

CHAPTER

3



**WHAT ASSETS AND INNOVATIONS
CAN GOVERNMENTS MOBILIZE TO
TRANSFORM THE PUBLIC SECTOR
AND ACHIEVE THE SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS?**

3.1 Introduction

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015 prompted deep reflection on the importance of reshaping and transforming public institutions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The current context is far less favourable than when the SDGs were originally agreed. Governments face many challenges, such as the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, violent conflict with spillover effects, environmental crises, food shortages, and supply chain disruptions in a context of high levels of debt and shrinking budgets. It is now clearer than ever that the State and effective, accountable and inclusive public institutions have an “inescapable stewardship role” to play in finding innovative solutions to address the repercussions of these overlapping crises.¹ It has been noted that the pandemic has restored the standing of the State as a legitimate authority and even as a “principle of first resort”, with States at the forefront of crisis response.

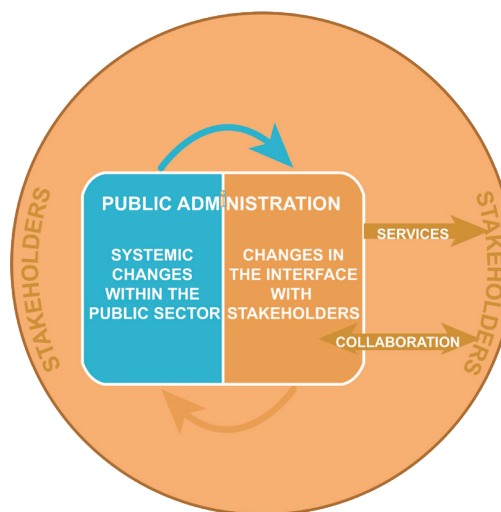
The pandemic brought about abrupt disruptions in the ways of working of public institutions. The urgency to respond in real time loosened institutional constraints² and forced public agencies to quickly experiment with alternative ways to operate,³ both of which accelerated innovation. Beyond the implementation of buffer measures to maintain essential public services, the crisis provided opportunities for transformations in public administration that would have been challenging to pursue in “normal” times. In Italy, for example, the pandemic forced public sector managers to make decisions that usually required a lengthy approval process in a short time, without the guidance of policymakers and amid financial uncertainty.⁴ In some cases, as explored in this chapter, more efficient and effective ways to deliver public services were found, and many of these may become the “new normal”. Nevertheless, it is not clear that this momentum of agile decision-making, experimentation and innovation observed during the pandemic will be carried into the future. This raises the question of how to foster innovation in public institutions once crises are over and regular procedures and processes resume.

For the State to retain public trust, it must innovate and be better prepared to handle future systemic shocks, being proactive enough to address problems before they emerge and become crises. At the same time, the challenges posed to Governments by cascading crises in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic further pressure them to identify innovative approaches to better serve their constituents. Governments can tap into the innovations developed to respond to the pandemic to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Public innovation initiatives, which involve public means to produce solutions with a public purpose, necessitate an inclusive approach that poses the question “For whom does change work?”—an inquiry Governments may not be giving sufficient attention to amid rapidly unfolding crises.⁵

While innovation undoubtedly plays a pivotal role in enhancing institutional effectiveness, it is important to acknowledge that it is one element of a broader picture. To earn people’s trust, public institutions need to fulfil their responsibilities, provide services in an effective and equitable manner, and be accountable for the effective management of public funds. Critical requirements for this are that public institutions are adequately funded and possess the necessary competencies. Public institutions also need to be accountable to the public and transparent. As illustrated in this and other chapters of the present report, not only do participation and engagement facilitate the development of policies and services that are robust enough to tackle complex social issues and emergencies, but they are also critical ingredients of shared trust between people and Governments. The establishment of an inclusive, gender-balanced and diverse public service that accurately reflects the population it serves is also an essential element. A public sector that enjoys people’s trust can leverage the expertise of non-State actors to create a joint agenda that meets the public’s needs and frames processes and services that are beneficial for all in the post-pandemic “new normal”.

With these considerations in mind, the present chapter focuses on how Governments can mobilize successful innovations that emerged in the public sector during the pandemic for the development of longer-term strategies and policies to achieve the SDGs. To address complex crises and accelerate progress toward the SDGs, Governments need to pursue innovative approaches in two distinct yet interconnected dimensions. The first dimension relates to policy innovations as well as administrative, organizational and systemic change within public administration itself. The second dimension is about transformations in the interaction between Governments and stakeholders, in particular at the interface between people and public institutions in relation to public service delivery. The next sections of this overview examine these dimensions.

Figure 3.1
Innovation in the public sector to deliver the SDGs and build resilience to crises

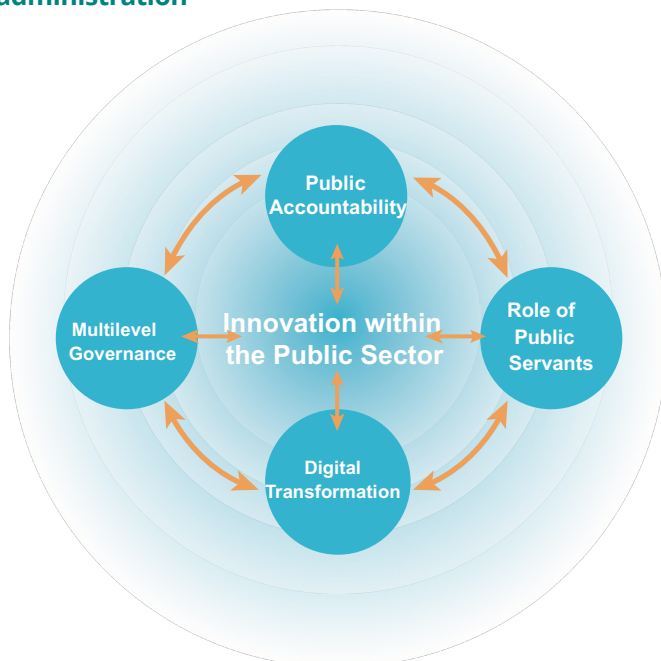


Source: Author’s elaboration.

3.2 Policy innovations and changes within public administration

Much is still being discovered about how to promote innovation in the public sector and which abilities, techniques and assets are needed to do it successfully, particularly when innovation emerges during a crisis. The public sector has an important role to play in creating the right environment to nurture and institutionalize innovation.⁶ Developments observed during the pandemic suggest that assets such as public accountability, coherence among different levels of government, enhanced capabilities and professionalism of public servants, and digital transformation should be considered by Governments as

Figure 3.2
Policy innovations and changes within public administration



Source: Author's elaboration.

building blocks of strategies to foster transformative change within public administration (see figure 3.2). This section explores these four elements in turn.

3.2.1 Innovation versus transformation

The literature suggests that innovation can come about as incremental improvements or disruptions and transformations that alter or replace processes or services.⁷ The COVID-19 pandemic pushed Governments to quickly find solutions to adapt to the drastically changed context. According to the World Bank, effective public sector agencies experimented with new ways to operate, including strengthening crisis management and preparedness through a coordinated response often led by the centre of government (see box 3.1).⁸

Beneficial, one-off innovations triggered by crises may not be sufficient to foster transformation in the long run and accelerate the pace of implementation of the SDGs. Experts argue that Governments need to be able to adapt to the changing environment and systemically embed innovation at the heart of policymaking and public administration.⁹

An increased pace of SDG implementation may require the rethinking of the model of operation of the public sector, as elaborated in the contribution of Geert Bouckaert. Experts underscore that new models should be shaped by people-centred and inclusive approaches based on the central principle of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind and on integrity and ethical behaviour.¹⁰ New models of operation for the public sector may combine enhanced capacities for crisis management with a change from hierarchical, static and siloed structures to dynamic collaborative and enabling approaches.¹¹ The impact of innovation in the public sector, especially when it has been developed in reaction to a crisis, must be considered in terms of improved effectiveness, resource optimization, and inclusive access to public goods and services within a sustainability perspective.

Box 3.1 Coordination of the response to COVID-19 in Cambodia

The Government of Cambodia set up the National Response Committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, to identify a national policy and strategy in response to COVID-19 and lead implementation plans to control the pandemic.^(a) The Committee was also responsible for minimizing socioeconomic impacts as well as leading and facilitating the implementation of multisectoral and interministerial measures at the national and subnational levels.^(b) An assessment of the COVID-19 response in Cambodia highlights the country's swift action and effective control measures during the initial year, leading to the successful containment of the pandemic. Additionally, by the second year, Cambodia had achieved extensive vaccination coverage.^(c) The assessment underscores the crucial role of strong leadership and transformative governance in the country's response.

Sources: (a) Jana Kunicova, "Driving the COVID-19 response from the center: institutional mechanisms to ensure whole-of-government coordination", World Bank Governance Global Practice (Washington, D.C., World Bank Group, November 2020), available at <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/944721604613856580/pdf/Driving-the-COVID-19-Response-from-the-Center-Institutional-Mechanisms-to-Ensure-Whole-of-Government-Coordination.pdf>, pp. 24 and 42; (b) *ibid.*, p. 42; (c) Srean Chhim and others, "Descriptive assessment of COVID-19 responses and lessons learnt in Cambodia, January 2020 to June 2022", *BMJ Global Health*, vol. 8, No. 5 (n.d.), available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2023-011885>.

3.2.2 Innovation and public accountability

Transparency and accountability are key determinants of the effectiveness of public institutions and cannot be ignored in transformation processes. As noted in the *World Public Sector Report 2021*, the responses to the pandemic increased risks for integrity violations in the allocation and use of public resources and core government functions. The pandemic necessitated the rapid scaling up of service delivery and social protection, which brought with it new pressures and challenges to public oversight. Emergencies were used to justify the use of legislative and administrative shortcuts, sometimes limiting transparency and compromising the ability of oversight institutions such as parliaments and supreme audit institutions to demand accountability from Governments. Nevertheless, oversight institutions found ways to utilize innovation to promote access to information, transparency and accountability.¹² In this context, it has been noted that the pandemic hindered the increasing trend of cooperation between supreme audit institutions and organized citizens, which is an important channel for enhancing public oversight (see the contribution by Jonathan Fox in this chapter).

In his contribution, Fox notes that the institutional resilience of transparency, participation and accountability reforms was challenged when national emergencies necessitated swift policy decisions rather than collaborative regulation and public

oversight. He cautions that legal measures alone may not be enough to ensure the stability of the related mechanisms and systems during crises. Anchoring those at multiple levels of government can strengthen the durability of policy changes over time. This creates a system of checks and balances and allows committed policymakers at different levels of government to counteract the impacts of inaction or changing priorities at other levels of government.

3.2.3 Multilevel governance and innovation at the subnational level

Context-based policy responses to crises are witnessed at the national and subnational levels.¹³ During COVID-19, subnational governments (including states, provinces and municipalities) were at the front line of crisis management and continued to play a central role during the recovery period. Innovation at the subnational level has in some cases promoted a more agile and responsive reaction to crises by leveraging closeness to citizens.¹⁴ Box 3.2 provides examples of local-level responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in Latin America. In other cases, results may have been mixed because of lack of capacity at the subnational level. In a post-pandemic context, public sector agencies may consider how to incorporate and scale up innovative practices coming from the subnational level

Box 3.2 Local-level response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil and Chile

On 26 February 2020, the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in Brazil, after which the virus spread rapidly throughout the country's main cities. Lack of direction from the central Government pushed states and municipal councils to coordinate sanitary measures, including supervising quarantines, redeploying the health workforce, and financing vaccine research. Sapopemba is a district in São Paulo where approximately 20 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line, often lacking access to essential services such as piped water supply and proper sewerage infrastructure. City commissioners and congressional members supported citizens in holding meetings with municipal government departments to identify and jointly coordinate preventive actions. These included handing out face masks donated by companies, coordinating educational activities, and organizing talks with school communities about returning to class. Areas presenting a high risk of infection were identified, as were the impacts of the pandemic on residents' lives. The collaboration between communities and local authorities allowed the effective identification of priority responses in a participatory manner.

In Chile, the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed on 3 March 2020. At that time, the country was facing a social and political crisis, with massive unrest and citizens demanding social justice and equity. This created institutional instability at the national level. Several initiatives were organized at the local level to support those in need. Interventions focused on addressing food insecurity, providing recreational and self-care activities, sanitizing public spaces, and manufacturing and distributing masks. The measures implemented helped ease the burden on public health authorities and fostered community mobilization, resilience and unity in addressing the COVID-19 crisis, reminiscent of the collective efforts witnessed during the economic downturn of the 1980s. According to a survey conducted in the country, one third of the individuals engaged in community-driven initiatives reported collaborating with local health teams or authorities. Despite the prevailing distrust towards public institutions during the pandemic, community involvement continued to serve as a means of collaboration with the Government.

Sources: Christian R. Montenegro and Felipe Szabzon, "Co-production? We do community participation: experiences and perspectives in the context of the COVID-19 crisis from Latin America", in *Rapid Response: COVID-19 and Co-Production in Health and Social Care Research, Policy, and Practice—Volume 1: The Challenges and Necessity of Co-Production*, Peter Beresford and others, eds. (Bristol, United Kingdom, Bristol University Press/Policy Press, 2021), available at <https://policy.bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/covid-19-and-coproductin-in-health-and-social-care>.

that have the potential to transform pre-pandemic standards. However, this requires dedicated processes for detecting, assessing and institutionalizing innovation, which may not exist.

