driven innovation. It enables public-private partnerships to address societal challenges effectively and drive sustainable development.

### Inclusivity and Accessibility

Creating DPI that empowers people requires a strong emphasis on inclusivity and accessibility. Governments must consider the diverse needs of their citizens, including vulnerable and marginalized groups. Addressing the digital divide is essential to ensure that no one is left behind in the digital era. Governments need to deploy strategies that promote digital literacy, especially among underserved populations, to enable them to access and benefit from digital services.

Moreover, DPI must be designed with universal design principles in mind, ensuring that digital platforms are accessible to people with disabilities. Implementing user-centric design principles can enhance the user experience and make public services more user-friendly, irrespective of individuals' technical proficiency.

### Stakeholder Collaboration

Developing DPI that empowers people necessitates a multi-stakeholder approach, involving collaboration among the government, private sector, civil society, and citizens. Governments should actively engage citizens in the decision-making process, seeking their feedback and insights. Open dialogue and transparent governance contribute to building trust and ensuring that DPI initiatives genuinely address societal needs.

Engaging with the private sector is equally critical as they bring technological expertise and innovative solutions. Public-private partnerships can drive the implementation of DPI projects, leveraging private sector resources and expertise while maintaining public interest and accountability.

### **Data Privacy and Security**

As DPI involves the collection and exchange of vast amounts of data, data privacy and security become paramount concerns. Governments must establish robust data protection frameworks and adhere to international best practices to safeguard citizens' privacy. Transparency in data collection and usage is crucial to maintaining public trust in DPI initiatives.

Furthermore, the potential for data-driven business models and innovation should be balanced with the protection of citizens' rights. Governments must strike a balance between encouraging innovation and ensuring data privacy, avoiding scenarios that could lead to the exclusion or exploitation of individuals.

### **International Cooperation**

In a globally interconnected world, international cooperation is vital in developing DPI that empowers people. Standard-setting and knowledge exchange among nations can accelerate the development of interoperable and secure DPI ecosystems. Sharing best practices and learning from each other's experiences can significantly benefit countries at different stages of DPI implementation.

### **Conclusion**

Creating digital public infrastructure that empowers people is a transformative endeavour that requires careful consideration of inclusivity, accessibility, data privacy, and stakeholder collaboration. DPI has the potential to revolutionize public service delivery, fostering transparency, and driving societal progress. By adopting a multi-stakeholder approach and leveraging international cooperation, governments can build robust and inclusive DPI ecosystems that positively impact citizens' lives and contribute to sustainable development. Embracing digital transformation with people at the center is a key enabler of a more equitable, efficient, and empowered society.