Webinar Summary: Powering Smart Governance

Title: Powering Smart Governance
Date: September 2025
Speakers:

- Mr. Mindaugas Glodas, CEO, NRD Companies
- Ms. Ieva Žilionienė, Chief Consulting Officer, NRD Companies
- Mr. Michailas Traubas, Head of Tax and Financial Solutions, NRD Companies
  Moderator: Mr. Adeleke Salami (AfDB)
  Organizer: Dr. Namawu A. Alolo (Manager, AfDB-ECAD); Sheila Jagannathan
  Hosted by: Dr. Eric K. Ogunleye (Director, AfDB-ECAD)

Overview

This sixth session of the **Leading Edge Insights (LEI) Series** focused on digital transformation in governance—why it often fails, what drives success, and how to sustain results. The event highlighted that technology alone does not determine outcomes; rather, **people, processes, and governance** are the critical success factors.

The session featured NRD Companies, a global GovTech and fintech group operating in more than 60 countries, including Africa. The speakers explored lessons from international projects, showing how Africa can adapt best practices to build trust, strengthen institutions, and deliver citizen-centered e-services

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Session Highlights

Key insights and contributions from the session included:

- **Why Digital Transformation Fails (Mindaugas Glodas):**
  - Only 20% of digital transformation projects succeed, often due to misalignment of ambition, governance, and skills rather than technology.
  - Failures stem from fragmented strategies across ministries, neglect of legacy systems, shifting project requirements, and weak legal frameworks.
  - Success requires political support, continuity, sustainability planning, and robust cybersecurity.

- **Designing Citizen-Centered Services (Ieva Žilionienė):**
    - Digital transformation is fundamentally about **service redesign**, not just new platforms.
    - Good digital services are **simple, seamless, trusted**, and organized around life events (e.g., registering a newborn).
    - Seven key characteristics of effective digital services were outlined, including user-centered design, lean processes, interoperability, openness to innovation, and accessibility across devices.
- **Transforming Revenue Systems (Michailas Traubas):**
    - Governments must prioritize services using clear criteria: demand, institutional efficiency, inclusion, cost savings, and readiness.
    - Examples from **St. Martin** and **Lithuania** showed how re-engineering processes like tax declarations can shift from burdensome, form-based systems to proactive, automated services.
    - The shift requires institutional reform, legal adaptation, and sustainable infrastructure.
- **Practical Roadmaps:**
    - A seven-step framework for building digital service delivery roadmaps was introduced, covering demand assessment, maturity measurement, process re-engineering, feasibility checks, and continuous adaptation.
    - Emphasis was placed on aligning reforms with long-term institutional and societal impact, not just project deadlines.

Lessons from the Webinar

Attendees were encouraged to take away the following key lessons:

- **Technology is the easy part**—governance, strategy, and institutional reform matter most.
- **User experience builds trust:** citizen satisfaction with digital services lags far behind the private sector, so governments must prioritize simplicity and reliability.

- **Start with high-impact services:** focus on services with the greatest demand and potential savings.
- **Plan for sustainability:** reforms must include maintenance, adaptability, and cybersecurity from the start.
- **Measure success by impact, not only KPIs:** timelines and budgets matter, but the real measure is improved trust, transparency, and efficiency.
- **Collaboration is essential:** multilateral partners, governments, and private sector actors all play critical roles.

Useful Resources

Participants were encouraged to explore further materials and tools highlighted during the session:

3 Powerpoint Presentations attached

Audience Questions and Discussion

The interactive discussion revealed both enthusiasm and concerns from participants:

- *Q1. How can governments avoid digitizing inefficient processes and instead drive real transformation?*
  A: Speakers emphasized *process re-engineering first*. Digitalization should simplify workflows, eliminate paper-based steps, and focus on user-centered outcomes rather than copying old systems into digital form.
- *Q2. What can be done when public sector staff resist or undermine reforms?*
  A: Change management and leadership are critical. Capacity-building, clear communication of benefits, and aligning incentives help reduce resistance and build ownership among staff.
- *Q3. How can institutions upgrade their technical maturity and skills?*
  A: By investing in continuous training, using modular e-learning, and adopting phased reforms that match current capacity. Building digital culture takes time and requires both leadership support and peer learning.
- Q4. Trust seems to be a recurring theme — how can governments embed it into digital reforms?

A: Trust is built through simplicity, transparency, and reliability of services. Governments must deliver consistently, ensure data protection, and design services around life events that matter to citizens.

- *Q5. How can agencies build a digital-first culture rather than treating reform as a one-off project?*
  A: Leaders must model digital behaviors, encourage innovation, and integrate digital into daily workflows. Reforms should be framed as institutional transformation, not just an IT upgrade.
- *Q6. How can sustainability be ensured once donor-funded projects end?*
  A: Continuity planning must be built in from the start. Governments should secure long-term budgets for maintenance, establish local capacity, and adapt systems to evolving needs.
- Q7. What defines a "good" digital service from the citizen's perspective?
  A: Services must be user-centered, quick, intuitive, and proactive — delivering results without unnecessary forms or repeated data requests.
- Q8. How relevant are global case studies (like Lithuania or St. Martin) to Africa?
  A: While contexts differ, principles are transferable: prioritizing high-impact services, integrating digital public infrastructure, and aligning reforms with governance and legal frameworks.
- *Q9. Can we access the session slides and materials for further learning?*
  A: Yes — materials will be shared with participants after the session to support continued engagement.

https://afdb.zoom.us/rec/share/wvfnpRuDE63eEOQ1z8HPN4EWyGwLqX3-_ubi0pNzizkM697kMJ3FDVKvhHLGZ2pS.KCuJjAoR9RdtOFqt

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