

UN DESA-KRILA Forum on “Strengthening Public Governance and Accelerating Digital Transformation of Local Government for Emergency Response and Revitalization of Local Economy in the Post-COVID-19 Era”

Co-organized by
United Nations Project Office on Governance (UNPOG)
Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG)
UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)
&
Korea Research Institute for Local Administration (KRILA)

**7 July 2021
2:00-4:30 PM Seoul, GMT+9**

**Via Zoom
Registration Link: <http://bit.ly/30ZheUi>**

Background

Local governments play a critical role in advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Political Declaration “Gearing up for a decade of action and delivery for sustainable development” adopted at the UN SDG Summit in September 2019 calls for bolstering local action to accelerate implementation, highlighting the commitment to “empower and support cities, local authorities and communities in pursuing the 2030 Agenda”.¹ As 65 percent of the total SDG targets have to be delivered by local authorities and actors², innovative strategies, approaches and actions at the local level, with active engagement of local communities and citizens, are imperative for accelerating the pace of achieving the SDGs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has fully underscored the crucial role of local governments as the first responders to develop and implement the emergency response measures at the local level. Due to the proximity to citizens, local governments are at the forefront of identifying the dynamically evolving emergency situations on the ground and delivering essential services and emergency assistance. Local governments also play an essential role in ensuring effective and timely risk communication and information-sharing and mobilizing local communities for agile and inclusive emergency responses. Particularly, emergency response policies and measures by local governments are critical to ensuring the inclusion and protection of disadvantaged and vulnerable populations, including slum dwellers, persons living in poverty and homelessness, poor rural communities, informal sector workers, etc., and address their special vulnerabilities and needs during the emergency situations.

¹ United Nations General Assembly (2019). Political declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly. A/RES/74/4. Para. 27 (e).

² Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2019). Achieving the SDGs in cities and regions. Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/about/impact/achievingthesdgsincitiesandregions.htm>

The significant repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy, particularly on jobs and loss of income, also call for a more proactive role of local governments in revitalizing the economy in the post-COVID-19 era. Local governments could be more responsive to changes in the labour market and mobilize and re-allocate resources to minimize the negative effects of COVID-19 on local economies through various emergency financial assistance, especially to micro- and small-sized enterprises. It is also important for local governments to review the current economic and employment structure in the context of the accelerated pace of digital transformation and innovation spurred by the pandemic.

In this regard, the role of local governance, with local governments at its center, is essential in addressing the challenges of COVID-19 and promoting a resilient and inclusive recovery in the post-COVID-19 era. Local governments should effectively engage local communities, civil society organizations, businesses, and citizens to enable innovative strategies and solutions to COVID-19 and the recovery in the local contexts. Particularly, engagement and collaboration with all local stakeholders are a pre-requisite to ensuring the delivery of essential services to all, including vulnerable groups, and their inclusion in the COVID-19 recovery policy-making and implementation processes. In addition, Public-Private-People Partnerships (PPPPs) at the local level are particularly important for addressing the financial, technical and human resource gaps of local governments and more effectively re-structuring the local economy in response to COVID-19.

To strengthen local governance, effective national-to-local governance for policy coordination, better coordinated resource mobilization and allocation at the local level, and technical and financial support between national and local and among local authorities are instrumental in forging resilient and inclusive recovery. For this, local governments need to be equipped with upgraded knowledge and skills to ensure institutional effectiveness and foster stakeholder engagement locally as well as the information sharing and capacity development to address far-reaching challenges of COVID-19 and new demands of the post-COVID-19 era.

Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic has become the new driver for digital transformation. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, digital technologies have enabled governments to connect with people and to continue to deliver services online and played a central role for communication, leadership and collaboration between policy makers and society.³ Leveraging ICTs and digital government, particularly AI, big data analytics, and robotics, has become critical for both government and non-government sectors. Digitalization has become the heart of the response to COVID-19 and preparation for the post-COVID-19 era with an exponential demand for digital services and so-called “non-contact industries”. While many countries have started to review national digital strategies or propose new digital roadmaps or initiatives for revitalizing the economy and improving national competitiveness, it is particularly crucial to accelerate digital transformation at the local level for resilient, sustainable and inclusive recovery and the post-COVID-19 era.

