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Immediate Release

The GovLab and the IDB bring innovative ideas to Latin American government officials

Smarter Crowdsourcing in the Age of Coronavirus Project Gives Governments New Tools To Address the Pandemic as the Project Passes the Halfway Point.

https://smartercrowdsourcing.org/

BROOKLYN, New York, Weekday, Month xx, 2020 – The Governance Lab (The GovLab) at New York University's Tandon School of Engineering (NYU) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) are pleased to share the results of the first two "Smarter Crowdsourcing in the Age of Coronavirus" online sessions, which have led to the development of recommendations that governments worldwide can use to most efficiently and effectively address the challenges of COVID-19.

As the pandemic rages on across the globe, many governments are still struggling to contain outbreaks, source and deliver supplies to those who need them most, and keep livelihoods secure. Globally, we have recorded nearly 33.7 million cases and over one million deaths. Latin America and the Caribbean have borne the brunt of the pandemic with Brazil, Peru, Mexico, Colombia, and Argentina making up five of the top ten in total coronavirus cases globally. Latin American countries also account for eight out of the twelve countries with the highest numbers of deaths per capita. Suffice to say, the pandemic is every bit as relevant today as it was three months ago.

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“The novelty of this virus and the disruption it causes proves that traditional methods governments employ to solve problems are not sufficient for this task,” said Beth Simone Noveck, NYU professor and director of The GovLab. “That is why The GovLab believes that complex problems demand more than status quo solutions; the tools of yesterday are not sufficient for the crises of today. This pandemic demands a different type of problem solving - one that can fully account for the intersectoral, international, and interdependent dimensions of a global crisis.”

The teams from The GovLab and the IDB collaborated with global experts, seeking to support governments in Latin America and the Caribbean to break down the pandemic into specific problems and identify solutions through a series of online sessions. They began the initiative by developing a problem catalogue that captures what they understand as the twenty-three problems that governments must address during the pandemic most urgently. IDB government partners choose what they identify as the most pressing and relevant issues to them from that catalogue. To date, The GovLab and IDB have completed two full cycles of the crowdsourcing initiative, addressing contact tracing and testing strategies, and delivered recommendation memos on these topics to participating governments.

“In addition to what we believe are important benefits for government partners, we also believe that multisectoral discussions are essential moments where true innovation happens,” said Henri Hammond-Paul, health policy advisor and research fellow at The GovLab. “As such, these sessions and their outputs are as valuable to experts as they are to the government partners.”

The first session focused on building a robust **national testing strategy**. Participating experts included scientists pioneering pooled testing strategies, business leaders trying to provide low cost tests, data scientists modeling the spread of the disease, and sociologists thinking about the socio/cultural dimensions of testing. The resulting ideas surfaced during the discussion formed the basis of the eventual recommendation memo that outlined pathways for governments to (1) implement pooled testing strategies, (2) streamline data issues with national patient identifiers, and (3) test high-risk populations.

The second session centered on **how governments can support the critical function of contact tracing**, seeking to cut through the noise around contact tracing, and identify actionable and concrete recommendations that government partners could implement to bolster their contact tracing efforts. The conversation resulted in our team investigating and recommending specific actions that governments can take to:

- Establish metrics systems that indicate thresholds of efficacy and track process of ongoing efforts,
- Increase interjurisdictional coordination both horizontally between co-equal jurisdictions and vertically between layered systems of governance,
- Ensure their contact tracing programs remain localized and relevant to the specific cultural, economic, and social realities of their constituencies

“Health policy-leading public officials have come together to collaborate,” said Victoria Alsina, project lead, NYU professor and senior fellow at The GovLab. “After helping to develop the structure of the sessions and identify desired outcomes, they are given the opportunity to engage with all participating experts and fellow countries, and as a result receive these final recommendations for each topic.”

The pandemic will continue to disrupt our communities and daily life for the foreseeable future. As the pandemic continues so do efforts to change its trajectory. This fall, The GovLab and the IDB will complete four more cycles of Smarter Crowdsourcing in the Age of Coronavirus, focusing on Behavioral Innovations, Supporting Vulnerable Populations and two more topics still pending, depending on countries most pressing priorities.

For more information, please visit https://coronavirus.smartercrowdsourcing.org/.

About the New York University Tandon School of Engineering

The NYU Tandon School of Engineering dates to 1854, the founding date for both the New York University School of Civil Engineering and Architecture and the Brooklyn Collegiate and Polytechnic Institute. A January 2014 merger created a comprehensive school of education and research in engineering and applied sciences as part of a global university, with close connections to engineering programs at NYU Abu Dhabi and NYU Shanghai. NYU Tandon is rooted in a vibrant tradition of entrepreneurship, intellectual curiosity, and innovative solutions to humanity's most pressing global challenges. Research at Tandon focuses on vital intersections between communications/IT, cybersecurity, and data science/AI/robotics systems and tools and critical areas of society that they influence, including emerging media, health, sustainability, and urban living. We believe diversity is integral to excellence, and are creating a vibrant, inclusive, and equitable environment for all of our students, faculty and staff. For more information, visit engineering.nyu.edu.

About The Governance Lab at the NYU Tandon School of Engineering

The Governance Lab's mission is to improve people's lives by changing the way we govern. Our goal at The GovLab is to strengthen the ability of institutions — including but not limited to governments — and people to work more openly, collaboratively, effectively, and legitimately to make better decisions and solve public problems. We believe that increased availability and use of data, new ways to leverage the capacity, intelligence, and expertise of people in the problem-solving process, combined with new advances in technology and science, can transform governance. We approach each challenge and opportunity in an interdisciplinary, collaborative way, irrespective of the problem, sector, geography, and level of government. For more information, visit thegovlab.org.

About the IDB

The Inter-American Development Bank is one of the main sources of long-term financing for economic, social, and institutional projects in Latin America and the Caribbean. In addition to loans, grants, and credit guarantees, the IDB conducts cutting-edge research projects to provide innovative and sustainable solutions to the most pressing problems in its region. Created in 1959 to help accelerate progress in its developing member countries, the IDB works every day to improve lives.

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