

From Frameworks to Implementation

UNDP support to digital and AI policy in the Arab States

3 Intelligent systems

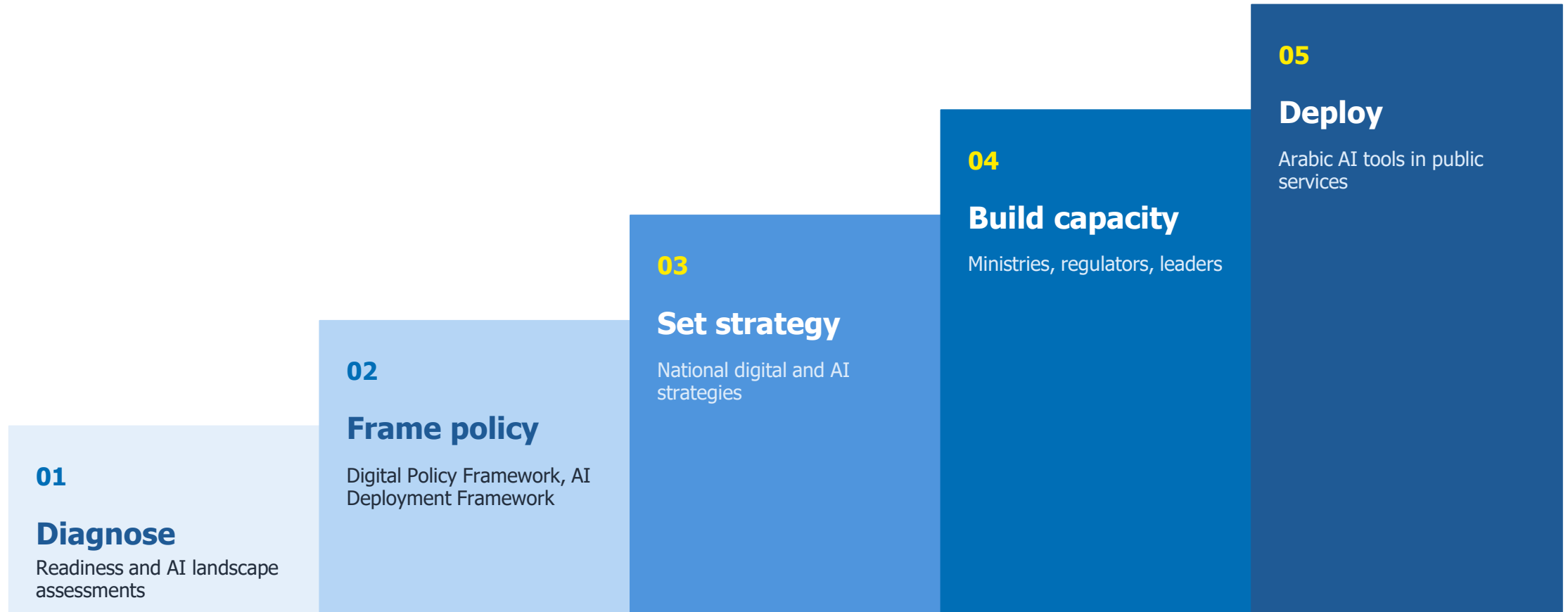
2 Data and digital public infrastructure

1 Networks and connectivity

Dany Wazen
Head of Regional Digital Transformation and AI Team, UNDP RBAS

Panel 3: Regional Experiences and Progress
Regional Workshop on Responsible AI Governance in the Arab States · Manama,
16 September 2026

Five steps, each one assumes the one before



Digital maturity

Three layers that build on each other

3

Intelligent systems and applications

2

Data and digital public infrastructure

1

Networks and connectivity

Most AI governance conversations start at layer 3. The Framework asks whether layers 1 and 2 are in place first.

