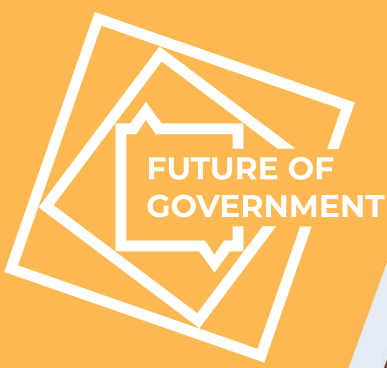


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# THE FUTURE OF GOVERNMENT: A CALL TO ACTION



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1818 H Street NW  
Washington DC 20433  
Telephone: 202-473-1000  
Internet: [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)

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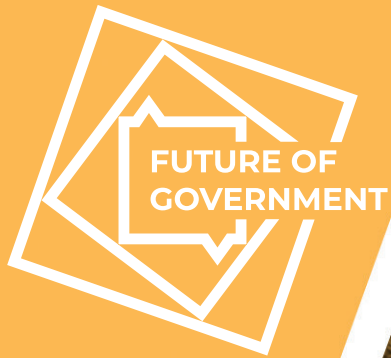
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# A CALL TO ACTION



## WHY NOW?

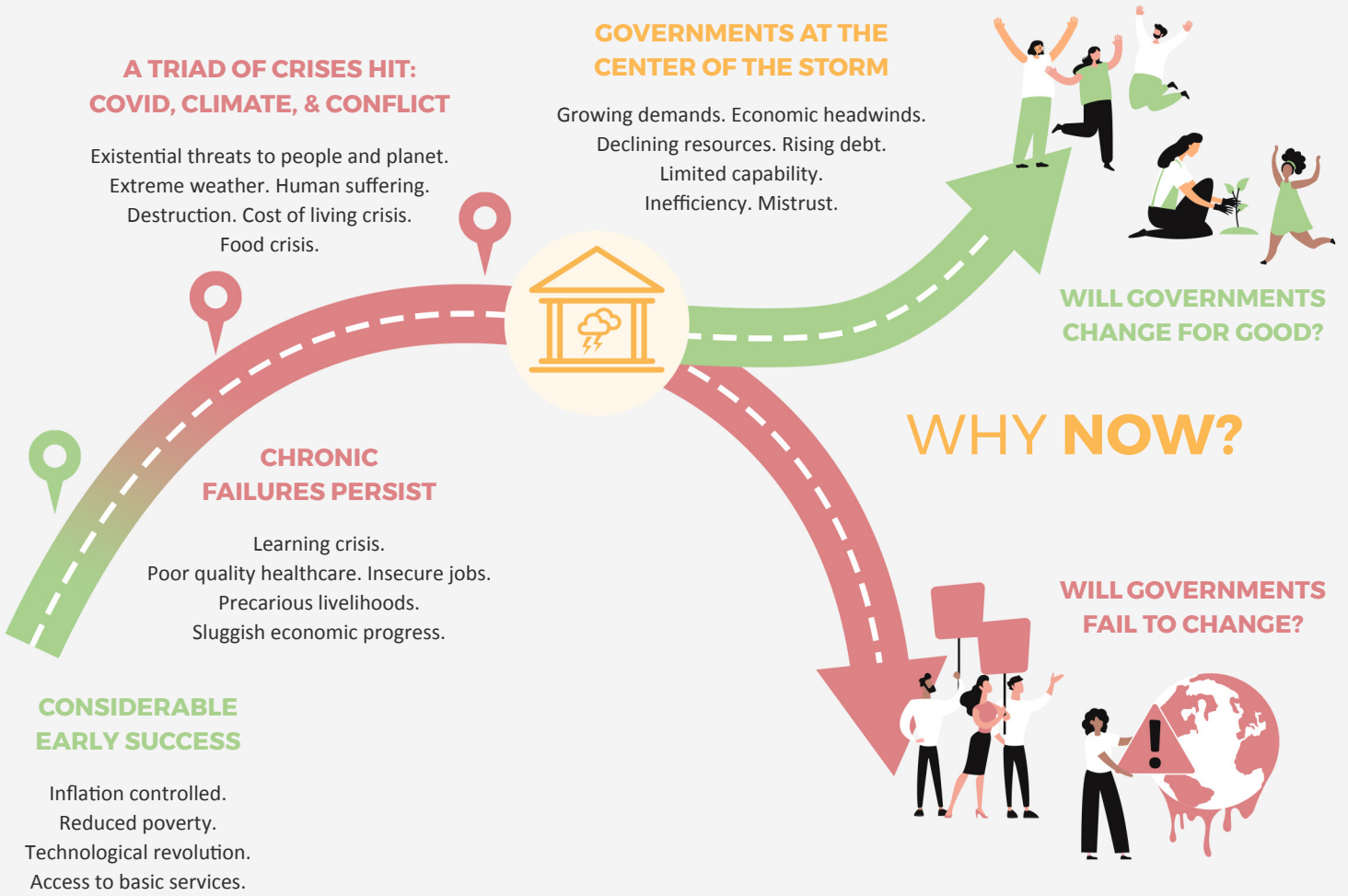
**Globally, we face an unprecedented triad of crises:** COVID-19 with its continued health, economic, and fiscal challenges; climate change with its potentially existential threat to the planet; and conflict, with its immense human suffering and destruction.

