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Tuesday 21 March 2023

Budgets and Bytes

How can digital improve public spending?

Agenda

09:30-09:45 – An emerging digital PFM paradigm?

We will open the day with a presentation on what an emerging digital PFM paradigm might look like, how this contrasts with the prevailing paradigm for using digital solutions in PFM, and what governments and the international community need to change in order to realise its potential.

Chair/Moderator

Cathal Long – Research Fellow, Development and Public Finance, ODI

Panel

Marco Cangiano – Senior Research Associate, ODI

James Stewart – Partner and Lead Technology Specialist, Public Digital

Emily Middleton – Partner for International Development, Public Digital

09:45-11:15 – Session 1: The view from the finance ministry

The range of technology options that finance ministries can use to build their PFM systems is expanding. It is also increasing the potential for interoperability with systems across the rest of government and beyond. This session will focus on how different finance ministries are responding to these opportunities, and how they see their technology architecture evolving to meet contemporary challenges and expectations.

Chair/Moderator

Mark Miller – Director, Development and Public Finance, ODI

Panel

Dr. Yakama Jones – Director of Research and Delivery, Ministry of Finance, Sierra Leone

Hennie Swanepoel – Chief Director (Data Analysis), Budget Office, National Treasury, South Africa

Alok Kumar Verma* – Technical Assistance Advisor, Fiscal Affairs Department, International Monetary Fund

Robert Bauchmüller* – Chief Officer (Strategy), Centre for Excellence in Finance

11:15-11:30 – Coffee/Tea Break

11:30-13:00 – Session 2: The view from beyond the finance ministry

Digital transformation to improve spending on public services often requires working across government siloes using flexible approaches to problem solving. In this session, we will hear from different teams that are developing digital solutions to improve how funds are allocated and used for service delivery. The speakers will discuss the approaches they are taking to improve interoperability and bring more data into public finance decision-making processes, as well as the challenges they are facing.

Chair/Moderator

Tom Hart – Senior Research Fellow, ODI

Panel

Prashanth Chandramouleeswaran – Associate Director, eGov Foundation, India

Sheila Kigozi – Director, ODI Budget Strengthening Initiative, Uganda

Gemini Mtei – Deputy Chief of Party, USAID/PS3+ Project, Abt Associates, Tanzania

13:00-14:00 – Lunch Break

14:00-15:30 – Session 3: Breakouts

A series of breakout sessions will further explore the links between digital transformation, public financial management and service delivery across different domains.

Breakout 1: Pathways towards digitalisation in social protection and public employment services

Reliance on digital approaches for social protection reached new heights during the Covid-19 response, with governments embracing digital delivery mechanisms at an unprecedented scale and speed. This session will take stock of these developments to consider how digitalisation is changing the way social protection is delivered, the results of these initiatives, the enablers of success, and key lessons for countries pursuing different pathways towards digitalisation in the social protection sector.

Chair/Moderator

Hazel Granger – Senior Research Fellow, ODI

Panel

Kostiantyn Koshelenko* – Deputy Minister of Social Policy, Ukraine

Verónica Acha* – Department Lead, Ministry of Social Development and Family, Chile

Richard Chirchir* – Principal Digital Technology Specialist, Development Pathways

Christy Lowe – Senior Research Officer, ODI

Jamele Rigolini* – Lead Economist (Human Development), Europe and Central Asia, World Bank

Breakout 2: Bringing data into public finance decision-making processes in the education sector

Commentators frequently lament the lack of data that leads governments to make inefficient spending decisions. At the same time, governments often collect mountains of data that goes unused. This session will look at the challenges of bringing data from digital solutions in the education sector into public finance decision-making processes, and what governments can do to address them.

Chair/Moderator

Susan Nicolai – Senior Research Fellow, ODI

Panel

Alasdair Fraser – Consultant, ODI

Iman Beoku-Betts* – Country Lead, EdTech Hub, Sierra Leone

Alasdair Mackintosh – Education Economist, Fab Inc.

Breakout 3: Using real-time indicators for economic decision making

Real-time indicators stand out among recent digital innovations, notably helping governments navigate uncertainty during the Covid-19 pandemic. This session will explore how governments build the capacity to develop and use these novel tools, and how to combine them with traditional statistics.

Chair/Moderator

Danielle Serebro – Research Associate, ODI

Panel

David Rosenfeld – Research Associate, ODI

Thierry Kalisa* – Chief Economist, National Bank of Rwanda

Edward Sherman – Deputy Director, Data Science Automation, Office for National Statistics

Dr. Saad Ali Shire – Minister of Finance, Somaliland

15:30-15:45 – Coffee/Tea Break

15:45-17:15 – Session 4: The digital infrastructure for the future of public finance

Building digital public infrastructure, using digital public goods, establishing central digital teams, employing agile delivery methods – the recommendations for governments to shift to digital ways of thinking and working is growing. But what do these recommendations mean for improving public spending? And what are the obstacles that need to be overcome for finance ministries to adopt and support them?

Chair/Moderator

Nick Gates – Programme Manager, Public Digital

Panel

Kirsty Innes – Director of Digital Government, The Tony Blair Institute for Global Change

Gerardo Uña – Head of Capacity Development Strategy Support Team, Fiscal Affairs Department, International Monetary Fund

Anir Chowdhury – Policy Advisor, a2i Bangladesh

Gavin Hayman – Executive Director, Open Contracting Partnership

* Joining online.

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Digital Public Finance Hub

The **Digital Public Finance Hub** is helping to bring public finance into the digital era. The Hub will support governments to manage public resources for service delivery by leveraging digital infrastructure and digital ways of working. It will promote new ways of thinking around the digital transformation of public finance by generating evidence, convening communities of practice and building country partnerships.

You can access the Digital Public Finance Hub and our latest reports from Tuesday 21 March via the ODI website. To engage further and learn about how you can support the initiative, please reach out to Cathal Long at c.long@odi.org.uk or Nicholas Gates at nicholas.gates@public.digital. We would love to hear from you.