Evaluation of Phase One of the UNPAN Project

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UNPAN Evaluation Objectives

This evaluation of Phase One of the UNPAN Project assesses the effectiveness of the United Nations Online Network in Public Administration and Finance [UNPAN] for strengthening the capacity of Online Regional Partners [ORPs] by giving them the tools necessary to effectively perform a regional e-knowledge management role. It:
1. Assesses the impact of the Network at building regional capacities for e-knowledge management.
2. Reviews the overall quality, currency, clarity and reliability of the information provided by ORPs.
3. Reviews the technical assistance the Division for Public Administration and Development Management [DPADM] provides to ORPs, particularly regarding the utilization of technical, human, and other resources available in developing countries.
4. Assesses the Network’s sustainability, based on the impact of project outputs on the targeted beneficiaries (i.e., national, provincial and municipal governments and NGOs) in building regional capacity for e-knowledge management.

UNPAN Evaluation Criteria

UNPAN’s activities can be evaluated along a range of criteria that include operational activity, technical effectiveness, ORP organizational and operational effectiveness, DPADM organizational and operational effectiveness, outcome effectiveness, conceptual validity, and UN financial/organizational assessment criteria. DPADM and ORP staff can provide information used to evaluate UNPAN’s effectiveness along these seven criteria. Because each type of respondent is appropriately placed to provide different kinds of information, selected DPADM staff responded to some criteria (the questions in Appendix A), and selected ORP staff to others (the questions in Appendix B).

This evaluation is not intended to formally assess UNPAN’s effectiveness from a technical perspective. That would require more input from information technology [IT] specialists. However, its discussion of Network capabilities from a public management capacity-building perspective does include responses from DPADM staff and ORPs related to this IT perspective, and does identify issues appropriate for future studies.

UNPAN Evaluation Methodology

This evaluation was completed by:
1. Reviewing available information on UNPAN and the four selected respondent ORPs through documents and Internet sites.
2. Collecting information from selected DPADM and ORP staff via face-to-face interviews and emailed questionnaires.
3. Compiling and synthesizing these responses, presented below as the “Findings.”
4. Drafting conclusions and recommendations based on these findings.
5. Reviewing these conclusions and recommendations with Mr. Bertucci and Ms. Qian.

The consultant wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of all interview and survey respondents in providing the information and insights needed to complete this evaluation, despite their commitments...
to other professional responsibilities. However, all errors of fact or interpretation remain the consultant’s responsibility.

**UNPAN Historical Background**

Within the United Nations’ Department of Economic and Social Development [DESA], the Division of Public Administration and Development Management [DPADM] organizes its activities into three thematic areas, each performed by a separate organizational entity: public sector efficiency (the governance and public administration branch), knowledge development and e-government (the knowledge management branch), and socio-economic governance and repositioning of public administration for pro-poor activities (the socio-economic governance and management branch) (United Nations 2002).

Information and communications technology [ICT] is rapidly and radically changing the way government and society function. While this poses challenges to all governments, it also provides excellent opportunities for many countries to make great strides toward improved governance and society. In response to these challenges and opportunities, the United Nations [UN] General Assembly in late 1999 entrusted DPEPA (now renamed DPADM) with developing the UNPAN Network (United Nations 2001).

UNPAN is designed to help countries, especially those in the process of economic development and transition, respond to challenges of governance and government capacity. UNPAN is not primarily a hierarchical program controlled and resourced through the UN. Rather, it is an innovative global information network of ORPs supported and facilitated by DESA and DPADM. Its immediate objective was to establish an electronic platform linking regional and national institutions devoted to public administration and finance online for information exchange, experience sharing, and on-the-job training in the area of public policy and management. Its long-term objective is to build the capacity of these regional and national institutions to access, process and disseminate relevant information via up-to-date ICTs for the promotion of improved public administration. UNPAN’s immediate beneficiaries are public administration-related regional and national institutions. Its ultimate clients are a more global constituency – people, government entities, the private sector, NGOs and academic institutions interested in building global government capacity for sustainable and equitable social, political and economic development (United Nations 2001).

UNPAN’s long-term objective is to build the capacity of selected regional partner institutions to access, process and disseminate relevant information via up-to-date ICTs for the purpose of improving public administration globally, strengthening their capacity by giving them three types of tools: increased human resource capacity through training, technical assistance and web technology; updated hardware; and access to current and appropriate software. It has five major functions: information clearinghouse, training programs, technical advice at the field level, forum for exchange and dialogues among stakeholders, and worldwide public administration directory. Its main focus themes cover economic policy, governance and institutional building, civil service and public sector reform, managerial innovation and development, and public finance, with an emphasis on emerging and crosscutting issues of particular interest to developing countries (United Nations, 16 March 2004).

By 2003, UNPAN had grown to 18 ORPs throughout the world, some more active than others. To achieve better coordination, the Network holds annual meetings designed to allow regional and international centers to communicate directly with each other, avoid duplication, and assess the effectiveness of e-knowledge management systems.
In March 2004, the Committee on Programme and Coordination recommended that UNPAN be evaluated for its effectiveness in strengthening governance systems for social development and poverty reduction, taking into account the impact of the Network on national policy-makers and the nature and quality of information provided to end users. Per that recommendation, this assessment is intended to maximize the usefulness of the Network for developing and exchanging information (United Nations, 16 March 2004).

**UNPAN Online Regional Partners (ORPs)**

Four UNPAN ORPs (ASPA, CLAD, NISPAcee and RCOCI) provided information through interviews and/or questionnaires.