**The world is at an inflection point.** We are presented with two stark visions for our collective future:

- The first builds on the progress that governments made early in the 21st century to create a future where people across the world are more secure in their livelihoods, prosperity is shared by many, poverty is in decline, our planet's natural resources are used sustainably, and global warming is reversed.
- The alternative picture is a future that will involve increased uncertainty, inequality, poverty and suffering exacerbated by global health challenges, climate change, and conflict.

**This century, prior to these crises, governments across the world made significant contributions to the progress of development.** By and large, governments helped to control inflation, reduced extreme poverty, enabled a technological revolution in mobile telephony, and increased access to basic services.

# THE WORLD IS AT AN INFLECTION POINT



## Most challenges are rooted in problems of governance

**Yet, governments in many parts of the world remain challenged to meet the basic needs of their citizens and face unresolved governance problems.** They continued to struggle to improve the quality of services, create conditions for improved security of jobs and livelihoods of their citizens, and to build equity and social cohesion. Children are more often than not attending school, but often don't learn the basics, accessing a government health clinic is often challenged by distance, opening hours and absenteeism, and healthcare providers often fail to diagnose and treat common illnesses. While social protection schemes have been rolled out around the globe, they are often insufficient to reach everyone, so peoples' livelihoods are often precarious and without a safety net. High levels of corruption and organized crime remain unsolved issues in many countries. Governments are often mistrusted. Despite years of economic progress, in 2020, most people lived in one of the 76 countries where their government spent less than \$3.44 per capita per day, whilst the richest countries spend more than \$60 a day.

**Most of these challenges are rooted in problems of governance.** Service providers and regulators are not given the tools and resources they need to deliver and citizens are unable to hold service providers accountable. These problems pre-date the onset of COVID-19 and climate change, yet they remain intransigent problems to many nations, and continue to be challenges for governments.

**The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the need to deliver climate change commitments, and the rise in conflicts has amplified the need for more effective government, from the central to the local level.** Government agencies, including local authorities, state-owned enterprises, are taking on new responsibilities for policy making, regulation and service delivery; the pandemic in particular was a shock that required governments to respond with agility – moving services online, creating homebased work environments for civil servants and developing national and local policy in coordinated ways to minimize the health and loss of livelihoods impact. The pandemic caused a health shock that also required governments to step up their regulation of society to introduce and enforce physical distancing as one of the leading remedies to prevent transmission, leading to a culture shock in many places where civil liberties and private freedoms were considered to be secondary to the need for collective action for the greater good. The economic shock that ensued also required a rapid expansion of state assistance, both for citizens and, in many cases, enterprises. The pandemic has also generated a revenue shock, and has forced governments to spend, ramping up their debt. People around the world are feeling the impact of COVID-19, climate change, and conflicts, which adds further strain on the social contract.

## GOVERNMENT OF THE PAST

Blind to context • Uncertainty • Mistrust • Elitism  
Resource depletion • Inflexible • Overreach • Corrupt  
Ignores global warming • Works in Silos • Avoids change  
Blames others • Inefficiency and waste • Delivery failure  
Broken promises • Stifles innovation



## GOVERNMENT OF THE FUTURE

Adapts • Inspires • Reimagines roles • Trusted  
Unlocks capability • Influences • Innovates  
Productive • Deliberate choices • Clear direction  
Responds to demands • Consults and collaborates  
Alive to context • Prepared for crises • Focus  
Seeks opportunities • Communicates • Delivers



**FROM THE  
GOVERNMENT  
OF THE PAST TO  
THE GOVERNMENT  
OF THE FUTURE**

**By re-imagining themselves now and undertaking a more collaborative approach to determining and delivering development action in the future, we believe that governments can create new opportunities and change for good.** One thing is clear: the actions that governments take in the months and years ahead will play a critical role in determining which vision of the future will be realized.

**All countries have a government. All governments are different.** They have different characteristics and different histories. They are structured differently and made up of different bodies, including central government, local governments, ministries, departments, agencies, and state-owned enterprises. These bodies may work across functions or within specific sectors. Responsibility will be distributed differently between central government, regional and local government. They are made up of different mixes of people: presidents, ministers, mayors, central and local bureaucrats, and workers at the frontline – from soldiers to teachers, from judges to nurses. Just as we urge governments to rethink how they function, we ask those involved whether inside or outside government to think deliberately about the different dimensions of government: how power is distributed; the interests of leaders; the incentives they work under; how their organizations came about; and the resources available to those with power.

**Over the course of history, governments have demonstrated many positive traits as well as some failings, which need to be learned from and build upon.** In changing for the better, it is important that governments recognize and understand past failures and opportunities for positive change. Similarly, while local influencers and international actors (including the World Bank) can take credit for supporting earlier successes, they should also acknowledge they have contributed to the failures as well and take time to learn from those errors.

**We have created a vision of the Government of the Future which contrasts with what we know about the Government of the Past.** While the characterizations are extremely general, they are likely to resonate with citizens across the world:

- We know that the **Governments of the Past** can be blind to context, leave a history of broken promises, lurch from crisis to crisis, pander to and enrich elites, resist change, and often be mistrusted.
- By contrast, the **Government of the Future** has a clear vision of its role and is responsive to the demands of citizens; it can influence and deliver; it is innovative, productive, trusted, and prepared for crises.