In his contribution, Louis Meuleman observes that the centralization trend induced by COVID-19 and other crises has put high pressure on the relations between national and subnational governments. He argues that the pandemic brought to light and reinforced the challenges of multilevel governance arrangements, exposing the fragmentation which hampered the impact of government responses. Bouckaert echoes this idea in his contribution. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) affirms that some Governments have set up mechanisms for multilevel dialogue, coordination, collaboration and funding to reduce fragmentation. Hinging on the availability of reliable and timely data, multilevel collaboration mechanisms aim to enhance crisis management, response and information-sharing. In Greece, Italy and the United Arab Emirates, the Government has bolstered the collection and aggregation of data to drive evidence-informed policymaking. Other experts add that coordination across levels of government is even more relevant in the context of revenue generation and spending imbalances among the different tiers of government in the aftermath of the pandemic.¹⁵

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Ghana adopted a flexible yet centralized approach that relied on information and directives from the central Government to the local governments.¹⁶ To provide the necessary urgent response, the central Government delegated authority to local state agencies, with the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development tasked to coordinate local activities and promote compliance with health protocols. This approach resulted in strengthened and unified policy design and execution throughout the country.

Transformative strategies require coordinating bottom-up and top-down approaches, adapting and adopting successful innovations that emerged in response to the crisis. In his contribution, Meuleman notes that in Germany, the importance of a two-tier crisis management system was more pronounced during than before the pandemic. He argues that collaboration across levels of government helped foster innovation while addressing capacity and resource constraints, and notes that coordination with the national level is also critical for effectively integrating innovative local experiences into multiscale governance approaches.

3.2.4 The role of public servants

Transformation relies on the capabilities and performance of public officials, as well as the effective management of the public sector workforce. The COVID-19 pandemic showcased the crucial role of public servants in ensuring the uninterrupted

delivery of public services and continuity in essential functions of the State, highlighting their adaptability in the face of challenges.¹⁷ Public servants were also essential in furthering innovation during the pandemic, devising new modalities for delivering public services and leveraging data and tools to further the attainment of the SDGs.

In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the rapid influx of refugees as a result of the security crisis in Ukraine, the public sector in Romania identified the need for a comprehensive approach to skill development and learning, as well as changes in hiring criteria and competency frameworks, to incorporate the soft skills needed by public servants to promote innovation. Skill development is a key feature of a comprehensive strategy or systemic approach¹⁸ that embeds “innovative capacities into the framework, culture and processes of government” to support the implementation of impactful policies and the design of service approaches that can handle complexity.¹⁹

Because building the capacity of public servants was a challenge during the pandemic, training methods had to be innovative, as illustrated in the contribution of Odette Ramsingh and Carlien Jooste and that of Ankita Meghani and Taryn Vian. In South Africa, for instance, health workforce training had to be transformed, and reliance on online platforms increased dramatically. Governments can leverage this transformation beyond the pandemic as an affordable or complementary alternative to in-person training while ensuring inclusive access to capacity-development opportunities.

Common narratives about innovation in the public sector emphasize the need for an enabling environment with appropriate regulation and infrastructure, as well as innovation-oriented organizational cultures, mindsets, capabilities and tools. They also emphasize that public servants need to be properly equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote innovation, so it is important to ensure that workforce competencies are strong in areas such as technology, strategic anticipation, crisis management, adaptability, resilience and change management.

During the pandemic, public sector managers and staff often departed from this general conception and did not wait for all these elements to be in place before engaging in innovation. This reflects one of the key differences between “normal” times and crises. In normal, non-emergency conditions, public servants may not often be allowed to experiment with innovation, learn from unsuccessful attempts, or understand how to manage the risks associated with innovation failure. They may also lack the optimism, influence and motivation necessary to explore new ways of delivering public services and capitalizing on data and tools that can foster innovation. All of this can drastically change during crises.

Ramsingh and Jooste relate that the Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University in South Africa experienced a surge in

collaboration and unity among its public servants during the pandemic, allowing innovation to take place much faster than would have been possible in normal circumstances based on standard transformation management approaches. The need to react to the crisis generated a strong sense of determination and purpose among the staff and as a result, the digitalization of the University, which was to have been carried out as part of a five-year strategic plan, was accomplished in under six months. Additionally, the University's human resources team issued working-from-home protocols within a day of the national lockdown announcement to ensure the safety of its personnel and students.

3.2.5 Digital transformation

During COVID-19 lockdowns, public sector agencies tapped digital technologies to continue their operations and deliver services. For example, some public institutions started conducting interviews online to fill vacant positions—a practice that had not previously been employed in many cases. As noted by Ramsingh and Jooste, the shift to increased digitalization at the Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University in South Africa resulted in a more than 50 per cent reduction in the administrative and logistical costs of recruitment and greater collaboration among different administrative functions.

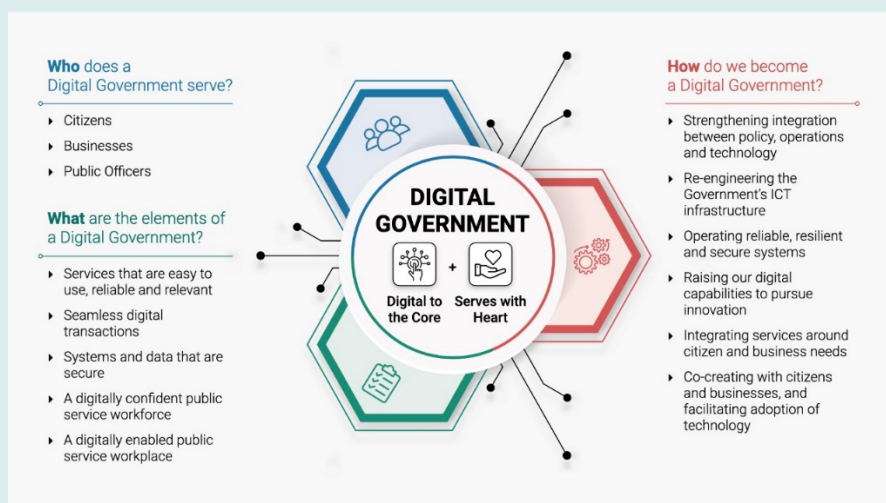
Box 3.3 Systemic approach to digitalization in public service delivery during the pandemic in Singapore

Singapore turned the disruption brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic into a catalyst for accelerating public innovation. The Government took proactive measures, developing digital solutions that utilized data collection and integrated operations and technology to combat the virus. This approach was rooted in the country's commitment to embracing innovation as a core value, fostering collaboration among public agencies, and adopting an agile approach to deliver services using a whole-of-government strategy.

Transforming the delivery of government digital services, with a focus on meeting citizen and business needs, also contributed to the effective containment of COVID-19. The Government Technology Agency of Singapore established workflows and processes to ensure that people's needs were prioritized. These efforts were guided by the country's Digital Government Blueprint and supported by the Singapore Government Tech Stack, a set of digital tools designed to streamline and simplify application development. The Tech Stack enables government agencies to accelerate digital application development by leveraging reusable code across the entire government.

The pandemic also stimulated the crowdsourcing of digital solutions. Issues such as isolation and mental health were addressed within this context, and the solutions adopted—including offering assistance to seniors in accessing health care and addressing the educational needs of students—were aimed at leaving no one behind.

Singapore: Digital Government Blueprint



Sources: Singapore, Government Technology Agency (GovTech), "Digital Government Blueprint", available at <https://www.tech.gov.sg/digital-government-blueprint/>; Ang Hak Seng and Sueann Soon, "Transformation in the Singapore public service: emerging stronger from the pandemic", *Ethos*, a publication of the Civil Service College Singapore, issue 22: Learning from Crisis, Tharman Shanmugaratnam, ed. (June 2021), available at <https://www.csc.gov.sg/articles/transformation-in-the-singapore-public-service-emerging-stronger-from-the-pandemic/>; Singapore, GovTech, "Singapore Government Tech Stack", available at <https://www.tech.gov.sg/products-and-services/singapore-government-tech-stack/>; Singapore, GovTech, "How techies can facilitate the post-circuit breaker economy", *technews*, 22 May 2020, available at <https://www.tech.gov.sg/media/technews/how-techies-can-facilitate-the-post-circuit-breaker-economy>.

As the pandemic progressed, policymakers responded through new systemic approaches leveraging digitalization. An example is the technology-enabled transformation of processes and core functional systems implemented by the United States Department of Commerce to address the pandemic. The innovation consisted of the design and implementation of a multifunction model encompassing the Department's human resources, financial management, and information and communications technology (ICT) functions across all 12 of its constituent bureaus.²⁰ Box 3.3 illustrates how Singapore designed a systemic approach to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of public service by leveraging digitalization in response to the pandemic.²¹

Digital technologies played a significant role during the pandemic. In some countries, they supported the efficient disbursement of social protection benefits and the identification of beneficiaries, especially in countries that had pre-existing systems in place (see the contribution by Fox in this chapter). Digital technologies allowed policymakers to access and analyse data related to behaviours to identify trends and patterns, including those linked to health and lifestyle choices, as highlighted in box 3.4. Such data supported decision-making on, for example, lockdown strategies requiring changes in people's behaviour to cope with the pandemic. Experts warn, however, that extracting data to fuel algorithmic decision-making processes may potentially create or amplify discriminatory outcomes.²² Furthermore, because the changes digital technologies produce are not predictable in all contexts, oversimplified narratives of their positive impact on SDG implementation are misleading. Experts refer to ICT as part of the solution but not a solution in itself. Contextual approaches are needed, especially at the local level.²³

3.3 Transformations in the interactions between Governments and stakeholders and the delivery of public services

Engaging and collaborating with non-State actors has long been recognized as important for Governments, both to enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of policy decisions and to improve the responsiveness and quality of public services. Chapter 1 of this report examines elements of the broader relationships between Governments and other actors, including voice, fiscal fairness, justice, information, and digital transformation, while chapter 2 addresses collaboration between policymakers, citizens, and the scientific community in the context of policy integration and policy coherence.

Innovations in response to the coronavirus emergency have placed a new emphasis on systems thinking and the role of Governments in "building an innovative society and in inventing solutions to emerging issues".²⁴ Nigeria, for example, established a national emergency response system that brought together a group of stakeholders with academic, health policy and service expertise to assess how response measures such as lockdowns affected living standards and business activities in the country.²⁵

In the context of multiple intersecting crises, the public sector is increasingly being called upon to create an ecosystem of innovation that promotes dynamic linkages among multiple organizations and across sectors.²⁶ This section explores transformative changes in the interaction between Governments and stakeholders through engagement, co-production, co-creation and enhanced service delivery.

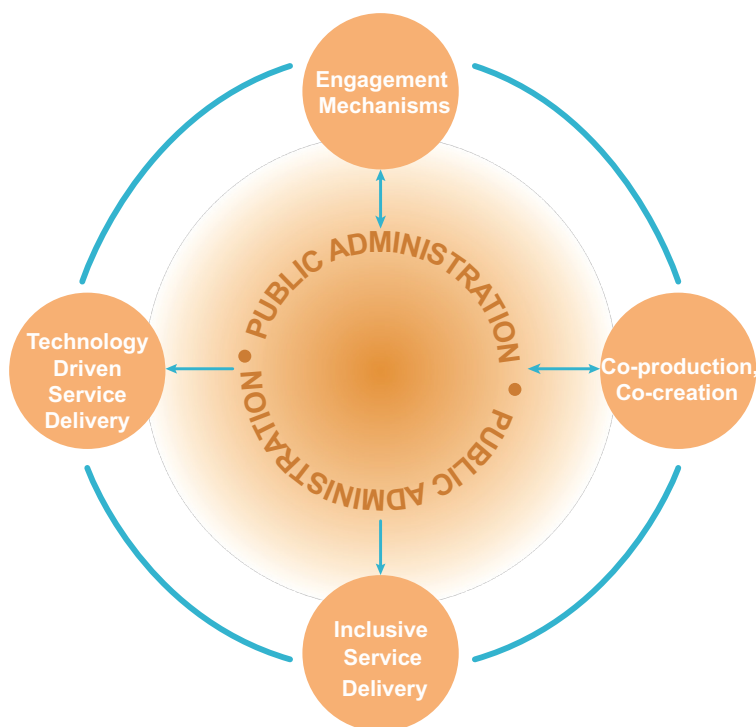
Box 3.4 The use of digital technology to analyse health and lifestyle habits during the pandemic in Poland

The Chief Sanitary Inspectorate in Poland developed the System of Records of the State Sanitary Inspection (SEPIS), which integrated multiple systems across national and local branches of the Inspectorate and enabled real-time information exchange to effectively mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The Inspectorate used multiple channels, including websites, helplines and mobile applications, to undertake epidemiological interviews and collect information about people's health and lifestyle habits to better understand the spread of the disease. SEPIS allowed users to register information on the outbreak and update their vaccination records. It also helped improve the quality of the Inspectorate's work as measured, inter alia, by the shorter time required to handle public requests. The data collected via SEPIS enabled decision makers to analyse the changing epidemic situation, which contributed to mitigating the spread of the virus in the country.