**ASPA**

The American Society for Public Administration [ASPA] is an UNPAN ORP in North America. Since 1939, ASPA has represented all forums in the public service arena in the United States. It advocates for greater effectiveness in government, publishes progressive theory and practice, and promotes global citizenship ([www.aspanet.org](http://www.aspanet.org)).

**CLAD**

The Center for Latin American Development Administration [CLAD] is an UNPAN regional partner in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is an international public organization of member governments founded in 1972 under an initiative of the governments of Peru, Mexico and Venezuela, and supported by the UN General Assembly (Resolution 2802 - XXVI) for focusing activities related to modernization of public administration as a strategic factor in the process of regional social and economic development ([http://www.clad.org.ve](http://www.clad.org.ve)).

**NISPAcee**

In addition to its other activities, The Network of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration in Central and Eastern Europe [NISPAcee] participates in the UNPAN Project by organizing, consolidating, classifying and indexing existing documents and uploading them to the UNPAN server. These documents are from NISPAcee, its partner organizations (e.g., SIGMA/OECD, EIPA, EPAN and Freedom House), regional events and newsletters, and a database of persons and institutions in the region. In addition, with financial support from UNDESA, NISPAcee plans to conduct other activities (e.g., development and delivery of e-training modules on e-governance, establishment and supervision of a sub regional center in Moscow, and conducting specialized training programs for governmental leaders in Central and Eastern Europe) ([www.NISPA.sk](http://www.NISPA.sk)).

**RCOCI**

The Regional Cooperation Office for City Informatization [RCOCI] is an UNPAN ORP in Asia and the Pacific region. It was established as a UN consultative and coordinating body to promote regional cooperation in city informatization, bridge the gap among cities in the development and utilization of modern information technology, and – through collective efforts – to foster the development of the information industry and promote regional social and economic development ([http://www.apcity.org/en/aboutus.htm](http://www.apcity.org/en/aboutus.htm)).
Findings

The DPADM and ORP interview and questionnaire responses are summarized below with respect to each of the seven evaluation criteria presented previously.

1. **UNPAN Operational Activity.**
   
   a. The latest evaluation (United Nations, 8 October 2004) reports that 17,384 documents are posted on the UNPAN server. Most are public administration papers, but there are also presentations, web pages, databases and periodicals. All are available through a search interface, and through links throughout the site where they are categorized by different public administration governance criteria.
   
   b. Currently, 25 organizations post information to the UNPAN website. Different ORPs post different types of materials, depending on their database structure and the needs of users within that region (United Nations, 8 October 2004: p. 1):
   
   c. An online survey conducted every six months gathers information about the categories of people accessing the UNPAN website. Information about the number of people and their location is assessed from monthly web usage reports. There have been about 2.3 million site views since the inception of UNPAN; and 225,000 visits in September 2004 (United Nations, 8 October 2004: p. 3). While the majority of UNPAN site visitors initially were from developed countries (primarily administrative development practitioners and social science academicians), the percentage of users from developing countries has increased from 38% to 51% over the past two years. These user surveys are available on the UNPAN web site (http://www.unpan.org/dpepa-inu-activities.asp#report). However, precise information on individual and organizational end-users is unattainable in that the Web is largely anonymous. The proportion of users from developing countries is probably underreported because many use US-based Internet service providers [ISPs].

2. **Technical (ICT) Effectiveness.**
   
   a. Several ICT issues affect UNPAN’s functionality, particularly on a regional basis:
      
      i. *The infrastructure* of the main UN website is adequate to handle traffic, but some developing countries’ limitations (see below) make browsing tedious and downloading too slow for effective research.
      
      ii. *Hardware* has recently been upgraded to the point where there are more than adequate resources to handle the traffic on the UNPAN site.
      
      iii. *Software*. Many ORPs had pre-existing databases that cannot be integrated with each other. Search functionality is fragmented in that each database, as well as the content server and the website itself, has its own search interface. This makes it difficult for casual users to find what they are looking for if they don’t know how information is organized on the site. DPADM recognized this as a major problem, and recently upgraded UNPAN’s search capability by giving users a single search interface from which to search all resources with a single click, but still give advanced users other search options. But Expedio is still a keyword search engine. DPADM should begin reviewing conceptually more intuitive, next-generation software (as an example, see http://www.conceptsearching.com) to enhance the UNPAN users’ experience. Multiple partners cannot make entries on the same page. Yet because many of the Division’s activities are carried out in collaboration with partners, the result is a double entry for the same activity (e.g., http://www.unpan.org/directory/conference/guest/browseoneconference.asp?conference_i
b. Language is an issue. The web interface and most of the documents on the site are in English. While this is an appropriate primary language and UNPAN users are increasingly proficient in it, proficiency is lacking at the local level and among older civil servants. DPADM staff are working constantly to upgrade the site. Information can and is posted in languages besides English, and users can search for documents posted in other languages by clicking on the link for six supported languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish and English), or by entering another language in the box provided (http://www.unpan.org/virtual_library-bylanguage.asp). But the real need is for a site with multilingual keyword architecture and search capabilities. DPADM should also invest in online translation software to better meet its stated objective to foster South-South relations.

c. Depending on the country or region, other economic and social issues affect the ability or willingness of potential end users to access the Network. Some developing countries have established good Internet connections and provided requisite technical and human resources. Others – particularly in sub-Saharan Africa – are profoundly challenged by issues of Internet access, equipment cost (if borrowed or accessed via Internet cafes), electricity (to power and air condition equipment), literacy, computer literacy, and gender inequality. UNPAN’s high profile and non-profit nature encourage potential users and collaborators. UNPAN’s attractiveness is also influenced by its visibility (i.e., the quality of its marketing) and its continued ability to focus on current, topical issues.