**We set out contrasting pictures of the past and the future as a tool to stimulate thought and debate in particular country contexts.** Many of the failings of the Government of the Past are likely to persist, and many governments have displayed behavior consistent with the Government of the Future. The intention here is to highlight the types of behavior that governments need to leave in the past and put forward the types of behavior governments could consider adopting in the future.

**As every country and its government are different, the Government of the Future will look different from country to country, in each sector, and at each level.** There is no one-size-fits-all solution. Each challenge faced by government is complex and governments need to simultaneously solve multiple challenges and meet citizen demand in their own way.

**Within and outside every government in every country are people who can make a difference and change their government for good. It is now time for such people to take action.**

## REIMAGINING GOVERNMENT

**So, how can governments start to reimagine themselves?** The Future of Government Initiative set out a framework for reimaging government that is intended to cut through the complexity by proposing a few simple actions and posing some key questions that stakeholders in and out of government can collectively answer. The purpose is not to add complexity or to be prescriptive, but to set out a flexible, iterative process that can enable governments to navigate the complexity of governing by focusing on a limited number of challenges and issues at any one time, identifying trade-offs and making deliberate choices, adjusting and fine-tuning as needed. Most importantly, we call for them to take action.

**No single government leader or institution can solve all the challenges faced by government and meet all its demands and expectations.** The process of revitalizing government can and needs to be performed at different levels and in different spaces – by the center of government, and by local governments, by groups of citizens working with government and by private sector leaders, by academics and students, and anyone who sees the need for change. Governments should not try to maximize output on their own, but envisage their capabilities in conjunction with what the private sector and communities can contribute to advancing the many pressing challenges that people and their societies face.

**The Future of Government report and supporting website sets out this framework in depth.** The process is broken down through a series of steps and questions. This is to help guide governments and their supporters through the processes of transforming how their government functions and what steps to take first.

## RENEWING THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

**The process of reimaging government starts with the social contract between government and citizens.** Governments face changing and growing demands and expectations from their citizens. There is an opportunity to reexamine what governments do for their citizens, and what citizens do for their governments.

**For a renewed social contract to be sustainable and effective, it needs to be supported by an elite bargain.** Power, authority, and resources that enable governments to function are typically concentrated in elites, not the broader citizenry, and therefore the deals reached by elites are critical for governments to deliver on the social contract. For elite bargains to be developmental, it is critical that elites commit to outcomes that benefit the broader society and not just themselves.

**There are four key questions that governments can ask themselves:** What is the role of government? How can government deliver? How can government be more productive? How can government build trust?

# RENEWING THE SOCIAL CONTRACT



## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT?

Governments avoid trying to maximize what they can deliver on their own, and instead need to reimagine their roles, taking into account their own capability and context. They do not always focus on provision solely, but look to their roles in regulation, leadership and coordination. They consider how local and central governments, the private sector, communities and all genders can work together to achieve common objectives that respond to the needs of citizens.



## HOW CAN GOVERNMENT BE MORE PRODUCTIVE?

Governments do more with less and shun inefficiency and waste. Governments identify and understand and confront the causes of inefficiency, identify solutions, be adaptive and exploiting new technology. In doing so, they drive public and private sector productivity whether in regulation, the workforce, in procurement or in the allocation and use of public finances.



## HOW CAN GOVERNMENT BUILD TRUST?

Governments at many levels, and in many spaces have lost the trust of their citizens. Governments urgently start work to regain and retain trust by involving, responding to and being accountable to citizens in decisions and delivery; by communicating well; by taking advantage of opportunities that technology presents; by achieving what they commit to; and being consistent in regulation & delivery.



## HOW CAN GOVERNMENT DELIVER?

Governments avoid confusing their own interests with those of citizens' and instead, with a clear focus on the needs of the citizen, rethink how they deliver and who drives, enables, and ensures delivery – whether through regulation or provision. They unlock and build new capability, collaborate and ensures quality and equity in what is delivered.

### Reach a developmental bargain with elites that benefits society

#### AN URGENT JOURNEY TO DELIVER CHANGE

**We urge Governments to embark on an urgent journey to deliver change.** This will involve flexible, iterative change processes to set and achieve policy objectives and to solve persistent practical problems. The aim is to enable governments to navigate the complexity of governing by focusing on a limited number of challenges and issues at any one time, identifying trade-offs and making deliberate choices, and then taking action and making adjustments as needed in a complex and uncertain world. Change cannot be achieved through one comprehensive policy process, it requires multiple processes happening at different levels, in different sectors simultaneously.

**This first step involves seeking, creating, and taking advantage of opportunities for change.** This has three dimensions: building coalitions and teams; innovating and using technology; and taking advantage of crisis and changing circumstances.

**Once the opportunity for change has been created, governments need to embark on the journey of change.** This involves: setting the destination and plotting pathways, and jointly agree the route; and taking steps, looking, learning and adjusting the route.

## TAKING AN URGENT JOURNEY



### TAKE STEPS, LOOK AND LEARN, AND ADJUST THE ROUTE

Individuals and institutions in government break out from their institutional silos, and take deliberate coordinated steps toward their destinations jointly with the key stakeholders involved; they take calculated risks, learn from progress and missteps along the way, and be flexible and adjusting their route as they progress.