Source: United Nations, Public Service Innovation Hub, United Nations Public Service Award winners for 2022, featuring the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate of Poland and its initiative relating to the System of Records of the State Sanitary Inspection (SEPIS), available at <https://publicadministration.un.org/unpsa/database/Special-Category-on-covid-19-response/SEPIS>.

Figure 3.3

Transformations in interactions between Governments and stakeholders and the delivery of public services



Source: Author's elaboration.

3.3.1 Innovative and resilient engagement mechanisms

During the pandemic, existing institutions, mechanisms and structures were used to deliver new or adapted services, as Fox highlights in his contribution. The conditional cash transfer (CCT) programme in the Philippines is a social protection programme managed by the Department of Social Welfare that reaches 4.4 million households. The programme, which has also been promoting civic awareness, is supported by a broad-based autonomous membership organization made up of its beneficiaries. During the pandemic, the Government used the CCT delivery mechanism to deploy a new social amelioration programme that benefitted a record number of households. As another example, the City Council of Madrid, through the Decide Madrid portal, offered new options in an existing public space to allow citizens to put forward solutions and provide feedback on public services during the pandemic and propose solidarity initiatives to cope with the quarantine.²⁷

There have also been new and innovative engagement mechanisms which have emerged since the start of the pandemic that allow individual citizens and communities to participate in decision-making and co-design public policies. To give structure to such participation during the pandemic, the Berlin Senate in Germany developed the Berlin Engagement

Strategy 2020-2025. The Strategy is designed to strengthen the partnership between the Government and civil society and encourage the voluntary commitment of Berliners to jointly shape a vibrant and solidary society. The Strategy includes measures such as strengthening dialogue between the Government and civil society and providing support for the digitalization of civil society organizations.²⁸

For engagement mechanisms to be successful, they need to be rule-based and embedded in the regular processes of public administration. Key elements that public sector organizations need to consider are the outcome and impact of participatory decision-making and collaborative innovation.²⁹ Public administration needs to be aware of diverse motivational determinants to create favourable conditions for collaboration and develop incentives, particularly for a quicker and more effective response to a crisis.³⁰ Having a broader understanding of needs is instrumental for optimizing the impact of innovations beyond the immediate results of participation and for accelerating the pace of change for those who are engaged.³¹

3.3.2 Co-production, co-creation and changes in service delivery

Governments have long utilized co-production and other forms of collaboration with businesses, charities, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders in designing public policies and delivering services. Co-production allows for an equal partnership between service providers and users—with the latter not only receiving services but also having a hand in creating them.³² Pre-and post-pandemic examples of public service co-production have been seen in a variety of sectors, including agriculture, education, health care and law enforcement.³³

With interactions between the public sector and recipients of public services heavily disrupted during lockdowns, many countries and institutions moved rapidly and drastically to co-production in health care, social protection, transport and education, as noted by several experts in their contributions. The pandemic presented Brazil with unprecedented difficulties, including a dramatic increase in social vulnerability. The Sesc Mesa Brasil food bank programme leveraged the benefits of co-production to help ameliorate some of the most urgent challenges. This initiative catalysed the efforts of community and civil society organizations to address the food and health security crisis and enabled social organizations to supplement State efforts to meet the needs of the population.³⁴ In the area of education, a study on public universities in Tunisia shows how the beneficiaries of distance learning co-created value with the service provider during the pandemic. Students became co-producers and shaped the quality of distance learning services based on their specific needs during

lockdowns. The study claims that this form of collaboration positively impacted the outcome and level of satisfaction for web-based learning.³⁵

It is difficult to measure the impact of co-production on the responsiveness, innovativeness and efficiency of public services.³⁶ In a broad sense, however, the pressures on public expenditure and the multiple challenges public institutions are facing to maintain high standards of service delivery in the wake of the pandemic have highlighted the importance of collaborating with multiple actors to address policy and operational challenges. Some models of co-production that evolved during the pandemic offer promise for the future. In Japan, pandemic-induced collaboration between service providers, community members and recipients as equal partners in long-term elder care not only improved service delivery during the health crisis but, according to experts, may also serve as the basis for a new post-COVID model of health-care co-production on a larger scale in the country.³⁷

In their contribution, Meghani and Vian emphasize that co-production with the private sector was critical in the COVID-19 response. The formation of public-private partnerships enabled the rapid development of COVID-19 tests, treatments and vaccines, among other advances. Through collaboration with the private sector, laboratory capacity and testing were increased in Ghana, Nepal and Nigeria, and hospital capacity was expanded in Ghana, Nepal and Bangladesh. These examples demonstrate the potential of partnerships and co-production to create a more resilient future and enable a “transformative co-productive approach” to rebuilding post-pandemic.³⁸

Despite the potential benefits of co-production,³⁹ the process of scaling up remains a challenge. Governments that wish to transition from temporary measures to systematic approaches to incorporating co-production into their standard operations in order to foster a collaborative culture, strengthen the capacity for collaboration, and ensure their preparedness for future crises must consider institutional elements such as legislative frameworks that enable co-production arrangements as well as transparency and accountability, which affect stakeholders’ willingness to co-produce.⁴⁰ Governments must also address challenges surrounding co-production that have been particularly prominent during the pandemic, including tensions between users and providers, cost pressures, incentive-related issues, and the attitude of public service officials who may feel uneasy about the increased role of stakeholders in public sector decision-making (see the contribution by Ramsingh and Jooste).⁴¹

3.3.3 Inclusive service delivery

In the wake of the pandemic—given the adverse trends relating to poverty, inequality and vulnerability—Governments

are under even greater pressure to provide public services that are accessible and affordable for all.⁴² This is particularly true for services that are essential for the well-being of the population, including those linked to health, education, water and sanitation, nutrition and social protection.

The pandemic accelerated health-care innovation, with a number of creative solutions adopted to reduce the burden on health-care systems.⁴³ Several examples showcase innovations that have not only broadened access to health-care services but also promoted inclusion and participation. The Republic of Korea has made health-care services more accessible to low-income and socially isolated older persons through partnerships with clinics, welfare services, and care service providers. According to a self-assessment, the programme has contributed to reducing the percentage of the population with unmet medical treatment needs to a mere 8.7 per cent. Through this collaborative effort, more than 90,000 cases have benefited significantly.⁴⁴ The United Arab Emirates launched a national programme to administer tests to persons with disabilities in their homes during the pandemic.⁴⁵ In the United States, the Health+ Long COVID programme has employed people-centred design to create patient-centric solutions in collaboration with individuals who have been affected by the virus. This includes the organization of “Healthathons” to swiftly develop and implement solutions with the help of the community.⁴⁶

In the education sector, many countries have implemented new initiatives designed to expand opportunities for students. Over the last three years, the Prefecture of the District of Jabotão dos Guararapes in Brazil has improved inclusiveness by granting access to secondary-level technical schools to students from low-income families with low education levels. According to a self-evaluation, the programme has made a substantial impact on the enrolment of district students in technical schools. Moreover, the dropout rate among students having completed middle school has declined by 27 per cent and now stands below the national average.⁴⁷ Botswana enhanced inclusiveness by creating a web-based interactive platform accessible to both learners and teachers. This collaboration resulted in more inclusive and equitable quality education as well as improved learning opportunities and service performance.⁴⁸ Ghana increased the ICT education and ICT exams pass rate of junior high school students by bringing hands-on mobile computer classes to remote and under-resourced schools.⁴⁹ Ireland appointed caseworkers to cater for the specific requirements of underprivileged children. Customized plans developed by caseworkers have addressed learners’ needs and facilitated their access to online education. This has included providing laptops, broadband connectivity and digital literacy training. As a result, disadvantaged children have been empowered with the necessary tools and support to actively participate in online learning—which has contributed to bridging the digital divide.⁵⁰

3.3.4 Technology-driven service delivery

The use of digital technology helped public institutions transform service delivery and enhance responses to COVID-19.⁵¹ In the health sector, Rwanda promoted the use of drone technology to transport medicines in rural settings and the use of robots to carry out medical tasks. Other innovations in public service delivery include the expansion of telemedicine and telehealth platforms, the creation of online portals to facilitate the vaccination process and access to mobile health applications, the use of data analytics, and the targeted application of artificial intelligence to strengthen public sector responsiveness (see the contribution by Meghani and Vian).⁵² Digital technology was also used during the pandemic for online schooling, judicial proceedings, e-voting in parliamentary proceedings, and (in India, for example) creating links between citizens' bank accounts and mobile phones to facilitate the disbursement of COVID-19 cash relief.⁵³

Innovation has also been observed in approaches to digital government at the whole-of-government level. Greece developed online systems and promoted e-governance after the outbreak of COVID-19 to enable citizens to gain virtual access to public authorities and to allow public servants to work remotely. Through these reforms, citizens were able to communicate with government authorities and deal with official documentation in real time, with less red tape, and with no risk of spreading the virus. This innovation led to the launch of a unified digital portal in 2020 as a new form of public management to allow citizens and businesses to access digital services easily and in a centralized manner.⁵⁴

In the post-pandemic context of increased socioeconomic and digital disparities, shifts to digital operations to keep Governments running and reduce costs may have further worsened inequalities in some contexts. The sudden increase in the usage of digital technology has exacerbated the digital divide within countries related to gender, age, disability, geography and socioeconomic status. As many essential services became virtual, those without broadband Internet access have been excluded, and the consequences could be long-lasting. This is especially prominent in the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, and small island developing States, where Internet and mobile phone access remain low for a significant portion of the population.⁵⁵ Experts emphasize that a nuanced and contextual approach to digitalization leverages the advantages of technology while addressing digital divides;⁵⁶ such an approach might include, for example, narrowing the digital skills gap among older people⁵⁷ and enhancing accessibility for persons with disabilities.⁵⁸ The *United Nations E-Government Survey 2022* emphasizes the importance of identifying the diverse needs of men and women and leveraging technology to deliver targeted solutions and improve the quality and range of public services provided to marginalized and vulnerable

groups. The Survey shows examples of measures aimed at addressing digital divides in post-pandemic contexts, including the broadening of accessibility to mobile applications in Japan and the Republic of Korea and the development of more accessible websites in New Zealand.⁵⁹

A just and inclusive digital transformation that leaves no one behind includes hybrid models of service delivery.⁶⁰ Blended or multi-channel service delivery that coordinates and integrates online and offline options allows the Government to provide a seamless experience for all users, including those in underserved areas and vulnerable groups.⁶¹ In 2020, the Ministry of Health in Panama employed a blended service delivery approach for managing a national vaccination campaign. This enabled offline access to the vaccination system for people in remote areas with limited or no Internet connection. The system allowed for offline applications and the local storage of vaccination records, which vaccination centres in remote areas could then upload to the government cloud.⁶²

The rapid acceleration of digitalization during and following the pandemic has heightened the urgency of regulating digital services. Relevant policies should allow innovation to flourish but also protect the rights of users and ensure that digital services are secure and equitable—for instance, by protecting women from the increased online violence they have experienced since COVID-19 emerged.⁶³

3.4 The way forward

The pandemic and post-pandemic periods have emphasized the necessity of moving beyond crisis management and addressing complex long-term issues. In order to tackle these challenges within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a new approach to innovation and transformation is required. This approach should be centred around effectiveness, accountability, inclusivity, collaborative governance and equity, drawing upon knowledge from various sources both within and outside public administration.

Public institutions need to evolve into innovative, technology-savvy entities that have the capacity to engage and co-create with non-State actors. As the pandemic illustrated, this may involve shifting away from the conventional emphasis on efficiency and minimal government intervention towards more participatory and multi-stakeholder forms of governance. Through investment in transformative public-sector change programmes, organizations can unlock their capabilities to go beyond merely responding to disruptions. Fostering transformation and adaptive mindsets will be key to enabling them to anticipate and effectively address the pressing challenges within their societies, even in complex and dynamic environments.⁶⁴ To ensure equal accessibility to quality public services for all and to harness assets and innovations that

Governments can utilize to achieve the SDGs and enhance preparedness for future crises, it is essential to place men, women, older persons, youth, persons with disabilities and vulnerable populations at the centre of public service design.

The contributions comprising the remainder of this chapter further explore innovative solutions that emerged during the pandemic to revamp the public sector's current model of operation, support collaboration across different levels and actors, and improve the delivery of public services—including developments relating to co-creation and hybrid learning. In the contribution by Fox, governance transformation and public service provision are examined from an institutional

resilience perspective. Meghani and Vyan provide an overview of innovations in health-care systems and service delivery. Meuleman examines innovative forms of multilevel government coordination and preparedness after COVID-19. Ramsingh and Jooste examine hybrid learning modalities adopted in a university in South Africa and their influence on innovation and performance. Bouckaert reflects on rethinking the current model of operation of the public sector after COVID-19. Thijs and Berryhill offer a view on co-production from an OECD perspective. A summary of the key recommendations arising from the contributions is presented in table 3A at the end of this chapter.

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Governance Reform and Public Service Provision: Institutional Resilience and State-Society Synergy

Jonathan Fox¹

For more than two decades, national and international policy reformers have sought to improve public service provision by applying transparency, participation and accountability innovations. Relevant initiatives often pursue collaborative governance strategies to bring public servants, citizens and civil society organizations together to generate feedback and promote problem-solving from the front lines. These efforts support the pursuit of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets 16.6 and 16.7, which respectively call for developing “effective, accountable and transparent institutions” and ensuring “responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels”.

