

## Needs and Data-Driven COVID-19 Response Operations for Government

In the first thought piece within this series, we explored the importance of creating structure around the government's coordination of COVID-19 response interventions.

A structured response is going to be a key enabler for driving through all three key phases of the COVID-19 response cycle namely, Respond Phase, Recover Phase and Thrive Phase. In this point of view, Deloitte shares a perspective on principles that governments can use to enable them to derive value from the use of data in the continued Response and emerging Recovery phases (some countries) in the fight against COVID-19.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made the role of government from social welfare and economic security perspectives increasingly pronounced. As governments across the world work tirelessly to contain the spread of the virus, the volume of social welfare, as well as economic and healthcare needs is increasing rapidly. This is placing tremendous pressure on government institutions across national, provincial and local government spheres. This added pressure is requiring government institutions to become more agile than ever to be able to effectively deliver against rapidly evolving service delivery mandates.

Unlocking agility and effectiveness in this time of crisis is going to require governments to expeditiously transition into running insight-driven COVID-19 crisis management operations, with data at the core of this competence. A lasting impact of COVID-19 on Civil Government the world over is the affirmation that using data insightfully is the 'new normal' of improving the capacity of the state to deliver services.

## A prudent response approach is needs-driven at its core

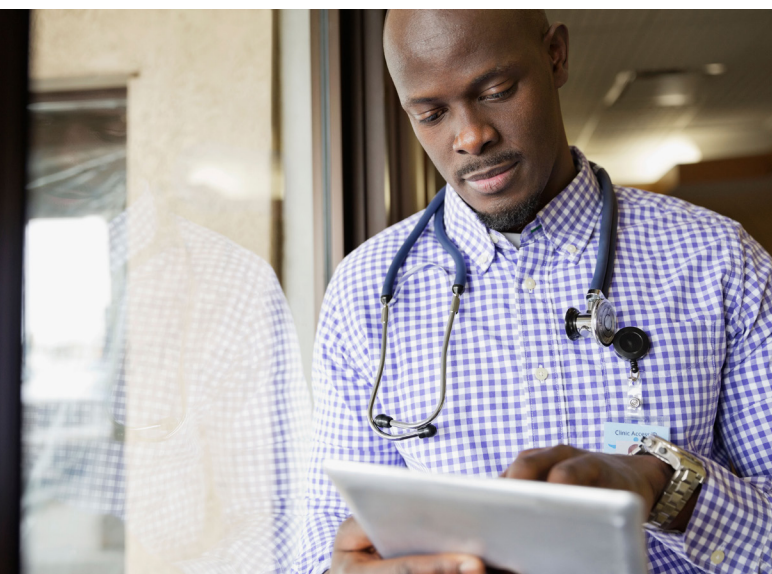
Over the course of April and May 2020, as the virus spread to several developing countries in the Southern Hemisphere (at writing, a number of developing countries were in the top 30 globally for confirmed cases on a sharp rise with Brazil at over 500K, Peru at 170K, Ecuador at 40K and South Africa at 35K confirmed cases<sup>1</sup>), it has become abundantly clear that governments need a multipronged approach to the COVID-19 response strategies, despite it being a public health emergency.

Due to the necessary lockdown regulations to contain the spread of the virus and flatten the curve, the response has had far broader socio-economic impact with deeper long-term ramifications including reduced household incomes affected by the halt in economic activity, increased rates of job losses in countries already battling high unemployment rates, increased need for food aid, increasing mental health cases, increased gender-based violence, limited access to childcare and educational services.

For effectiveness and to ensure no one is left behind in the government interventions, a needs-driven COVID-19 response that is a partnership between government and civil society is required and comprises:

### 1. Identification of urgent needs that require prioritisation in the response strategy

The needs at a minimum cut across comprehensive health interventions, social welfare needs, public and environmental safety and compliance, economic support interventions, and government continuity.



#### a. Health interventions

- i. Universal access to COVID-19 screening and testing to ensure that all members of the public, irrespective of having health insurance or not receive this critical service.
- ii. Active contact tracing to limit community transmissions of the virus.
- iii. Quarantine facilities for those individuals from vulnerable groups that cannot self-quarantine in their own homes due to high density living.
- iv. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) readily available for health care workers with minimal reuse.
- v. Increasing bed capacity in highcare sections of health facilities and increasing the amount of electromechanical equipment such as ventilators.
- vi. Tracking of deaths to monitor possible overrun of the capacity of existing mortuary services. This need is also amplified by the need for regulations to be refined to guide funeral homes in the handling of human remains of COVID-19 related deaths and the procedures for funerals to contain community infections.
- vii. Provision of flu vaccinations for the traditionally vulnerable groups (people with chronic health conditions, pregnant mothers, elderly and children) as the rise of cases in the Southern Hemisphere coincides with the flu season.