### SET THE DESTINATION, PLOT PATHWAYS, AND JOINTLY AGREE THE ROUTE

Instead of trying to address everything at once, governments prioritize where to act, by distinguishing their citizens' needs from wants and distinguishing critical government failures from weaknesses, and then understanding the source of these needs and causes of these failures.

Governments stop over-promising and under-delivering and instead are selective, yet ambitious; they are realistic in what they aim to achieve and responsive to the growing demands they face, making deliberate choices about what they can and cannot achieve.

Governments resist the replication of "best practice" from wealthy countries and develop local solutions to local problems that are tailored to local context and capability and take into account the power, interests and incentives of those involved.



## Plot Pathways and Take Steps towards a Shared Destination



### COALITIONS AND TEAMS

Governments avoid making decisions unilaterally, and instead proactively consult and build coalitions in support of progress. Securing the agreement of critical interests, including communities and elites will enable progress by using and aligning informal processes for decision-making with formal ones.



### INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Technology is no panacea, and governments avoid automating problems and harness its potential to provide new ways to solve or leapfrog old challenges. Innovation does not mean using the latest technology. Using available technology and capacity innovatively can reduce costs, improve services or underpin new, disruptive interventions. It provides new ways to deliver learning inside and outside schools. It can enable more effective citizen participation and communication with citizens.

### CRISIS

With crisis and changing circumstances comes opportunities for government to change for good and tackle these and the intransigent failures of governments that preceded them.



## Seek, create and take advantage of opportunities for change

**TAKE THE  
FIRST STEP NOW**

**This is an urgent call to action. The time to reimagine government is now.** With crisis comes opportunity; an opportunity for governments to change for good and tackle problems they have long neglected as well as those that are new.

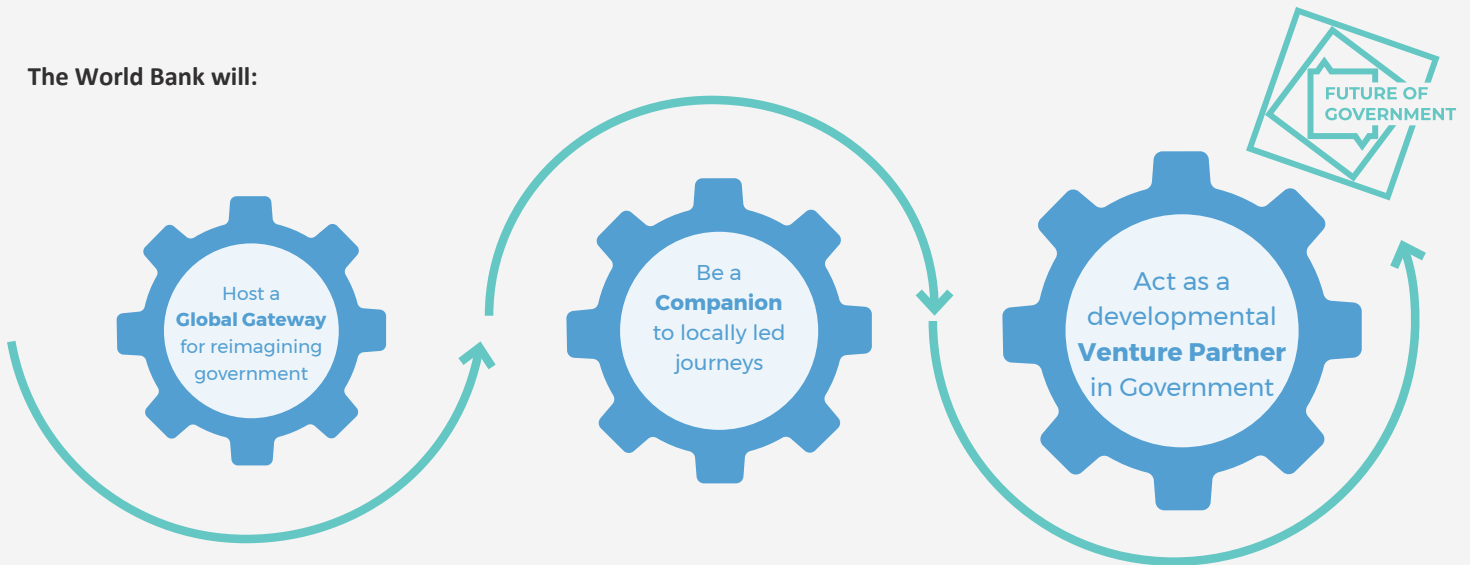
**History has shown us that governments can successfully meet the challenges they face, no matter how severe – and change for good.** There are people in every country and in every government who can and do use the power, influence and authority they have, within and outside formal structures, to deliver changes in government. Opportunities abound from new technologies and disruptive innovations, to changing circumstances, leveraging teams and coalitions and harnessing authority for good. Change is possible, even in the most challenging contexts. Governments must and will reinvent themselves again to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

**Reimagining government involves governments governing differently.** Regardless of the political system and distribution of power, the government failures of the past indicate that many of these failings are rooted in problems of governance. We suggest that governments identify behavior which has contributed to past persistent failures and confine it to the past; and consider changing behavior in ways which addresses those failures and enables them to confront new and critical challenges, to become the Government of the Future. Setting a tone of consultation that comes from the top can be important, with leadership that is focused on identifying meaningful goals that resonate with citizens and prioritizing what realistically can be achieved. A key feature in ensuring realistic, achievable goals, is to bear in mind fiscal realities, available capability and context. Setting a different tone is key to building trust and raising resources for government to play its role. Regardless of the level or sector in focus, governments will need to set their own destinations and plot their own pathways. To pursue of change, a broad range of different coalitions and teams will need to be formed.

