



Enabling government performance during covid-19 and beyond

The covid-19 pandemic is fundamentally changing how governments work and how society functions and interacts at an economic and collective level.

Some implications of this are immediate and undeniable, as lockdowns and social distancing close down government services and business. The impact on countries gross domestic product, tax revenue and basic services, such as health and education, has been dramatic.

As the pandemic evolves, governments must change how they provide services to ensure political, economic, and social stability and security. The transition to recovery will be as important to individuals as the immediate response phase.

Oxford Policy Management's (OPM) Public Sector Practice can provide direct support to governments responding to the pandemic.

Our team of experts brings together diverse skill sets to provide comprehensive advice to government in preparing for the recovery phase of the crisis. We have identified seven critical activities that can help governments manage the transition from response to recovery.

- **Setting up alternative delivery mechanisms.** The pandemic has necessitated governments change how public services are delivered. Moving more services online and in turn increasing the demands for public transparency. Rapidly developing alternative implementation mechanisms is a challenge. Our team can work across government to identify appropriate delivery mechanisms ensuring continued service delivery. These alternatives could involve

using online platforms, mobile apps or using other government frontline staff. Our team in Uganda, working with the Revenue Authority, are helping to identify online platforms for taxpayer support and processing that makes the system more efficient and omits the need for face to face interactions.

- **Managing rapid organisational change that enables delivery.** The pandemic has highlighted weaknesses in every governments' ability to deliver. More flexibility is required within government to ensure essential decision-making and public service delivery is maintained. Our team has experience supporting the identification of priority functions and roles across government. We can help to identify and design the institutional structures to manage the recovery phase of the pandemic and prepare for future crisis. We currently support the Government of Punjab in this area, helping to develop an economic recovery strategy that will see the rapid development of new organisational structures to deliver social welfare benefits to the citizens' of Punjab, Pakistan.

- **Putting in place effective public communications strategies and delivery mechanisms.** Effective government-citizen communication is critical. As the pandemic evolves and messaging needs become more nuanced, communication delivery mechanisms must develop to reflect this. Our teams have experience in facilitating and supporting governments to implement new communications processes across Africa and Asia. The OPM managed Climate Proofing Growth and Development Programme developed an integrated communication process for public policy reforms that utilised different mechanisms, channels and products (content) across government and non-government actors to inform and create awareness of changes. This included training journalists and civil society organisations in policy analysis skills, enabling an understanding and engagement with complex public policy topics and their ability to communicate to their audiences.
- **Tracking real-time public perceptions in traditional and social media.** Monitoring and measuring public sentiment is critical in effective communications and policy responses. We can support governments track how information and discussions on covid-19 develop in country. This information will help inform governments understanding of public opinion and whether public messaging is understood, can track misinformation and its sources, and map where there are gaps in citizen / audience information. We have utilised this methodology in tracking citizens perspectives on state capture of extractives and the openness of government.
- **Establishing iterative routines for effective management.** In a pandemic Leaders need to make decisions based on unclear scientific evidence. These decisions need to be revisited regularly and rapidly revised based on new information. Our team can help implementers to design frameworks to manage the crisis adaptively and learn in real-time for future shocks, including a second wave of the outbreak. In Pakistan we are already working closely with the government to iterate and evolve public economic and social policy in response to the pandemic.
- **Rapid context and political analysis to understand evolving risks.** Understanding how the pandemic is changing the environment in which government, and other organisations, are operating in is critical to international and multilateral organisations as they design medium- and long-term responses. Our teams have considerable experience using diverse methodologies to develop analysis capable of supporting rapid decision-making processes for international partners, ensuring intervention strategies are informed and founded on an understanding of what national governments need and its politics. OPM has conducted numerous quick context and political economy mapping studies for the UK government in preparation for central diagnostic processes. We recently completed a scoping study to assess the best approach to UK engagement in the South Pacific, supporting an informed approach to its interventions.

How a government responds to covid-19 will shape its citizen's trust for years to come and will inform how a government is perceived nationally and internationally. Most importantly, it will directly impact the country's economic and social development for at least the next decade. Getting the government response right is crucial, but will be one of the most challenging endeavours many have faced, requiring a whole of government effort. OPM's Public Sector Governance team has the experience and ability to support this effort.