- Layer 1: spectrum, broadband affordability, infrastructure sharing, cross border connectivity
- Layer 2: digital ID, data governance and interoperability, digital payments, financial inclusion
- Layer 3: responsible AI deployment across health, education, agriculture and public services
- Developed by UNDP with Ooredoo Group and Frontier Economics; launched at GSMA MWC Doha, November 2025, with Qatar's Ministry of Communications and IT
- Complements national strategies and sequences reform by digital maturity

1.5%

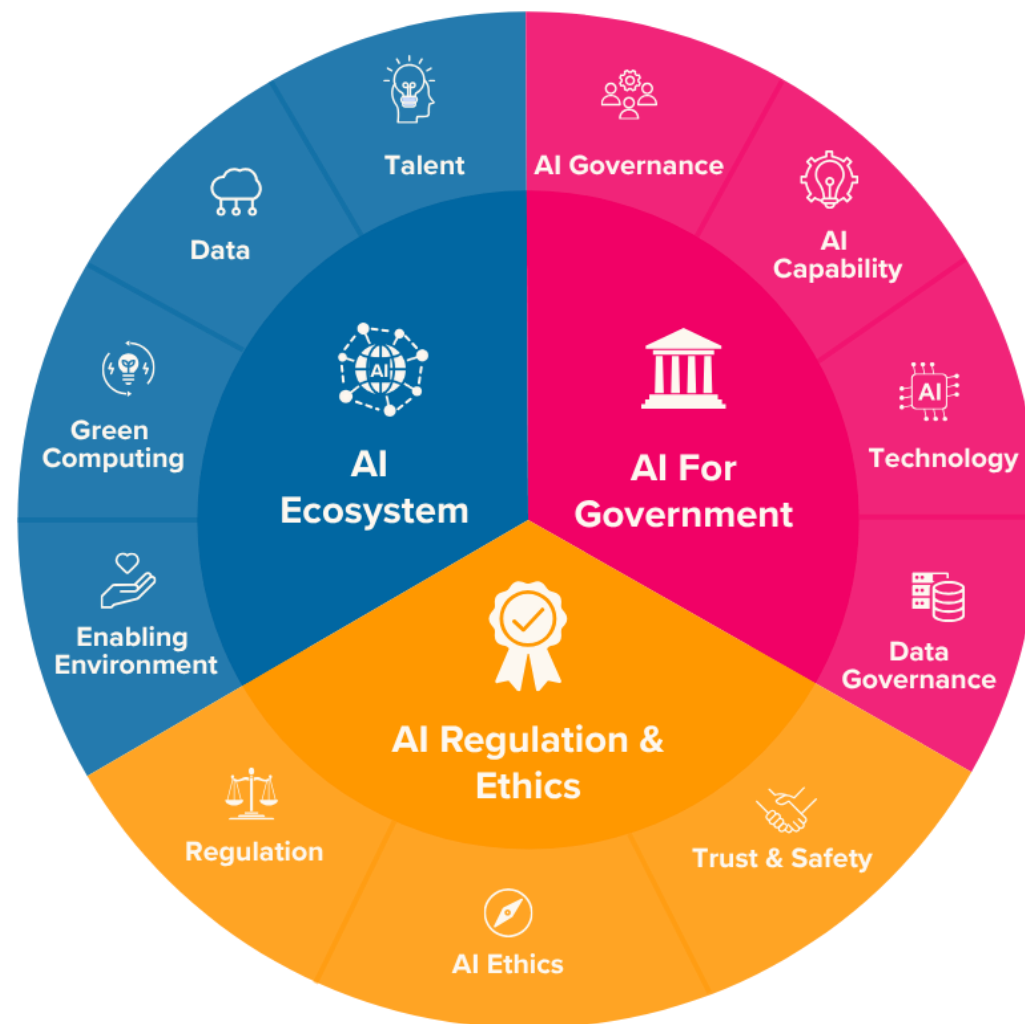
of GDP from a 10 point rise in fixed broadband penetration, developing countries

\$21-35bn

annual AI contribution to GCC GDP under inclusive policy frameworks

WHAT IS AI READINESS?