**Individuals and institutions outside government might consider how they could change behavior so that they can support the change in approach.** To do so they need to understand how they may have contributed to governments' challenges in the past. There is clearly a role for international partners, including the World Bank, to play in this process to support and strengthen these more inclusive locally led processes. Through The Future of Government initiative the World Bank plans to enable this in three ways:

## THE FUTURE OF GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE

The World Bank will:



**Disruptive Debates** – setting out fresh perspective on the future of government

**Government Trends** - putting countries in context, presenting data on delivery, roles, resources, capability, productivity, trust.

**Country Cases** - in reimagining government and renewing the social contract

**Navigation Tools** - for collaborative country journeys and the conundrums and choices they may face.

**Convening conversations and encouraging change**, supporting processes in different spaces in different countries.

Working with **country leaders, teams and coalitions** to reach agreement on how to change government for good and take steps along the way.

Playing the role of a **broker, facilitator and coach**.

**Partnering with governments by finding, fostering, and financing** local developmental bargains reached through collaborative processes, locally disruptive innovations and the joint steps involved in implementation.

Taking a portfolio approach to risk within and across engagements, acknowledging that **many will fail**, but with failure comes opportunity to learn and adapt.

### Enabling governments to reimagine themselves for good

**Governments can take the first steps by starting with a conversation.** The entry points for taking action are multiple and varied. They will exist at the center of government, at local government, across sectors, or in a particular sector. It could involve convening a group of stakeholders in the education sector to tackle a learning crisis in schools. It could involve convening communities and local governments to discuss how livelihoods in rural and urban areas can be made secure. It could involve initiating conversations across rival communities. It could also involve a leader at the center of a national government, or a local government convening their executive to reset and agree a handful of priority issues for that government to tackle as a whole. Then, together reexamine the social contract, understand the situation at hand, identify the critical issues to focus on, plot pathways, agree the route and act. The initial conversation that leads to action need not take months, it can take place over a few days, and be revisited again and again. Whilst change can be rapid, the teams that drive change and the coalitions which support it need to be aware that change is more often incremental, takes time, and requires persistence and determination to deliver. Yet change is possible all the same.