Sceptics point to social science field experiments that find little evidence of impact—yet those evaluations only address tool-led, localized interventions.² These “light touch”, micro-level tests of governance innovations leave open the question of the possible impacts of larger-scale, more strategic reforms of public service delivery. Yet both sceptics and advocates of open-government, participation and accountability reforms are likely to agree that their institutional resilience is uncertain—especially when reform champions leave office, or when national crises prioritize rapid policy responses over participatory co-governance and citizen oversight. Meanwhile, numerous multilateral efforts have yet to be independently evaluated to assess their longer-term impacts—as in the notable cases of the World Bank’s mandate to include citizen engagement measures across all of its investment projects or the Open Government Partnership’s national action plans.

Even before the pandemic, this international wave of transparency and accountability reforms faced increasingly inhospitable national policy environments in many countries. Then pandemic-driven urgency to scale up service delivery and social protection added new burdens and threats to public oversight and co-governance reforms. For example, the pandemic slowed what had been growing international momentum towards greater collaboration between supreme audit institutions and organized citizens as a pathway to more effective public oversight.³ Indeed, one of the most promising of such innovations—“citizen participatory audits” in the Philippines—continued to win international accolades even after it stopped publishing the results of collaborative efforts.⁴ At the same time, some public oversight and co-governance innovations managed to survive recent challenges at both the national and subnational levels. Indeed, explanations of national pandemic response success stories such as the Republic of Korea underscore the key role of State-society synergy.⁵

This brief review of institutionally resilient participatory oversight reforms in four countries spotlights how hybrid, collaborative governance can work in practice—in cases where innovations have already been scaled up. That said, assessment of the impact of these reforms is complicated by frequent implementation and evaluation gaps. High degrees of variation across subnational territories and sectors underscore the relevance of identifying positive outliers—in contrast to the conventional policy evaluation search for average impacts, which render invisible both breakthroughs and bottlenecks.⁶

The Mitadin community health worker programme in India, launched in 2002 in the very-low-income state of Chhattisgarh, stands out as distinctive because of its large-scale, socially embedded participatory approach to front-line service provision.⁷ The state programme’s 70,000 community health workers are grass-roots women leaders from socially excluded communities with a strong ethos of commitment to public service and accountable local leadership. The programme is supported by the State Health Resource Center, which is governed by a joint government-civil society board. The Mitadin programme is especially distinctive because it encourages community health workers to go beyond the conventional provision of basic preventive health services. The programme participants actively engage in defending the rights of the socially excluded—including access to the health-care system, redress of grievances, responses to gender violence, access to government food programmes, and the defence of forest rights—often with support from other community health workers and/or their programme supervisors. During the pandemic, the state’s Health Department drafted the Mitadin health workers to participate intensively in the government’s crisis response, including high-risk contact tracing and vaccination, with a commitment to supplemental compensation. When the government did not deliver on its promise, the Mitadin community health workers engaged in a broad-based work stoppage that underscored their remarkably high degree of public legitimacy and job stability—while still earning less than half the minimum wage.

Brazil has long been internationally recognized for its municipal participatory budgeting innovations and its contribution to anti-poverty efforts; this recognition has persisted abroad even though those reforms have long faded within the country.⁸ In contrast, since the 1990s, State-society partnerships have promoted federal laws and regulations that have steadily constructed a much more deeply institutionalized, comprehensive participatory policy regime in which powerful

multilevel municipal councils jointly implement key large-scale social programmes that focus on priorities such as health, welfare and children's rights.⁹ The policy council system's combination of federal mandates, civil society collaboration, and municipal embeddedness have enabled their institutionalization across most of Brazil, independently of the party in power at the federal level. In 2019, a Supreme Federal Court ruling blunted the effects of a hostile national Government's effort to decree the elimination of the federal policy councils. The policy council system demonstrated a high degree of institutional resilience. A recent assessment found that one third of the federal-level councils survived unchanged, another third were damaged but survived, just over one fifth were dismantled, and 15 per cent were already inactive.¹⁰ One of those federal councils, the National Health Council, played an especially notable role in promoting governmental responses to the pandemic at subnational levels in the absence of a federal science-based policy from the Ministry of Health. With support from the mainstream media, the National Health Council issued numerous recommendations for pandemic protection measures—including the protection of health workers—and contributed to a coordinated response across the health system's multiple levels. A new national Government is expected to revive the prior secular trend of further institutionalization of the municipal council social policy regime.

The conditional cash transfer (CCT) programme in the Philippines is the largest social protection programme in the country and the third largest in the world, reaching 4.4 million households. The Department of Social Welfare and Development launched the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) in 2002, and the Government has sustained it now across four presidential administrations—in contrast to other high-profile anti-poverty programmes.¹¹ Unlike most CCTs, the 4Ps include family development and youth development training programmes that promote civic education and elements of social accountability (at least in some regions). Even more notable, the Philippines is perhaps the only country in the world where the CCT programme is supported by a broad-based, autonomous membership organization of the beneficiaries themselves. Launched in 2016, this organization of 77,000 beneficiaries campaigned for a law to protect the 4Ps programme from future policy reversals; the law passed in 2019.¹² To mitigate the effects of the pandemic shutdown, the Government of the Philippines used the CCT programme's existing delivery mechanism to deploy a new, scaled-up social amelioration programme. This pandemic social protection programme reached more than four times as many households as the 4Ps programme—more than 17 million—and most within two months.¹³ Following the pandemic crisis, the organization of CCT beneficiaries remained alert to possible government plans to reduce the rolls, ready to use the new law for accountability.

In Colombia, the 2016 Peace Accord not only demobilized the country's largest armed resistance, but also committed the Government to addressing the conflict's underlying causes by bringing democratic governance and absent social services to territories in conflict. Particularly noteworthy was the Accord's inclusion of an innovative Ethnic Chapter. The Accord underscored the direct relevance of both new and existing official citizen oversight institutions to encourage government implementation of policy commitments.¹⁴ The Accord also included its own multi-stakeholder monitoring commissions, including a forum to oversee and encourage respect for ethnic rights—grounded in broad-based Afrodescendant and Indigenous social organizations. Even though the Accord was legally designed as a 15-year commitment by the State of Colombia, a 2018 change in government de-emphasized implementation of the reform commitments and slowed the launch of the official hybrid oversight institutions.¹⁵ Nevertheless, despite the pandemic and weak government compliance with the Accord, the national ethnic rights policy oversight body survived and managed to present its own independent assessment of the Accord's Ethnic Chapter to the President and senior officials in September 2021.¹⁶ When a newly elected Government recommitted to implementing the Peace Accord, this innovative multi-ethnic oversight forum was poised for reactivation.

The diverse cases of institutional resilience illustrated above share a key characteristic: they survived the twin challenges of the loss of national policymaking allies and the pandemic crisis. Some hung on to policy allies still within the government—embedded either in subnational governments or in technical agencies that recognized policy commitments addressing SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7. Yet in contrast to governance reform innovations that rely exclusively on high-level champions of change or civil society notables with ready access to the media, these four cases of reform resilience share another key characteristic: they are grounded in sustained, substantive engagement with large numbers of organized citizens. These cases suggest the following key propositions:

- Partnerships between policy reformers and autonomous broad-based social organizations can bolster the resilience of policy innovations that prioritize responsiveness to citizens—especially when they have legal backing, as in Brazil, the Philippines and Colombia.
- The idea of State-society synergy suggests that partnerships between policymakers, public servants and organized citizens can generate the capacity to adapt in response to shocks to the system—whether they are pandemics or major changes in the national policy context. When governance reforms involve efforts to include the socially excluded, they can be bolstered by organizations that represent the people the SDGs were designed to reach—as in the cases of conditional

cash transfer beneficiaries in the Philippines, health councils in Brazil, community health workers in India, and Afrodescendant land councils in Colombia.

- These organized social constituencies, with their legitimacy and oversight capacity, can bolster reform agendas by identifying bottlenecks, responding to backlash, and holding policymakers accountable. Their potential for power shifting and public accountability contrasts with widely adopted governance reforms that are limited to individual citizens, including many feedback or grievance redress mechanisms that leave responsiveness to the discretion of government officials.¹⁷

- Multilevel governance reforms also contribute to resilience, so that when reform champions leave national office, committed policymakers who remain in subnational governments can limit the further rollback of reforms. In the face of crises such as pandemics, multilevel institutionalization of participatory oversight can buffer the effects of national policy inaction.

In summary, innovations in the governance of public services are more resilient in the face of challenges when they are grounded in State-society synergy.¹⁸

Endnotes

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Uplifting Innovation through Co-Creation: From the Local to the Global Level

Nick Thijs and Jamie Berryhill¹

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Co-creation as a foundation for public sector innovation

The scale and complexity of the challenges Governments are facing today are compelling public institutions to adopt novel ways to think and implement public policies. This means being able to develop innovative responses to tackle long-term transformations. Governments need to understand, test and embed new ways of doing things through public sector innovation. Engaging with the public and co-creating public sector policies and services with citizens and residents is a foundational element of effecting change.² This has been emphasized by 43 countries around the world through their commitment to the 2019 OECD Declaration on Public Sector Innovation.³ The Declaration incorporates the following key priorities:

- Bring public, private, not-for-profit and individual actors together to engage in partnerships, collaboration and co-creation to develop new approaches or solutions to problems.
- Create partnerships and link into existing networks of exchange inside, outside and across the innovation system to increase the capacity to innovate.
- Develop a spectrum of engagement and co-creation practices and use different forms of co-creation to ensure that innovation efforts are informed by lived experience and relevant expertise.
- Look for opportunities to partner with other countries on cross-border challenges requiring innovative approaches.
- Listen for new and emerging voices to pick up weak signals that things might be changing, as this can help identify an emergent need or opportunity for innovation.

Co-creation empowers people to take an active role in issues that affect them, and it can strengthen the legitimacy of government programmes and build public trust, which has been near record lows in recent years. This can contribute to reinforcing democracy.

While Governments have been increasingly leveraging co-creation over the past several years, the COVID-19 pandemic underscored its necessity, as Governments had to act quickly to put in place processes and services that functioned in the

“new normal” context while also meeting people’s needs. One of the most critical lessons from the pandemic is that Governments must place citizens and inclusion at the centre of policymaking.⁴

The OECD Observatory of Public Sector Innovation (OPSI)⁵ and the Support for Improvement in Governance and Management (SIGMA) programme⁶ have sought to explore innovative co-creation approaches leveraged by Governments, how they are enabling the public sector to meet the unprecedented challenges of today and tomorrow, and what lessons may be learned from these efforts. Much of the information gathered is included in OPSI reports on government innovation trends,⁷ the COVID-19 Innovative Response Tracker,⁸ and the Case Study Library,⁹ a constantly growing repository of over 700 case studies where public servants can learn about innovative projects around the world and even reach out to the teams behind them to learn more. The cases referred to below can be found in these reports.

Co-creation in practice

The COVID-19 crisis served as a catalyst for public sector innovation in many ways, and there emerged creative and fantastic ideas and initiatives for both short-term response and long-term recovery. Co-creation has been one of the leading approaches, as illustrated in the following examples:

- Hack the Crisis began as a 48-hour hackathon in Estonia to bring together civic-minded citizens and government agencies and was duplicated around the world, leading to the Global Hack. In some countries such efforts have been embedded in government more long-term, as in the case of UpdateDeutschland in Germany.¹⁰
- In the United States, the Health+ Long COVID programme uses human-centred design to co-create patient-centred solutions with those impacted, with efforts including Healthathons designed to rapidly prototype and deliver solutions with the community.
- In the wake of COVID-19, a Philosophy of Care was co-created in South Australia to underpin mental health-care provision. The new care standard centred on people with lived experiences of distress and crisis emergency.

- Representing a form of cross-border innovation, the Global Cities Innovation Collaborative has enabled cities around the world to discuss issues of mutual concern and to launch global open innovation competitions for individuals with great ideas to co-develop pioneering solutions for shared COVID-19-related challenges and economic recovery.

While Governments are still grappling with the effects of the pandemic, they must also now deal with the shocks caused by the events in Ukraine, as well as with issues such as climate change, digital disruption, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Examples of innovative co-creation by Governments and their partners that focus on issues beyond COVID-19 can be seen in a multitude of policy areas.

In re-imagining communities, both in times of crisis and for enhanced community spaces, Ukraine, Estonia and Colombia are exemplary. ReStart Ukraine¹¹ is an open collective exploring ways to restore afflicted areas in a post-war scenario using a co-created toolbox to empower municipalities. Avalinn AR¹² in Estonia enables residents to use an augmented reality app to co-create urban development solutions. The city of Bogotá in Colombia is co-creating public spaces to improve neighbourhoods.¹³

Climate change remains a key concern across the globe. In Denmark, crea.visions enables the public to co-create with AI thought-provoking visions of utopias and dystopias to raise awareness about climate change challenges. On a European Union scale, the Citizen and Multi-Actor Consultation on Horizon 2020 (CIMULACT) project¹⁴ brought together more

than a thousand citizens in 30 countries to co-create visions for sustainable futures and transform them into innovation recommendations.

