

THE UAE MGOVERNMENT



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Context and Background

The UAE launched the eGovernment and started some of its eServices such as eDirham in as early as the year 2001. The service initiated by the Ministry of Finance replaced the traditional way of paying and collecting fees for government services. The government gradually made more services available online.

The UAE is investing heavily in adopting and implementing the latest Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the government sector. The Global Information Technology Report 2016 indicates that the UAE continues to lead the Arab world in terms of networked readiness in the 26th position. The government is leading the way to greater digital connectivity (2nd in terms of government usage), providing a consistent vision for the sector and achieving success at promoting it (1st on both indicators). Individual usage has also further improved (19th, up to one spot) especially in terms of mobile broadband subscriptions and households with Internet access, although other important ICT services are not yet widely available: in 2014, fixed broadband subscriptions were still 11.6 per 100 people. Businesses' adoption of and the economic impacts of ICTs have been improving in recent years, but a gap still exists with the most advanced economies in this area. Patent activity, both general and ICT-related, remains relatively low.

The UAE is diligently working towards achieving all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the year 2030 to create and achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. Beyond the present global challenges, the SDGs will also focus on a range of goals from reducing poverty, inequality, climate and environmental degradation to increasing prosperity, peace, and justice with the overall aim of creating a mGovernment in the UAE.

UAE is witnessing a journey of significant transformation and becoming a leader among nations in achieving the SDGs, as noted by the launch of several initiatives that have been inclusive of all key governmental bodies and the private sector.

Need for the mGovernment

mGovernment and Smart Cities appear to have more traction than previous electronic initiatives. Evolving and creating a compelling force and nudge towards the adoption of:

- Sustainability:
The increasing recognition and knowledge of the impact of using a finite level of global resources to support growth as well as the need to improve environmental resilience and citizen well-being as a means of conflict prevention.
- Globalization:
Utilizing financially sustainable growth and innovative opportunities to reduce the negative impact of trade and competition.
- Future of Work:
Digital technologies are changing and transforming the nature of education, employment, and manufacturing that sometimes can increase the need for governments to reform, revise and develop regulatory policies and processes to keep pace with this transformation.
- Trust:
In the age of the global social media, there has been a significant depreciation in the trust between Government and citizens, to counter this, governments need to improve their services and rebuild this trust.

The primary aim of this initiative is to ensure the happiness of all UAE citizens. HH Sheikh Mohammed describes mGovernment as one that never sleeps (working 24 hours, 365 days a year), adding that mGovernment could be considered as welcoming as a hotel, that provides fast delivery, strong procedures, innovation, adaption, with the provision of services to citizens at anytime and anywhere, in and outside of UAE; improving their lives and meeting their expectations.

Idea - mGovernment Roadmap

To facilitate the successful implementation of the Mobile Government initiative, the TRA subsequently launched the mGovernment Roadmap. The Roadmap had set milestones for

the transition from eGovernment to mGovernment to be achieved in a systematic plan by the year 2015.

The scope of the Roadmap went in parallel with the Federal eGovernment Strategy 2012-2014, which focused on environmental improvements, improving readiness and achieving user happiness. These focus areas were presented as four parallel tracks, first two of which corresponded to improvements in the environment for the mGovernment to advance. The tracks of the mGovernment Roadmap were:

- Establish the environment for mGovernment to flourish
- Assess the capability and capacity of government entities
- Establish shared resources across government entities at the national level
- Achieve citizen happiness.

National Plan to Support Mobile Government Initiative

National Plan to Support Mobile Government Initiative aims to implement the vision of the Mobile Government Initiative. The National Plan shall be implemented from 2015 to 2017.

The National Plan complies with Vision 2021 that states that we are united in prosperity and knowledge. It also complies with the National Agenda that states among many other things for the UAE to be at the forefront in providing government services electronically and over mobile phones.

