



Policy Brief

Governing Through Change in Asia and the Pacific

The Need for Dynamic Governance Capabilities



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United Nations Development Programme

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The Need for Dynamic Governance Capabilities

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Executive Summary

Over the past decades, the Asia-Pacific region has made significant human development gains, lifting millions of people out of poverty and becoming a global growth engine. However, the region faces a series of converging global and regional challenges – including threats from climate change and pandemics, disruptions to growth and job creation due to shifts in trade, demographics and technology, as well as a governance challenges due to declining public trust, increasing social polarization, and a shrinking of civic space.

These challenges call for future-ready governance—governing dynamically by anticipating change, adapting swiftly, and acting decisively to deliver results amid uncertainty and accelerate progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Yet, effective delivery systems are insufficient. Meaningful people-centered change requires political and collaborative leadership across institutions and deepening civic engagement. Together, these conditions will help ensure that policymakers are not only implementers of reform, but active agents of transformation.

This policy brief outlines how the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is advancing dynamic governance capability frameworks and tools to support governments in adopting future-ready governance systems. It draws on examples from across Asia and the Pacific to illustrate the evolution of dynamic governance attributes and their contribution to accelerated human development. The brief also sets out UNDP's approach to supporting governments in institutionalizing the dynamic capabilities required to reinforce progress toward the SDGs.

This policy brief aligns with UNDP's Strategic Plan (2026–2029), which aims to deliver effective governance by leveraging systems thinking, innovation, and strategic foresight to help countries build more agile and anticipatory governance and policymaking, while delivering responsive services and expanding economic opportunities.

The case for future-ready governance

Asia and the Pacific has achieved extraordinary success over the past half-century. The region lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty, transforming itself into a global engine of growth. Between 1960 and 2023, the region’s share of world GDP rose from 13 to 31 percent.

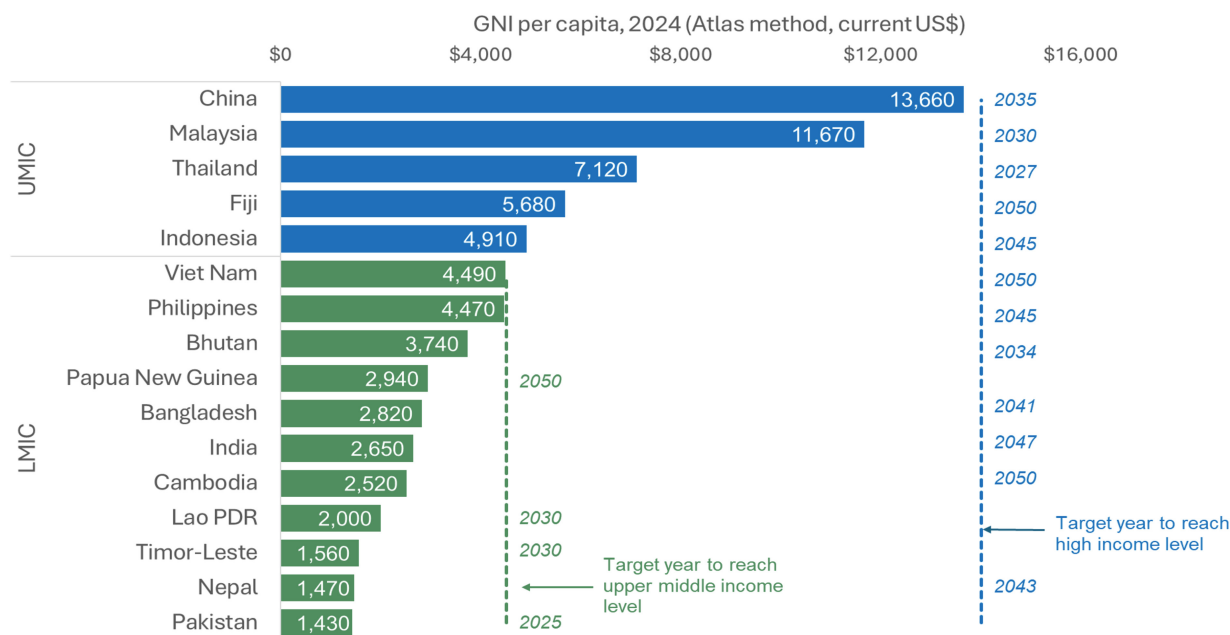
Over this period, countries in the region have engaged in extensive development planning and investments and made significant progress; and national ambitions remain bold. For instance, Viet Nam and Indonesia aim to achieve high-income status by 2045, and India by 2047 – milestones that require sustained and accelerated growth and highlight the powerful ambition for upward mobility (Figure 1.1).

Nevertheless, this progress has been uneven, with considerable disparities both between and within countries. The United Nations (UN) Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report projected that, on current trends, the 2030 Agenda will not be achieved in the region until well into the 2060s (UN, 2024).

The risks ahead

Accelerating progress towards the SDGs will not be easy. **There are three major risk clusters. First, the existential threats** stemming from climate change and global pandemics. **Second, demographic and technological changes** are threatening to disrupt growth and job creation. **Third, governance challenges** marked by declining public trust, increasing social polarization, and shrinking civic space.

Figure 1.1. Countries across Asia-Pacific have set ambitious targets to reach upper-middle and high-income status within the next few decades



Sources: UNDP; Vision documents and national development plans of respective countries: Bangladesh – Vision 2041; Bhutan – 13th Five-Year Plan (2024–2029); Cambodia – Pentagonal Strategy for Vision 2050; China – Outline of the People’s Republic of China 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development and Long-Range Objectives through the Year 2035; Fiji – Fiji National Development Plan 2025–2029 and Vision 2050; India – Viksit Bharat@2047; Indonesia – Visi Indonesia Emas 2045; Lao PDR – Vision 2030 and 10-Year Socio-Economic Plan (2021–2030); Malaysia – Ekonomi MADANI (2023); Shared Prosperity Vision 2030; Nepal – 15th Five-Year Plan (FY2020–FY2024); Pakistan – Vision 2025; Papua New Guinea – Vision 2050; Philippines – Ambisyon Natin 2040; Thailand – Thailand 4.0 Strategy; Timor-Leste – Strategic Development Plan 2011–2030; Viet Nam – Vision to 2050.

