Global Lessons in Digital Resilience

Event Summary | 26 June 2025

As disasters grow in frequency and complexity, governments around the world are increasingly turning to digital technologies to mitigate risk, accelerate response and strengthen recovery. This global event, part of the World Bank's Tokyo Digital Academy programme supported by Apolitical, brought together experts from Japan, Singapore and beyond to explore what digital resilience means in practice — and how public servants can design and manage digital infrastructure to withstand crises.

The virtual session, hosted by **Chris Ferguson**, VP Government & Public Sector at Apolitical, opened with remarks from the World Bank's Global Director for the Urban, Resilience and Land Global Department, **Ming Zhang**, who stressed the need for digital infrastructure to be inherently resilient and built with continuity, redundancy and reliability at its core. With each dollar invested in resilience generating up to four dollars in returns, the imperative is clear: governments must act now to embed resilience into digital systems before disaster strikes.

The first set of case studies, delivered by **Gaku Takabayashi** (Consultant) and **Takehiro Ishimatsu** (Senior Consultant) of the Nomura Research Institute, explored how Japan is leveraging digital technologies across three critical areas: disaster victim management, situational assessment and information soundness. Japan's digital platforms integrate multiple data sources, from resident information to satellite imaging, to ensure rapid identification, communication and service delivery for affected citizens. Case studies included the use of transportation cards for identity verification during evacuations and AI-driven tools for damage assessment and pump placement during floods.

In a second Japanese case study, **Yasuhiro Kuriyama**, Director of the Disaster Management Office in the Chubu Regional Development Bureau, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, presented the "TechForce" application used during infrastructure recovery. By uploading field data directly to the cloud, response teams reduced administrative burdens and accelerated damage reporting, allowing outdoor and office teams to work in parallel.

Singapore's contribution came from **Hsiao Ming Chia**, Director of Core Engineering Products at GovTech Singapore, who outlined the government's shift toward a shared responsibility model for digital resilience in the cloud. Moving away from blame-based contracting and siloed accountability, Singapore's approach emphasises co-ownership across agencies, vendors, and

platform providers. Through the Government on Commercial Cloud (GCC) platform, GovTech has built in guardrails and monitoring tools to ensure all stakeholders understand their responsibilities in maintaining service continuity. This shift not only supports more resilient operations but also encourages transparency, better collaboration, and faster recovery when incidents do occur.

The event rounded off with a dynamic panel featuring **Stela Mocan**, the World Bank's Digital Government Practice Manager; **Yasuhiro Kawasoe**, a Disaster Risk Management Specialist at the World Bank; and **Aura Cifuentes,** a Fellow at Co-Develop and the former Digital Government Director at the ICT Ministry of Colombia. Key themes included the importance of local partnerships, data sovereignty and modularity in fragile contexts. Speakers also highlighted the value of building participatory, community-driven approaches that incorporate citizen-generated data, particularly in low-resource or rapidly changing environments.

Final remarks were given by **Idah Pswarayi-Riddihough,** a Global Director in the World Bank's Digital Vice Presidency. In her closing remarks, Idah emphasised the importance of cross-sector collaboration, data integrity and global knowledge-sharing as foundations for building resilient digital systems that truly serve citizens in times of crisis.

Key Takeaways

- Design for resilience from the start: Continuity, redundancy and reliability must be embedded in digital systems, not added later.

- Interoperability and identification matter: Unified data systems and practical identification tools, such as identity cards, enable fast response and recovery.

- Simulations improve preparedness: Testing cross-agency processes before disasters ensures smoother operations when they occur.

- Trusted, sound information is essential: AI-powered platforms and chatbots help verify data and reduce the spread of misinformation during crises.

- Shared responsibility unlocks resilience: Clear ownership, mutual trust, and transparent collaboration among public and private actors strengthen digital service continuity.