



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs

How Can Governments Strengthen Public Trust and Their Relationships with Society?

Webinar 2: *World Public Sector Report 2023* webinar series

16 November 2023, 8:30 – 10 am (EST, NY)

Concept Note

Background

The [*World Public Sector Report 2023: Transforming institutions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals after the pandemic*](#), published by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) through its Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG), examines the role that national institutional and governance innovations and changes that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic can play in advancing progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The consequences of the pandemic and its aftermath threaten to further derail progress on the 2030 Agenda and make the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) more difficult to achieve in the short and medium terms. Yet the pandemic also sparked rapid innovation in government institutions and public administration that could be capitalized on; positive changes were observed in the internal workings of public institutions and in the way they interact with one another and broader society, including through public service delivery. The report explores the potential of these to be sustained over time.

The first chapter of the report focuses on how Governments can strengthen their relationships with people and other actors and earn public trust to accelerate progress towards the SDGs. These relationships are affected by crises like the pandemic, but also influence responses to them. Their strength is therefore pivotal to realizing the changes required for more sustainable and resilient societies. The chapter considers a select set of adverse trends that were exacerbated by the pandemic and influenced these relationships, relating to governance, the accuracy of information, and democratic values, traditions and institutions. It highlights opportunities to address them and generate trust in public administration with successful and promising institutional and policy changes.

The trends examined point to social contracts under strain and the need for a comprehensive approach to rebuild them. This is crucial in order for society to meet today's compounding challenges, respond to those that are likely to arise, and still achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Governments alone cannot reshape their relationships with other social actors. However, as a crucial first step, they can create an enabling environment for strengthened relationships and strive to earn and retain public trust. They can take steps that support a renewed social contract, such as promoting transparency and civic engagement, ensuring respect for human rights, and demonstrating trust in other actors at the same time that they seek greater trust.

Objectives and format

The objectives of the webinar are to highlight key messages from Chapter 1 of the report and foster interaction among expert contributors with focus on positive changes and lessons from the pandemic period. The webinar should highlight solutions and recommendations for strengthening trust in governments, their relationships with society and achieving the SDGs.

The webinar will open with a short introduction of the Chapter 1 conceptual framework and overview. This will be followed by two panels of four speakers each. The first group's contributions share a connection with various implications of communication and digital transformation, and the second with the vital roles of participation, inclusion and fairness. Each panel will begin with brief remarks by the speakers. The floor will then be given to each speaker to share reactions to the others' interventions in the form of comments and questions. A free-flowing discussion can follow for the remaining allocated time. Following the second panel, the floor will be opened for a similar exchange between the two groups of speakers. As time allows, questions from the Zoom Q&A or the moderator may be posed to speakers.

Participants

One author of each of the 8 expert contributions will participate as a speaker. The DESA author of the overview will open the session and moderate.

Platform

The webinar will take place via Zoom. It will be open to all by registration:
bit.ly/PublicSectorReportWebinar2

Provisional agenda

8:30 AM EST (NEW YORK TIME)

- 8:30 AM EST Welcome and introduction to Chapter 1 by the moderator
- Lisa Ainbinder, Governance and Public Administration Officer, Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government, UN DESA
- 8:35 AM EST Panel of expert contributors (digital transformation and communication)
- Sarah McCoubrey, Access to Justice Strategist, CALIBRATE (3 min)
 - Valeria Betancourt, Communications and Information Policy Programme Manager, Association for Progressive Communications (3 min)
 - Naledi Mashishi, former researcher, Africa Check (3 min)
 - Mirza Shadan, Director, Global Health Strategies (3 min)
- Interactive discussion
- 9:05 AM EST Panel of expert contributors (participation, inclusion and fairness)
- Müge Finkel, Co-Director, Gender Inequality Research Lab (GIRL); Director, Ford Institute for Human Security; Assistant Professor of International Development, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs - University of Pittsburgh (3 min)
 - Alexandra DeBlock, Research Officer, International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) (3 min)
 - James Sloam, Professor of Politics, Royal Holloway, University of London (3 min)
 - Jeffrey Owens, Director, WU Global Tax Policy Center, Institute for Austrian and International Tax Law (Institut für Österreichisches und Internationales Steuerrecht, WU Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien), Vienna University of Economics and Business (3 min)
- Interactive discussion
- 9:35 AM EST Plenary reactions/discussion, including possible questions from the Zoom Q&A
- 9:55 AM EST Closing

List of Chapter 1 contributions with authors and links

[Towards a fair fiscal contract? What do the private sector and high-net-worth individuals “owe” society?](#)

Jeffrey Owens is the Director and Ruth Wamuyu is a Teaching and Research Associate for the WU Global Tax Policy Center at the Institute for Austrian and International Tax Law (Institut für Österreichisches und Internationales Steuerrecht, WU Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien), Vienna University of Economics and Business

[Gender equality in public administration: a new normal for Governments three years into the pandemic](#)

Müge Finkel and Melanie Hughes serve as Co-Directors of the Gender Inequality Research Lab (GIRL). Dr. Finkel is the Director of the Ford Institute for Human Security and Assistant Professor of International Development at the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh. Dr. Hughes is a Professor of Sociology at the University of Pittsburgh

[Communication with social actors on the COVID-19 pandemic: implications for future crises](#)

Torsha Dasgupta is a Senior Associate, Mirza Shadan a Director, and Kaushik Bose a Vice-President at Global Health Strategies

[Regulating the use of digital technology by public administrations to protect and strengthen human rights](#)

Valeria Betancourt works with the Association for Progressive Communications as Communications and Information Policy Programme Manager

[The appetite for e-justice is a chance to advance Sustainable Development Goals and entrench rights protection](#)

Sarah McCoubrey is an Access to Justice Strategist at her consultancy, CALIBRATE

[Civic space and the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

Elly Page is a Senior Legal Advisor and Alexandra DeBlock is a Research Officer at the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)

[Youth voice and sustainable public policy: rejuvenating urban democracy](#)

James Sloam is Professor of Politics at Royal Holloway, University of London

[Combating misinformation as a matter of urgency: an African perspective](#)

Naledi Mashishi is a former researcher for Africa Check

For further information, please contact Ms. Lisa Ainbinder (ainbinder@un.org) or Ms. Xinxin Cai (cai2@un.org).