Governments and public institutions often face significant limitations, lacking the capacity to anticipate risks, build consensus around a long-term vision, respond to people’s needs, and deliver equitable development outcomes.ⁱ Some government institutions remain reactive, rigid, and fragmented – increasingly ill-adapted to the complexity of today’s world. As a result, they struggle to respond to new data and citizen feedback, or to continuously re-align resources within the state machinery while coordinating across sectors.

In an era defined by disruption and uncertainty, all governments will need to build dynamic governance capabilities to protect past gains and create conditions for more inclusive and resilient growth.

Understanding Dynamic Governance Capabilities

According to strategic management literature, dynamic capabilities represent the capacity of organizations to “integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies to address rapidly changing environments” (Teece et al., 1997).² Ordinary capabilities focus on routine operations, whereas dynamic capabilities are needed to anticipate and adapt to change (Teece, 2025).³ In short, they are about being future-ready amid rapidly changing contexts.

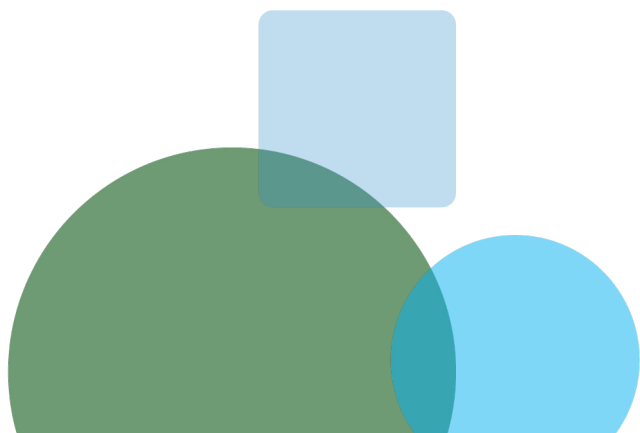
When applied to the public sector, the concept takes on a broader meaning. Unlike private firms, which are primarily answerable to shareholders, governments are accountable to all citizens, for whom they must deliver public value, while adhering to principles of transparency, legitimacy, and accountability (Piening, 2013).⁴ This fundamental difference shapes the role of dynamic capabilities in the public sector.

Delivering public value

As Moore (1995) argued, the state’s purpose is not just to deliver services efficiently, but also to generate outcomes that people value: decent jobs, thriving businesses, integrated public transport, social protection, digital connectivity, and effective public services.⁵

This means matching development priorities with the capacity to deliver – aligning operations with the resources, skills, and systems required (Cabinet Office, 2025).⁶ Governments can meet these demands by deploying resources strategically and acting with legitimacy, trust, and public value at their core.

Academic institutions have further strengthened this agenda. The Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose (IIPP) at University College London **has advanced the conceptualization of five key attributes of dynamic governance capabilities: strategic awareness, adjusting priorities, building coalitions, reconfiguring delivery, and learning and experimentation.** IIPP has also sought to operationalize and measure these capabilities at the city level through its Public Sector Capabilities Index.ⁱⁱ



The approach is also gaining traction in international frameworks for practitioners:

- *United Nations* – The UN’s 2024 Declaration on Future Generations, for example, commits governments to leveraging data and strategic foresight to ensure long-term thinking and make governance more anticipatory, adaptive, and responsive.ⁱⁱⁱ This approach is also closely aligned with the FutureGov High Impact Initiative, launched in 2023 under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General and co-led by UNDP and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), as a global platform to advocate for public sector transformation and innovation.^{iv}
- *OECD* – Similarly, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Recommendation on Human-Centred Public Administrative Services (2024)^v and the 2019 Declaration on Public Sector Innovation^{vi} recognize the need for adaptive institutions that inspire public trust through quality services.

The UNDP approach and definition of Dynamic Governance Capabilities

The concept of dynamic capabilities in government has been advanced by UNDP since 2019^{vii}, in collaboration with UN agencies and partners, to support more resilient, responsive, and future-ready governance across Asia and the Pacific.

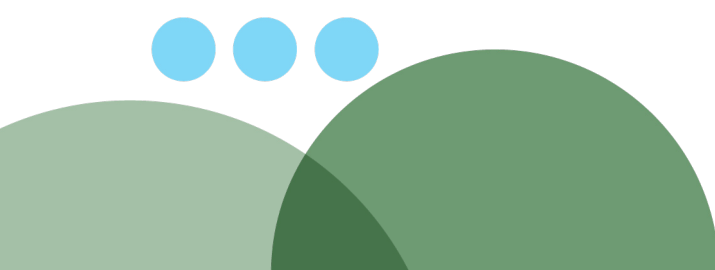
UNDP defines dynamic governance capabilities as the ability to anticipate, adapt, and act with agility (Table 2.1), and, in the *2024 Regional Human Development Report*, UNDP identified three interconnected attributes:

- *Anticipatory* – foreseeing opportunities for the future and risks while planning for contingencies
- *Adaptable* – modifying strategies based on feedback loops and as contexts change
- *Agile* – mobilizing effective action with speed and efficiency

UNDP views these as mutually reinforcing attributes that enhance a government’s ability to navigate complexity and change. Crucially, this means going beyond designing static institutions to internalizing dynamic capabilities among government officials and policymakers – based on a culture of learning, collaboration, and inclusive participation.

