Open Government Case Study - Sample Case Submission Form

[Open Data, Participation, Collaboration, Citizen Engagement, and Public Sector Innovation]

Important Information

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) are conducting a joint study on the economic and social impact of open government for the Arab region. The study will reflect on literature review and previous studies and reports made by OECD and ESCWA and other organizations, and it will consider case studies and best practices from Arab and OECD countries. As such, and for the preparation of the study, this Sample Case Submission Form is intended to help the collection efforts for inspiring case studies and best practices from government entities and agencies in the Arab region. It should be noted that selected cases may be published within the ESCWA portal for the open government, which is under design and implementation, as well as the OECD Open Government case platform[1]. Furthermore, the relevant experiences will be in featured in the planned Joint OECD-ECSWA meeting of the MENA Working Group on Open and Innovative Government this year, in coordination and collaboration with authorities concerned by these experiences.

The attached form serves as a submission form for open government activities that have been or are currently being developed and implemented at any level of government, and specifically those authorities that are working on open government development in the country, including local levels. The Case Study might cover one of the following topics: Open Government, Open Data, Stakeholder Participation, Collaboration, Citizen Engagement, Transparency, Accountability or Innovation in the Public Sector.

In the context of the attached form, an "activity" refers to any processes and actions taken to work towards the achievement of open government at national, area or local levels. An activity can consist of one or more actions. Participants can submit as many activities they wish, and it is preferable to choose activities with an economic or social impact. ESCWA will make the analysis of the contributions and may contact participants with follow-up questions.

To share a case, please complete the MS Word form, either in English or in Arabic, as many times as you wish. We must receive all submissions no later than [15/05/2020]. Should you have any questions, do not hesitate to send an email to Ms. Nibal Idlebi, chief of Innovation at ESCWA (email: idlebi@un.org, & escwa-tdd@un.org) and to the OECD Open Government Unit (Opengov@oecd.org).

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[1] https://oecd-opsi.org/case_type/open-government/

1. Organisation Details

1.1. Organisation Name	*Ministry of Interior*
1.2. Organisation Type [Government, NGO, International, Academia, Private Sector]	*Government*
1.3. Country	*Sultanate of Oman*
1.4. Primary Sector [Economic affairs, Education, Public administration, Health, Transport, etc.]	*Public administration*

2. Activity Case Study

Now, we are going to ask you several questions about your activity. We are very excited to find out ==what you did, how you did it== and who benefited from it. The more comprehensive your answers are, the easier it will be for the reviewers and readers to appreciate the aims and achievements of your activity.

2.1. Title [a title for your activity]	*The e-Voting system*	
2.2. Website [the website about your activity, if existed]	*[https://www.elections.om]*	
2.3. Year Your Activity was Put Into Practice	*2011*	
		Open Data
2.4. Which of the following best describes your activity? [Please mark the main category]	✓	*Participation*
	✓	*Collaboration*
	✓	*Citizen Engagement*
	✓	*Transparency*
		Accountability
	✓	*Public Sector Innovation*

2.5. Summary (Short and Simple Explanation)

The summary should describe your activity and be short and simple (few sentences), and it should use clear language, compel the reader to continue reading, use simple, not sector-specific terminology (no idioms, slang, or domain-specific "buzz" words). The summary should answer the following questions:
- What the activity is?
- Why it was developed or the problem/opportunity being addressed?
- And who it benefitted?

The e-Voting system has been implemented since 2011 and the system is being enhanced each time to ensure its integrity and the efficiency and effectiveness of the election process. From a semi-automated election process in 2011, today the system is fully automated without any human interference. From candidates 'and voters' registration, verification and casting of votes, the entire process is automated which depicts the sustainability of the system to support the citizens' participatory and representative decision-making at all levels. The system is paperless and contribute to environmental sustainability by eliminating the use of paper, about 50 tons of paper saved!

2.6. Case Study Overview

The Overview is an overview of the activity and outcomes. You will have the opportunity to elaborate on some of the details. Please tell us:
- What problem the activity solves or what opportunity was taken advantage of
- What the activity is
- Objectives
- Beneficiaries
- How is it envisioned for the future? For example, how will it be institutionalised in its current context? How will it scale even bigger?