In the policy area of protecting marginalized groups, the Activation Anti-Displacement programme in Austin, Texas, combats homelessness by co-creating anti-displacement strategies and data-driven equity tools to mitigate displacement risks. In Georgia, the Government's ServiceLab worked with individuals with hearing impairments to co-design an emergency services hotline with video chat and sign language capabilities.

Digital disruption can be used as a means to co-create. The NHS AI Lab¹⁵ in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is bringing together cross-sector stakeholders and the public for co-creation and experimentation around AI to revolutionize health care. CitizenLab, a civic technology company in Belgium, empowers civil servants with AI-augmented processes for analysing citizen input and strengthening collaboration. In Colombia, the *Emerging Technologies Handbook*¹⁶ promotes innovation and co-creation through the use of emerging technologies to advance the SDGs.

These cases represent just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to Governments using innovative methods to co-create with their people to help address practically every type of challenge societies face. The key to moving forward is embedding such practices in the routine business of government and building a new collaborative capacity and culture at all levels—from the smallest teams to national systems and even beyond, to transnational and global ecosystems.

Sources of inspiration: Toolkit Navigator and Innovation Playbook

In addition to the hundreds of examples of public sector innovation collected in the OPSI Case Study Library, there are many other tailor-made resources that can help Governments successfully employ co-creation approaches. The OPSI Toolkit Navigator provides support by orienting users around a vast collection of innovation toolkits (including the Open Government Partnership's Participation and Co-Creation Toolkit, Co-design Canvas, the Neighbourhood Ideas Exchange Toolkit, and the Partnership Co-design Toolkit) so that users can find those best suited to their situational needs.

A variety of quality resources other than the Toolkit Navigator exist to promote and enable co-creation. The Innovation Playbook offers actionable instruments for the implementation of the Declaration on Public Sector Innovation, including a key line of action focused on cultivating new partnerships and involving different voices.

Sources: OECD Observatory of Public Sector Innovation, "Toolkit Navigator: putting innovation theory into practice", available at <https://oecd-opsi.org/toolkit-navigator>; *Innovation Playbook: Your 3-Step Journey to Put the Declaration on Public Sector Innovation into Practice* (April 2022), available at <https://oecd-opsi.org/publications/innovation-playbook>.

Note: In the Declaration, ministers and other national representatives affirm their commitment to five key action areas for public sector innovation, one of which is cultivating new partnerships and involving different voices.

From ad hoc to systems approaches for today and tomorrow

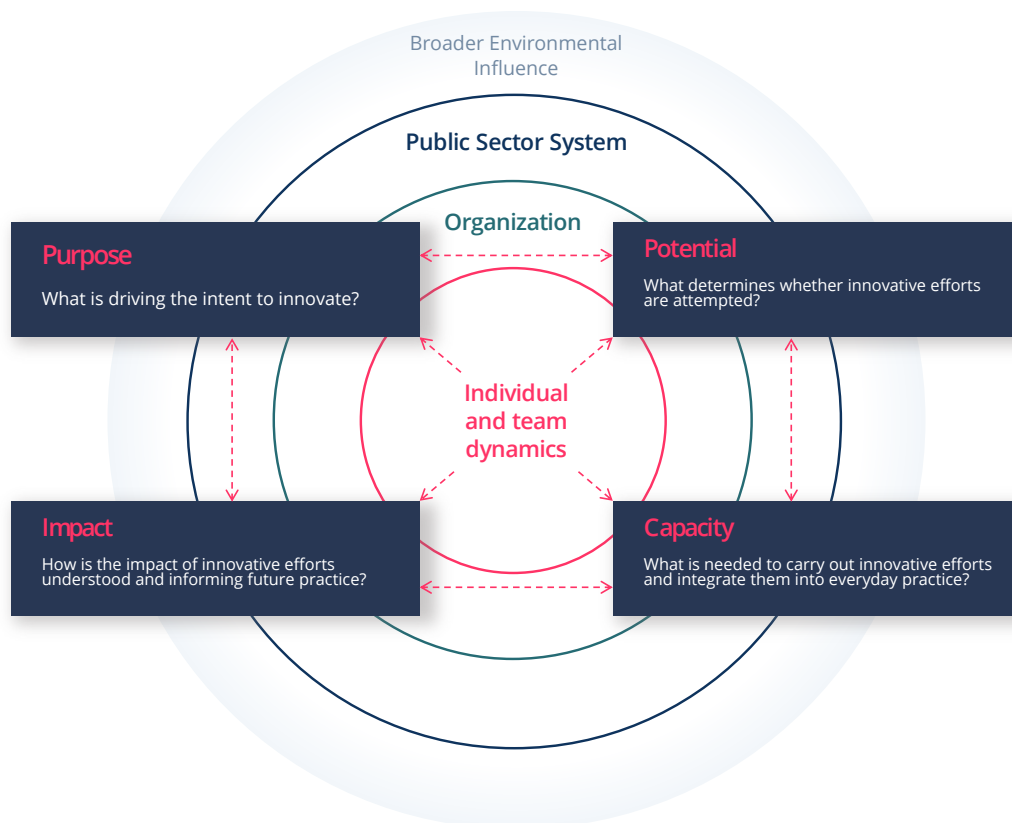
Governments shifting from COVID-19 response to longer-term recovery are turning their attention towards emerging new challenges as well as enduring priorities such as achieving the SDGs. When it comes to co-creation, Governments are increasingly recognizing that critical insights and good ideas often come from outside the walls of government. A key challenge Governments face, however, is moving beyond one-off ad hoc solutions in narrow environments. For innovative capacity to flourish, Governments need to move away from innovation as a sporadic activity (fuelled predominantly by crises) to systemically embedding innovation at the heart of policymaking and public administration.

To achieve this, Governments must enhance their systemic capacity to innovate. OPSI has developed the *Innovative Capacity of Governments: A Systemic Framework*¹⁷ to facilitate this process. The Framework supports three levels of analysis (individuals and teams, organizations, and whole systems) through four innovation lenses (purpose of innovation, potential

for innovation, capacity to innovate, and impact of innovation). While this Framework is broader than co-creation, Governments will need to promote collaboration-relevant capacities and align processes to take innovative co-creation to the next level. The SDGs are systemic in nature, and Governments will need to ensure their co-creation activities are aligned to match cascading transversal effects.

While it can be overwhelming for Governments to deal with the crises and challenges of today, they must also prepare themselves for the future, working with citizens and residents in anticipating what may be necessary but has not yet emerged—and in some cases, even shaping future possibilities to build a bright future for the generations that follow. This approach hinges on harnessing collective imaginations. Ideas and life experiences must be able to permeate across organizations both inside and outside of government, and then be heard and acted upon, even when the return on investment may not be clear. Thus, in addition to strengthening their capacity to innovate, Governments should seek to build up good anticipatory innovative governance so that they are prepared to withstand and cope with future shocks.¹⁸

Innovative Capacity Framework



Source: Misha Kaur and others, *Innovative Capacity of Governments: A Systemic Framework*, OECD Working Papers on Public Governance, No. 51 (Paris, OECD Publishing, 19 September 2022), available at <https://oecd-opsi.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/innovative-capacity-wp.pdf>, adapted from figure 1, p. 22.

Endnotes

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Innovations in Health-Care Service Delivery during the Pandemic

Ankita Meghani and Taryn Vian¹

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted health service delivery as countries implemented lockdowns and issued stay-at-home orders. Despite attempts to make essential health services available throughout, the pandemic strained health systems and resulted in rampant shortages of health commodities, beds and health-care staff. There were concomitant declines in tuberculosis screening, HIV testing, and maternal and child health services.² However, the global pandemic also accelerated the pace of innovation. Some initiatives served as stopgap measures implemented to maintain health services, whereas others helped leapfrog progress in the areas of health information systems, telemedicine, and regulatory policy, bringing efficiencies that could be applied even beyond the public health emergency. This contribution presents examples of some innovative approaches that were implemented during the pandemic and reflects on their applicability in a post-pandemic context.

Innovations in regulation and generic manufacturing

The pandemic presented new challenges in regulatory policymaking at the national and global levels while also offering lessons to be learned from key innovations. Regulators and policymakers learned about the importance of strengthening regulatory collaboration and harmonizing regional regulatory policies to facilitate the approval of and access to COVID-19 diagnostics and therapeutics. Examples of regulatory innovations included relying on the World Health Organization's Emergency Use Listing Procedure and regulatory decisions made by stringent regulatory authorities,³ providing conditional approvals,⁴ and having regulatory agencies accept rolling submissions rather than the usual approach of accepting submissions only once all the data have been finalized. Partnerships through the Pharmaceutical Inspection Cooperation Scheme (PIC/S),⁵ a network of select regulators, also supported the harmonization standards for good manufacturing and distribution practices for medicines. PIC/S was seen as an important platform for promoting regulatory convergence and cooperation that could ultimately help countries at various levels of regulatory maturity ensure access to quality, safe and efficacious drugs.

Learning from COVID-19 vaccine inequity, Governments and multilateral organizations began focusing their attention on leveraging and strengthening manufacturing capacity in several

low- and middle-income countries to facilitate the rapid scale-up of generic manufacturing. This inspired the development of a global platform known as the COVID-19 Technology Access Pool,⁶ which was launched to allow developers of COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics, and other health products to share intellectual property and data with qualified manufacturers. Through this process, patent holders voluntarily licensed their patents, which were then sub-licensed to qualified and vetted generic manufacturers that paid royalties on the sale of the medicines.

Innovations in testing and disease surveillance

The pandemic necessitated innovations in the areas of testing, contact tracing, and disease surveillance. Asymptomatic transmission of SARS-CoV2 meant that mass testing was needed for disease control; however, countries faced challenges in administering polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing due to complex logistics and infrastructure requirements. The City of Vienna started the Everything gurgles! (Alles gurgelt!) initiative to address these challenges.⁷ The initiative allowed students, workers and other residents to access home PCR test kits by registering online, accessing a bar code, and picking up the test through hundreds of participating drugstores. Samples could be submitted at 680 supermarkets, drugstores, and gas stations. The postal service took the samples to laboratories, and results were emailed within 24 hours.

The authorization of over-the-counter (OTC) fully at-home diagnostic tests for COVID-19 using rapid antigen testing was also a game changer. The Singapore Ministry of Health provided guidance on how to use OTC antigen testing for screening before large gatherings such as sports events, concerts, weddings, and funerals, allowing people to gather more safely and return to their normal lives.⁸ The Government of the United States of America required private insurance to cover the cost of the testing. Germany, Austria, and England included rapid tests as part of their strategy to control COVID-19, providing them through schools, pharmacies, and volunteers going door-to-door.

Finally, 50 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas engaged in COVID-19 digital data surveillance and tracking using the District Health Information System (DHIS2) open-source health management information platform developed and coordinated by the Health Information Systems Programme (the HISP Centre) at the University of Oslo.⁹ The Ministry

of Health, Nutrition and Indigenous Medicine in Sri Lanka developed eight modules for COVID-19 tracking—including a digital vaccine certificate—within four months. The open-source modules were designed to allow countries to monitor transmission, detect new cases, conduct risk assessments, and aggregate data to guide preparedness and response decisions by national and local government and other stakeholders. Another open-source application—the Surveillance Outbreak Response Management and Analysis System (SORMAS)—was developed by a German non-profit foundation. It supported public health authorities in identifying and monitoring individuals who might have been exposed to an infected person and following them for testing and treatment. The SORMAS-ÖGD application was used by several federal health departments in Germany, France, Switzerland, Nigeria, Ghana, and Fiji.¹⁰

Innovations in service delivery

During the initial phase of the pandemic, health departments developed COVID-19 triage systems to rapidly manage the demand for services and provide patients with appropriate care depending on the severity of illness. Some countries, such as India, Pakistan and Japan, set up a centralized system through which COVID-19 patients were directed to a broader network of private and public hospitals based on the severity of illness.¹¹ These hospitals were staffed with relevant medical experts and equipped to provide a specific level of health services based on a patient's medical classification (mild, moderate, major, or extreme severity of illness).

The number and volume of telehealth services increased dramatically during the pandemic as video conferencing tools, telephones, and online platforms were leveraged for remote health-care provision. In India, for example, telemedicine became an instantaneous adaptation to allow doctors to stay connected with patients when the nationwide lockdown took effect in March 2020. This experience paved the way for the development of inaugural policy guidelines for telehealth in India.¹² In some countries, including the Republic of Korea, formal policy changes allowed telemedicine to be practiced exceptionally during a public health emergency. Current policy discussions in the Republic of Korea suggest that telemedicine will become part of the new normal.¹³ In the United States, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services expanded telemedicine access from only Medicare patients living in rural areas or in specific health facilities to all patients. This expansion of telemedicine has been shown to increase health-care access to people living in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods.¹⁴ More broadly, the pandemic also spurred demand for telepsychiatry services, which has been growing across various countries.¹⁵

Another innovation was in the area of health workforce training, which was provided via online platforms. Findings suggest that online training increases learning opportunities without affecting training quality and knowledge acquisition and is an affordable and convenient alternative to in-person training, particularly in low- and middle-income settings.¹⁶

Finally, the pandemic led to increased reliance on innovations such as the use of drone technology to bring vaccines and treatments to areas with limited access to transportation. In Rwanda, for example, the public health sector partnered with a for-profit drone company to deliver medicines to cancer patients living in rural settings.¹⁷ While the scalability, feasibility and applicability of this approach over the longer term is unclear, it nonetheless offers important lessons on how non-traditional technologies may be used to solve problems in the health sector.