Table 2.1. Elements of dynamic capabilities in governance

Main pillars	Key components	Supportive actions
<p>Anticipation – refers to the ability to foresee potential challenges, opportunities, and changes in the environment.</p>	<p>Detect signals of emerging trends, potential disruptions, or shifts in context through collective intelligence and participatory approaches^{viii}</p> <p>Co-create future scenarios through participatory methods to reflect the complexities and reduce blind spots</p>	<p>Promote critical future-oriented thinking through training/initiatives to promote the use of data and foresight, digital transformation and a culture of continuous learning</p> <p>Conduct scenario planning as part of policy development processes with continuous feedback loops based on data and multi-stakeholder engagement</p>



Adaptability – refers to the system’s ability to adapt to changing conditions or shifting priorities by adjusting strategies and plans

Act upon the need for change by reviewing and adjusting plans, strategies and budgets in response to feedback loops and changing contexts, and recalibrating as needed

Promote learning and unlearning based on data/new evidence, including from foresight, pilots and sandbox initiatives.

Embrace iterative approaches, where policies are seen as evolving tools to be refined over time, including through citizen feedback mechanisms

<p>Agility – refers to the speed and efficiency with which systems or institutions can respond to new information, unexpected events or shifting priorities without major disruption</p>	<p>Regularly review new evidence to quickly course-correct if needed</p> <p>Promote flexibility of institutional arrangements, processes and mindsets for rapid adjustment</p> <p>Rapidly deploy human and financial resources needed to address challenges before escalation or to timely seize opportunities</p> <p>Establish communications systems for quick, coordinated action across institutional lines and socio-political divides</p>	<p>Adopt fit-for-purpose digital and data tools to boost (1) process efficiency and (2) strengthen timely, transparent engagement with end users.</p> <p>Establish regular practices and capacities to review new data and strategies, including citizen feedback and scenario mapping</p> <p>Ensure resources can be easily reallocated in response to changes and having contingency funds</p> <p>Promote inter-agency collaboration through training, rotational assignments, and having rapid response teams with diverse expertise</p> <p>Remove regulatory/institutional hurdles to data-sharing or re-designing and implementing new processes</p>
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Source: UNDP “2024 Asia-Pacific Regional Human Development Report”

Examples of Dynamic Capabilities in Asia and the Pacific

In 2024, UNDP conducted a rapid assessment of dynamic governance capabilities in four countries: Cambodia, Fiji, India, and Sri Lanka, and found that while these capabilities are being fostered, progress remains uneven.^{ix}

The assessment collected inputs from multi-sectoral stakeholder engagements and examined how governments were developing and applying dynamic governance capabilities, and using foresight tools, digital innovations, and institutional reforms to strengthen governance.^x

This assessment combined desk research with direct stakeholder engagement. Since some of the data were self-reported, the findings would be subject to respondent bias. Nevertheless, the assessment provides a view of the region’s public sector growing adoption of dynamic capabilities, although with a distinctly uneven pattern (Table 3.1).

- *India* – Comprehensive application, combining foresight tools, real-time adaptive platforms and large-scale agile systems like CoWIN,^{xi} and PRAGATI.^{xii}
- *Fiji* – Foresight and adaptive learning have been integrated into national planning.
- *Cambodia* – During the pandemic, there were initial signals of adaptability, and agility with the civil service training swiftly moved online to preserve administrative continuity.
- *Sri Lanka* – Still at an early stage. There has been experimentation with foresight and adaptive practices through the Citra Social Innovation Lab (Box 3.1), however these are not yet fully institutionalized across government.^{xiii}

Table 3.1. Examples of mapping from the rapid assessment in Asia and the Pacific

Capability	India	Fiji	Cambodia	Sri Lanka
Anticipatory	Strong examples: National Blockchain Stack; predictive health systems (LIMS)	Integrated in planning: Scenario planning for National Development Plan	Fragmented: Village-level mapping; rolling plans lack national harmonization	Initial experiment: Citra Social Innovation Lab
Adaptive	Data-driven: Aspirational Districts Programme and Family ID systems (real-time data); MyGov citizen engagement (30m users)	Learning: Adaptive learning in health sector; inter-ministry working groups	Crisis-driven adaptation: Rapid digital shift in training for civil servants during pandemic	Leadership adaptable but practices uneven across government sectors
Agile	Large-scale platforms: CoWIN vaccination platform (2.2b registrations); PRAGATI (360+ projects, \$230b)	Emerging: Climate budget tagging; limited by process delays	Early-stage digital delivery: Some cash transfer programs; limited real-time data	Developing: Communication across teams; increasing budget for innovation/R&D; few agile practices identified

Source: UNDP and Primus Partners (2025).

Underlying this uneven progress are systemic constraints that limit the development and institutionalization of dynamic governance capabilities. These constraints manifest as weak execution capacity. For instance, public institutions are not yet fully equipped to anticipate or adapt to rapidly changing conditions, and citizen participation mechanisms remain either ad hoc or restricted, making governance less inclusive and eroding public trust.

These factors can stem from rigid institutional silos or limited legal frameworks combined with a lack of sustained political will. The more advanced practices tend to be confined to isolated initiatives or sectors, rather than embedded consistently across government systems. As the following sections indicate, these deep-seated barriers also have a direct, measurable impact on human development.

Box 3.1. Citra Social Innovation Lab – institutionalizing anticipatory governance in Sri Lanka

The Citra Social Innovation Lab was established as a joint initiative between the Government of Sri Lanka and the United Nations Development Programme to foster innovation across various sectors. Anchored in the Prime Minister's Office, Citra aims to drive systemic change through its core workstreams of systems transformation, public sector innovation, and policy coherence. The Lab leverages key enablers such as digital, data, innovation, and service design.

Operations are guided by a holistic set of principles that prioritize human-centered design to address user needs, and systems thinking to tackle complexity. This approach integrates digital tools, data, and strategic foresight to optimize service delivery and ensure anticipatory, agile governance. Underpinned by a human rights-based framework, these efforts remain committed to inclusivity and equity, ensuring solutions are fair, non-discriminatory, and responsive to the needs of all vulnerable groups.

Citra Lab supports government initiatives to reimagine and reform public systems so they deliver higher-quality, citizen-centered policy outcomes. The Lab works directly with ministries to prototype and refine policies, convene cross-sector partners to co-create solutions, and embed innovation practices, methods, and operating models within the public sector — ensuring real skills transfer and sustained institutional transformation. Through these efforts, Citra helps ensure that new policies are developed and tested using participatory, human-centered, and data-driven approaches, enabling the Government to design better policies, accelerate implementation, and institutionalize innovation across the system.