3. Organizational and Operational Effectiveness of UNPAN ORPs.
   a. The criteria used to select ORPs are presented in the **UNPAN Plan of Action** (http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan002087.pdf). Each potential ORP participated in a needs assessment with help from UNPAN (DPEPA/DESA), particularly with respect to telecommunications capacity, information and validation capacity, technical capacity, human resource capacity and access to information. Detailed arrangements and responsibilities are outlined in an official Memorandum of Understanding between each ORP and the United Nations. Those receiving UNDESA support (financial and technical) are in developing or transition countries. Some Western countries have overlapping coverage because they don’t require support from UNDESA, and have the capacity to provide documents for the UNPAN system.

   b. UNPAN partners add value by (1) providing regional content, (2) giving feedback on the information needs of the regions, and (3) serving as a regional presence for public administration capacity-building. ORPs facilitate regional dissemination of information from the Governance and Public Administration Branch by providing access to information related to governance and public administration in that region. More specifically, an ORP’s usefulness is determined by its capacity and by the mechanism and framework provided to it by UNPAN to interact with DPADM and other partners. UNPAN partners played an instrumental role in organizing the global forum and sharing its conclusions and recommendations. Many ORPs undertake specific projects and then share them through UNPAN.

   c. Existing partners have the experience and political legitimacy to better manage information processes related to public administration and development. UNPAN also stands to benefit by
working with expert partners such as CLAD, whose SIARE database serves as what many respondents consider a global model for UNPAN. UNDESA supported some ORPs in developing or transition countries (financially and technically). Some Western countries have multiple/overlapping coverage because they don’t require support from UNDESA, and have the capacity to provide documents for the UNPAN system. Establishing more centers would enable ORPs to adopt a more regional focus, add regional languages (e.g., Russian in the case of NISPAcee), and otherwise increase their effectiveness.

d. For political reasons, UNPAN partners should generally be selected permanently based on the initial criteria (i.e., professional focus, level of technical capability, human resources, credibility, sustainability, and commitment to cooperation), provided they continue to provide good content and appropriately use UNDESA’s technical assistance to maintain the basic infrastructure to serve as a regional platform. Operationally, ORPs should be required to meet some basic performance standards to remain in good standing. This may also encourage others to get more involved if they want to remain a part of the Network. New partnerships with academic institutions may decrease the intensity of political bias and political considerations that currently affect ORP selection.

e. A uniform data structure would provide clarity and consistency across ORPs, making the system easier to manage and navigate. But UNPAN partners are institutions in their own right and UNDESA cannot force them to specialize. Many UNPAN ORPs had developed their own pre-existing databases that varied with the nature of their missions. The unique nature of a diverse body of partners engenders creativity and enables peer learning and modeling. As a compromise, perhaps formulating general guidelines and a “unified extract” of all databases would be helpful for optimized searching and complex outputs.

f. UNPAN differs from other development-related sites (e.g., The World Bank or the Asian Development Bank) in that, while DPADM can focus on key thematic areas, UNPAN cannot, in that ORPs and not UNPAN determine what information is posted and how it is categorized. Organizing data by multiple criteria (chronologically by region, discipline and policy issue) provides complementary means of searching and navigating site content. These categories are not mutually exclusive. Efforts to combine them should be encouraged. Organizing information by region (and the monthly reports that group usage statistics by region) creates a cooperative and at the same time competitive atmosphere among the partners. While UNPAN might be strengthened by focusing on topical policy issues (e.g., decentralization, conflict prevention and management, human resource management, e-government, tax administration and resource mobilization, accountability and transparency, civil service reform), it must also be recognized that different ORPs find different topics to be of greater interest in their region, and post information accordingly.

g. UNPAN provides sufficient training to enable partners to perform at a satisfactory level. Most work the ORPs do on the site is not complicated. Under normal circumstances, they meet once a year for training and knowledge transfer. They also have the ability to call or e-mail UNPAN-NY for immediate assistance on use of the site and technical problems that may arise. Some of the more established partners require less attention than they are currently receiving, while some of the less established partners need significantly more hands-on instruction. But there is some question whether training activities as currently conducted are an effective or sufficient modality to build ORPs’ capacity.
h. Technological limitations – particularly Internet connection speed – significantly impact some ORPs’ performance. The impact of language ranges from minor to serious, depending on the ORP’s technical and staff capabilities. Some terms do not have clean translations from English, making keyword searches problematic. Because much available information produced in each region comes in the original language, it is not uploaded into the UNPAN system. However, some ORPs (e.g., CLAD and RCOCI) contribute a lot of ‘most visited’ documents in other languages, with their titles, abstracts, thematic key words, etc., translated into English. “Content is king.”

i. UNPAN’s initial financial and technical support gave some under-resourced ORPs the motivation and ability to improve IT and information/knowledge management. For example, NISPAcee made its website a more powerful and interactive portal with the capability for online event registration, event management, conference management, and self-initiated updating of expert databases (keyword protected). UNPAN came along just in time to help NISPAcee make qualitative improvements in its capacity to serve member institutions, diffusing information about “best practices.”

j. Because documents are posted simultaneously to the ORP and UNPAN websites, UNPAN can measure the number of times these documents are accessed, but cannot determine whether they were accessed directly through the ORP website or indirectly via the UNPAN portal. Thus, there is no direct way to determine the extent to which these institutions and individuals are aware of or use information posted to the UNPAN and website. Some ORPs (e.g., NISPAcee and ASPA) report that governmental officials or other intended users may not know about UNPAN.

