



# ICEGOV 2025 Highlights and Takeaways

**Abuja, Nigeria  
4–7 November 2025**

***“Shaping the Future of Digital Governance through Cooperation, Innovation, and Inclusion”***

18th International Conference on Theory and Practice of Electronic Governance

Hosted by UNU-EGOV and NITDA (Nigeria), under the patronage of the Federal Ministry of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy (FMCIDE) of Nigeria.

# ICEGOV 2025 at a glance



**151**  
Papers submitted

**377**  
Registered participants

**51**  
Countries

**35**  
UNU-EGOV  
Scholarships

**12**  
Tracks

**5**  
Keynotes

**6**  
Workshops

**4**  
Roundtables

## Identity and Theme

**“Shaping the Future of Digital Governance through Cooperation, Innovation, and Inclusion”**

In a world reshaped by intelligent systems, automation, and the power of data, ICEGOV 2025 asked a simple but demanding question: how do we shape digital governance so that it is cooperative, innovative, and genuinely inclusive?

The conference focused on how rapidly advancing technologies, especially Artificial Intelligence, are transforming public services, economies, and everyday life, while also generating new risks for rights, accountability, and democratic institutions.

Across tracks, workshops, and roundtables, ICEGOV 2025 explored how digital governance can be developed with citizens rather than only for them: protecting fundamental rights, strengthening public trust, and ensuring that vulnerable and marginalised groups are not left behind.

By bringing together empirical studies, conceptual frameworks, and practical experiences, the community examined how to embed ethics, equity, and collaboration into digital governance models, ensuring they remain transparent, accountable, and resilient in the face of continuous technological change.

## What we talked about

### 1. Governing AI, data and digital safety

Across keynotes, paper sessions and workshops, Artificial Intelligence and data governance were treated as core governance questions. Discussions focused on:

- How to harness AI for public good while ensuring fairness, accountability and human oversight in areas like public services, social protection, elections and urban management.
- How to govern data responsibly through privacy, cybersecurity and digital sovereignty frameworks, including for critical infrastructure and cross-border data flows.
- New approaches such as data intermediaries, data cooperatives and trusts, and culturally aware strategies to tackle misinformation, platform power and online harms.

### 2. Digital public infrastructure and transforming the country's ecosystem

Several tracks examined how Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), digital ID, payments, interoperability and broadband are reshaping the country's ecosystem. Key debates looked at:

- DPI as the backbone of scalable, citizen-centric services and inclusive digital financial systems, with case studies from India, Nigeria and beyond.
- How digital transformation and GovTech initiatives can move from pilots to systemic change, supported by skills, institutional capacity and organisational innovation.
- New metrics, indices and evaluation frameworks (e.g. EGDI, GTMI, LOSI, and other GovTech-oriented measures) to assess whether digital governance delivers real outcomes, not just online portals.

### 3. Inclusion, rights and the Global South perspective

ICEGOV 2025 put inclusion and the Global South at the centre of digital governance debates. Contributions highlighted:

- Structural digital divides affecting persons with disabilities, women and girls, youth, rural communities and legally or economically marginalised groups.
- African and wider Global South experiences with AI, digital public services and digital transformation strategies, including opportunities for leapfrogging and South-

- South cooperation.
- Rights-based approaches to safety and protection online, including responses to technology-facilitated gender-based violence and the need for “safety-, privacy- and accessibility-by-design” in digital systems.

### 4. Participation, platforms and digital economies

Another strong thread was how people and markets interact with the state in the new environments. Discussions explored:

- The role of social media and digital platforms in political participation, youth mobilisation, public communication and the risks of misinformation, polarisation and opaque algorithms.
- New models of co-creation and co-production in public services, including AI-enabled co-creation and participatory approaches to evidence-based policymaking.
- How digital economies and public-private partnerships shape infrastructure, competition and resilience, and what this means for regulation, accountability and public value.



## Messages from Abuja



### **Growing importance of AI and data governance.**

Governments must treat AI, data and algorithmic systems as core public infrastructure, governed with the same care as any other critical asset.



### **Cooperation needs capacity, not just declarations.**

Mandates, institutions, funding and shared infrastructures are what make cross-sector and multi-level collaboration real.



### **Inclusion and safety must be built in.**

Designing with persons with disabilities, women and girls, youth and marginalised communities from the start is the only way to build trustworthy systems.



### **DPI decisions have long shadows.**

Choices about digital ID, payments and data exchange will influence who benefits, who is excluded and who holds power in digital societies.



### **The Global South is innovating, not just catching up.**

Experiences from Africa and other regions are generating new models and questions that enrich global digital governance debates.

## Programme Highlights

### **Doctoral Colloquium: nurturing the next generation**

ICEGOV 2025 opened with a full-day Doctoral Colloquium, where PhD students presented ongoing work on topics such as digital carbon governance, e-government usability and security in Nigeria, AI regulatory sandboxes and public-private collaboration in cryptocurrency crime investigations. The Colloquium provided structured feedback from senior chairs and peers, helping young researchers sharpen their questions, methods and contributions.