Since its inception, Citra has managed over 60 projects across 10+ sectors, including health, education, and agriculture. It has facilitated partnerships with 45+ government and non-government entities and engaged with over 100 communities and delivered more than 80 capacity-building programmes to institutionalize innovation within the civil service.

Source: Citra: Sri Lanka's First Social Innovation Lab. <https://www.citralab.lk/our-work>.

Why Dynamic Governance Matters for Human Development

To understand what dynamic governance capabilities mean for people’s lives, this section considers how these capabilities correlate with people’s wellbeing as measured by the Human Development Index (HDI).^{xiv} The analysis uses various proxy indicators for core elements of dynamic governance capabilities as outlined in Table 2.1.

For this purpose, the COVID-19 pandemic offered a natural experiment or “stress test” for governance systems worldwide. The period of intense disruption in 2019 and 2020 exposed the differences between resilient and fragile systems and revealed significant lessons for preparing government institutions for an era of profound disruption and change.

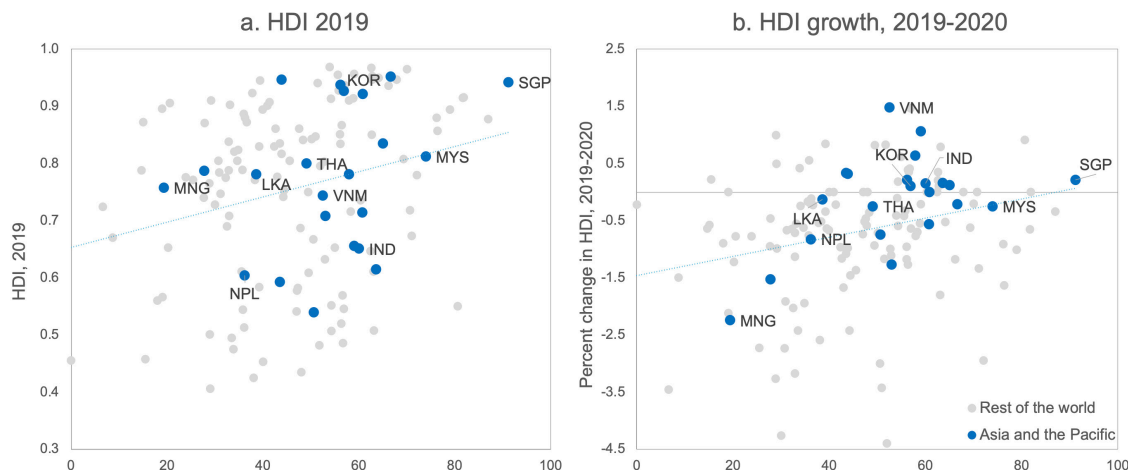
Anticipation: spotting opportunities, preparing for shocks, and building resilience

The first pillar of UNDP’s dynamic governance capabilities framework is anticipation, which refers to a government’s ability to foresee and prepare for future opportunities and challenges. This requires a clear long-term vision, which allows public officials to anchor short-term decisions within enduring national priorities. This vision should, however, be used as a strategic compass rather than a rigid blueprint and must be accompanied by flexible implementation.^{xv}

As an indicator of the capacity for long-term vision, the results from the World Economic Forum’s Executive Opinion Survey offer a good proxy indicator.^{xvi} Figure 4.1 shows that countries with stronger long-term visions consistently achieved higher pre-pandemic HDI levels (panel a). More importantly, they also demonstrated greater resilience during the crisis, experiencing, on average, smaller declines in HDI (panel b): a forward-looking orientation helped them balance immediate crisis responses with strategies for sustainable recovery.

Most countries in Asia and the Pacific performed above the global average in terms of resilience. However, the significant differences between countries underscore the importance of a government’s long-term vision. Singapore, for example, scored highest on long-term vision, and sustained positive HDI growth through the crisis. Since 2014, Singapore has had the Smart Nation initiative.^{xvii} This helped keep the economy functional during the crisis through digital contact tracing (e.g., TraceTogether and SafeEntry)^{xviii} and vaccine management systems. India too, which scored moderately for long-term vision, sustained positive HDI growth.

Figure 4.1. Long-term vision and HDI



Sources: UNDP and World Economic Forum

Mongolia, on the other hand, which scored lower on long-term vision, saw a significant decline in its HDI. The absence of a long-term vision typically leaves governments with fewer options to pivot and to protect development gains when hit by shocks.

By embedding strategic foresight into planning, prioritization, and policy coherence, governments can ensure that immediate actions are consistent with longer-term developmental trajectories. This capacity is decisive in mitigating shocks and preventing development reversals. A clear direction enables policymakers to look beyond immediate shocks and seize emerging opportunities for future progress.

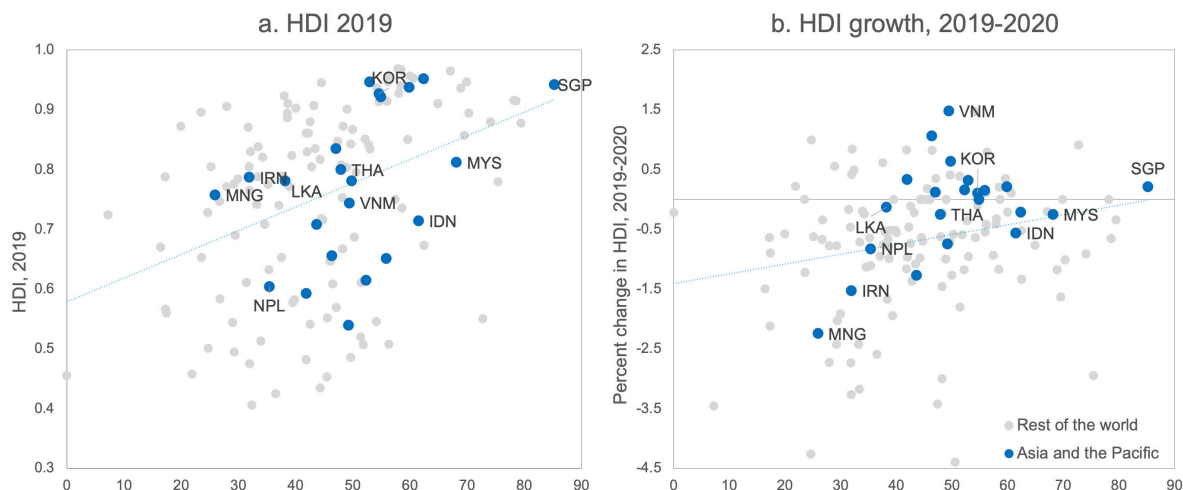
Adaptability: solving policies and strategies under new realities