4. DPADM’s Organizational and Operational effectiveness Related to UNPAN.
   a. DPADM’s hardware and infrastructure are generally considered adequate, but human resources are not. Only one staff member (Mr. Gibbons) handles the technical aspects of the site. In Haiyan Qian’s absence, his available time is severely limited by other duties. The human capacity of DPADM would need to be strengthened if the project were developed further.
   b. ORPs generally get adequate resources from DPADM for routine work uploading documents. However, some ORPs lack sufficient technically qualified staff and adequate equipment. Uploading documents to the database has been haphazard or incomplete in the absence of DESA-funded staff support. And in any event, more external financial and technical support would be needed for qualitative improvements to some ORPs’ (e.g., online education). One challenge ORPs face is determining which materials provided by non-ORP institutions are or are not appropriate for posting on UNPAN.

5. UNPAN’s Effectiveness at Building Public Administrative Capacity.
   a. UNPAN is generally appreciated and respected as a general starting point for global public administration research. It is effective to the extent that the materials obtained through the UNPAN are up-to-date and from most regions of the world). It is still developing based on members’ and users’ suggestions.
   b. UNPAN’s quality as a database depends on research needs. Other public administration portals and databases (e.g., the World Bank, OECD, SIARE, and the Asian Development Bank) are more specific to the organizations that manage them. Some respondents find these other sites more useful (in that these organizations can control all site content, and organize it as they please), and more generic sites (e.g., Google) more powerful. Data accessibility is limited to
information gathered through Expedio. Some users think content could be more extensive and the search engine more powerful, though UNPAN can never be as technically advanced or fully resources as Google.

c. UNPAN’s user-friendliness depends on one’s perspective. Those who have a general idea of what they are looking for probably rate the site as user-friendly. Someone needing information without knowing where to start might find the site to be cumbersome. The “advanced search” interface is user-friendly only in the first screen (“Enter words or phrases separated by commas”).

d. DPADM posts a user survey on its site, but individual documents are not rated for relevance. DPADM staff rely on ORPs’ judgment to determine the relevance of documents before posting, and would question the ORP if a document it posted looked out of context. The design of the UNPAN website allows ORPs to post information about ORP activities. However, ORPs can only post information about similar activities sponsored by member or associate member institutions as documents. Thus, they are not retrievable by a keyword search for conferences, training programs or other events. Though ORPs can post information provided by other organizations, guaranteeing its accuracy is a different question. Some ORPs (e.g., CLAD) maintain quality control through end-user surveys. Systemic evaluations occur through the monthly Progress Report on UNPAN Implementation, quarterly UNPAN newsletters, and the annual E-information Management Seminar.

e. While UNPAN does replicate information elsewhere, it provides a more comprehensive, global database that enables searching and navigation from a single portal. By offering easy and global access to regional experience and worldwide information, adhering to a dynamic process which aims at responding to the needs of its users and addresses their most critical areas of work, UNPAN is growing to be a demand-driven, customer-oriented, and interactive two-way provider of information and knowledge network. At the same time, much of the information is unavailable elsewhere.

f. Though it does not provide a direct mechanism for end users to interact with partners, UNPAN does promote interactivity. With respect to interactivity between ORPs and end users, one (NISPAcee) reports a 1000% increase in site usage as measured by the length of time spent and the number of pages accessed by end users who use the website. With respect to interactivity among ORPs, the UN sponsors training programs, conferences and meetings for ORP directors (e.g., in Thessalonica and Shanghai). The new UNPAN Newsletter provides a medium for information sharing among partners, though it is not interactive. DPADM established an online conferencing area on the UNPAN web site two years ago, but it has been rarely used. Most informal cooperative agreements among ORP representatives (e.g., on translating the UNPAN menu and basic information into other languages) have been completed. Continued technical upgrading of the UNPAN site will require continued financial and human resources.

g. Insofar as the UNPAN web site contains a significant number of documents that cannot be found on any other single web site, UNPAN delivers with respect to dissemination of data and information, and the sharing of experience.

h. UNPAN is generally effective as a capacity-building mechanism (at least, based on the level of resources invested), in that it provides easy access to knowledge and information in the field UNPAN is unique, based on the diversity of its constituency and its universality as an online
public sector policy and management information and knowledge network. By disseminating latest practices and outcomes of conferences, UNPAN can catalyze capacity-building activities. Additional resources should not only enhance the site’s overall functionality but also allow DPADM staff to provide direct support to less technically inclined users. It is not yet as effective in promoting/disseminating new information useful to policy-makers.