### **Keynotes: setting the tone for impact and inclusion**

- Opening addresses by Tshilidzi Marwala (UNU Rector and UN Under-Secretary-General) and Bosun Tijani (Minister of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy, Nigeria) framed digital governance as a strategic state capability for development, innovation and inclusion.
- Tomasz Janowski examined how digital government research can increase its real-world impact, calling for contextualised,

- internationalised, and strategic approaches, as well as deeper collaboration between research, policy, and practice.
- Nibal Idlebi highlighted the importance of cooperation and innovation for “digital governance for all”, anchored in sound policies, skills and regional collaboration.
- David Omozuafoh explored the AI imperative for inclusive and sustainable governance in Africa, linking continental AI strategies to concrete governance challenges and opportunities on the ground.

### **Workshops and roundtables convened by partners: deep dives into critical themes**

Interactive workshops tackled issues such as:

- The need for streamlined cybersecurity governance and a possible central cybersecurity agency in Nigeria (*Octagon, Sulfman*)
- The relationship between digital government maturity and AI readiness, drawing on UN E-Government Survey and AI Readiness Index insights (*UNDESA*)
- AI-enabled co-creation for evidence-based policymaking (*GUT, UWK*)
- Digital governance politics and Artificial

Intelligence in the Global South (*Wits University, IDRC AI4D*)

- Cultural values and online misinformation (*DCO*)
- Data intermediaries, cooperatives and trusts for more equitable data governance (*GIZ, Paradigm Initiative, CSEA*).

Roundtables focused on:

- Shaping data governance and advancing digital inclusion in Africa (*UNESCO*)
- Co-creation for better service delivery in the age of AI (*API, UWK, UNU-EGOV*)
- Technology-facilitated gender-based violence and safe digital spaces (*UNFPA*)
- Balancing inclusion and innovation in Digital Public Infrastructure (*ACET, KOICA*).

Together with the 12 conference tracks, these elements gave ICEGOV 2025 a rich mix of theory, evidence, policy debate and practice-oriented exchange.

### **Tracks**

ICEGOV 2025 explored innovative strategies and frameworks for creating digital governance models that reflect the values of equity and fairness. They

aimed to address the ethical dilemmas arising from AI and other emerging technologies, ensuring that these innovations are harnessed responsibly.

- **Track 1:** Building Trust through Inclusive and Ethical Digital Governance
- **Track 2:** Securing Digital Governance: Privacy, Cybersecurity, and Sovereignty for the Future
- **Track 3:** Harnessing AI for Public Good: Balancing Innovation and Responsibility
- **Track 4:** Digital transformation and innovation in the Public Sector
- **Track 5:** Harnessing Emerging Technologies for Smarter and More Efficient Public Services
- **Track 6:** New Metrics and Approaches for Measuring Digital Governance Success
- **Track 7:** Building Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for Scalable and Inclusive Digital Service Delivery
- **Track 8:** Smart, Sustainable and Resilient Communities, Cities and Regions
- **Track 9:** Participation in the Era of Social Media and Digital Platforms
- **Track 10:** Governing Digital Economies: Public-Private Sector Perspectives
- **Track 11:** Accelerating Digital Transformation in the Global South
- **Track 12:** Early Research Track



## Awards

Two categories were awarded on ICEGOV 2025: Ongoing Research Paper and Research Paper.

### **Micro-Transformation Framework for Public Sector Innovation: Catalyzing Resilient, Outcome-Driven Digital Governance**

**Author:** Robert Ifeonu (Central Bank of Nigeria)  
**Award:** Best Research Paper

The paper proposes a micro-transformation framework that rethinks digital transformation beyond large, technology-centric projects, grounding innovation in local realities and institutional complexity. It stands out for its strong theoretical foundations, transparent methodology and balanced mix of scientific rigour and policy relevance.

### **Time and Complexity in Public Procurement of Digital Solutions: Evidence from Italian Municipalities**

**Authors:** Tommaso Giaccardi, Luca Gastaldi (Politecnico di Milano)  
**Award:** Best Ongoing Research Paper

This paper offers a timely and rigorous contribution to the underexplored area of

procuring digital solutions in the public sector, combining solid empirical analysis with clear conceptual and practical implications for more effective, accountable procurement.

## What's next?

ICEGOV 2025 underlined that shaping the future of digital governance is a shared, long-term effort. The conversations that started in Abuja will continue through follow-up publications, collaborations and future editions of the conference.

In the coming weeks, the Proceedings of the 18th International Conference on Theory and Practice of Electronic Governance (ICEGOV) will be published by Lecture Notes in Computer Science (LNCS), Springer.

We invite all ICEGOV 2025 participants and registrants to stay connected, share their experiences, and utilise the ideas, tools, and networks from the conference to advance digital governance in their own contexts.

We thank all ICEGOV 2025 participants, partners and sponsors for their contributions, energy and insights in Abuja!

## ICEGOV 2025 in numbers

**151**

Paper submissions (88 research, 38 ongoing, 24 short); 74 papers accepted – an overall 42.3% acceptance rate where only full papers are considered (41 research, 23 ongoing, 10 short).

**35**

UNU-EGOV scholarships awarded, supporting authors and participants from 14 different nationalities.

**308**

Unique authors from 33 countries, including 210 authors from emerging economies.

**377**

Registered participants from 51 countries: Government (191), Academia (101), International Organisations / NGOs (54), Industry (26), Civil Society (5).

**Top represented countries (authors):** Nigeria (102), Brazil (34), India (30), Portugal (30), Greece (11)

**Top represented countries (participants):** Nigeria (262), Portugal (12), South Africa (10), United Kingdom (6), Ghana (5).

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