Shura Council and Municipal (Baldiya) elections are two national wide elections conducted in Oman. Ministry of Interior is responsible for conducting these national elections. These elections take place once every four years, the last Shura Council election was held on October 2019.

Prior to 2019, the election process was done manually which was a very lengthy and tedious procedure. Problems such as low voters' registration, long time taken to authenticate voters' eligibility, voters casting multiple votes and lack of connectivity between each voting centers hindered citizens' journey towards a consultative government. The toughest challenge is to encourage the citizens to vote since voting is not compulsory in Oman. With the implementation of Electronic Voting System (e-Voting), MOI successfully streamline the election process, encourage Omanis to exercise their rights to vote and eradicate any chances of frauds. This ensure that the election process is fair and transparent, without prejudices and that Omanis cast their vote wisely to select the most suitable candidate to the Councils. This computerized biometric authentication system was implemented during the election 2011 and in the latest of 2019.

The e-Voting system comprised the state-of-art IT structure and system which reduces the administrative time, enables remote connectivity, completes the activity with online supports and allows voters to cast their votes independently. This directly attracts the public especially youth and women to become registered voters. The process is totally transparent in which candidates can also submit their interest to be the representatives to the Shura Council. This innovative approach eliminates bureaucratic red tapes and streamline the election process which promote open government and digital transformation in the public sector.

2.7. What Makes Your Activity Different, Unique, or Innovative?

The e-Voting initiative is innovative because it integrates the digitization of the election process and automate the voting procedures into a seamless application. Utlising open databases and mobile technologies, the initiative is successful in enhancing representation for the citizens in national decision-making process to deliver more effective, credible, accountable and legitimate institutions. Election results can be released in real time as all polling stations are connected and integrated to the PKI and webservice applications for voters' authentication. Overseas' citizens cast their votes via mobile application and election tasks done by about 5000 committee members is simplify using mobile technology.

3. Development

3.1. Collaborations & Partnerships

Were there partners involved? Describe what each brought to the table and why it was important to the case. These may include: Citizens, Government officials, Civil society organisations, and Companies.

The e-Voting system designed and implemented by Ministry of Interior in cooperation with Royal Oman Police, Ministry of Technology & Communications, Majlis A'Shura and citizens.

3.2. Users, Stakeholders & Beneficiaries

Who are the users, beneficiaries, and stakeholders targeted? How each group are affected. These may also include: Citizens, Government officials, Civil society organisations, and Companies.

The stakeholders are the Government of Oman, Higher Committee of Election, Ministry of Interior, Royal Oman Police, Majlis A'Shura, Ministry of Technology and Communication, Telecommunications organisations and the Omani citizens.

The Shura Council is the citizens' platform through which they convey their opinions to the government. It is a forum that can absorb everyone and give them the chance to express their feedback and demands for the improvement of livelihood in each region. All those engaged in the Shura process must be aware of the role with which they are entrusted and the responsibility towards the nation and citizens

In collaboration with the ROP's initiative of the National Registration System (NRS) in which every citizens and residents are given smart ID card which contained their personal information as well as can be used to store other essential information, the eVoting system uses such information to establish the voters' registers. Today, the voters' registers are updated in real time as citizens can register as voters online, at anytime and anywhere. On the election day, the system authenticate the voters through their identity cards.

Ministry of Technology and Communication provides the Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) to authenticate the citizens registration as voters.

4. Reflections

4.1. Results, Outcomes & Impact

- What results and impacts have been observed from the activity so far?
- How have the results and impacts been measured (e.g., methodologies used)?
- What results and impacts do you expect in the future?
- To the extent possible, please indicate the tangible or numeric results.

1) *Ease of application process, through a fair and transparent system of selecting the most suitable and competent candidates to the Shura and Municipal councils, Omanis will have to exercise their vote sensibly and wisely. In the last election, there were 590 candidates vying for 84 seats, 20 Women and 570 men. In 2019, there are 637 candidates vying for 86 seats, 40 women and 597 men.*
2) *Reduce time for voters' authentication. Voting went very smooth, no long queues as now it took less than 2 min per voter for registration and verifications as compared to 6-8 mins previously.*
3) *Increased the unified polling stations from 2 to 5 so that citizens do not have to travel far from their place of work. As Oman is a vast country, majority of the citizens though registered in their home town but they work else where such as in Muscat, the capital. By having more unified polling stations, these citizens can cast their vote in the location where they are based. This initiative helps to draw more citizens to cast their votes.*
4) *The e-Voting system ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life.*

4.2. Challenges

- What challenges have been encountered?
- What failures have been encountered along the way (e.g., structural failures or significant setbacks)?
- And how, if at all, have those challenges and/or failures been responded to?