Based on innovative country practices, important measures in accelerating local digital transformation could include: i) setting effective digital strategies at the local level, in alignment with the national digital transformation strategies/initiatives, ii) forging collaboration between local government and other local stakeholders, including IT businesses, the private sector and academia, to address the technical and financial gaps of local government, and iii) creating a digital ecosystem, particularly for improving local online service delivery and restoring the local economy. At the same time, it is also imperative to develop a digital inclusion policy to ensure that all citizens can enjoy the benefits from digital technologies without being discriminated or excluded from the digital economy and society. Accelerating local digital transformation in an

³ UN DESA (2020). Compendium of Digital Government Initiatives in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

effective, resilient and inclusive manner requires enhanced digital capacities and mindset change of local government officials.

Against this background, the UN Project Office on Governance (UNPOG), an integral part of the Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) of UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), and the Korea Research Institute for Local Administration (KRILA) are co-organizing a Forum on “**Strengthening Public Governance and Accelerating Digital Transformation of Local Government for Emergency Response and Revitalization of Local Economy in the Post-COVID-19 Era**”. The objective of this Forum is to share lessons learned and exchange good practices in strengthening public governance and leveraging ICTs and digital government for digital transformation in response to the COVID 19 pandemic and in preparation for post-COVID-19 era. The Forum will be held virtually.

Objectives

- I. Discuss how to strengthen public governance and accelerate digital transformation at the local level for resilient, sustainable and inclusive emergency response and post-COVID-19 era;
- II. Exchange innovative approaches, strategies and experiences and promote peer-to-peer learning among different countries and stakeholders;
- III. Provide policy recommendations for strengthening local governance and accelerating local digital transformation for recovery and post-COVID-19 era; and
- IV. Facilitate local partnership among participants.

Format, Structure, and Methodology

The virtual Forum is composed of two thematic Sessions. Each Session is composed of thematic presentations, panel discussions, and an interactive Q&A discussion.

The event will be organized using video conferencing tools such as Zoom. English-Korean simultaneous interpretation will be provided.

Thematic Focus

Session 1: Strengthening Public Governance of Local Government (KRILA)

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed significant threats to the social and economic well-being of all people. The crisis is having a far-reaching impact on local governance in every part of the world. Specifically, the pandemic has a profound impact on local public health services and local economies and exacerbates pre-existing social problems, with worsening inequality.

Local governments are at the forefront of the COVID-19 response. The pandemic calls for concerted responses from governments at all levels, with a focus on integrated planning and disaster mitigation responses by the local government.

This pandemic highlights the urgent need of strengthening local governance to address the shocks in economic, financial and social spheres. Local government remains at the center of COVID-19 response and sustainable post-COVID-19 recovery, including containing the spread of the virus, disaster preparedness, service delivery, ensuring infrastructure, and mobilizing human and financial resources and intergovernmental coordination.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also wreaked havoc on the economy with prolonged economic difficulties in the years ahead. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the Korean economy, for example, is experiencing an unprecedented contraction, which is unfolding in completely different ways from past economic crises, therefore requiring different policy measures.

This Session aims to contribute to sharing the challenges, strategies, actions, and effective public governance in combatting COVID-19 at the local level of government in Korea as well as other countries. It covers various aspects of responses and mitigation measures implemented by local governments.

Session 2: Accelerating Digital Transformation of Local Government (UN DESA/DPIDG/UNPOG)

ICT and digital technologies have been playing a pivotal role in COVID-19 response. Swift and assertive digital efforts empowered and enabled local authorities to address the impact of COVID-19 at frontline, by leveraging ICT and digital technologies, especially the digital government platform, for facilitating social distancing and quarantine measures, delivering essential public services to citizens on the ground and keeping people informed and engaged. Cities have particularly harnessed their smart city infrastructure to rapidly respond to the pandemic by utilizing more advanced technologies, especially with real-time data and information which allowed local government officials to make evidence-based decisions and early crisis predictions and adjust the response strategies accordingly.

Fully acknowledging such a significant role of digital technologies and digital government for addressing COVID-19, many countries have started to review and further advance their digital government strategies in the context of pursuing a sustainable and resilient recovery in the post-COVID-19 era. Some countries are setting new digital government strategies for revitalizing the economy in the post-COVID-19 era, e.g., the Digital New Deal initiative of the Republic of Korea. Specifically, the central role of cities and local governments in responding to the needs of the citizens with innovative digital platforms, tools, apps and smart technologies during the pandemic has further accelerated the advancement of the digital transformation of local governments. To revitalize the local economy and better prepare for non-contact-based industries in the post-COVID-19 era, such as distant education, telemedicine and working from home, local governments are expected to further expand digital infrastructure by developing AI, big data, cloud computing, and 5G and transform the way they work and promote innovations and the digital economy by creating new digital ecosystems.