Digitalization of data management

The pandemic inspired critical innovations in the digitalization of data for managing supply chains and tracking vaccinations and to speed up the compilation of data for decision-making. India expanded its Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network (eVIN),¹⁸ developed in 2015 to track vaccines in the country's Universal Immunization Programme throughout the supply chain, to provide data on who was getting vaccinated and to send reminders to those who had not yet received their shots. Panama developed a system called Panavac19, which included a portal for residents to make vaccination appointments and download a digital vaccination certificate.¹⁹ The system was expanded to include laboratory results as well. The Saudi Data and AI Authority and Ministry of Health developed a COVID-19 digital tracking system called Tawakkalna to help people access testing and to safely begin opening up access to services post lock-down.²⁰

Digital vaccination IDs were used during the pandemic to provide information on what vaccine a person received, when they received it, and when they should get their booster dose. This helped ensure that vaccines were in stock and could be accessed where and when they were needed. A digital identification system called Simprints was used in Ghana to record COVID-19 vaccination delivery in areas where many births are unregistered and people lack formal identification.²¹ China and the state of South Australia used a health QR code system that required citizens to upload personal information through a cell phone application to evaluate exposure risk. Though effective, some of these systems were considered controversial because the information gathered could be used to restrict people's movement and access to facilities or to impose quarantine.

Partnering with the private sector

Partnerships with the private sector were critical to the COVID-19 response. Collaborations ranged from vaccine development and strengthening capacity for diagnostics to supporting service delivery for COVID-19 patients. Operation Warp Speed, in which the United States Government invested \$18 billion, supported the development and early manufacturing of COVID-19 vaccines meant for the United States population,²² while the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations expanded global access to COVID-19 vaccines with a \$1.4 billion investment. These efforts stimulated a market for accelerated vaccine manufacturing. In the future, such public-private partnerships may be leveraged to study long-term vaccine safety and virus mutations and to strengthen pandemic response capacity globally.

During the pandemic, public-private collaboration often produced a synergy that drove innovation and accelerated progress. Working with private hospitals and laboratories helped expand access to care for COVID-19 patients and access to testing for the general population. In Uttar Pradesh, India, the Government rapidly engaged and mobilized private laboratories and enlisted private hospitals to provide COVID-19-related services.²³ In the Netherlands, a public-private consortium rapidly designed and implemented a high-throughput diagnostic platform for SARS-CoV2.²⁴ The open-source Systematic Testing using Robotics and Innovation during Pandemics (STRIP) platform allowed 14,000 tests per day, forming the basis for a nationwide infrastructure and strengthening preparedness for future pandemics. Similarly, public-private partnerships expanded laboratory capacity and testing in Ghana, Nepal, and Nigeria and extended hospital capacity in Ghana, Nepal, and Bangladesh—countries where urban populations rely heavily on private health-care providers.²⁵

Private companies helped convert private spaces for use during quarantines, made financial and in-kind contributions to provide the supplies and equipment needed for treatment, organized mass COVID-19 communication campaigns, and provided food relief.

Mobilizing human resources and expanding workforce capacity

The high demand for health services during the pandemic led to a concomitant need to expand the health workforce. In some cases, temporary workers were hired to support crisis management efforts, while in others, a pathway was created to integrate temporary workers into the Government's permanent health workforce cadre.²⁶ In Thailand, for example, the Ministry of Public Health converted 40,000 of its 150,000 temporary medical employees to permanent civil service staff to recognize their crucial contributions to the country's pandemic response.²⁷

India launched a call for Covid Warriors—including retired doctors, armed forces medical staff and private sector medical professionals—to support the COVID-19 response.²⁸ Final-year medical students and paramedical students were also brought in to conduct screenings and contact tracing and administer vaccinations. Similarly, Brazil encouraged final-year medical students to support COVID-19 health services and reinstated the medical licenses of Cuban medical professionals who were living in Brazil.²⁹ Mexico began contracting foreign health workers to expand the domestic health workforce and called on doctors from various specialties to participate in the COVID-19 response.³⁰

Conclusions

Innovations flourished during the pandemic. Some innovations were implemented spontaneously as stopgap measures, while others, such as telehealth and digital health technologies, tended to be implemented systematically by national Governments and institutes of public health. Lessons from the innovations implemented suggest that engaging in partnerships with the private sector, maintaining a strong health workforce, strengthening national regulatory systems, and leveraging advances in telemedicine and other digital health technologies were particularly critical in responding to the pandemic. As lessons and experiences continue to be gathered and chronicled, it will be important for countries to assess the applicability and adaptability of these innovations to their local contexts so that they are prepared for the next health crisis.

Endnotes

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Innovative Multilevel Coordination and Preparedness after COVID-19

Louis Meuleman¹

How COVID-19 put multilevel governance under pressure and what innovations have come out of that

The COVID-19 pandemic and the simultaneous occurrence of many other crises—including climate-induced disasters, economic crises, and (geo)political conflicts—have changed the scope and course of government at all levels. National and subnational authorities have suddenly found themselves back in the driver's seat following (in many countries) decades of efficiency-driven measures which ultimately led to diminished capacity to address key societal issues. Whereas national Governments have often taken the lead in overall crisis management, subnational governments (at the state, provincial and municipal levels) have been on the front lines of street-level, hands-on governance. They have been confronted with the complexity (or “wickedness”) of the challenges and compelled to deal with the paradox that many large challenges can simultaneously be crises (requiring immediate action) and complex problems (requiring multi-actor involvement and long remedial processes with many “small wins”). The cascade of crises in recent years has led to the realization that new and existing challenges surrounding multilevel governance need more attention.

Many countries reported in their voluntary national reviews (VNRs) of progress made towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that the pandemic had compelled them to make changes in their institutional structure.² Argentina established the Federal SDG Network for Provincial Governments to facilitate the exchange of ideas and strategies among governing authorities at this level for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The pandemic also accelerated the use of scientific data in decision-making processes. It prompted countries such as Greece, Italy, and the United Arab Emirates to leverage the development of digital services for the collection and aggregation of data to drive evidence-informed policymaking.

Although the levels of government within a country are usually legally and politically separated, they are still intertwined and engaged in multilevel governance. Generally, national Governments are well placed to observe the linkages between local and supra-local challenges at the subnational level and may be best equipped to respond to larger-scale challenges. Local governments are closer to residents and are often the first to identify emerging economic, social and environmental challenges. They may be best positioned to address such problems before they grow to a national scale.

While each country has its own politico-administrative, sociocultural and historical context, all countries share certain similarities. The current poly-crisis has forced national Governments to mobilize financial and other resources on an unprecedented scale. Because crisis and disaster management has been driven by extreme urgency, standard rules and procedures have in some cases been suspended for the sake of expediency; Governments have taken legislative shortcuts—sometimes bypassing legislators and key stakeholders and forgoing evidence-informed regulatory impact assessment to facilitate rapid implementation. National Governments, confronted with the continuation of crises, may feel the need to establish crisis governance as the “new normal”. This would have consequences at the national level. For example, there would be less investment in the long-term strategies needed to achieve the SDGs and other aspects of sustainable development by 2030 (and beyond). The key principle of leaving no one behind would have lower priority. Policies would be less informed by scientific and stakeholder evidence. At the subnational level, the national focus on crisis management could imply a more restrictive legal framework in which to operate, less funding (with the diversion of more budgetary resources to national crisis management), and less freedom to use available budgets. Overall, the centralization trend induced by COVID-19 and other crises has exerted heavy pressure on relations between national and subnational governments. However, in such situations, there are always innovative practices that emerge—as (almost) everything becomes fluid under pressure.

Federal systems often have a powerful second level of government, and the federal Government cannot intervene in many policy areas. This can create tensions in a multilevel system. Belgium has three Regions that are each responsible for their own regional, provincial and municipal government; Germany has sixteen federal subdivisions (*Länder*) and Austria has nine; and Spain has 17 Autonomous Communities, each made up of provinces and municipalities that also have a certain level of autonomy. These and other countries with similar administrative structures are part of a multilevel governance system that is not primarily hierarchical. In such cases, important responsibilities relating to the SDGs often lie with the regional government, so appropriate mechanisms and structures need to be in place to facilitate effective multilevel governance in order to achieve the SDGs.³

From fragmentation to collaboration

The allocation of responsibilities and tasks to different levels of government, which is usually regulated in the national constitution, can represent either “fragmentation” or “specialization”, depending on the circumstances. Fragmentation has a negative connotation and specialization a generally positive one. Specialization becomes fragmentation when the parts are not communicating and coordination is difficult. Fragmentation happens vertically between government levels and horizontally between policy sectors and their institutions. Ideally, vertical and horizontal fragmentation should be tackled together. In a fragmented institutional framework, the organizational—and mental—silos make it very difficult to adopt the holistic approach needed for the SDGs. Building trust is an important way to overcome silo thinking. Beyond this, trust is an important indicator of how people perceive the quality of government institutions in democratic countries and how they interact with them.⁴

As evidence of its commitment to counter fragmentation and promote collaboration between the different levels of government, Italy included in its 2022 VNR a thematic analysis of efforts to localize the SDGs. The VNR also included voluntary local reviews (VLRs) prepared by local authorities cooperating with central institutions in the implementation of the National Sustainable Development Strategy. Italy has decided to institutionalize policy coherence by including a national action plan on policy coherence for sustainable development as an annex to its National Sustainable Development Strategy.

From slow progress to real-time collaborative multilevel governance

As a reaction to the inflexibility and sluggishness of traditional rule-based relations between national and subnational governments, some countries have started to engage in real-time collaborative multilevel governance. The Netherlands, with its long-standing participative governance culture, has such a mechanism for addressing strategic policy issues, including the SDGs. Intergovernmental dossier teams have been established to discuss what each of the three tiers in the country’s administrative system (national, provincial and local) can contribute to addressing challenges with a strong multilevel dimension. The three governance levels come together in real time to discuss how to tackle specific pressing problems. This is an additional approach that in no way undermines the subsidiarity principle or the legal hierarchy between the levels. In other countries, multilevel collaboration might not look the same; comparative research on urban sustainability transitions has shown that multilevel relations can differ among national governance cultures.⁵

Another example of real-time collaborative governance can be found in Colombia, where multilevel processes have supported

the allocation of budget resources across territories and the establishment of common reporting formats.⁶

A review of VNRs shows that the SDGs are being used to incentivize better collaboration between national and subnational governments.⁷ In Cabo Verde, 22 local platforms have been established as multi-stakeholder spaces to link national and local SDG strategies. In Spain, the Network of Local Entities for the 2030 Agenda integrates 317 local actors and aims to promote the coordination of actions at the local level to implement the 2030 Agenda.

A crisis is a good time to observe real-time collaborative multilevel governance. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal Government of Germany used a two-level pandemic crisis management mechanism: the Conference of Premiers of the federal states of Germany (*Ministerpräsidentenkonferenz*), with the participation of the Federal Chancellor (*Bundeskanzler*). The Conference played a leading role during the pandemic (a role that was unusual when compared with normal times), holding frequent meetings and taking decisions. Some of the decisions were implemented successfully, whereas others were not;⁸ outcomes were mixed, and at times citizens felt confused by the complex results.

Between top-down governance and voluntary local reviews

Traditional multilevel governance is top-down. The local government tends to have little power, especially in presidential systems. The top-down approach can be fast in times of crisis, as observed during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is otherwise typically slow. National laws and policies might require years of preparation and even more time before they become locally embedded and practised. For example, the local implementation of new European Union legislation can take up to six or seven years from the time the initiative is adopted by the European Commission, in part because the rules first need to be translated into national legislation, linked to relevant action items, then delegated across the different levels of government.

The subsidiarity principle (as defined in article 3b of the Treaty establishing the European Community) limits the top-down approach to some extent. Subsidiarity aims to ensure that decisions are taken at the most “appropriate” level, with appropriateness referring to the capacity of public authorities at each level of governance to make decisions on issues of direct relevance to them and to implement related policies. The empowerment of local government makes bottom-up governance more effective since measures can be taken at the lowest level at which they can be implemented effectively.

VNRs presented at the 2022 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development offer evidence of a growing trend

towards localizing the SDGs.⁹ The Government of Eswatini recognized an urgent need to decentralize functions and devolve powers to the local level in order to fast-track developmental projects and programmes and reduce disparities. A more centrally steered approach has been chosen by Indonesia to strengthen coordination between the national and subnational levels for the implementation of the SDGs.¹⁰ There is a formal requirement to integrate the SDGs and the national medium-term development plan into medium-term regional and local plans. A roadmap is also required for implementation of the SDGs and other action plans, annual reports, and biannual monitoring systems at the subnational level. The VNR of Italy highlights the effective multilevel governance initiatives enacted by its regions, autonomous provinces and metropolitan areas to implement national sustainability objectives at the local level. For this, coordination mechanisms have been established between central and local authorities. The Government of the Philippines reports that it has sought to foster a bottom-up rather than a top-down approach to SDG integration through cross-sectoral SDG programmes, activities and projects implemented at the various subnational levels.