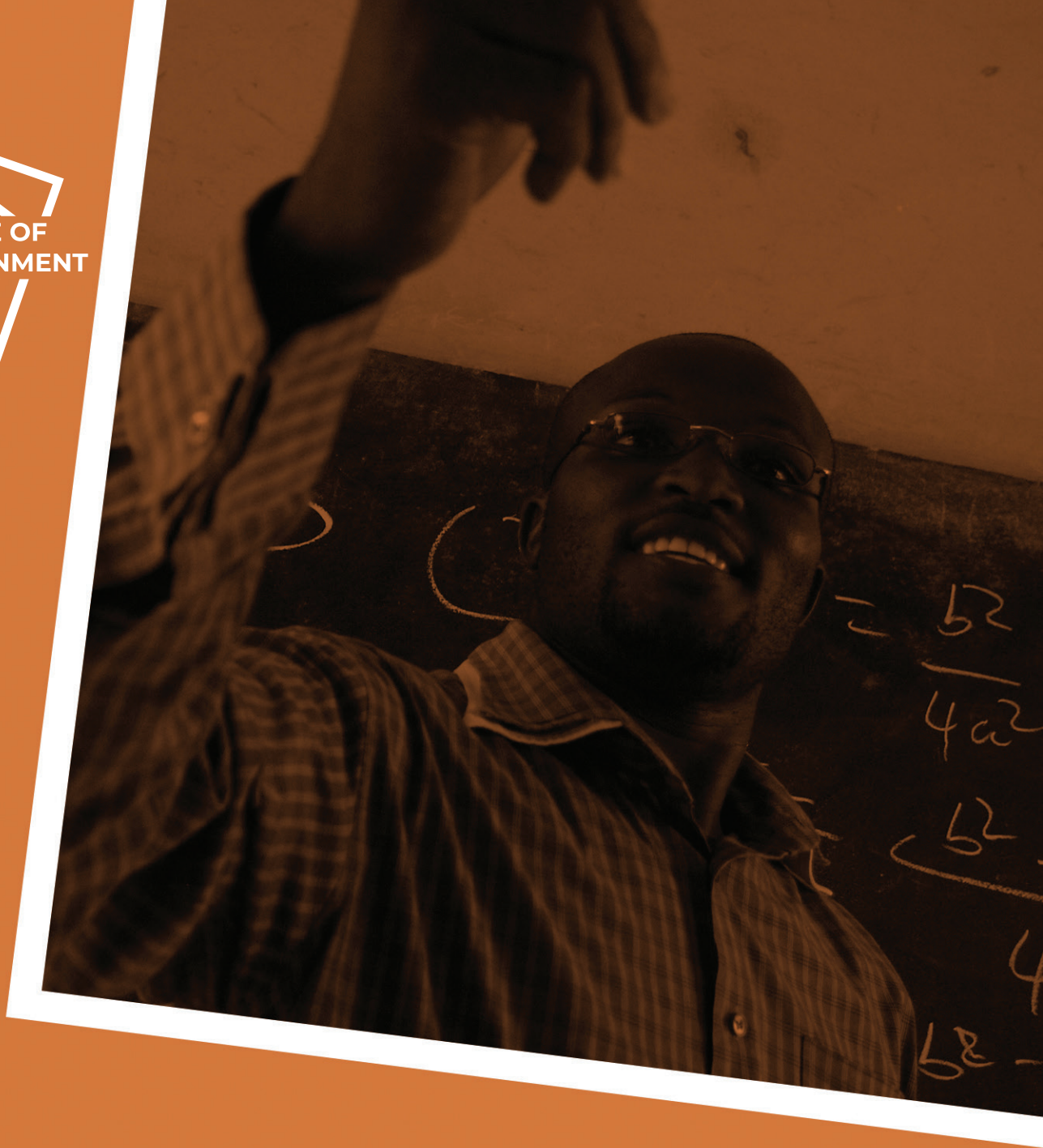
## TAKE THE FIRST STEP NOW



## Start a conversation

**The journey starts with individuals, whether inside or outside government.** We ask you, the readers of this call to action, to reflect on where your government is, your role in the Government of the Past and your potential role in the Government of the Future, and how you can change behavior to support changing government for good. What part you can play in making this collective journey happen? With whom do you share interests? Whom can you influence? Can you start building a coalition for change? With whom could you have a conversation?

**We ask you to have that conversation today and take the first step of the journey now.**



# RENEWING THE SOCIAL CONTRACT FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY





## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT?

### BACK TO THE FUTURE

The original concept of the role of government has been that of guarantor of public safety and provider of order. A government must monopolize the legitimate use of force and to set and enforce the laws that govern society, allowing it to raise resources, regulate markets and keep a degree of social cohesion. Governments were also established to improve societies' welfare by addressing market failures and the externalities that cause them through regulation. The dominant way in which governments intervene and spend public resources is to provide citizens with goods and services; thereby, along with providing security, establishing government legitimacy.

Governments can coordinate, cajole, regulate, inform, and coerce, as well as strictly provide. As governments generally need assistance from citizens and non-state actors to create needed change, they use these tools stimulate private sector and community action.

### CONUNDRUMS AND CHOICES

Expectations and capability
Provider, regulator, and leader
Central and local
Society and elites

### GOVERNMENT OF THE PAST

... continues to be limited in what it can achieve by focusing on provision only, maximizing its role; and fails to take advantage of the capabilities of communities and the private sector to help meet its objectives.



### GOVERNMENT OF THE FUTURE

... reimagines its roles in provision, regulation, leadership, and coordination based on its capability, with the expectation to maximize what the public sector, the private sector, and communities can contribute together to achieve its objectives.



As the **Government of the Future** reimagines its role, it understands that its own capabilities limit the role it can play, and that there may be a significant gap between what can be accomplished and the expectations of citizens. The Government of the Future manages these expectations instead of exaggerating the results it can achieve when setting destinations.

The Government of the Future limits its role in provision to the critical needs of the population and not the wants of the few, despite the trend for governments to assume increasing roles. Given the limitation of its own capacity as a provider, it proactively explores how government can influence and unlock the capacity and resources of the private sector, civil society, and communities through its role as regulator, leader, influencer and coordinator.



# HOW CAN GOVERNMENT DELIVER?

## BACK TO THE FUTURE

This century, governments have expanded what they deliver and what they regulate, but this expansion – and often a lack of genuine intent – has challenged their ability to deliver quality services. Recent crises have driven innovation and put a spotlight on governments’ varying abilities and approaches to delivery. Governments have been forced to improvise in the face of unexpected demands.

## CONUNDRUMS AND CHOICES

- Customer’s or bureaucrat’s perspective
- Do-it-yourself or work with others:
  - Using public sector or private sector capability and resources
  - Managing staff or managing contractors
  - Buy in from non-state actors or adapting non-state ideas
- Enforcing or enforceable regulation
- High tech and high touch
- Existing and future capability

## GOVERNMENT OF THE PAST

... continues to look inwards, not serving its own citizens’ interests, expanding government rather than improving delivery of services and regulation. It loses sight of the needs of citizens and the quality of delivery stagnates while the bureaucracy expands. Motivated by power and bureaucratic interests.



## GOVERNMENT OF THE FUTURE

... with a clear focus on the objective and the citizen, rethinks how it delivers and who drives, enables, and ensures delivery. It unlocks and builds new capability, while it collaborates and ensures quality in what it delivered.



**The Government of the Future** will continually drive to improve delivery through existing and new government roles, keeping a clear focus on its customers. Consultation with the citizen, communities and firms keeps a governments’ focus on their needs, rather the government acting as though it knows best. This culture is instilled at every level of government.

The Government of the Future identifies delivery challenges and prioritizes them based on their impact and complexity to address. It investigates the underlying causes of these challenges and works toward collective solutions, both across and within sectors.



# HOW CAN GOVERNMENT BE MORE PRODUCTIVE?

## BACK TO THE FUTURE

Governments are universally facing constraints to their resources amid growing demands and are constantly trying to achieve more within those constraints. To be successful, they must address persistent inefficiencies in the use of public and private resources, in the workforce, in procurement, and in the deployment and use of public finances. In addition, they must take on the corruption that is prevalent in all governments and societies.