#### b. Social Security

- i. Reconciliation of demand versus supply of food parcels/ vouchers. Demand would have increased significantly beyond the existing recipients of food aid, considering that informal traders who earned subsistence level income from daily trade in public areas are not able to trade.
- ii. Shelters may be required for the homeless, especially with the cold months approaching, to limit exposure of this vulnerable group.
- iii. With schools closing, there is a need for the use of virtual classroom platforms to ensure continuation of teaching and learning. A key dependency is ensuring universal access to internet connectivity and devices to access online learning which may be challenging in remote/rural areas.

<sup>1</sup> COVID-19 Dashboard by the Centre for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University, <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>, 03 June 2020



c. **Public and environmental safety and compliance with the relaxation of the regulations for economic recovery**

- i. Increase community policing initiatives to support enforcement of regulations for social distancing and heightened hygiene observance (handwashing and mask wearing).
- ii. Guidelines for social distancing in public spaces (public transport, malls and shopping centres, parks, beaches etc.).
- iii. Frequent sanitisation and decontamination of public spaces.
- iv. Proper handling and disposal of medical waste generated by increased use of PPE by health workers and members of the public.



d. **Economic support interventions**

- i. Financial support for businesses with a greater proportion of the support being availed for small medium and macro enterprises and informal traders (hawkers and unregistered trades people).
- ii. Unemployment insurance for members (covering both citizens and non-citizens who are restricted in the boundaries of the country) of the public who have lost employment or are subject to wage cuts due to lockdowns during the Respond Phase.



e. **Government Continuity**

- i. Guidelines for government offices reopening.
- ii. Allocation of PPE to public officials as they return to work.
- iii. Adoption of work force strategies that allow for social distancing (e.g. Shift system to limit to normal volumes of staff in buildings at the same time).
- iv. Health screening, testing and overall wellness tracking of staff in the office and those that are at home.
- v. Reprioritisation of service delivery plans and allocated budgets to factor in COVID-19 related public spending.



## 2. The right focus on data and analytics will pave the way for effective COVID-19 response management

With an understanding of needs across the response strategies of government, the use of data unlocks essential insights for leaders on where best to focus the limited resources of the state to meet these needs. If all governments had mature data governance capabilities at present time, they would have been better positioned to fully harness the power of advanced analytics for predictive analysis that in turn facilitates proactive planning for the COVID-19 response.

The COVID-19 epidemic has cast a spotlight on the urgency and the importance of governments evolving and maturing their data governance capabilities. As part of the Recover Phase and leading into the Thrive Phase, it is crucial for Government institutions to answer the following questions as part of defining the immediate steps for putting the building blocks in place for this crucial capability:

- What are the most critical data sets needed to manage the key priority response needs for the unforeseeable future that the virus will still be a health crisis?
- Are there clear and established producers and consumers for these data sets?
- Are there existing data catalogues aligned to the prioritised needs? Data catalogues are inventories of existing data available across the various sector portfolios managed by various government entities. Are there global data sets that can be used to assist with modelling scenarios? These two questions will define the starting point for a government entity.
- Is there a data structure framework that guides data modelling, taxonomy and the data modelling tools to be used?
- Does the organisation have a Data Architecture which is the processes, systems and human organisations required to store, access, move and organise data?
- Is there defined Master Data (the language of doing business – the business objects and classifications that describe overall business information) for the organisation that is underpinned by Metadata (structured information about data or, simply, “data about the data”).

- Are there defined data quality standards? (Completeness, timeliness, accuracy, consistency, relevance, and integrity)
- Data Security is the processes and technology to protect data from unauthorised access, viewing, modification or deletion whether the intent is accidental, intentional, or malicious. Does this capability exist in the organisation?
- Additionally, Data Compliance is the ongoing processes to ensure adherence of data to both enterprise business rules, and, especially, to legal and regulatory requirements. This is an important dimension especially in countries that have in the recent years passed stricter privacy regulations.
- Another component that is critical is the choice of tools for visualisation of data. Is the choice of tool a good fit for purpose within the organisation? Business Intelligence dashboards sit on top of the rest of the components outlined above. However, with mounting pressure to share data with a variety of stakeholders, this focus tends to be the initial and often the sole unsustainable focus for some government institutions.

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