A country's ability to **design, adopt, govern, and ethically deploy AI** across sectors and institutions.



How do we measure AI Readiness

A country's ability to design, adopt, govern and ethically deploy AI across sectors and institutions.

Why it matters

- Governments ready for AI capture the gains in trade, production and services while protecting citizens' rights
- Readiness is institutional before it is technical: the ability to evaluate, procure and oversee an AI system
- It is uneven across the region, so the diagnostic has to be tailored to where a country actually is

AI Landscape Assessment (AILA)

Diagnoses the current state of AI development, capacity and governance; benchmarks maturity globally; informs policy, infrastructure, talent and regulatory priorities; supports whole-of-society coordination.

National report

The country's AI position across the stages of maturity

Readiness matrix

Scores by pillar, sub-pillar and component

Policy briefs

Priority actions for decision-makers

Dashboard

A living view to track progress after the assessment

Three pillars, eleven sub-pillars, one whole-of-society approach

Pillar	Sub-pillar	Components
AI Ecosystem	Enabling environment	Strategy, innovation
	Green computing	Infrastructure, sustainability
	Data	Availability, usability
	Talent	Basic skills, advanced skills
AI for Government	AI governance	Strategy, programmes
	AI capability	Skills, operational capacity
	Technology	Development, infrastructure
	Data	Data governance, data accessibility
AI Regulation and Ethics	Regulation	AI, data protection, cybersecurity, intellectual property
	AI ethics	Ethical framework, transparency, inclusivity, accountability
	Trust and safety	Trust and safety

How it is run

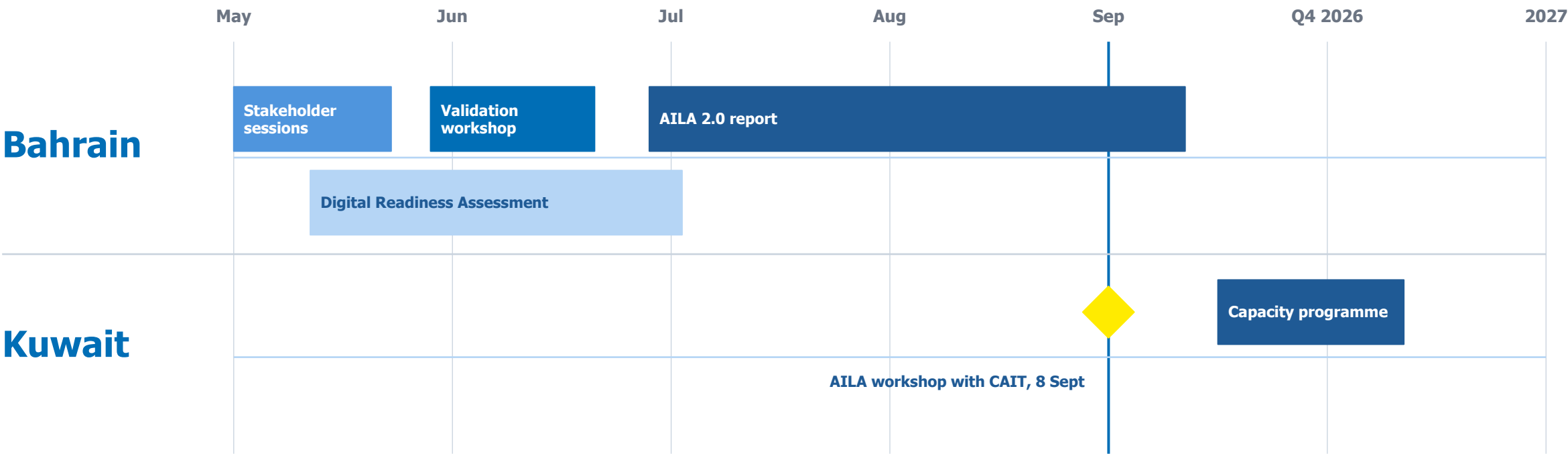
- Surveys and a workshop with civil servants: qualitative depth, not only external indicators
- Applicable globally, tailored to the country's stage of AI readiness
- Read on top of the Digital Readiness Assessment, so layer 3 is scored against layers 1 and 2