Features of mGovernment

There are several features of the UAE mGovernment. Some of them are:

- Works non-stop
- Provides services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year
- Providing fast track and reliable services
- Adapts to changes quickly
- Devises solutions to challenges
- Facilitates people's lives

- Brings them happiness

Projects and initiatives for the mGovernment initiative

Several projects and initiatives were launched to implement the mGovernment initiative and achieve the goals set within. Each of these projects is designed to mobilize the UAE government entities to provide services through mobile phones and smart devices by engaging intelligent service-delivery methods such as mobile applications that are based on predictive analytics. Some of the important projects and initiatives are:

Federal Network (FedNet)

The Federal Network (FedNet) connects the information systems of 42 federal entities in the UAE. It provides secure, efficient and high-speed internet services. It hosts all the electronic government data and facilitates secure and reliable exchange of data. It raises levels of efficiency, security and continuity of government services provided through electronic channels.

Centre of Digital Innovation (CoDI)

The Centre of Digital Innovation (CoDI) seeks to provide government entities with services that contribute to mobile application development. It seeks to apply cutting-edge technologies to develop and test applications. Hence, it signed cooperation agreements with major companies such as Apple, Blackberry, Android and Microsoft to provide cutting-edge technologies to the government entities.

The services can be summarised in four main points: consultation, technical training, laboratory for testing mobile applications and the Innovation Center. CoDI provides services to government entities, educational institutions and the private sector within the GCC.

UAE Government Apps

The UAE Government Apps is an app that contains all the UAE government applications; over 100 at present and is currently available on Apple Store and Google Play. The App Store provides unique features and services based on the user's location. The UAE Government Apps is a practical realization of the Mobile Government Initiative. The UAE is the first government in the world to launch an app store of government apps.

One App

One App is an application under development. Through the application, users can access

more than 4000 federal and local government services. The app will work on an intuitive basis and provide services and notifications based on user needs. After launch, it will be made available on various platforms.

The National CRM

The National Customer Relations Management (CRM) is a unified call center for all UAE Government services. It provides services to citizens, residents and visitors. National CRM is an additional channel of communication with the UAE Government.

SmartPass

SmartPass is a system through which one can access all government services through one username and password. Each would be assigned a unique identification number to facilitate easy access to all electronic transactions with the federal and local government entities in a secure electronic environment. SmartPass can be used through special kiosks located at public places.

Government Service Bus

The Government Service Bus (GSB) provides a centralized interconnectivity platform for eGovernment services. It facilitates procedures for accessing eServices and enhances the integration and the quality of government services within a safe electronic environment.

GSB assists federal and local government entities to render several services through the eConnection process and exchange data smoothly amongst the entities' systems. It provides a single window system for integrated government services according to national guidelines and the highest digital security.

Awards for mGovernment excellence

Best mGovernment Service Awards

The Best mGovernment Service Award is an annual award that stems from the Mobile Government initiative. The award is open for UAE government entities and government entities from across the world. The award also targets UAE university students. The mGovernment award focuses on government service delivery solutions provided via mobile phone using any of the below means:

- Smart phone applications
- Mobile web solutions
- SMS solutions
- Smart wearable technologies

The UAE Drones for Good Award

The UAE Government launched the UAE Drones for Good Award to honor the innovative and creative minds that find solutions to improve people's lives and provide positive technological solutions to modern-day issues.

The UAE AI & Robotics Award for Good

The UAE Government launched the UAE AI & Robotics Award for Good to support innovation in the key area of artificial intelligence and robotics as part of the UAE's commitment towards the National Innovation Strategy launched by H. H. Sheikh Mohammed.

Story of The UAE mGovernment

In May 2013, His Highness (H.H.) Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice President, Prime Minister, and Ruler of Dubai, announced the innovative and unique start of UAE's transition to a mGovernment. This catalyzed a significant wave of positive change and advancement across the nation, such as government entities updating strategies and plans to modernize their capacities and services to the development of a number of national initiatives focused on assisting and facilitating government entities' change and transformation, as illustrated in the growth of smarter services, people, and technologies.

Impact of the mGovernment

Online services index (OSI)

The UAE has achieved significant progress in the online service index (OSI) of the UN E-Government survey. Its score increased from 0.89 in 2016 to 0.94 in the year 2018, which made the country move up from the 8th position to the 6th position. The total score obtained by the first ranked country is 1, which means that the UAE achieved 94 percent of its task to attain the first rank. According to the online service index, the UAE occupied the first position in the Arab world, GCC region and West Asia region.