What is government productivity? While a difficult concept, it essentially is what government delivers relative to the resources it deploys. The difficulty of determining whether a government or a program is productive comes in part from challenges in measuring and putting a price on what it delivers. The objectives and outputs of government are not always tangible, involve externalities and are in areas where there is often no market price.

## CONUNDRUMS AND CHOICES

- Mission critical or mission creep
- Individual and collective action
- Measuring and motivating
- Specialists and generalists
- Incentives and control
- Enforce existing rules and changing mindsets
- Automating problems and technology solutions

## GOVERNMENT OF THE PAST

... continues to allow inefficiency, waste, and corruption; it maintains barriers to the efficiencies of the private sector; combined, this paralyzes the government's potential to deliver against their objectives; it gives in to incentives to not change or question how government does things.



## GOVERNMENT OF THE FUTURE

... identifies and understands why inefficiency exists and drives public and private sector productivity whether in regulation, the workforce, in procurement or in the allocation of public finances by confronting the cause of inefficiency, being adaptive, and exploiting new technology.



**The Government of the Future** identifies areas where there are inefficiencies, and it prioritizes the savings on the basis of the degree to which they affect delivery and the savings addressing them could generate.

It makes effort understands why inefficiencies exist including - the technical, political and institutional reasons. It identifies the stakeholders involved, their motivation, their power, and the resources they influence.

Based on these understandings, it develops and implements practical solutions that address the causes of inefficiency and deliver sustainable improvements in value for money and delivery.



# HOW CAN GOVERNMENTS BUILD TRUST?

## BACK TO THE FUTURE

Trust is the fabric that holds society together and allows governments to operate. It guides the development of rules and laws that are generally accepted and understood by most of society. In recent decades, trust in well-established public institutions and governments has been declining, as some citizens feel governments don't have their 'best interests at heart' and are more dominated by elite interests.

A variety of factors, including history and culture, determine what alternative institutions people choose to trust when their belief in government is shaken. There are several competing networks of trust living within the same country. Trust within government and between government agencies, locations and levels is often strained, yet overcoming distrust is critical for efficient and effective government operations.

## CONUNDRUMS AND CHOICES

- Messenger and the message
- Transparency and communication
- Participation, responsiveness and consistency
- Short-term popularity and long-term trust
- Blaming or taking responsibility

## GOVERNMENT OF THE PAST

... is mistrusted as a result of its unrealistic promises; its failure to involve citizens in decision-making captured by elites; its failure to communicate in the era of social media; and ultimately, its lack of consistency in regulation and delivery of services.



## GOVERNMENT OF THE FUTURE

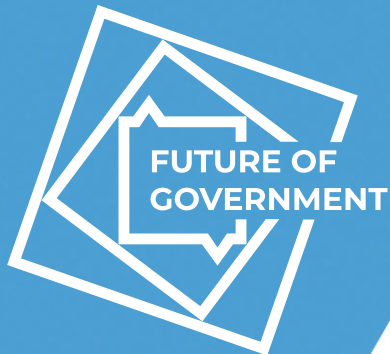
... gains and retains trust by involving, responding to and being accountable to citizens in decisions and delivery; by communicating well; by taking advantage of opportunities that technology presents; and by achieving what they commit to and being consistent in regulation and delivery.



**The Government of the Future** understands that the trust of citizens and trust within the government is critical for its ability to achieve its objectives. It assesses and understands where it is trusted and where it is not trusted and what impact this has had in the past, and how it may impact on the future achievement of objectives.

Importantly, it understands the sources of mistrust and who citizens trust and why.

Crucially, the **Government of the Future understands** that to earn trust it must be consistent and fair. It must strive for consistency and equity in the application of regulation and delivery of services and be seen to provide value for money. It is humble, is clear about what it can and cannot achieve, and takes responsibility for failures as well as successes. It prepares for crises, as the quality of their response can have an outsized effect on public trust. Ultimately to earn trust it must deliver.



**AN URGENT JOURNEY  
TO DELIVER  
POSITIVE CHANGE**



# SEEKING AND CREATING CATALYSTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE

## BACK TO THE FUTURE

The 21st Century has witnessed man-made crises, such as climate change and financial instability, and natural crises, such as COVID-19 and tsunamis. Ageing populations, growing inequality and evolving social norms are gradually affecting how societies are structured and how citizens view the social contract. In addition, there have been remarkable innovations in the public sector and great technological leaps in the private sector. With the presence of good leadership, capable teams and broad coalitions, these crises, evolutions and innovations provide opportunities to be catalysts for positive change.

## CONUNDRUMS AND CHOICES

- New Normal and Back to Normal
- Is disruptive innovation cutting edge?
- Technology risk and opportunity
- Where is the space for change?
- Leaders and coalitions
- Authority on paper or in practice?

## GOVERNMENT OF THE PAST

... sits back and waits for change to happen and accepts rather than confronting challenges; resists change and stifles leadership and innovation; encourages institutions and individuals to work in individual silos; ignores changing circumstances.



## GOVERNMENT OF THE FUTURE

... proactively seeks, creates, and takes advantage of opportunities for change by building coalitions with authority to drive change; by using changes in circumstance and crises to promote change; and exploits the potential of technology to solve and leapfrog challenges.



