

POST COVID-19 AND PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY IN AFRICA: ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- Introduction: COVID-19 – a wicked problem and disaster risk
- The public sector in Africa and service delivery
- Post COVID-19 public service delivery issues in Africa
- Post COVID-19 public service delivery opportunities
- Conclusion: Lessons

Introduction

- Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may be described as a “wicked problem” and disaster risk in spite of advanced science and technology.
- Wicked problem: It is a pandemic that is complex, intractable, unstructured, cross-cutting and relentless; “second and third waves” of increasing cases; mutations and variants; new terminologies: new normal; protocols; social and physical distancing, restrictions, PPE.
- Disaster risk: It is an “unnatural disaster” that has caused a lot of harm: restrictions and human rights abuses; health, economy, movement of people. It has affected over 107 million people with 2.5 million deaths. Level of infectiousness and mode of transmission unparalleled.
- Affected the entire globe and brought governments, health, economy, education, society and culture of countries to their knees. Vaccines been discovered in a rush driven largely by collaboration.

The public sector in Africa and service delivery

- The public sector performs basically four functions typical of public services: (i) formulation of economic and social policies; (ii) design and implement public programmes; (iii) raising revenue; (iv) managing accountability
- Effective service delivery leads to trust and confidence of citizens and legitimacy and accountability of the state.
- Complaints from politicians, governments and citizens on ineffective public service delivery. Bretton Woods institutions led reforms of the public sector
- Weak institutions to perform the functions; a few good institutions
- Weak preparedness to deal with disaster risks such as pandemics

Post COVID-19 public service delivery issues in Africa

- Financing disasters such as pandemics to improve preparedness
- Improved on-line services: e-government and e-governance
- Digitization: encoding of data and documents
- Reform of policy and institutional framework for service delivery
- Collaboration and coordination among institutions
- Strengthen regional integration through effective collaboration
- Improved public education on observance of the protocols
- Policy continuity and depoliticization of public service delivery
- Achievement of the Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063

Post COVID-19 public service delivery opportunities and choices

- Transformative leadership
- Build stronger institutions; SDG 16 on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions – a pillar for achieving all the other Agenda 2030 goals.
- Deal with the political economy issues
- Citizens' satisfaction of public services delivery
- Strengthen public private partnership
- Digitization of public services and effective decentralization
- New internal organization processes (online meetings and approval processes, and experimentations with new modalities of work)

Conclusion: Lessons

- African governments need to budget for disasters such as pandemics
- Revitalize the importance of frontline workers or “street level bureaucrats”; build effective public sector and its workforce
- More public demands for quality public services and greater citizens involvement in public services management
- Improved public-private partnership and infrastructure in service delivery
- Improved mechanisms to monitor public service delivery
- Develop more “pockets of productivity”; that is, institutions which are effective in spite of operating in difficult environments