The second pillar of dynamic governance capabilities is adaptability – the ability to adjust policies and strategies in response to feedback loops and shifting conditions. More responsive governments tend to sustain higher levels of human development. They can detect emerging challenges and opportunities and co-create and review interventions with stakeholders. As a proxy indicator for adaptability, once again, the World Economic Forum’s Executive Opinion Survey response to the question on the government’s “responsiveness to change” was useful for an initial analysis as shown below.^{xix}

There is a strong link between responsiveness and development outcomes. Figure 4.2 shows that **countries with more responsive governments consistently achieved higher pre-pandemic HDI levels** (panel a). More importantly, they also demonstrated greater resilience during the crisis, experiencing, on average, smaller declines in HDI (panel b). This implies that adaptability enabled faster adjustments in social protection, digital services, and health measures, enabling countries to cushion the human cost of the crisis.

Figure 4.2 also shows that the region displays a wide spectrum of performance. Singapore scores high in responsiveness and has been able to buffer human development against shocks. In contrast, countries with lower responsiveness scores, such as Iran, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Mongolia, have all experienced varying degrees of HDI decline. **Institutional inertia, lack of collaborative leadership, and fragmented coordination can hinder rapid adaptation to change, leaving a country more vulnerable to developmental setbacks.**

Figure 4.2. Government’s responsiveness to change and HDI



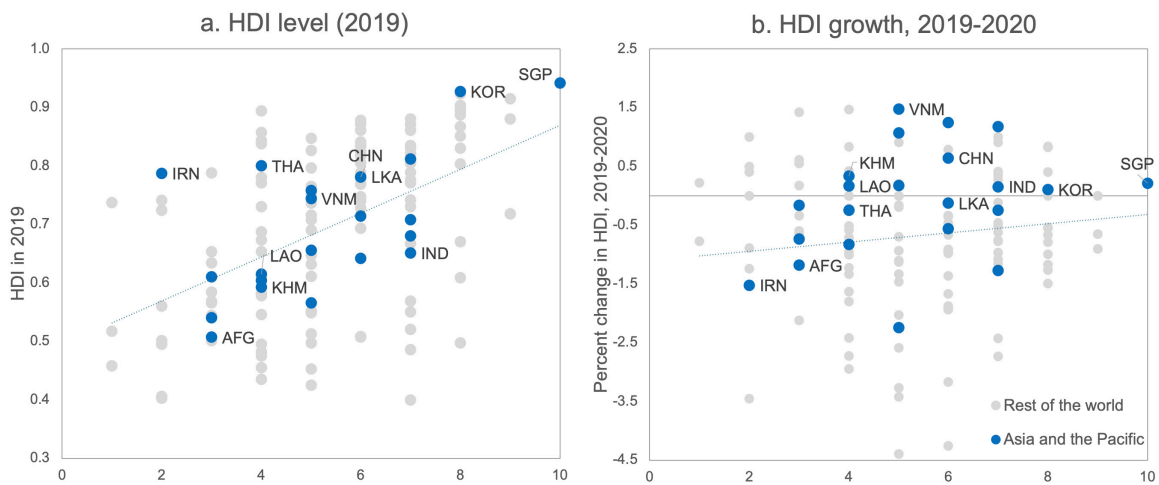
Sources: UNDP and World Economic Forum

Agility: delivering solutions with speed and scale

The third pillar of dynamic governance capabilities is agility – the capacity to respond to shocks and deliver solutions with speed and purpose. This is a multi-dimensional capability, encompassing government internal machinery as well as its external, citizen-facing services.

One of the most critical dimensions of agility is policy and institutional coordination: the ability to ensure different government agencies act coherently. To measure this, the Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (BTI) was selected as a proxy.^{xx} As Figure 4.3 shows, countries with stronger policy coordination based on this index, such as the Republic of Korea, not only achieved higher pre-pandemic HDI levels (panel a) but also demonstrated greater resilience with smaller declines in HDI during the crisis (panel b).