**The Government of the Future** constantly seeks opportunities and catalysts for change. It also deliberately invests in building the space or creating the environment for change. It is ready to take advantage of opportunities to drive change as they appear, whether expected or unexpected, and takes maximum advantage of them.

The Government of the Future encourages and leverages innovation and the use of technology to drive change, understanding technology as an enabler for achieving objectives and solving problems, and where possible even leapfrogging them.

The Government of the Future uses crises and changing circumstances to initiate positive change. It ensures that practices learned during a crisis are not lost as the crisis subsides and avoids returning to business as usual.

The Government of the Future searches for and proactively builds coalitions in support of change and teams to deliver change through enabling conveners and brokers. Those with authority will use this to provide and secure the space for change.



# SETTING THE DESTINATION AND PLOTTING PATHWAYS

## BACK TO THE FUTURE

Although governments have registered many development and economic successes in recent decades, the COVID-19 pandemic has adversely impacted progress, and the gains made early in the century were slowing or halting before the pandemic itself.

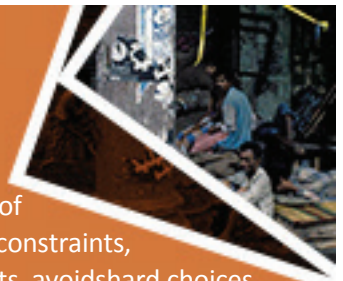
Demands on governments and expectations of what they can do have been growing across the world, while their ability to meet them has not always kept up. Furthermore, new types of demands beside the conventional ones have been emerging related to health pandemics, climate change, and conflict and security. Financial strains limit governments' ability to address demands both new and old, creating an expectations gap that is aggravated by an inability to prioritize, communicate, organize, and coordinate their work across agencies. Instead of well-reasoned goals, national plans are often just lists of aspirational objectives.

## CONUNDRUMS AND CHOICES

- The many and the few
- Causes not symptoms
- Immediate or future goals?
- Focus on certainties or crisis risks?
- Few or many goals?
- Feasibility or greater popularity?
- Plans need deals

## GOVERNMENT OF THE PAST

... consistently over-promises and under-delivers, without considering the demands of citizens, or understanding its own context, constraints, and challenges does not consult constituents, avoidshard choices, accommodates elites, imports inappropriate solutions and is ultimately unsuccessful in achieving outcomes which respond to citizens' demands.



## GOVERNMENT OF THE FUTURE

... is ambitious, yet selective and realistic in what it aims to achieve, understands its own context and capability, is responsive to the growing demands it faces. It makes deliberate choices about what it can and cannot achieve and develops local solutions to local problems that are tailored to local context. It secures agreement of critical interests.



**The Governments of the Future** might embark on a three-stage process for plotting feasible pathways to deliver developmental change that can be useful for government policymakers, regulators and providers in different spaces, and those seeking to influence them. The three stages are:

- to identify and prioritize a limited number of critical policy problems from the plethora of demands and challenges it faces, careful to distinguish needs from wants;
- to investigate the policy priorities, understanding the underlying sources of the related needs and the causes of the challenges and the stakeholders involved;
- to set a destination that solves each policy problem and plotting a pathway to reach that destination.



# TAKING STEPS, LOOKING, LEARNING, AND ADJUSTING THE ROUTE

## BACK TO THE FUTURE

Governments are often very productive when it comes to developing policies and plans, but their record is more mixed when it comes to implementing those plans, often behaving inflexibly and being risk averse. Politicians and bureaucrats focus on maximizing the resources and inputs available to them, tending to be hierarchical and divided into silos. They face resistance from those benefitting from the status-quo, and are not always good at learning and adapting, even in situations where they want a clean break from past practices. Although rarely progressing in a linear fashion, change is possible.

## CONUNDRUMS AND CHOICES

- Individual and collective action
- Pre-planned and searching
- Participation, process, and the product
- Steps and leaps
- Flexible or orderly?

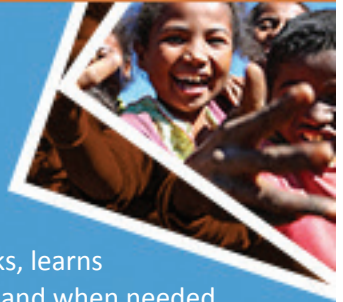
## GOVERNMENT OF THE PAST

... reacts to the situation without a clear sense of direction, uncoordinated and acts in silos, avoids taking risks, continues to look inwards, fails to learn from mistakes and adjust its actions.



## GOVERNMENT OF THE FUTURE

... takes deliberate coordinated steps toward its destination jointly with the key stakeholders involved, takes calculated risks, learns from progress and missteps along the way and when needed, is flexible and adjusts the route.



**The Governments of the Future** will take deliberate steps, with urgency along the route, toward the destination. This involves public sector institutions taking decisions and implementing actions in a collective and coordinated manner consistent with what they are capable of and what is feasible, given the context and environment.

It requires breaking out of institutional silos and forming multi-stakeholder teams to deliver specific changes. It may involve public sector leaders encouraging such joint working by convening actors and empowering teams to deliver

The Government of the Future will look and learn along the way. The journey will not go according to plan – there will be reversals, missteps, and progress in unexpected areas. When necessary – and it will be necessary – government will need to adjust the route. It will adapt, be nimble, and be flexible.





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 @wbg\_gov

 futureofgovernment@worldbank.org