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# Innovation in public administration: learning from the COVID-19 period

Expert group meeting on “Enhancing Innovation to Build Resilient and Responsive Public Administration to Support the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – An SDGs Mid-Term Review Perspective”

7-8 September 2023

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The pandemic impacted the work of public institutions and public administration in significant ways

Out of necessity, public institutions had to innovate and find ways to

- 1) continue to function
- 2) make policy decisions and implement them
- 3) deliver public services

How to capitalize on change that had positive impacts on the SDGs in the next 7 years to 2030?



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# World Public Sector Report 2023

Chapter 1: How can Governments reshape their relationships with people?

Chapter 2: How can Governments assess competing priorities and address difficult policy trade-offs?

Chapter 3: What assets and innovations could Governments mobilize to transform the public sector and achieve the SDGs?

# Innovation in public administration: two dimensions examined in WPSR 2023

Innovations and change in internal ways of working of public organizations

Changes at the interface between governments and citizens : delivery of public services



# WPSR 2023 Chapter 3: expert contributions

Six contributions explore innovative solutions that have arisen during the pandemic:

- Rethinking the current model of operation for the public sector after COVID-19
- Governance reform and public service provision: institutional resilience and State-society synergy
- Innovative multilevel coordination and preparedness after COVID-19
- Uplifting innovation through co-creation: from the local to the global level
- Innovations in health-care service delivery during the pandemic
- 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

## The role of public servants

- Essential role in furthering innovation during the pandemic
- Capacity and skills to foster innovation, inclusion and gender equity
- Surge in collaboration and unity during the pandemic, fostering innovation

## Resilient institutional mechanisms

- Examples of institutional mechanisms with multiple anchoring points in government and strong civil society engagement, able to survive shocks and demand accountability even in crisis times
- Attention to outcomes and impacts of participatory decision-making, incentives to participate

## Digital technology

- Help address development challenges (e.g. AI to identify corruption in procurement)
- Access to and analysis of data to inform decision-making during the pandemic
- Part of the solution, but not a solution in itself; need for contextual responses

## Multilevel governance

- Subnational response to crises - more agile & responsive?
- Crisis management – avoid the challenge of fragmentation
- integrating isolated innovative local experiences in multiscale governance approaches

# WPSR 2023 Chapter 3: Selected topics (2)

## Co-production and changes in service delivery

- Institutional framework for systematic approaches
- Address challenges, e.g., user-provider tensions, costs, incentives, vulnerability, inequality

## Inclusive service delivery

- Innovations in healthcare, education
- Covers all levels from policies, regulation (national and international), workforce mobilization and training, delivery mechanisms

## Technology-driven service delivery

- Leveraging technology while addressing digital divides
- Hybrid service delivery models
- Regulation of digital services to protect the rights of users



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# Selected suggestions made by experts

Strengthening systemic capacity to innovate in the public sector requires moving beyond one-off, crisis-driven solutions to embed innovation in public administration processes

Consolidate crisis innovations into resilient governance systems capable of handling systemic shocks, incorporating successful ad-hoc solutions adopted during the pandemic into new standard operating procedures

Encourage a problem-solving culture within the public sector that promotes innovation - public organizations should capitalize on the opportunity they had during the pandemic to foster collaboration and sense of purpose among their staff

Public institutions need to prioritize participatory governance and citizen oversight to enhance accountability, even during crises like the pandemic

To increase the resilience of institutional mechanisms, consider anchoring them at different levels of government and institutionalizing civil society engagement (as opposed to relying solely on individual engagement), 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 and academia should invest in the use of online platforms workforce training to ensure continuous professional development beyond emergencies, including in low- and middle-income settings





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Thank you

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