Figure 4.3. Policy coordination and HDI

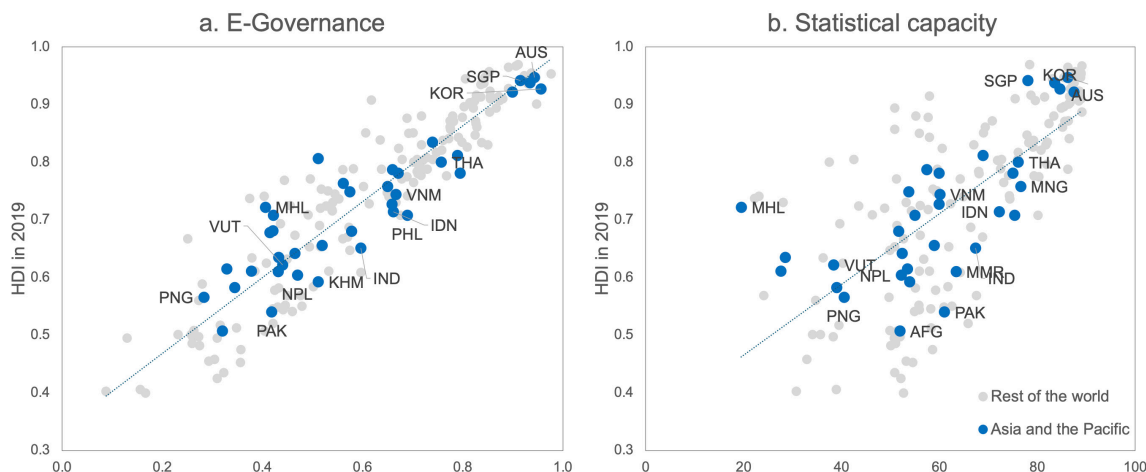


Sources: UNDP and Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index

A capacity for coordination is powerfully amplified by a second dimension: data-driven governance based on robust digital and data infrastructure. Figure 4.4 shows a strong, positive correlation between pre-crisis HDI and both the UN E-Governance Index and the World Bank’s Statistical Performance Indicators. The reason is straightforward: effective digital governance and reliable statistical systems provide the shared, trusted data that is essential for evidence-based policymaking. This common data infrastructure in turn also enables coordination across hierarchies and departments, allowing different parts of government to act coherently and responsively.

As for the other aspects of agility, there are some striking differences between countries. Digital frontrunners like Australia and the Republic of Korea exhibit top-tier performance in both e-governance and statistical capacity, and have high levels of human development. Thailand as an emerging economy similarly illustrates how investing in strong digital foundations supports development gains. Conversely, countries with less developed digital and data backbones, such as Papua New Guinea and Nepal, face greater challenge and have lower human development outcomes.

Figure 4.4. Data-driven governance and HDI



Sources: UNDP, UN, and World Bank

The tangible outcomes of agility were most evident in the platforms that deliver solutions at speed and scale, from managing a global crisis to solving daily urban problems. A prime example is Malaysia’s MySejahtera app,^{xxi} which has rapidly evolved from a simple contact-tracing tool into a comprehensive crisis-management platform, building significant public trust through its responsiveness. Outside the region, Rwanda’s IrempoGov platform^{xxii} also serves as a powerful example of digital public infrastructure in action by ensuring uninterrupted access to more than 100 essential public services during lockdowns.^{xxiii}

Beyond its value for crisis management, agility is transforming everyday citizen-state interactions and restoring trust. In Thailand in 2024, for example, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) launched an AI-enabled citizen platform called *Traffy Fondue* through which citizens can report local issues such as broken streetlights or trash accumulation. Within two years, BMA had received almost 600,000 complaints, mostly related to roads (Wancharoen, 2024).⁷

Agile digital solutions are thus not just technological and institutional achievements; they deliver real outcomes of a government’s underlying ability to coordinate effectively and leverage data to deliver essential services and meet people’s expectations.

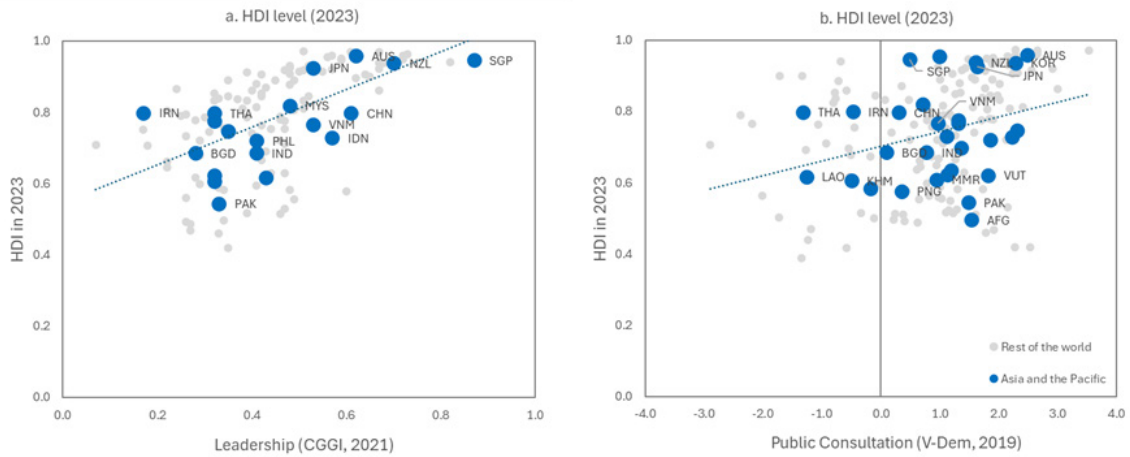
Beyond capabilities – fostering the spirit of change

To be truly transformative, dynamic governance capabilities must be sustained by a persistent commitment to long-term reform, driven by a spirit of change that provides the direction, momentum, and legitimacy needed to convert short-term crisis responses into structural improvements. While crises may create temporary reform, only deep institutionalization can sustain change over time.

Comparative governance data reinforces this relationship. Countries with stronger performance in leadership, foresight, and public consultation — measured through indicators such as the Chandler Good Government Index (CGGI)^{xxiv} and the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Public Consultation Index^{xxv} — consistently achieve higher HDI outcomes in the years following major shocks, including the COVID-19 pandemic. Frontier performers such as Australia and the Republic of Korea rank highly on these governance indicators and among the region’s top HDI performers, while countries with weaker leadership and civic consultation, including Iran, Lao PDR, and Cambodia, tend to record lower human development outcomes (Figure 4.5).