The objective of this Session is to examine the role of digital technologies and digital government for emergency response and revitalization of the local economy in the post-COVID-19 era and discuss how to accelerate digital transformation at the local level for resilience, sustainable and inclusive COVID-19 response and post-COVID-19 era.

Specifically, the Session will address diverse approaches, strategies and experiences for: i) setting local digital transformation strategy, including smart city initiatives, particularly in coordination with national government; ii) fostering partnership with other stakeholders, especially the private sector and people; iii) upgrading skills and knowledge of local government officials for digital transformation; and vi) bridging the digital divide and improving ICT infrastructure and connectivity, especially mobile broadband in rural areas.

Target Audience

The target audience of the Forum includes government officials, from both national and local government agencies, responsible for coordinating and leading efforts to address the challenges of COVID-19 and foster digital transformation. The Forum also intends to involve research institutes and think tanks, academia, civil society organizations, the private sector, and regional/international organizations engaged in exploring innovative solutions for the COVID-19 crisis.

Co-organizers

UN DESA holds up the development pillar of the UN Secretariat and works to promote the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. UN DESA promotes capacity development as a link between global and regional processes and development at the country level. The mandate of DPIDG is to assist the Member States in fostering effective, efficient, transparent, accountable, innovative and citizen cent e red public governance, administration and services for sustainable development. United Nations Project Office on Governance (UNPOG), as an integral part of UN DESA/DPIDG, is mandated to address the strengthening of the capacities of public administration in Asia and the Pacific and Eastern Africa to translate the SDGs and other internationally agreed goals into institutional arrangements, strategies and programmes at country level.

KRILA is the cornerstone of local autonomy and decentralization in Korea. It carries out research projects that lead the local autonomous development such as local autonomy and policy, revitalization of local economy and development of future regions. KRILA also provides a long-term viable vision for local autonomy and autonomous decentralization and generous support for the major challenges of local administration.

Agenda (Korea Time, GMT+9)

Opening Session	
2:00-2:15 PM (15 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderator: Mr. Du-sub Shin, Director General for Planning and Coordination, KRILA • Opening Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Bokyun Shim, Head of United Nations Project Office on Governance (UNPOG), DPIDG/UN DESA (3 mins) - Mr. Iljae Kim, President, Korea Research Institute for Local Administration (KRILA) (3 mins) • Keynote Speech <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Kim Soon Eun, Chairperson, Presidential Committee on Autonomy and Decentralization, Republic of Korea (8 mins)
Session 1: Strengthening Public Governance of Local Government (KRILA)	
2:15-3:15 PM (60 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderator: Prof. Pan Suk Kim, Yonsei University and the International Civil Service Commission • Presentation 1: Prof. Sabine Kuhlmann, Chair, Political Science, Public Administration and Organization, University of Potsdam (15 mins) • Presentation 2: Prof. Myung Jae Moon, Dean, College of Social Sciences, Yonsei University (15 mins) • Discussant 1: Ms. Erna Irawati, Head of the Center for Government Official's Program and Policy Competency, Lecturer at the School of Administration, National Institute of Public Administration, Indonesia (5 mins) • Discussant 2: Mr. HyeonUk Bak, Associate Research Fellow, KRILA (5 mins) • Q&A Discussion (20 mins)
Session 2: Accelerating Digital Transformation of Local Government (UN DESA/DPIDG/ UNPOG)	
3:15-4:15 PM (60 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderator: Ms. Mi Kyoung Park, Governance and Public Administration Officer, UNPOG/DPIDG/UN DESA

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation 1: Mr. Deniz Susar, Governance and Public Administration Officer, Digital Government Branch, DPIDG/UN DESA (8 mins) • Presentation 2: Mr. Sean Audain, City Innovation Lead, Wellington City Council (8 mins) • Presentation 3: Dr. Thavisak Manodham, Director General of E-Government Center, Ministry of Technology and Communications, Lao PDR (8 mins) • Presentation 4: Ms. Aida C. Yuvienco, Director, Department of Information and Communications Technology, Philippines (8 mins) • Discussant: Dr. Zaki B. Khoury, Senior Digital Development Specialist, Digital Development Global Practice, The World Bank (8 mins) • Q&A Discussion (20 mins)
Closing	
<p>4:15-4:30 PM (15 mins)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closing Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Iljae Kim, President, Korea Research Institute for Local Administration (KRILA) (3 mins) - Mr. Bokyun Shim, Head of United Nations Project Office on Governance (UNPOG), DPIDG/UN DESA (3 mins)

Contact

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