Some of the main obstacles were:

1) *Oman is a vast country. With mobile election applications, citizens can now register as voters through online anytime and anywhere.*
2) *Lack of awareness on citizens' rights and representation. Through massive public awareness programme, citizens' participation in the election increased from 519k in 2011 to 714k in 2019.*
3) *Frauds and human errors in manual election process. Business process re-engineering was done to streamline the whole election process to eliminate frauds and human errors.*
4) *Communication and data transfer especially for remote regions. This is overcome through mobile internet and private virtual network.*

4.3. Conditions for Success

What conditions do you think are necessary for the success of your activity? Conditions for success may include:
- Supporting infrastructure and services
- Policy and rules
- Leadership and guidance
- Human and financial resources
- Personal values and motivation

About USD$6.25 million for the development and implementation of the eVoting system. This include hardware, software, services and connectivity. This system is sustainable to support future 3 elections.

Certain technologies software used to develop the system. The mobile technologies support Andriod and IOS. It is also integrated to the PKI with Ministry of Technology and Communication and Webservices for National Registration System and Immigration and Customs System from the Royal Oman Police.

There are about 5,000 members in the election committee who managed the election comprising the Ministry of Interiors and other government entities.

4.4. Replication

Has the activity been replicated to address similar problems? If so, how? In your opinion, what is the potential for it to be further replicated in the future? You may wish to discuss how the activity has already been used by others, as well as how you believe it could be used by others in the future. These others may be in: Other organisations, within your organisation, larger or smaller agencies, organisations or governments.

The eVoting system is a significant milestone in Oman's political journey. Through a fair and transparent system of selecting the most suitable and competent candidates to the Shura and Municipal councils, Omanis exercise their vote sensibly and wisely. Though voting is a new concept for modern society in Oman, it is a new beginning for more democratic actions in which the citizens play their part in taking national decisions.

Apart from the election for the Shura Council, the eVoting system is also deployed for the Municipal Councils election. There are 11 Municipal councils for the governorates in Oman. Each Municipal Council may comprise at least 8 elected members. The eVoting system is sustainable and can be deployed for other national level elections in the Sultanate. The e-Voting system is also adapted by the Oman Chamber of Commerce (OCC) to appoint the OCC members.

4.5. Lessons Learned

What lessons from your experience would you like to share with others like you? Where there any pitfalls to avoid?

1. *Public education on each citizen's right to vote has to be rampantly carried out using multiply channels, mass media, internet, social media (FaceBook, Twitter & YouTube), online chat via the Election website, social events organised by the Walis' offices. This is critical to ensure that all eligible voters register for the election.*
2. *The availability of financial resources invested in the project is critical as without proper financial resources, it would be difficult to develop a robust and effective system.*
3. *Proper planning at every phase on tasks to be executed is important as this would eliminate any bottleneck or problems.*
4. *The availability of highly motivated and trained project team is essential for the successful implementation of the initiative and the system.*
5. *Highly coordinated efforts between Ministry of Interior, Royal Oman Police and Ministry of Technology and Communication are also essential for the successful implementation of the system and the sustainability of this initiative to other application.*
6. *Mobile connectivity for the election committee. The mobile application for the committee members unit all the team from various organisations and all the tasks are easily tracked from the app.*

4.6. Anything Else

Is there any other information you would like to share about the activity?

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5. Materials

5.1. Materials

Do you have online materials you would like to include with your submission? Please use the fields below to insert your links.

Link for images	*[https://...]*
Link for supporting files	*[https://...]*
Project-Related Video URL 1	https://youtu.be/534v1WZw300
Project-Related Video URL 2	https://youtu.be/OEDejI1k37E
Other related URL	*https://results.elections.om/Results/*
5.2. Could you give us the permission to republish the data and information, or part of them, included in this form?	*[Yes]*
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