Version 2.0

- Adds trust and safety, green computing and data accessibility, the gaps we found in first-generation assessments



AILA: Bahrain and Kuwait on one timeline



- Eight stakeholder sessions across government, regulators, financial infrastructure, private sector, research and women in tech; findings validated in a workshop with counterparts
- AI readiness read on top of digital foundations, feeding the National AI Strategy and the NHDR
- Senior counterparts from CAIT and line ministries completed the AILA survey at UNDP Kuwait
- Assess, build the capacity to act, then write the strategy with the people who will implement it

AI Trust and Safety: Palestine

The problem

Growing pressure to adopt AI-enabled services, starting with financial and digital ID, without the institutional, governance and safeguard foundations to manage the risks. Data and systems exist; accountability, oversight and the readiness to assess harms do not.

What UNDP did

An AI Trust and Safety Assessment focused on digital ID, one of the first in the region. A two-day workshop under the AI country enablement approach brought ministries, the monetary authority, municipalities, universities, telcos, payment providers and civil society into one room, framed around risk, safeguards and institutional readiness.

The Trust and Safety report

Risk identification for digital ID deployment in a fragile context, safeguards design, governance recommendations and rights-based considerations. Names who is accountable, what oversight is needed and what evidence is required before and after deployment. A replicable country enablement model for the region.

Delivered with UNDP's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People. Partners included MoTDE, MoI, PMA, PICTI, Ramallah Municipality, universities, JAWWAL, Ooredoo, Zamleh and payment providers. Report in finalisation.

A national AI strategy, and what has to feed it



AI capacity building: Egypt and Kuwait

Egypt

AI capacity building for public institutions

- Two cohorts, two days each: the Responsible AI Center and the National Telecom Regulatory Authority
- Foundational AI literacy, responsible AI and safeguards, sector use cases, hands on work with AI tools
- Faculty from the RBAS AI policy team, UNDP HQ AI advisors and Apolitical as learning partner
- A companion maturity assessment for the regulator, adding an AI readiness layer to each pillar of its digital transformation

Kuwait

From assessment to the capacity to act

- AILA workshop with CAIT on 8 September: senior counterparts from CAIT and line ministries completed the survey
- A four session capacity programme in Q4 for CAIT and the ministries that will own the strategy
- Readiness findings, responsible AI and safeguards, priority use cases, and drafting exercises on strategy components
- Output: a counterpart group able to write and implement the National AI Strategy in 2027