6. UNPAN’s Conceptual Validity.
   a. Information can be viewed as raw data or inputs. Knowledge involves a higher level of discernment or conceptualization to make use of the information. Capacity building requires direct application of knowledge toward an individual outcome or set of outcomes. Different ORPs view these relationships differently, based on their own experiences. NISPAcee has been able to provide information to members in a way that they can benefit from it so as to develop their own capacity, and that of the Network. CLAD’s information system (SIARE) is intended to contribute to organizational learning through the transfer of experiences and interactions among actors from different countries.

   b. Information and communications technology (ICT) improves opportunities for facilitating knowledge management. Conceptually, ICT is the technical platform that enables a knowledge management system to function by enabling people to organizing and compile information. And if organizing people in shared spaces for knowledge creation helps in mass production of knowledge on the technical side, ICT can enable virtual creation of such spaces – a solution that is not tested sufficiently, but in theory, one that can revolutionize the process of knowledge creation. In the business world, the technological innovations with which businessmen rush to the global market embody new knowledge.

   c. Building government capacity is a key to sustainable development. The capacity to manage knowledge is an increasingly important component of this process. ORPs serve end users, and in a wider sense they enhance government capacity by enhancing the capacity of civil service and transferring knowledge from our member institutions to governments. To assess knowledge management (KM) as a strategy for developing government capacity, one would need to determine to what degree KM allows governments to address their outcomes. Performance indicators could demonstrate the effect of KM on employees’ work. KM systems themselves should be evaluated to determine how well they enable users to find interrelationships between multiple variables.

   d. Databases build government capacity by providing easy access to all necessary information and knowledge. To build capacity, a database must include not only relevant information but also a mechanism for making connections between disparate concepts and documents. Contact databases save time in locating organizations and individuals. Practice-based databases save time locating precise information needed to undertake a particular initiative.

   e. Success in a knowledge-based society requires sophisticated approaches to gathering information, while at the same time enabling users to disseminate it on a real-time basis. Passive databases represent an early stage of ICT knowledge management applications. Interactive, participative, and networked forms of ICT can be demand-driven and customer-centered, offering more opportunity for service enhancement through e-government. E-government information sharing must be reciprocal, in that government employees must not only teach and inform but also be willing and able to learn. However, it requires more resources to develop and maintain interactive sites than passive sites.
f. Given that participative and interactive networks are more effective than passive forms of ICT, it will be increasingly necessary to solicit user feedback about the usefulness of sites, individual documents and the search engine itself, as was suggested during the Shanghai meeting. Enabling users from across the globe to rate/evaluate individual documents would not only allow DPADM to evaluate the quality of partners’ submissions, but would also foster an online community of web site visitors. On-line user surveys are already in place and have been quite successful. Discussion forums or knowledge networks organized around policy issues are a logical next step, though they would need coordinators and moderators to be successful.

g. UNPAN ORPs might consider developing on-line training courses if there is a need and capacity to do so within their organizations. DPADM has recently added a Learning Content Management System (similar in functionality to Blackboard or WebCT, but with smaller-scale applicability) that will provide the capability for interactive course content delivery. Courses are currently being developed by two partners (RCOCI and ASPA) and will be made available online when they are ready. Some static resources are also available. UNPAN should focus on subjects with broad, international appeal. It could develop real-time online seminars (enabling users to pose questions to facilitators) and/or archived format. DPADM could develop an online certificate program honored by UN member states. ORPs considering offering on-line training courses would need to develop courses taught by experts who understand the language and the culture, yet other organizations (e.g., IASIA and the UN Staff College) face similar issues. Distance learning would require commitment of resources for staff to serve as facilitators/resource people. On-line training manuals can instantly disseminate “how to” instructions but are more passive.

h. UNPAN might think about several issues as it moves to the next level:
   i. **Site Redesign.** UNPAN should consider developing a viable site with a modern and consistent look and feel that can attract future partners and build traffic – including an updated interface and improved navigation. UNPAN should consider strengthening its capabilities so it could become more like Google (as an example of a database that uses a more advanced search engine). It should consider more interactivity and user responsiveness.
   
   ii. **Marketing.** UNPAN may need a clearer marketing strategy. ORPs do not always have the capacity to promote UNPAN throughout the region and with its governments. The UN, with its links to diplomatic channels, does have such a capacity. It should promote UNPAN more widely to make government officials more aware of its existence. In the past, it was not possible to promote UNPAN as the “#1 public administration portal” because it was not (based on the number of documents posted and the number of users). Now that sufficient documents have been posted, it may be appropriate to more carefully assess their relevance and quality for end users. Site redesign and marketing are related in that the need is for a good site that an increasing number of users access, particularly those from developing countries.

   iii. **ORP Expansion.** Additional ORPs should be created in order to build the portal and make it more attractive for regional users, expanding the Network to a sub-regional or country level.

   iv. **Content Focus.** As the total number of documents increases, it may be useful to consider whether UNPAN should focus on more specific policy areas, academic disciplines or fields of professional practice. In this regard, it might be useful to collect similar data (through the marketing survey mentioned above, or the end-user evaluations
recommended at the end of this report) on the types of information accessed on ORP websites by persons directed to these by the UNPAN home page. This would enable ORPs to more accurately assess their markets, determine product demand, and plan what kinds of information they should focus on posting.

v. **User Evaluation.** UNPAN assesses performance based on the number of documents posted. But once the quantity of information available reaches a certain level, UNPAN needs to assess its quality. This can only be achieved through marketing surveys that track the kinds of documents people search for by tracking the use of keywords. UNPAN should consider applying the concept of product ratings to documents posted on its ORP’s sites, providing end users with information about how many people had accessed a certain document, how useful they found it to be, and what related documents they would recommend to other interested users.

vi. **Online Training.** UNPAN was originally intended to provide problem-solving resources (i.e., on-line advisory services and training activities) for governmental administrators in developing countries. It has yet to venture into the distance-learning realm. Perhaps in-house expertise would bring an online education program closer to fruition. DPADM should also ask its partners to provide access to their conferences (video, audio, papers, etc.).