The adoption of the SDGs in 2015 seems to have encouraged subnational governments to become more involved in the global sustainable development discourse. Even before the SDGs were launched, cities belonged to international networks such as the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, Local Governments for Sustainability, and United Cities and Local Governments. Many cities have taken the lead in tackling social challenges and in addressing climate change and other environmental issues. Frontrunning large cities often perceive government at the national level as opposing innovation and blocking progress. At the very least, this points to a lack of effective collaboration and communication in a multilevel governance context.

Local and subnational governments have become more vocal, ensuring that their voices are heard through channels such as VLRs and voluntary subnational reviews (VSRs) of SDG implementation. Only four VLRs were launched during the July 2018 meeting of the High-level Political Forum (by Kitakyushu, Shimokawa, and Toyama in Japan and by New York City in the United States), but such reviews have become increasingly popular; in 2022, 26 VLRs were presented at the Forum. The United Nations provides guidance and other support for the preparation of the VLRs.

Multilevel capacity-building

Level-specific governance frameworks may come into play with the division of tasks between national and subnational governments because different types of problems require different governance styles and tools. When tackling a climate-induced flood disaster, coordination is usually needed at a level above local authorities; when dealing with very complex problems, being close to citizens provides a better understanding of the challenges; and certain routine issues should not be dealt with bureaucratically or through lengthy dialogue but might benefit from outsourcing to an efficient private operator. Such level-specific governance approaches should be synergistic but can also be divisive and undermine progress if relations between the levels are not managed well. Capacity-building at all levels is needed to help authorities at each level understand the circumstances and responses from other levels of government.

Various SDGs (especially SDG 11) require implementation at the urban level and thus depend on strong engagement from local actors and institutions. This may require additional decentralization and devolution so that municipal powers are concomitant with responsibilities. The complexity of managing 17 interrelated SDGs may present difficulties for municipalities with capacity constraints or similar challenges.¹¹

National action plans to increase policy coherence for sustainable development—in line with SDG target 17.14—can help Governments strengthen the capacity for effective coordination across government levels. Italy is currently one of the frontrunners in this area.¹²

Conclusion

Traditional multilevel governance—in which national Governments exercise control over subnational governments—has not disappeared and may even have become stronger as a result of the need for central crisis management in recent years. Nevertheless, more collaborative and bottom-up approaches are gaining momentum. This is important because, for a number of reasons, multilevel governance for sustainable development requires combining top-down and bottom-up approaches as well as the integration of the horizontal, cross-sectoral dimension.

Endnotes

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Blended Learning in Medical Higher Education: New Modalities Driven by the COVID-19 Pandemic and Their Influence on Innovation and Performance in a Public University in South Africa

Odette Ramsingh and Carlien Jooste¹

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic irrevocably altered the fabric of society. Developed and developing countries alike were confronted with infrastructure and community-related problems that had to be solved almost overnight once COVID-19 started to spread across the globe. No sector escaped unscathed, and the by-products of the unprecedented pandemic left all sectors—including community-based sectors such as health care and education—in uncharted waters. Within the global education sector, the shutting down of formal and informal learning environments (including schools) affected 94 per cent of the world's student population.² Statistics further show that 99 per cent of students from low- and lower-middle-income countries were impacted by the effects of COVID-19 on their national education systems.³

In South Africa, the Government imposed a national lockdown on 20 March 2020, closing all schools and impacting the education of approximately 17 million learners at levels ranging from early childhood development (pre-school) to secondary school.⁴ In higher education, defined as post-school education and training, approximately 2.3 million students were affected.⁵ The announcement of the lockdown brought the education system to a very abrupt halt in a country whose Constitution emphatically states that everyone has the basic right to education⁶—a sentiment echoed in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which calls on Governments to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

The suddenness and ferocity with which COVID-19 took hold shook organizations out of their momentary paralysis, resulting in a new kind of agility.⁷ Educational organizations of all sizes had to adjust to new ways of working. Some changes, such as amending timetables, involved fairly straightforward logistical shifts, but educational institutions were also required to rethink the way students were taught and to develop new pedagogical methods that would serve the needs of students learning mainly from home. It was at this juncture that crisis met innovation as educators rallied to pursue the best possible learning outcomes during a period of extended uncertainty and upheaval. Educational institutions were compelled to become more innovative if they wanted to preserve their educational integrity and continue to provide a quality learning experience. Teachers, lecturers, administrators and managers had to adapt and learn, harness their innovative spirit, implement new plans at great speed, and endeavour to navigate unintended

consequences. Most educational entities made the decision to move forward with digital learning strategies. All 26 universities in South Africa, which were at different stages of implementing digitalization and hybrid learning, had to develop educational approaches that would rescue the remainder of the academic year and ensure continuity in the face of an extended crisis. However, there were a number of obstacles to overcome. In a country such as South Africa, the decision to pursue this approach highlighted the lack of information technology infrastructure, the high cost of digitalization and digital access, and the depth of digital inequality. Students from low- or lower-income households had to either find alternative ways of accessing information online or not study at all. Even though 77.5 per cent of households in the country had access to the Internet, mostly via cell phones, only 10.4 per cent of households could access the Internet at home using fibre optic or asymmetric digital subscriber line technologies, which allow fast data transmission at a high bandwidth.⁸ Some universities were able to sign agreements with mobile providers in South Africa for data access for their students, while others received government funding to meet this requirement and address other technological needs such as the lack of laptops for students and teaching staff. Universities shifted budget priorities and received COVID-19 funding from the Government, which enabled them to provide data access to students so that they could engage in online learning. Institutions responsible for educating tertiary-level students were among those tasked with developing logistical and learning innovations. The management of these institutions had to maintain employee productivity, help staff navigate a blended learning environment, and meet educational and organizational objectives in order to save the academic year and prepare for an uncertain future. While this period was filled with urgent challenges, it also showcased the innovation, resilience and performance capabilities of institutions.

As an illustrative case study, this contribution examines the pandemic-driven approach adopted by a health sciences university in South Africa mandated to educate and graduate students committed, as future health-care professionals, to ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages (SDG 3). During the pandemic, Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University had to attend to the theoretical aspects of the students' education but also to accommodate those completing practical work in hospitals and other medical facilities in the country. The University had to ensure staff and student safety as well. This contribution speaks to the SDGs

on health and education and is anchored in the observations made in a public health sciences university setting, where the pandemic threatened to derail the academic year and impact the University's national imperative around transforming health-care sciences in the communities and the country. A sub-question guiding the present contribution is this: In a challenging, under-resourced environment faced with an unprecedented crisis, how can employees and students be inspired to rise above the attendant challenges in the provision of health education and services, understanding the threat to the larger goal should they fail?

Innovation within health sciences education

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University has various on-campus facilities for practical learning and a teaching hospital next to its main campus. Students are predominantly from rural areas and low-income households and depend on government education grants from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme to pursue their tertiary studies. When COVID-19 hit and subsequent restrictions were imposed on the institution, the University had to redefine its engagement with its students and help staff adapt to a new way of teaching. During the pandemic, health-care professionals classified as essential service providers had to report to work, so the Government of South Africa allowed students within this field to continue their practical studies, while theoretical teaching had to take place online.

With this concession, the University was able to develop a fit-for-purpose protocol that saw a reduction in student numbers on campus and in practical environments and the introduction of an online platform to present the theoretical aspects of the courses. Teaching online involved a combination of traditional and innovative methods; academic professionals not only provided standard lectures but also managed group discussions and utilized interactive media and videos facilitated by the online platform. Lectures were recorded and made accessible to students, who could view them at their convenience to review materials and prepare for activities and exams. Digitalization—originally part of a five-year strategic plan—was achieved in under six months. The University also entered into partnerships with private companies to provide data access for staff and students, and a courier service was engaged to deliver laptops to students in rural areas. Within 24 hours of the lockdown announcement, working-from-home (WFH) protocols were issued by the University's Human Resources Department; line managers and staff members were provided with guidance, and they and their families were offered access to national and University psychosocial services. Communication between the University, lecturers and students became a top priority, as did the coordination of various on-campus activities.

As the University had students on campus and medical students working in the field, the institution's faculty and administrators understood the need to ensure the safety of the staff and students. One of its academic professionals developed a COVID-19 screening application (digital app), which was released within three months of the nationwide lockdown announcement. The app aimed to contain the virus and monitor reported symptoms among staff and students.⁹ Through the app, students and staff were able to conduct a health self-check before entering campus by answering questions related to known symptoms associated with COVID-19. The app further recorded information on possible exposures and testing among students and staff members.¹⁰ After capturing all the information, the app offered a risk assessment with relevant recommendations.¹¹ The take-up of the app was phenomenal, which was not surprising given the high levels of fear and anxiety during this period, so no lengthy change management plan was required for implementation.

Performance management in the time of COVID-19

Innovation requires implementation to bear fruit, and to achieve this an organization must rely on its people. To create the appropriate setting and space for innovation, the impact of the pandemic on the working environment at the University had to be considered. The suddenness of the lockdown and WFH instructions shook employees and line managers out of their complacency, challenging conventional approaches to identifying and setting objectives, driving and measuring performance, and interacting with fellow employees. New realities called for "redefining productivity in a fragmented work setup".¹² Employees scrambled to restore a sense of order, familiarizing themselves with digital technologies and online tools that would be needed for communication, teaching and learning, and leadership and management.¹³

Whether because employees were very conscious of their obligation to support the University's health professionals or because they were on the front lines of the crisis and worried about the rising fatality statistics, there was a rallying response from within the institution to move forward quickly. Online teaching and learning were implemented, with challenges being addressed faster than the strategic plan envisaged. The university started conducting online interviews (a practice not previously considered), which resulted in a more than 50 per cent reduction in administrative and logistical costs for recruitment. There was also greater collaboration among different administrative functions and self-driven accountability to deliver results. Employees managed their assignments independently with no need for continuous monitoring by supervisors, even though the latter could check their progress and performance online with the push of a button. There was often too much communication as a balance between intrusion and neglect was sought.¹⁴

A combination of factors conspired to drive strong performance. The anxiety and urgency surrounding the crisis spurred innovation and a collective sense of purpose and collaboration. Concerns surrounding status and hierarchy became secondary to working together to overcome emerging challenges and deliver the best education and support possible in a fluid environment. Traditional performance indicators and performance management were revised to focus less on logistics and more on quality and adaptability.

Conclusion

It has now been more than three years since the shock waves of the pandemic first ripped through institutions. These years have allowed time for introspection on how the pandemic and its attendant challenges offered an opportunity to innovate, how sustainable the innovations proved to be, and whether the shifting approaches to performance management have been maintained post-crisis. Some lessons and observations from the case study include the following:

- Many new opportunities were created by the pandemic, and a number of positive changes were made that were long overdue. One of the University's most important decisions was to commit substantial resources to setting up and strengthening digital capabilities and online systems, as this will have a long-lasting impact on areas such as institutional flexibility and performance management.

- The role of certain traditional performance measures (such as clocking in and fulfilling time requirements) diminished during the pandemic. Results orientation became increasingly tied to performance objectives that were largely driven by a sense of individual responsibility and accountability.
- The traditional culture at many universities is characterized by something of a silo mentality, with a focus on discrete change-management projects. The crisis created an *esprit de corps*, bringing the University's internal stakeholders together to work collaboratively on overcoming urgent challenges and achieving common goals.
- Strategic plans with time projections are important, but faster and better outcomes can be achieved when there is strong staff buy-in.
- Technology is a game changer in terms of educational delivery, costs and access, and the use of digital learning tools can help bridge the inequality gap. During the pandemic, students were provided with access to laptops and data to enable them to join online classes and continue with their studies.

Endnotes

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Rethinking the Current Model of Operation for the Public Sector after COVID-19

Geert Bouckaert¹

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an immense impact on societies around the world, but this major health emergency is just one of a series of global crises that have seriously undermined progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the plan of action for people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships elaborated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The world's societies and the challenges they face are becoming increasingly complex, and an obvious question is whether the current model of operation for the public sector is fit for future purposes. As part of this analysis, it is fair to ask whether the public sector has handled the recent crises effectively, as a review of actions taken can provide an indication of existing competencies. A related question refers to how the world can prepare for future crises, even though it is known that preventing a crisis is better than having to resolve one. It is (hopefully) a shared belief that achieving most or all of the SDGs can help prevent future crises—or at least increase the capacities of societies and the resilience of institutions so that they can better navigate any crisis that may occur.

The recent global crises have had a mixed impact on public sector operations. During the pandemic, the core functions of public institutions—including service delivery, lawmaking and policymaking—were negatively affected in a number of ways. However, this was also a period of promising advances, as managing the pandemic brought about innovations in administrative management and stakeholder engagement, increased transparency and accountability, and a growing awareness of the need for new systems and approaches.²

Public sector systems and institutions differ in terms of their legal framework, their historical development, and the cultural traditions on which they are based. A certain level of variability is expected; however, there are agreed-upon international standards—including the United Nations principles of effective governance for sustainable development—that provide a strong framework and solid benchmarks for good public administration, management and governance.³ Having an objective point of reference makes it possible to assess what works and what does not work under which conditions so that Governments can learn from one another's experiences. A review of effective COVID-19 responses highlights the importance of three key objectives:

- Responding rapidly to crises;
- Managing crises effectively;

- Establishing fit-for-purpose systems to prepare for future systemic shocks.