AI4SD

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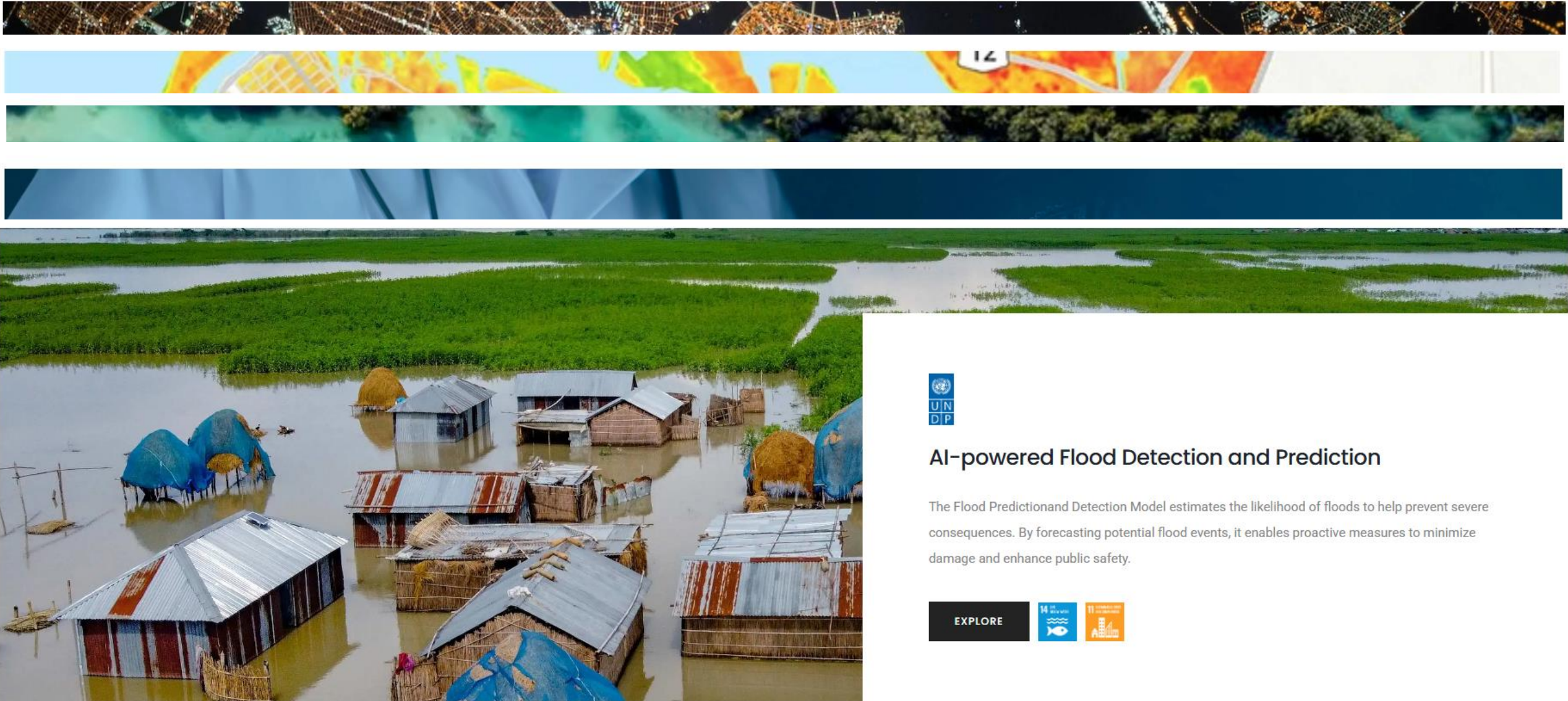
[Ethical use of AI](#)



UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

AI FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLATFORM

12 models launched



AI-powered Flood Detection and Prediction

The Flood Prediction and Detection Model estimates the likelihood of floods to help prevent severe consequences. By forecasting potential flood events, it enables proactive measures to minimize damage and enhance public safety.

EXPLORE



AI4SD: From policy to tools



AI for Sustainable Development platform

ai4sd.org · launched with the UAE at UNGA79, September 2024

- Open-source AI models, datasets, training resources and a collaborative space for AI on the SDGs
- Flagship of the Digital for Sustainable Development (D4SD) partnership; MBZUAI contributes research, capacity building and six models
- Coverage: poverty and inequality, social cohesion, climate, environment, water, energy, food security
- Lowers the barrier to entry for AI-driven SDG work and positions the region as a leader in regionally grounded AI for development

Social and Climate Platform with e&

NLP and sentiment analysis over non-conventional data for crisis and climate monitoring; first applied to the 2023 Türkiye-Syria earthquake; joint Responsible AI Framework