vii. **Adding Value.** UNPAN can add value by increasing the amount and quality of information access and exchange among ORPs, from clients to each ORP, and from ORPs to clients. It can do this by (1) providing members of one ORP with the opportunity to go out of the region for information through other ORPs’ portals, compare information available through these other ORPs, share information on advances, increase credibility, give a global focus to building governance capacity, enhance learning opportunities, and model rational and transparent decision-making through open data access, (2) build data bases within each ORP by developing more sophisticated methods of mining existing documents by descriptors, keyword search, or intuitive search engines, and (3) publish certain uniform databases (e.g., lists of experts organized by discipline, geographic origin, geographic area of practice, and type of work).

i. **Sustainability** can be assessed at several levels:

i. **United Nations.** UNPAN’s sustainability within the UN can be measured conceptually by assessing the extent to which UNPAN web site has assisted the global public administration community in addressing the Millennium Development Goals. Operationally, it can be measured by the degree of financial support and coordination from UNDESA. This may be problematic given the UN’s limited resources, bureaucracy, organizational specialization and array of projects, but it is also necessary.

ii. **Online Regional Partners.** ORPs assess sustainability based on the UN’s commitment to it (in financial and human resources) in competition with other programs. They assess UNPAN by determining who the real end users are (academicians, practitioners, elected and appointed officials), and how useful the information provided is to each of them as a group.

iii. **End Users.** ORP client institutions or individuals) assess UNPAN based on the value of the information it provides. More sophisticated search engines (ones that can cross databases or information provided by different ORPs) improve accessibility. Sorting by policy issues, geographic regions or academic disciplines is useful, but it is only a start. More powerful, intuitive search engines will be increasingly necessary to fruitfully search information posted by UNPAN members. Search engines that only operate in English require users to know both languages. And the ability to work with key words across
languages assumes that common classification systems have been used by all ORPs, and that the concepts translate clearly and uniformly across cultures and languages.

7. UN Financial and Organizational Assessment Criteria for UNPAN.
   a. The UNPAN Network has a “steering committee” of the heads of all ORPs. It meets annually at an “UNPAN Inter-regional Consultative Meeting” for policy making, major activity planning and evaluation. Members communicate continually through other channels (e.g., activities, e-mails, and conference calls).

   b. UNPAN’s activities are reported to the Committee of Experts on Public Administration [CEPA] each time it meets for overall policy guidance and advice. The committee reviews and makes specific recommendations on UNPAN. These recommendations are incorporated into its overall report of each session.

   c. The Committee’s report of each session is submitted to the United Nations Economic and Social Council [ECOSOC] for review and approval. Once the report is amended and approved, it (and any supporting resolutions) become the UNPAN policy guidelines which are available for members to implement.

   d. The heads of UNPAN ORPs are invited to attend each session of the Committee as observers so that they can also directly interact with the members of the committee and make useful contributions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on these findings, the consultant has reached a general conclusion about UNPAN, and proposes some general recommendations for its improvement.

1. Conclusion: UNPAN is a unique global database for public administration and development. It is a widely used and effective mechanism for building government capacity in both developed and developing countries.
   a. Current internal protocols (e.g., for UN data posting, partner data posting, or links) are adequate to maintain quality control over the UNPAN website. Now that many ORPs have been established and many documents have been posted, some strategic improvements recommended below could help ensure that the quality and depth of content continue to remain high.
   b. Current UN governance mechanisms for policy planning and evaluation are appropriate. However, per the following recommendations, more sophisticated end-user outcome evaluation mechanisms and criteria could be applied to this and other UN programs.
   c. Development accounts are an innovative funding strategy for new projects like UNPAN. But once pilot projects have passed an evaluation period and demonstrated their effectiveness, more permanent funding methods should be used to promote sustainability, and to align UNPAN as a program integral to achievement of the broader DPADM mission. In particular, the development and maintenance of a high quality search engine means fewer resources may be available for direct support of ORPs.

2. Recommendations: Now that UNPAN has demonstrated its effectiveness, it can best move to the next level by continuing to transform itself into a more facilitative, customer-focused information network. In the consultant’s opinion, this means adopting the following specific recommendations to effectively implement a strategic plan that embodies IT sophistication, structural development, customer service, marketing, evaluation and sustainability. By doing this, UNPAN can also serve
as a model for other UN programs or ORPs seeking to improve public administration capacity by undergoing similar transformations.

a. Site Development. While it cannot and should not compete with more comprehensive and better-resourced sites (e.g., Google.com), UNPAN should continue to update by such improvements as a multilingual home page, improved navigation, a more advanced search engine, and more interactivity.

b. ORP Expansion. The UNPAN Network should be expanded by creating additional ORPs. This would increase the quantity of information posted, and enable greater specialization (e.g., by region, language or policy issue). It would require increasing the number of site licenses for Expedio software – perhaps to an unlimited number of site users – so that up to several hundred ORPs globally could post information. Other organizations would be accepted as ORPs as long as they continued to post information relevant to public administration and development, and provided accurate and complete contact information to enable end-users to verify postings and follow up concerning questions or comments.

c. UN Development Account Program Evaluation. Within UNDESA, development accounts are an innovative method of reallocating resources internally to support pilot programs designed to meet the UN’s Millennium Development Goals by improving public administration capacity. The seven criteria used in this report to assess the Phase One of the UNPAN Project may be useful as suggested outcome measures for evaluating other development account-funded programs as well.