E-Participation Index

E-participation index is one of the integral standards of the UN E-government survey. It measures the proceedings followed by each country to engage its citizens in making government policies and decisions and developing public services. The UAE moved up in the eParticipation index from the 32nd position in 2016 to the 17th position globally in 2018. It occupied the first position at the Arab, GCC and the regional level.

Adoption of eServices

The rate of adoption of eServices in the public administration increased in the years 2015, 2016 and 2017 to 65.7%, 69.17% and 70.55% successively. It was a big challenge for the government to get the public to shift from using manual services to online services. All departments worked very hard to simplify the eServices so that everyone could use them easily. Government entities used different tools like marketing and gamification and offered round-the-clock customer support, which helped to increase the adoption rate.

Content and disability

TRA launched the Government Websites Guidelines, which gives clear instructions and set validation rules for writing web content. According to that guideline, the website content has to be in two languages (Arabic and English), free of grammatical and spelling mistakes and properly segmented (that is no English text in the Arabic version and vice versa). The guidelines also cover domain and hosting, site architecture and design, user experience and usability, accessibility, eParticipation, social media and open data, among others. Read the Summary of Web Content Guidelines for UAE Government Entities.

According to the UAE Government's Guidelines for Federal Websites, a government website should have software to read texts and alternative texts for the visually impaired people. Also, all audio and video files on the website should have descriptive captions to assist those with hearing problems. The TRA website is one of the federal websites using such language to help the people of determination (special needs' people) to browse its pages easily.

Smartphones and useful usage

According to TRA's report for the second quarter of 2017 on the use of smartphones in the UAE, it is revealed that 81.5 percent of phones registered on the UAE's networks were smartphones.

More than 90 percent of the UAE federal government services are available online. Every government entity in the UAE has a website with an electronic services section. This portal is a one-stop shop for federal and local government services. This encourages the UAE's population to visit the government entity websites and take full advantage of ICTs to complete their government transactions online.

eParticipation

Another aspect where ICT is applied is eParticipation. The UAE national portal has a large section for eParticipation under the name (Sharik). Sharik provides several eParticipation channels which include consultations, forum, blogs, chats, surveys, polls and social media tools like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to reach out to the general public and engage them in active communication with the government concerning their opinions and experiences on government services, policies, etc. Besides, each federal government entity has such eParticipation section, where users can participate in government decision and policy-making online.

The official portal of the UAE Government

The official portal of the UAE is also a handy resource for information about the UAE's government, future, history, culture, economy, touristic sites or geography of the UAE and much more. Some of the other UAE government websites include:

Smart education

Illiteracy is not an obstacle to internet users in the UAE, as it is less than 1 percent according to the UAE's Ministry of Education. Emirati schools are increasingly being connected to the internet and equipped with eLearning facilities, and many of them encourage tablet computers for student use. The Mohammed Bin Rashid Smart Learning Programme was launched to establish a unique learning environment in schools through the introduction of 'smart' classes.

Access and Affordability

The UAE is one of the world's most connected countries. According to ITU's latest 'Measuring the Information Society Report', internet penetration in the UAE was at 95 percent in 2017, up from 91 percent in 2016. As of November 2018, there were over 1,300,000 internet subscribers in the country, more than 99 percent of whom had broadband connections. The UAE has one of the highest mobile phone penetration rates in the region. According to the UAE's Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), mobile penetration in 2018 reached 19.4 million subscriptions.

Prices for high-speed broadband in the UAE are the second cheapest in the GCC after Bahrain. Broadband is affordable for most users, given the UAE's high per capita income. In April 2017, the UAE's TRA directed mobile operators to reduce the roaming rates within the Gulf region, resulting in an average 18 percent drop in prices for consumers.

Bandwidth

As of November 2018, there were over 1,300,000 internet subscribers in the UAE, more than 99 percent of whom had broadband connections. The Global Competitiveness Report 2018 has shown the UAE's advancement to the first place globally in mobile broadband subscriptions. The same report ranked the UAE second globally in the mobile subscription rate.

Coverage and internet speed

The UAE's TRA launched the 'Coverage' initiative to perform a field scanning to test and analyze the quality of operators' networks all over the UAE and to simulate user experience. The coverage implementation mechanism is based on developing a smart and innovative system that is installed in a tailor-made car and indoor solutions that are constructed for field scanning. This initiative aims to ensure consistent, high-quality internet and mobile phone coverage all over the country.

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