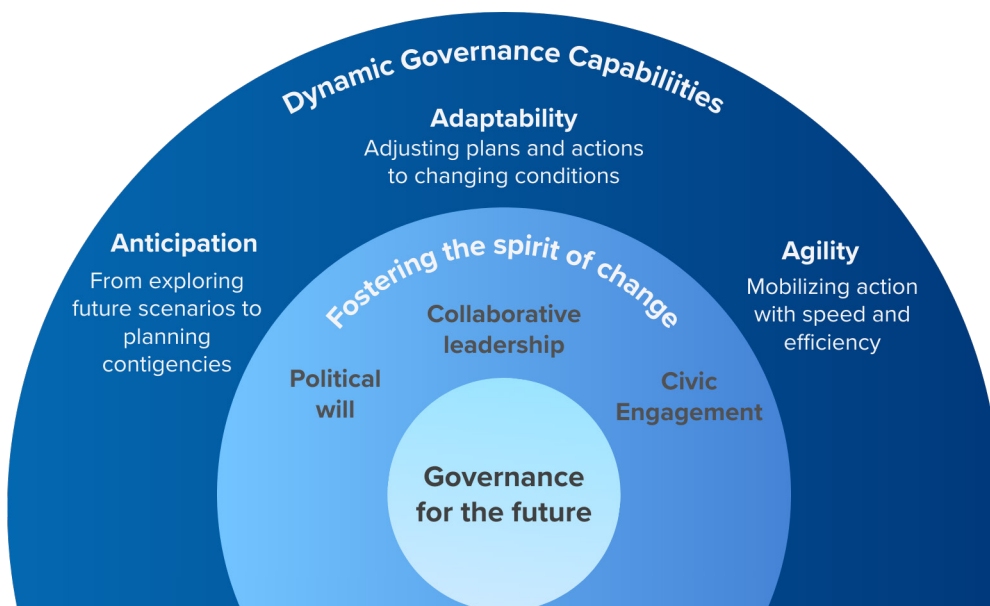
Figure 4.5. Collaborative leadership, civic engagement, and HDI



Source: UNDP, Chandler Good Government Index, and V-Dem

UNDP’s framework for future-ready governance defines this spirit of change through three interconnected foundational elements: political will, collaborative leadership, and civic engagement. Political will provides strategic direction and the mandate for reform; collaborative leadership aligns actors across government and society around shared evidence and goals; and civic engagement and inclusive decision-making broaden the circle of problem-solvers by enabling people to shape priorities and hold institutions to account (Figure 4.6).^{xxvi}

Figure 4.6. Governance for the future



Source: UNDP “2024 Asia-Pacific Regional Human Development Report.”

Conclusion and the way forward

This policy brief highlights the critical role of dynamic governance capabilities in building future-ready and resilient governance systems that can accelerate human development. Drawing on UNDP’s conceptual framework and early data from Asia and the Pacific, it shows how anticipatory, adaptive, and agile governance helped countries protect development gains during the COVID-19 pandemic and other recent shocks.

However, for these delivery capabilities to be transformational and sustainable, they must be underpinned by a foundational “spirit of change”.

These elements are mutually reinforcing: anticipation is ineffective without the political will to act on foresight; adaptability depends on leadership that aligns institutions and stakeholders around evidence and shared priorities; and agility builds trust only when it delivers fairer and more responsive services shaped through citizen engagement.

Across Asia and the Pacific, governments face intensifying pressures that increasingly test their ability to govern through change. At the same time, citizens demand secure, inclusive, and accessible public services; improved efficiency and revenue collection; reduced fraud and corruption; greater digital inclusion; and stronger trust in public institutions.

Yet many public sector systems remain ill-equipped to respond to these demands. Public institutions often lack the leadership, coordination, and adaptive capacity required to reconfigure roles, processes, and delivery models at pace. As a result, failures to strengthen dynamic governance risk eroding public trust and reversing development gains.

Recent governance crises — from Bangladesh to Nepal — underscore how institutional inertia, weak accountability and inclusion, fragile integrity systems, and limited learning capacity can undermine resilience in the face of shocks.

Addressing these limitations requires systematic measurement and learning. Greater investment in diagnostic tools, data, and feedback mechanisms is essential to embed continuous learning and adaptive management within governance reform efforts.

UNDP is uniquely positioned to advance this agenda. Under its Strategic Plan (2026–2029), UNDP commits to delivering effective governance by leveraging systems thinking, innovation, and strategic foresight to help countries build more anticipatory, agile, and responsive institutions.

Building on foundational work in Viet Nam and other pilot countries, and on insights from the 2024 Regional Human Development Report, UNDP will support governments in moving from experimentation to the systematic institutionalization of dynamic governance capabilities.

As a concrete next step, in 2026, UNDP, in collaboration with the Chandler Governance Group (CGG), will develop a Dynamic Governance Capabilities support offer for government institutions. It will include a practical data tool to support policy reform, inform investment decisions, and strengthen accountability. It will also provide a learning platform for governments, regional institutions, and development partners to rethink high-stakes governance changes needed to drive structural transformation, sustain human development, and ensure no one is left behind in an increasingly uncertain world.

Annex: Rapid Assessment Methodology

Using a mixed-methods approach, UNDP's 2024 rapid assessment aims to capture insights on the state of governance dynamics that feature anticipatory, adaptiveness, and agility elements across four countries — Fiji, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and India. The approach combines qualitative and quantitative inputs with interviews conducted virtually to ensure flexibility, accessibility, and resource efficiency.

1. Data collection

To gather a diverse set of perspectives, the assessment integrates five complementary methods:

- *Stakeholder interviews* – Semi-structured interviews with representatives or focal persons from key government agencies, civil society organizations, and private sector, along with experts from UNDP Country Offices. Discussions offer contextual insights into governance systems and their on-the-ground application.
- *Online surveys* – Form-based surveys are administered to collect standardized data. The questionnaire includes both closed-ended items (capturing demographic information and governance metrics) and open-ended questions (eliciting experiences, constraints, and recommendations).
- *Focus group discussion (FGD)* – A multi-stakeholder FGD validates emerging findings, surfaces divergent viewpoints, and deepens understanding of institutional dynamics.
- *Desk research and policy scans* – A structured review of country cases, national plans, governance reforms, and public-sector initiatives. This is mainly used for India.

2. Stakeholder coverage

The pilot survey and consultations engage a targeted yet diverse set of respondents:

- *Government officials* – Selected based on policy and system-level roles, including representatives from the National Innovation Agency (Sri Lanka).
- *Private sector representatives* – Perspectives on regulatory environments, public-private collaboration, and barriers to innovation.
- *Civil society organizations* – Insights on transparency, inclusiveness, service delivery, and community-level governance experiences.

The rapid assessment engaged ten online survey respondents and conducted seven multistakeholder discussions and one FGD. Consultations were held with focal points from four UNDP Country Offices (India, Fiji, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka).