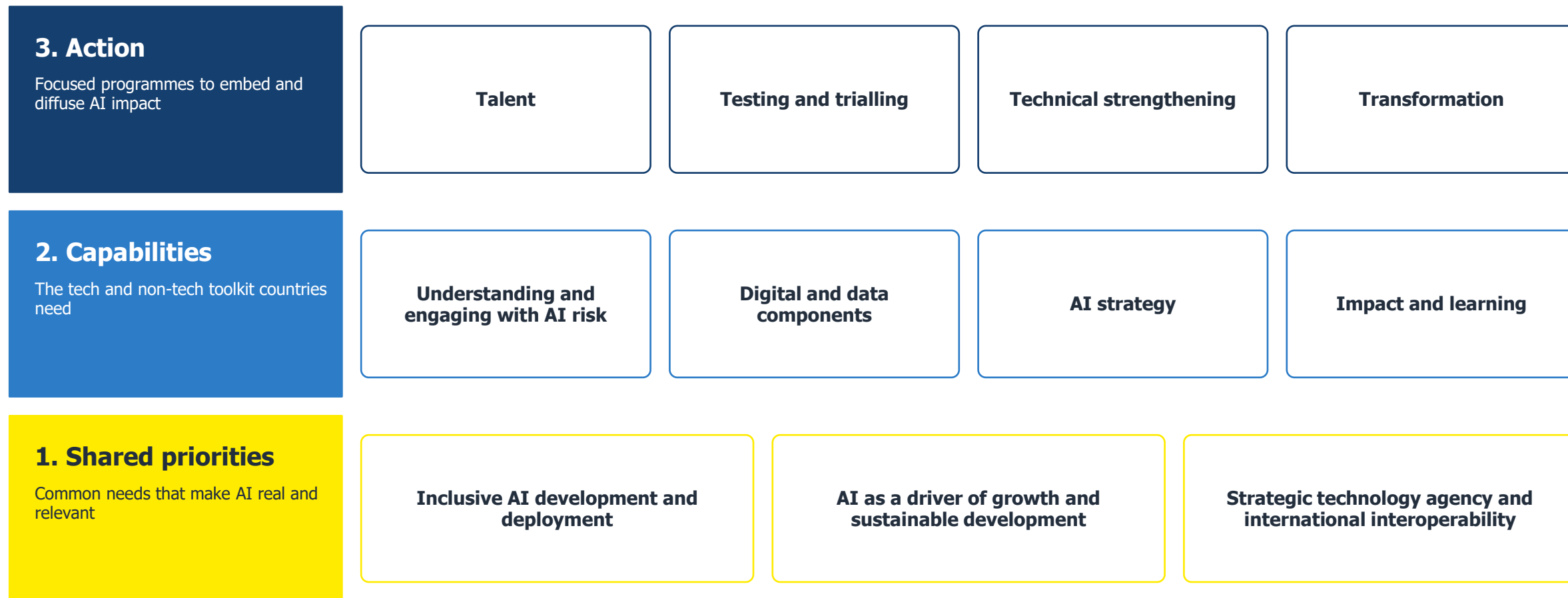
Arabic language work

Arabic AI language models including Iraqi dialect, dialect playbooks and document digitisation for public sector use cases

AI and Data to Policy, Jordan

Multi-day training equipping policymakers to use data and AI across the policy cycle, linked to the global Data to Policy Champions community

AI Deployment Framework: Three cumulative layers, from shared priorities to action



