

ENABLING DIGITAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN LMIC COUNTRIES

EVENT OUTCOMES

March 11, 2019
8:30 AM – 5:00 PM (Washington, D.C. time)

World Bank (J Building)
701 18th St NW, Washington, DC 20006
Conference Room: J B1-075

Event Overview

Digital technology has had a profound impact on the relation between citizens of the developing world and the governments that serve them. From mobile payments of civil servants to technologies providing health services to remote communities, the impact has been remarkable and the scope for further innovation is broad. There is an opportunity to improve the quality of services that the public sector can offer its citizens using technology.

An all-day workshop was organized by the World Bank, PDEL, and Vital Wave for leaders in foreign policy, technology, academia and implementation to come together and discuss how technology can be used to create better service and in turn, more demand among citizens. The workshop included a mix of plenary sessions, presentations, and interactive discussions supported throughout by academic evidence and implementation insights. In addition to the valuable discussions during the event, the convening also resulted in various points of follow up for potential collaboration.

Event Summary

Over 40 participants attended the workshop, including 20 mid- and high-level staff from the World Bank. An additional average of ten participants attended via the WebEx link throughout the day from World Bank country offices.

The day began with a brief overview of the goals for the GovTech program – the delivery of transparent, simple, and efficient services to citizens and businesses, which will be enabled by a set of preconditions (e.g., connectivity, digital identity, data registries) and the effective use of data generated through digital technology. The importance of analog foundations (e.g., skills in the public sector, regulatory environment, procurement strategies) were also highlighted.

The first session focused on accountability. Questions around the preconditions necessary for creating a continuous, effective, and fair feedback loop between citizens and their governments were explored. This included the need for analyzing citizen access to technology and the inherent biases that may be built into the response from the government. In addition, although some programs and interventions did hold

governments accountable in a specific instance (e.g., Kenya), they did not truly transform the core issues in the long term.

In the second session, digital identity was discussed as a fundamental building block for the GovTech agenda. Emphasis was placed on “good” identity for all that is universal in coverage and accessibility with a design that is robust, secure, responsive, and sustainable. The underlying technology will also only be as good as the complementary investments and policies in place to support it. This observation was bolstered by presentations on work in India around the delivery of services and incentives. Ultimately, one must have a clear theory of change on the issues that technology is addressing and the aspects of the enabling environment that are needed to allow it to thrive.

Session three focused on economic development. Financial inclusion including research on access, particularly for women, was explored. Ultimately governments still play a critical role in providing the backbone for the expansion of digital financial services. Striking a balance between being pro-client and enabling private-sector involvement is key. Barriers to uptake that were highlighted include infrastructure challenges (e.g., reaching the last mile), basic financial literacy, access, and a lack of clear protocols and procedures in countries that prevent risk and ensure smooth operations and expansion.

The last session focused on service delivery. Examples included vaccination, dengue outbreak monitoring, as well as monitoring fieldworkers and health workers. Key critical success factors highlighted included keeping the processes and information collected simple, the utilization of training, and identifying the right incentives. Having the design of the solution built into the daily workflow of the user instead as an add-on effort was also emphasized. However, the data collected should always be scrutinized and efforts made to ensure that not just any data, but the right data, is collected.

In the closing session, participants took a step back and summarized reoccurring themes mentioned throughout the presentations. These included:

- Ensuring sustainability of solutions and services (to live on past the project)
- Addressing limitations of infrastructure
- Understanding the end user (accessibility, level of literacy, social norms, comfort)
- Creating the right partnerships
- Building on existing platforms (not reinventing the wheel)
- Integrating efforts and programs into other systems (e.g., health systems)

In addition, by the World Bank and partners drawing on past projects as well as other fields (such as digital-for-development) it can further identify ways in which to help its client governments successfully implement GovTech programs and services.

Identified Areas of Research

Research themes centered around current evidence regarding the potential of GovTech as an institutionalized practice for the World Bank and its client governments, as well as more visionary topics such as artificial intelligence in the context of government operations in LMICs.

Within the last year the GovTech team has focused on areas such as government trust, citizen engagement in fragile, conflict-affected, and violent (FCV) environments, and emerging technologies.

Specific areas of potential and current research were highlighted by World Bank speakers and panelists, including:

- Outcomes from previous World Bank e-governance projects (both successes and failures)
- Impact evaluation across different sectors and users to create deeper understanding of barriers and incentives for digital identity
- Existing gaps to further inform the GovTech initiative's future research agenda
- The application of AI, blockchain, and other disruptive technologies to the GovTech strategy
- Deploying GovTech technologies in FCV environments
- The ability for technology to allow countries to leapfrog (or fill gaps while more traditional systems are put in place)
- Best practices and approaches that are needs-based, evidence-based, and able to scale

For the final agenda, please see Appendix A.



APPENDIX A: FINAL AGENDA

Event Moderator: Brendan Smith, Vital Wave

8:30 - 9:00 am: Opening remarks: Renaud Seligmann (World Bank)

9:00 - 10:15 am: Session 1. GovTech for accountability

- Saki Kumagai (World Bank)
- Using technology to make elected officials accountable to citizens - James Long (University of Washington, Seattle)
- Panel Discussion: Integrating Points of View

10:15 - 10:30 am: Break

10:30 am - 12:00 pm: Session 2. Digital Identity: Using technology to generate inclusion and empowerment

- Vyjayanti Desai and Julia Clark (World Bank ID4D)
- Alan Gelb (CGD)
- Biometric ID and mobile technology to increase benefits from public transfer programs - Paul Niehaus (University of California San Diego)
- Related themes: Public sector and private sector savings, service delivery, data protection/privacy

12:00 - 1:30 pm: Working Lunch Session: Session 3. Technology and Economic Development

- Harish Natarajan (World Bank)
- Driving digital financial inclusion - Craig McIntosh (University of California San Diego).
- Related themes: Public/private nexus, implementation imperatives
 - Additional Discussant: Leah Gatt, Vital Wave

1:30 - 2:30 pm: Project matchmaking event and coffee break

2:30 - 4:00 pm: Session 4. GovTech and Service Delivery

- Ana Bellver (World Bank)
- Generating information on the quality of service delivery using innovative technologies - Arman Rezaee (University of California Davis)
- Government use of ICT to pay and incentivize workers - Michael Callen (University of California, San Diego)
- Panel Discussion: Integrating Points of View
 - Additional Discussant: Derek Treatman, Vital Wave

4:00 - 5:00 pm: Closing panel. The Forward Path of GovTech

- Summary Observations
 - Brooke Partridge (Vital Wave), The Integrated View
- Leadership Panel
 - Ed Olowo-Okere (TBC World Bank)
 - Craig McIntosh (UCSD)
 - Brooke Partridge (Vital Wave)
 - Brendan Smith (Vital Wave), Moderator