

## **23 July 2025- : Promoting New Competencies and New Mindsets for the Future of Governance in the Global South**

This VNR Lab, organized by the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and UN DESA's Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government, explored what new competencies and new mindsets are needed for the future of governance in the Global South. Across this year's HLPF, there has been a resounding call to focus on people—both the people behind policy and decision-making and the people who are affected by policies. One cannot accomplish this goal without focusing on competencies and new mindsets, pointing to the vitality of this VNR Lab.

This Lab showcased how transformative governance depends on the mindsets and competencies of public servants; it must be inclusive, anticipatory, and citizen centered. Traits such as empathy, adaptability, purpose-driven service, and future-oriented thinking were emphasized as essential for navigating complexity and driving inclusive development. Digital literacy and foresight were also identified as vital skills. Civil servants must act as agents of change rather than passive implementers of policy, and this feat cannot be done without building legitimacy and social trust between citizens and institutions.

Moreover, governance must be agile, able to respond to shocks, and committed to equity and sustainability to achieve the SDGs and, for Africa, Agenda 2063. Several practical tools and models are already shaping reform efforts across the African continent. The African Association for Public Administration (AAPAM)-APRM Competency Toolkit for Leadership and Training (LDT), for example, supports civil service development by addressing institutional, financial, and capacity-building dimensions of competencies. The Toolkit validation with seventeen African countries noted disparities of these frameworks. It also identified challenges for equal training opportunities as well as necessity to improve national service Scorecards. In South Africa, statisticians are reframing their work to focus not only on technical accuracy, but also on producing data that is user-centered and actionable. Similarly, Ele-vate AI Africa is equipping youth and governments with the tools to lead innovation. Projects like MamaMate, an AI-powered maternal health assistant, illustrate how technological solutions can be used to advance justice and inclusion.

Separately, the ASAN public service delivery model from Azerbaijan was showcased to demonstrate how core competencies—such as emotional intelligence, digital fluency, and teamwork—can enhance satisfaction and trust in public institutions when complemented by convenient accessibility to services. This model is being replicated in 30 countries, and it holds immense potential for enhancing service delivery in LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDs.

Effective and inclusive governance is increasingly seen as a key determinant of national resilience and equitable development, and SDG 16 was highlighted as an enabler to achieve all the other SDGs. When citizens receive responsive, transparent services—whether in healthcare, education, or business—trust in institutions grows. Public sector transformation, while a necessary process, will take time, coordination, and patience. For this to happen, public servants must be equipped with the mindsets and competencies required to innovate and realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.