

Side-event on South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Scaling Up Innovation in Public Service Delivery

Dubai, UAE, November 1, 2016

Time 11:00AM-12:30AM

Location: Exhibition area

Speakers

1. Mr Anir Chowdhury, Policy Advisor, Prime Minister's Office, Bangladesh
2. H. E. Dr. Mohamed Asim, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Government of the Maldives
3. Max Everest-Phillips, Director, UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence, Singapore
4. Hon. Alikhan Baimenov, Chairman, Regional Hub of Civil Service, Astana, Kazakhstan
5. Dr. A. H. Monjurul KABIR, Senior Programme Adviser: Head, Asia-Pacific & LDC Section, UN Women
6. Tarcisio Alvarez-Rivero, Chief, Programme Planning and Coordination section, UN ESCWA

Context

Governments around the world, in both developing and developed countries, are going through tremendous changes to respond to rapidly rising expectations of their citizens for improved public service delivery through accelerating technological transformations and embracing strong competitive pressure from the private sector service providers. Traditional public service delivery is known for being unresponsive to citizens' demands, driven by rules and procedures many of which find their roots in the bygone era. Every government is embracing approaches and tools to become more citizen-centric, responsive and participatory. In particular, the following trends are seen:

1. New digital technologies provide governments with the means to improve the delivery of public services, thereby bringing increased accountability, transparency and effectiveness leading to greater public trust. Globally reputed research firms show that digitization has tangible benefits for a country's overall competitiveness, business environment and quality of life. Studies also confirm that a majority of citizens would prefer using digital tools to access public services. However, the challenge is often with developing citizen-centric rather than technology-centric approaches and the adoption and promotion of digitization by the service providers themselves.
2. This difference in perspectives between service providers and service seekers prevents the former from understanding the problems faced by the latter, leading to a service delivery paradigm and practice that is considered unresponsive and 'red-tapish' by the average citizen. Unscrupulous practices by the vested interest groups in different tiers further complicate matters and frustrate the citizen. To fully understand the perspective of the citizen, especially the underserved, and modify its own structure and processes to incorporate this new understanding, many governments are employing tools such as 'design thinking' and 'behaviour insights'. However, sometimes these tools are quite difficult to adopt and adapt to the needs of a particular country and context.
3. Typically, civil service is designed to be risk-averse to maintain order and status quo. Yet, many governments are dabbling in various experimentations, sometimes using approaches and technologies mentioned above. Many governments have partnered with NGOs, for-profit companies and academia for these experiments in new forms of service delivery. Furthermore, so-called 'innovation labs' have sprouted around the world, some of which are supported by UN organizations, international development partners and philanthropists. The experimentation has produced fascinating innovations and evidence that inform policy

formulations. However, the proportion of these innovations that have been scaled up geographically and demographically is much lower than expectation.

The 3 abovementioned trends; digitization of service delivery, user-centric methodologies, and experimentation in civil service may have originated in developed countries but are taking the developing countries by storm. In fact, these practices are establishing a culture of citizen-centric innovation within the practicing governments, breaking silos of operations and helping move towards a whole of government planning and execution. However, achievements in countries vary considerably, some falling far below expectations. Important reasons are replication without proper understanding of the context and lack of commensurate efforts in human and institutional capacity development. These regularly result in wastage of scarce resources and frustration in both service providers and seekers.

Objective of the Side-Event

On 20 September 2016, the Bangladesh Permanent Mission to the United Nations and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation convened a high-level meeting on *South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Scaling up Innovation in Public Service Delivery* on the sidelines of the seventy-first session of the UN General Assembly at the United Nations headquarters. Heads of states and governments from Bangladesh and Sweden, ministers from Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Maldives, and the Netherlands, and the Permanent Representative of Uganda to the UN in NY highlighted cases of innovations in respective countries that could be adopted in other countries. The Prime Minister of Bangladesh proposed the need for a collaborative network to share these good practices and find ways to adopt them in other countries. Heads of UNDP, ITU, UNCDF, Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation and UNOSSC endorsed the concept of a global collaborative network that would focus on identifying innovative practices on making the government more effective, transparent, accountable and citizen-centric and proliferating these practices globally.

It was highlighted that most of the Sustainable Development Goals depend on the existence or the development of institutions that foster innovations in public services. As such, nurturing of these institutions is at the center of achieving the SDGs. Moreover, there are SDG targets that particularly focus on this concept: 16.5 (Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms), 16.6 (Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels), 16.7 (Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels), 16.10 (Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements), and 9.c (Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020).

The side-event alongside the Global South-South Development Expo in Dubai will explore challenges such as: What kind of innovations in governments are meeting citizens' expectations of improved public service delivery? What creates impact and what doesn't in such innovations? Why do certain public service innovations scale and others don't? How much experimentation is pragmatic in public service delivery sphere? How does one gather and provide access to data while balancing the need to protect peoples' privacy and the responsibility to share data that belong to the public? What are the effective provisioning of digital platforms, open marketplaces and collaborative communities? The network will try to answer these questions in specific terms such that the answers empower countries to take action towards adoption of innovative practices after customizing them to the local context.

4 main objectives:

1. To increase awareness on the subject of scaling up innovation in the public sector service delivery;
2. To deliberate on some challenges that the Network would try to address;
3. To bring together a coalition of countries (developed and developing) with an interest to further the recommendation of creating a network; and
4. Link up with institutions engaged in similar work.