While most Governments now have a good deal of experience with crisis response and management and have integrated and institutionalized successful innovations in public sector operations, relatively few have experience with future crisis planning. As illustrated by recent crises, systemic shocks require robust public sector responses since these shocks destabilize entire societies and States and can even affect other countries and have global repercussions. One of the major lessons learned from recent crises is that it is vital to prepare for what may be referred to as “turbulence governance”⁴ by setting up systems capable of containing and handling systemic shocks.

Rapid crisis response is essential

Risk and impact assessments indicate that rapid response is essential for reducing negative impacts. Experience with recent crises shows that few public sectors can list a fast reaction time as one of their key competencies.⁵ In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, many developed countries demonstrated a lack of readiness—even with risk assessments, national modelling and scenarios, and roadmaps based on previous disasters.⁶ Some of the countries in Asia that had previously dealt with SARS were a step ahead in some respects as they could institutionalize some of their earlier response strategies, particularly with regard to monitoring, testing and tracing.

Evidence to this point suggests that the speed with which Governments react to a major disaster and make decisions to move forward with significant interventions depends on the following:⁷

- Rapid recognition of crisis status, a strong understanding of its implications, and acknowledgement of its urgency among relevant decision makers;
- The conviction that crisis policy measures are available and appropriate;
- The status of the decision-making architecture (actors and their relationships).

Certain other variables can also affect the speed of response, including the degree of centralization or decentralization, the extent of fragmentation or coordination, whether the governance culture is characterized by tradition or adaptability,

whether there is an openness to learning and a willingness to experiment and innovate, and where the public sector stands in terms of crucial capacity.

In her 150-country comparative study on crisis response times, Marlene Jugl observes that having a dedicated ministry tasked with crisis response can have “a substantial accelerating effect of several days on crisis response”.⁸ She cites evidence indicating that countries with a separate health ministry, for example, are able to respond more rapidly to health crises. When future crises hit and there is no distinct ministry or agency capable of fast monitoring and response, reaction times may be slower.

Horizontal fragmentation and specialization can have positive or negative implications for response time, depending on the level of coordination and prioritization. For example, specialization can be an advantage if it is linked to the type of crisis occurring, though efforts are sometimes concentrated in one area at the expense of other, related policy domains (with health being prioritized over economics and education, for example). Vertical fragmentation and decentralization can inhibit fast response, though decentralization (depending on the degree of autonomy) can also allow some regions to act more quickly.

Governments may learn from their own or others’ past experiences with similar or different types of crises. In the case of COVID-19, it seems that “intra-crisis cross-border learning was more significant than inter-crisis learning from own experience with past epidemics”.

There are some important lessons that can be learned from past experience. One of the main takeaways here is that having a dedicated crisis-related agency can speed up crisis response. Since crises take many forms and can have a serious impact on specific sectors, it would be wise for Governments to create a flexible matrix-type tool to set up permanent specialized task forces for different types of possible crises such as cyber collapse, extreme weather events and pandemics.⁹

Managing and containing “classical” crises

The design of regulatory systems governing health and other crises varies across countries.¹⁰ When the pandemic hit, many of those with traditional crisis management systems in place were initially resistant to change; however, innovative solutions were needed to address the unique challenges associated with this unprecedented crisis. There emerged a greater willingness to explore and experiment with new ideas and to introduce changes in the administrative and managerial culture within the public sector; thinking outside the box and creative problem-solving were often encouraged. Ad hoc solutions that proved successful need to be formally integrated and made part of standard operating procedures in crisis management systems.

Steps should be taken to institutionalize innovations relating to digital readiness, adaptability, simplified procurement, co-creation and co-production, citizen engagement and participation, staff mobility, and communication.¹¹

Digital readiness improved during the pandemic, as evidenced by the increased use and relative normalization of, for example, virtual meetings, electronic signatures and digital identification, paperless decision flows, and online health-care provision (telemedicine). However, the digital divide became more apparent in key areas, including education (online teaching and learning), health-care access, and mobility (the transportation of people and goods). Digital privacy also became a major issue, as a key component of the pandemic response involved accessing and sharing personal health data. There were concerns that database connections used for contact tracing could be used for other purposes as well. In some countries, special legislation was adopted to protect digital security and privacy.

Logistical speed and efficiency became particularly important during the pandemic. Governments were able to simplify procurement processes without compromising tendering procedures. Governments invoked force majeure to introduce changes intended to streamline operations. Systems were created to ensure the delivery of critical goods and services, and administrative processes—including those governing tenders and public procurement—were adapted to improve speed and flexibility within the public sector.

Co-creation, co-production, engagement and participation were assigned greater priority during the pandemic. The lockdowns and other restrictions on public movement and contact disrupted social interactions—including those between the public sector and the users of public services. Many countries and their institutions acted quickly to establish participatory processes in a number of sectors, including health, education and mobility.

Staff mobility within the public sector improved significantly during the pandemic. Under the traditional system, personnel assignments and movements tended to be sclerotic and to occur within silos. However, when gaps needed to be filled to ensure effective governance and business continuity, new opportunities opened up for staff reallocation and reassignment (driven by both institutional exigencies and individual volunteerism).

The lessons learned with regard to adjusting traditional practices may be summarized as follows: Governments should establish a problem-solving culture that supports and facilitates innovation, and flexible but transparent procedures should be adopted for the creative allocation of human resources, for maintaining a tendering system that allows public institutions to make best use of all available capacity in the market, and for actively promoting different productive partnerships between national

and local governments, non-governmental organizations and private sector actors to strengthen service delivery.

Preparing public sectors for future global and systemic crises

Classical bureaucracies need to introduce systemic changes not only for crisis management but also for the implementation of “turbulence governance” for crisis preparedness. Growing public awareness that the State and the public sector were not only part of the solution but were actually best situated and qualified to take the lead in addressing crisis-related challenges went a long way towards restoring the legitimacy of State authority. To maintain the trust of the public and its belief in the dedication and competence of government authorities and institutions, the public sector will need to consolidate innovations into a fit-for-future-purpose governance system that can handle systemic shocks and turbulence while also maintaining effective day-to-day service delivery. The three reforms suggested below can support the creation and maintenance of such a system.

Shift from sequential thinking (normal-crisis-normal-crisis-normal governance) to simultaneous thinking (combining normal service delivery with sustained crisis governance).

Governments should take steps to modify their public sector systems and operations so that they are flexibly able to combine routine service delivery with key elements of crisis governance. This will require some innovation around the allocation of personnel, project structuring, horizontal budgeting, and the creation of peer learning opportunities both within and outside institutions, sectors and countries. Public administrations should prepare themselves to engage in more complex decision-making based on improved access to different and more granular data.

Implement the United Nations principles of effective governance for sustainable development¹² in order to strengthen and preserve public trust.

National and subnational governments that are invested in promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (SDG 16) will have the tools they need to achieve the other SDGs and handle major crises.

The United Nations has set out 11 principles of effective governance for sustainable development that are aligned with the objectives of SDG 16 (and all other SDGs). There is strong emphasis on enhancing public trust in government by focusing on responsibility, accountability, effectiveness and inclusion—four key concepts highlighted in SDG 16. Trust in public institutions and belief in their legitimacy are needed to implement the necessary societal and institutional changes.¹³

The Committee of Experts on Public Administration has produced a variety of strategy guidance notes that provide numerous concrete examples and cases illustrating front-line best practices.¹⁴ The United Nations recognizes noteworthy achievement through its annual Public Sector Award. The 10 winners for 2022—Thailand, the Philippines, Ukraine, Brazil, India, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Poland, Panama and Ireland—offer a look at creative best practices that integrate the principles of effective governance for sustainable development to ensure that public service provision is inclusive and equitable and that public sector institutions are effective and responsive.¹⁵

Practise whole-of-government strategies within whole-of-society approaches

Within public administrations, horizontal and vertical concertation, coordination, cooperation and integration generally intensify when there is a crisis to be managed and become even stronger when there is a systemic shock that needs to be addressed. However, individual practical experiences do not necessarily offer definitive solutions, as the structural features of government systems vary widely, and what works in one setting might not work in another. Across the board, however, horizontal interactions need to be consolidated within a whole-of-society approach, while a whole-of-government approach should inform vertical interactions. Institutionalizing stakeholder engagement for the pursuit of a shared objective is crucial.¹⁶ Special attention should be given to strengthening and supporting local governments because of their proximity to citizens. A whole-of-government/whole-of-society approach will require more diversity and flexibility to promote collaborative governance within the public sector and between the public sector, the private sector and social networks.¹⁷

Endnotes

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- 15 The list of 2022 UNPSA winners and a description of their initiatives are available on the United Nations Public Service Innovation Hub website at <https://publicadministration.un.org/unpsa/database/Winners/2022-winners>. More information on the Public Service Innovation Awards is available at <https://publicadministration.un.org/unpsa/database>.
- 16 United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Public Administration and Development Management, *Working Together: Integration, Institutions and the Sustainable Development Goals—World Public Sector Report 2018* (Sales No. E.18.II.H.1), p. 7.
- 17 Xabier Barandiaran, Maria-José Canel and Geert Bouckaert, eds., *Building Collaborative Governance in Times of Uncertainty: Pracademic Lessons from the Basque Gipuzkoa Province* (Leuven, Belgium, Leuven University Press, 2023), available at <https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/61606>.

Table 3A. Expert recommendations to transform the public service and achieve the SDGs

Area	Action points
Governance transformation and public service provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen institutional resilience for public service provision through innovations in transparency, participation and accountability, backed by legal frameworks. • To increase the resilience of institutional mechanisms, consider anchoring them at different levels of government so that they can effectively withstand the departure of reform champions within the Government or the prioritization of rapid policy responses during times of crisis. • Governments need to balance crisis response with long-term strategies required for the achievement of the SDGs. To do so, they need to promote evidence-based decision-making. Prioritizing the principle of leaving no one behind should not be compromised. • Governments need to establish effective anticipatory capacity to prepare for and manage future shocks. • Governments need to strengthen their systemic capacity to innovate. This requires moving beyond one-off, crisis-driven solutions to embed innovation in policymaking and public administration processes. • Public institutions need to prioritize participatory governance and citizen oversight to enhance accountability, even during crises such as the pandemic. • Consistently pursue collaboration between supreme audit institutions and organized citizens to improve public oversight, transparency, and accountability.
Co-creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governments should aim to capitalize on the insights gained from the catalysing effects of COVID-19 in fostering innovation in co-production and co-creation. • Actively involve citizens in decision-making processes and ensure that policies and services meet their needs. • Governments need to align their co-creation activities with the systemic nature of the SDGs. Collaborative initiatives should be designed to have wide-ranging and interconnected impacts that contribute to the achievement of the Goals.
Health-care service provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governments should actively support the utilization of telehealth and digital health technologies and other innovative solutions while also assessing and adapting pandemic-driven innovations in testing and disease surveillance to improve service delivery, expand health-care access, and address challenges in underserved areas. • Governments could prioritize and strengthen collaboration with the private sector to leverage resources, expertise and infrastructure to ensure effective health-care delivery. • Governments should invest in and promote the use of online platforms for health workforce training to ensure continuous professional development beyond emergencies, particularly in low- and middle-income settings.
Multilevel coordination and preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges in multilevel governance require more attention. Efforts should be made to navigate the tensions between national and subnational governments caused by crises such as COVID-19. • Governments should encourage a culture of collaboration and innovation across all levels of governance. • Governments should embrace collaborative approaches, combining both top-down and bottom-up relations, as well as horizontal, cross-sectoral integration.

Table 3A (continued)

Area	Action points
Hybrid learning modalities and their influence on innovation and performance management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public organizations should capitalize on the opportunities they had during the pandemic to foster collaboration and a sense of purpose among their staff and redefine productivity based on objectives and outcomes. This shift could allow for greater flexibility and performance management during and beyond crises. • Organizations should ensure that their strategic plans incorporate the perspectives and input of employees to enhance their engagement and commitment. • Academic professionals should be encouraged to think creatively and develop tools and applications that can address specific challenges in their organizations. • Academic organizations should recognize the transformative power of technology and invest in online learning systems and platforms to enhance teaching and engagement with students. They could collaborate with private companies to acquire technology and explore ways to overcome inequalities and improve access to resources.
Rethinking the current model of operation of the public sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governments should consolidate crisis innovations into a resilient governance system capable of handling systemic shocks, incorporating successful ad hoc solutions adopted during the pandemic into new standard operating procedures. • Transformed institutional frameworks need to consider digital readiness, adaptability, simplified procurement, co-production, participation, staff mobility, and effective communication. • Encourage a problem-solving culture within the public sector that promotes innovation. • Activate flexible and transparent procedures for allocating human resources, conducting tenders, and forming partnerships with local governments, non-governmental organizations and private actors to deliver services effectively. • Move away from sequential thinking and adopt approaches that combine routine service delivery with crisis governance to ensure that both aspects are given equal attention and resources. • Adopt whole-of-government strategies and combine them with whole-of-society approaches. This includes engaging citizens, organizations and other stakeholders in crisis management and decision-making processes.