d. UNPAN Program Evaluation. The UNPAN program should continue to evaluate itself based on the criteria suggested in this report (i.e., operational activity, technical effectiveness, ORP organizational and operational effectiveness, DPADM organizational and operational effectiveness, outcome effectiveness, conceptual validity, and UN financial and organizational assessment criteria). As DPADM’s role moves increasingly toward facilitating ORP activities, its value added will increasingly be based on providing ORPs and other end users with a high quality web portal, search engine, and other services. Therefore, continued IT evaluation and upgrading should remain a high priority.

e. ORP Reporting and Evaluating. As the number of ORPs continues to expand (based on a potentially unlimited number of Expedio site licenses), quality control will become increasingly important, yet difficult. DPADM will need to monitor ORPs to ensure that (1) their contact information is current and correct, (2) they are continuing to post relevant and valuable information, and that (3) they have established end-user evaluation criteria and procedures that enable them to assess the content they post to make sure it is what their end users need and want.

f. Content Evaluation. UNPAN should consider a range of strategies for applying the concept of end user product ratings to documents posted on its ORP’s sites. Three such strategies for using web-based end user ratings to monitor and enhance the quality of products or services for end users are now employed by BizRate.com, Amazon.com, and Project MUSE.

i. BizRate.com searches other web sites to identify thousands of Internet sources for specific products, ranks them (along criteria such as price, quality of customer service, and delivery time), and solicits feedback from site users.

ii. Amazon.com provides product reviews (both those prepared by professionally by marketing departments or for trade publications, and informal comments from individual customers). It then asks site users who read the informal comments to rate the usefulness of the comments in helping them make a purchase decision, and posts these evaluations as well. Identifiable end user members (those who sign in by identifying themselves by username and password) receive customized lists of suggested products based on their previous site search activity (by keyword).
iii. The Johns Hopkins University Press HUP markets electronic journals “bundled” in combinations to meet the needs of individual institutional subscribers through Project MUSE, a proprietary electronic database. Revenue accrues to individual journals based on usage (i.e., the number of times electronic subscribers – individual or institutional – access articles) as a percentage of total Project MUSE usage and revenue. For more information about Project MUSE, open the JHUP website (http://www.press.jhu.edu/journals), and follow the link to “Access JHUP Journals Online.” While UNPAN currently collects information on which documents are accessed most frequently (United Nations, 8 October 2004), usage data could also be employed systematically by ORPs to assess their end users’ preferences and their own performance.

g. Marketing. As its role shifts from direct support or ORPs to UNPAN Network facilitation, DPADM should (1) continue to assess Network performance along the criteria used in this report, (2) give ORPs the capability to evaluate their own performance based on their effectiveness at identifying specific end users and providing them with policy analytic information appropriate their own history and objectives; and (3) encourage ORPs to develop feedback criteria and mechanisms that will enable them to assess whether they are posting information appropriate to their target markets. Taken together, these measures will drive a flexible, customer-focused Network marketing strategy.

h. Content Focus. Different ORPs will post material related to different topical areas, based on their own situations and end-user needs. DPADM should periodically review the comparative content focus of documents posted by various ORPs, and their end-user evaluation methods and criteria. By providing this comparative information to all ORPs, DPADM can help them make more informed choices about what information is most valuable for different end users, contexts, etc. Shifting responsibility for evaluating content focus to individual ORPs would enable DPADM to maintain a facilitative and user-focused role as the number and variety of materials posted continues to increase. By monitoring user satisfaction and the criteria used by various ORPs to assess user satisfaction, DPADM staff could determine what policy issues are considered most valuable by end users.

i. Online Training and Technical Assistance. UNPAN is now implementing an online training system. As the number of ORPs increases, it will become increasingly cost-effective for DPADM to provide an online training platform to ORPs, while ORPs themselves would use this platform to offer training and technical assistance to end users. By supporting ORPs that offer targeted training and technical assistance to end user individuals and institutions, DPADM can facilitate Network development by enhancing ORPs’ capability to increase public administration capacity as one strategy for achieving the UN’s Millennium Development Goals.

j. Strategic Alignment and Support. While development accounts are an innovative funding mechanism for new programs, UNPAN’s continued success as it moves past Phase One requires that it be integrated into and aligned with the DPADM/DESA mission, and adequately supported and resourced. In particular, continued technical upgrading of the site and search engine (improved IT capability) will require long-term investments of financial and human resources.
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Appendix A:
Questionnaire for UN Staff (DPADM)

UNPAN Operational Activity:
- How many files (e.g., documents, databases, calendars of events, conference listings, conference papers or presentations), of what kind, are posted on the UNPAN website?
- What organizations within each region provide information posted by the UNPAN partners on the UNPAN website?
- How many individual and organizational end users, of what category (political, administrative, academic), access these documents?

Technical (ICT) Effectiveness:
- What technical issues (e.g., infrastructure, hardware, software) affect the functioning of UNPAN as a database and search engine, including the ability of potential end users to access the system?
- What cultural issues (i.e., language) affect the ability or willingness of potential end users to access the system? (Answered by)
- What economic and social issues affect the ability or willingness of potential end users to access the system?

Organizational and Operational Effectiveness of UNPAN Online Regional Partners:
- What criteria are used to select UNPAN partners?
- In general, what is the value of UNPAN partners? Are they useful, or are they simply another layer of bureaucracy on top of existing, functional institutions?
- Under what conditions is it better for UNPAN to work with existing, functional partners, or to establish new ones?
- Should UNPAN partners be selected permanently, or should their appointment be temporary; and if temporary, based on what criteria?
- Should UNPAN partners’ databases have uniform functions, or should they be allowed/encouraged to specialize on some other basis besides geography?
- What are the relative advantages or organizing data by region, by policy issue, or disciplinary subject?
- Does UNPAN provide sufficient training to enable partners to perform at a satisfactory level?
- To what extent do language barriers/technology limitations impede the satisfactory performance of UNPAN partners?