3. Analytical approach

Insights from interviews, online surveys, FGDs, and desk research were triangulated using a common analytical framework to assess the state and operationalization of governance capabilities. The analysis involved identifying strengths, bottlenecks, and opportunities for enhancing dynamic governance across country contexts.

4. Limitations

The analysis had significant limitations. It relied largely on self-reported data from interviews and online surveys. This added to the richness and depth of the information but was also open to respondent bias so insights should be considered as indicative rather than exhaustive.

Endnotes

- i. Read more on this in Chapter 5 of the UNDP's 2024 Asia-Pacific Regional Human Development Report
- ii. For a more comprehensive evolution of definition of dynamic capabilities according to IIPP, see Annex 2 of the report "Assessing Dynamic Capabilities in City Governments: Creating a Public Sector Capabilities Index"
<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/publications/2025/oct/assessing-dynamic-capabilities-city-governments-creating-public-sector-capabilities-index>
- iii. The Declaration on Future Generations is published here:
<https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sotf-declaration-on-future-generations-rev3.pdf>
- iv. The FutureGov High Impact Initiative is premised on the fact that current gaps in public sector capabilities present, in many instances, an acute obstacle to the achievement of the SDGs – hence, member states must adopt a renewed sense of purpose and urgency towards public sector transformation to reach the ambition of Agenda 2030. For more information, please visit <https://futuregov.org/>
- v. Link to the 2024 OECD Recommendations:
<https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0503>
- vi. Link to the 2019 OECD Declarations:
<https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/oecd-legal-0450>
- vii. UNDP Viet Nam's pioneering Adaptive, Agile and Anticipatory Governance (AAAG) framework, was developed in 2019 through iterative learning with partners. The framework emerged from the #NextGenGov initiative launched in 2018, as part of UNDP's endeavor to define the support needed for governments to deliver sustainable development amidst various global trends.
- viii. Underpinning this is the understanding that sustained and broader stakeholder participation means more evidence to inform government decision making, as well as having the channels/means to receive new information as conditions change. For instance, different participatory approaches such as expert panels can help with long-term scenario planning, while focus group discussions, particularly with specific demographics or marginalized groups, can help governments better understand current needs and how they may evolve. See Table 5.2 in the 2024 Asia-Pacific Regional Human Development Report for more examples of this in practice.
- ix. This refers to the internal report "Governance for the Future and Digital Transformation Service UNDP Asia-Pacific: Dynamic Capabilities: Anticipatory, Adaptive and Agile Governance"
- x. The assessment combined surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions involving government officials, civil society, the private sector, and UNDP country teams. Refer to Annex: Rapid Assessment Methodology for more details on the methodology of the assessment.
- xi. CoWIN (Winning Over Covid-19) is the official platform for managing COVID-19 vaccination in India See details in link: <https://www.cowin.gov.in/>
- xii. PRAGATI (Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation) is an ICT platform existing in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) that reviews and monitors various governmental projects across the country. See details in link: <https://egovernance.vikaspedia.in/viewcontent/e-governance/digital-india/pragati-platform?lgn=en>
- xiii. Meanwhile, Sri Lanka made progress on digital and AI strategy. Leadership is also often cited as a positive example in that regard, according to the findings from UNDP's Rapid Assessment.
- xiv. The data analysis in this section presents simple correlations and does not infer causation. The observed relationships may be subject to omitted variable bias and/or reverse causality.
- xv. This links to the importance of adaptability, which will be discussed shortly.

Endnotes

xvi. It is based on the question, “In your country, to what extent does the government have a long-term vision in place?” See details in link: <https://www3.weforum.org/docs/GCR2018/04Backmatter/3.%20Appendix%20C.pdf>

xvii. See details about The Smart Nation Vision in the link: <https://www.smartnation.gov.sg/about/our-vision/smart-nation-vision/>

xviii. See the article on the TraceTogether application here: <https://web.archive.org/web/20210422092839/http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/trace-together-safeentry-malls-workplace-jun-1-app-tok-en-covid-19-14671116>

xix. This indicator captures the degree to which a government can adapt policies, institutions, and regulations in response to shifting economic, social, and technological conditions.

xx. The BTI’s Policy Coordination indicator assesses how well a government coordinates conflicting objectives into coherent policy. A high score (10) signifies effective, coherent action, while lower scores (0) reflect increasing friction and fragmentation, down to a complete failure to coordinate. See details in technical codebook. https://bti-project.org/fileadmin/api/content/en/downloads/codebooks/BTI2024_Codebook.pdf

xxi. See details of the MySejaterah app in “COVID-19 and social wellbeing in Malaysia: A case study.” Link: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8435184/>

xxii. See Rwanda’s IrengoGov platform: <https://irengo.gov.rw/>

xxiii. Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) refers to shared systems like digital ID, payments, and data exchange that act as a country’s “digital roads.” UNDP champions inclusive, rights-based DPI as a critical accelerator for the SDGs. Through its work in over 100 countries, UNDP helps nations build their own DPI ecosystems to ensure no one is left behind in the digital transformation. See details in link: <https://www.undp.org/digital/digital-public-infrastructure>

xxiv. For detailed practices under each sub-component, see UNDP’s 2024 Asia-Pacific Regional Human Development Report on Governance for the Future.

xxv. The Chandler Good Government Index (CGGI) “Leadership & Foresight” indicator assesses how public sector leaders impact public trust, create cultures of integrity and service, and cultivate the foresight needed to anticipate emerging challenges. It encompasses five key components: Ethical Leadership, Long-Term Vision, Adaptability, Strategic Prioritization, and Innovation. See details in <https://chandlergovernmentindex.com/technical-annex-terms-and-conditions/>

xxvi. The Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) indicator measures how wide the range of consultation is when important policy changes are being considered—ranging from no consultation (decisions made by a narrow leadership circle) to broad consultation engaging actors across the political spectrum, business, and civil society. See details in <https://www.v-dem.net/documents/55/codebook.pdf>

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