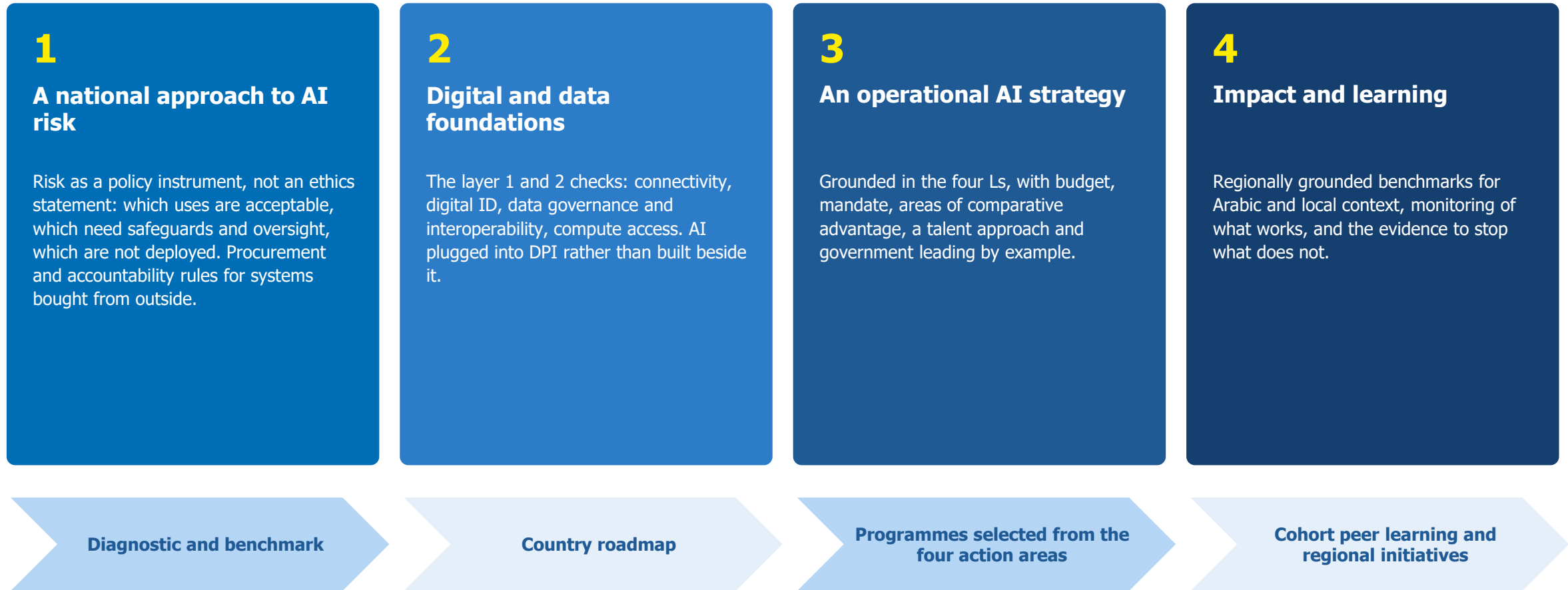
Built from the AI journeys of 17 countries and territories; sits on the Digital Policy Framework. Now in peer review.

Four action areas, twelve programmes

Talent AI literacy at every level	Testing and trialling Shaping and embedding AI	Technical strengthening Exploration and implementation	Transformation Deeper, longer-term impact
Chief AI Officers Programme	Regional AI Assurance Network	AI Policy Network for cross-border use cases	AI-empowered public sectors
MSME AI adoption support	Regional AI Sandbox Initiative	AI Model Policies	An AI commons, or AI DPI
AI Deployment Fellowships	AI Benchmarks for the Arab States	National Leaders' Masterclass on AI agency	Regional AI exemplar programme
AI for Citizens			

A cohort approach: AI Advocates, with deeper digital and AI foundations, and AI Explorers, earlier in the journey, move together. Classification by leadership, talent and engagement, not income. All countries engage with AI now.

What a country develops with the Framework



Bahrain, Kuwait and Palestine are the first applications of this sequence.

DP Facility: How a country joins, and what holds it up



PARTNERSHIP AND FINANCING

- UNDP and Ooredoo Group anchor the Facility
- Countries contribute through co financing or in kind, matched to their means

WHAT A MEMBER COUNTRY GETS

- A shared diagnostic language with peers and with development finance institutions
- Specialist expertise on call, and leadership development for the people who carry the reform
- A regional peer network, so no country solves the same problem alone