Organizational and Operational Effectiveness of DPADM related to UNPAN:
- In your role as a DPADM official, do you think Online Regional Partners get the support and resources from DPADM they need to fulfill their responsibilities? If not, why not? What
additional support or resources are needed?
- Do you think DPADM has adequate resources to fulfill its role? If not, why not? What additional support or resources are needed?
- How effective is UNPAN as a global online research portal for public administration?
- What other global online research portals do you use as your basis for this comparison?

**Effectiveness at Building Public Administration Capacity:**
- How well does the UNPAN Project function as a major public administration database, particularly in comparison with other available databases in the field?
- How user-friendly is UNPAN in comparison with other public administration portals and databases?
- What mechanisms exist, and how effective are they, for evaluating the relevance of documents, information, data, etc. posted on the UNPAN website, especially for end users?
- Does UNPAN simply replicate information available elsewhere to existing users? If not, what is its value added for existing users?
- To what extent does UNPAN promote interactivity, particularly between partners and end users?
- Does UNPAN deliver with respect to promoting knowledge management?
- Given the UN’s function as a neutral space for the development of public administration capacity, what is the effectiveness of UNPAN as a capacity-building mechanism?

**Conceptual Validity:**
- What is the relationship among information, knowledge and capacity building?
- What is the relationship between ICT and KM?
- How are we to assess knowledge management (KM) as a strategy for developing government capacity?
- In general, what is the role of databases in building government capacity?
- Specifically, what is the comparative utility of passive databases vs. more interactively participative forms of ICT at building e-government?
- If interactive forms are more effective, are there measures that can be taken (feedback, user responses, reviews like BizRate, etc.) to make UNPAN more interactive?
- What online training opportunities exist or could be developed through UNPAN (compared with those available elsewhere: http://www.pti.org/research.asp)?
- What is the next level to which UNPAN could or should be taken?
- What criteria could or should be used to assess UNPAN’s sustainability?

**Appendix B:**

**Questionnaire for UNPAN Online Regional Partners**

**Technical (ICT) Effectiveness:**
- What technical issues (e.g., infrastructure, hardware, software) affect the functioning of UNPAN as a database and search engine, including the ability of potential end users to access the system?
- What cultural issues (i.e., language) affect the ability or willingness of potential end users to access the system?
- What economic and social issues affect the ability or willingness of potential end users to access the system?

**Organizational and Operational Effectiveness of UNPAN Partners:**
- What criteria are used to select UNPAN partners?
- In general, what is the value of UNPAN partners? Are they useful, or are they simply another layer of bureaucracy on top of existing, functional institutions?
Under what conditions is it better for UNPAN to work with existing, functional partners, or to establish new ones?

Should UNPAN partners be selected permanently, or should their appointment be temporary; and if temporary, based on what criteria?

Should UNPAN partners’ databases have uniform functions, or should they be allowed/encouraged to specialize on some other basis besides geography?

What are the relative advantages or organizing data by region, by policy issue, or disciplinary subject?

Does UNPAN provide sufficient training to enable partners to perform at a satisfactory level?

To what extent do language barriers/technology limitations impede the satisfactory performance of UNPAN partners?

As an UNPAN partner, how they use the site to develop your own capacity?

Based on your contacts with them, how are other organizations in your region using the UNPAN web site?

Organizational and Operational Effectiveness of DPADM related to UNPAN:

In your role as an UNPAN Online Regional Partner, do you get the support from DPADM you need to fulfill your responsibilities?

Do you have adequate resources to fulfill your role?

Do you think DPADM has adequate resources to fulfill its role? If no, why not? What additional support or resources are needed?

Effectiveness at Building Public Administration Capacity:

How effective is UNPAN as a global online research portal for public administration?

What other global online research portals do you use as your basis for this comparison?

How well does the UNPAN Project function as a major PA database, particularly in comparison with other available databases in the field?

How user-friendly is UNPAN in comparison with other public administration portals and databases?

What mechanisms exist, and how effective are they, for evaluating the relevance of documents, information, data, etc. posted on the UNPAN website, especially for end users?

Does UNPAN simply replicate information available elsewhere to existing users? If not, what is its value added for existing users?

To what extent does UNPAN promote interactivity, particularly between partners and end users?

Does UNPAN deliver with respect to promoting knowledge management?

Given the UN’s function as a neutral space for the development of public administration capacity, what is the effectiveness of UNPAN as a capacity-building mechanism?

Conceptual Validity:

What is the relationship among information, knowledge and capacity building?

What is the relationship between ICT and KM?

How are we to assess knowledge management (KM) as a strategy for developing government capacity?

In general, what is the role of databases in building government capacity?

Specifically, what is the comparative utility of passive databases vs. more interactively participative forms of ICT at building e-government?

To what extent does UNPAN promote interactivity, particularly between partners and end users?

If interactive forms are more effective, are there measures that could be taken (such as feedback, user responses, or reviews presented on websites like Amazon.com or BizRate.com) that would make UNPAN more interactive?
What online training opportunities exist or could be developed through UNPAN (compared with those available elsewhere: http://www.pti.org/research.asp)?

What is the next level to which UNPAN could or should be taken?

What measures/criteria could or should be used to assess UNPAN’s sustainability?