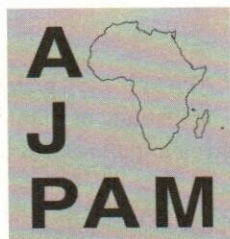


# African Journal of Public Administration and Management

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## CIVIL SERVICE NEUTRALITY IN ANGLOPHONE AFRICA: A MODEL FOR NEW MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACIES

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*Gatian F. Lungu*

### **Abstract**

The ideal of civil service neutrality rarely forms a subject of discussion these days, yet the need for a neutral public administration has become urgent now that several African states are re-introducing multiparty governance. This paper reviews the concept of civil service neutrality within the contextual experience of new multiparty states in Anglophone Africa. Among other things, it is argued that failure to observe the principle of political neutrality poses a great danger to the efficacy of public administration.

### **Introduction**

The theme of civil service neutrality (also referred to as administrative neutrality, political neutrality, and so forth), long suppressed by single party and military regimes, has once again surfaced with the re-introduction of multiparty democracy in several African countries. Nationalist leaders who led their countries to independence in the early 1960s quickly dismissed the concept as a bureaucratic myth at best, and as a neocolonial subversive doctrine at worst. This attitude towards civil service neutrality was supported by half-baked arguments from academics who held that public administration was a political institution but failed to elaborate on the political aspects they were alluding to (Bwalya, 1978). Thus, when one-party constitutions were introduced towards the end of the 1960s and early 1970s, the ground was already levelled for capricious politicization of civil service systems.

After more than three decades of excessive if not crude politicization of public administration, African civil service systems have lamentably failed to serve their societies effectively. Conference after conference has registered this failure which has in effect become one of the major aspects of the governance crises on the continent (Balogun and Mutahaba, 1989). The current administrative/management crisis in African states is rooted in factors that extend beyond the neutrality-politicization theme, but the latter has often been underestimated as a contributing source to the present crisis.

There has been a considerable degree of awareness, or a re-awakening, at least, at the level of rhetoric, in some democratizing states of Africa, of the need for politically neutral civil service systems. The post-apartheid South African constitution, for example, has a chapter solely devoted to the creation of a neutral public service. Current civil service regulations in Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Lesotho, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe stipulate that both civil service systems and officials must remain politically neutral. After winning the 1991 multiparty general elections Chiluba was on record as calling for a "neutral civil service" in Zambia, after what he described as excessive politicization under Kaunda's one-party rule (Chiluba, 1992).

However, despite constitutional provisions and platitudinous pronouncements, the reality of civil service neutrality in Africa's new democracies remains confused and often contradictory. In South Africa, for example, cabinet ministers - i.e., politicians - approve appointments to the civil service beyond the "posts of confidence", and usually on the basis of what has popularly come to be known as "politically correct" candidature. Shortly after defeating Kaunda and replacing the one-party state in Zambia, Chiluba dismissed almost 50 per cent of permanent secretaries and almost all heads of units including the army, airforce, police, intelligence services and parastatal managers, and replaced them with party faithful, and often with names from his language group (Times of Zambia, 10 January, 1992). The Lesotho ruling party is known for making partisan appointments to permanent civil service positions, and for curtailing local government decentralization for fear that opposition groups might gain ground.

In almost all new multiparty states of the Anglophone group there is a discrepancy between the espoused ideal of civil service neutrality and the practice of continued politicization of the same. This calls for serious re-examination of the concept of neutrality, and the design of a model that can take adequate cognizance of political realities of contemporary Africa. This article undertakes this twofold task by reviewing the concept of civil service neutrality within the context of a multiparty liberal democracy, and by proposing a model that would hopefully enable civil services and civil servants to both be responsive to political will and operate neutrally.

A word on the phrase 'multiparty liberal democracy' is in order here. The liberal multiparty democratic state is singled out here, not because it is the only form of democracy or the one preferred by the author, but because political



developments in the 1990s have clearly shown that those African states that claim to be democratizing have chosen, or have been urged to choose, this type of governance.

## **I. The Concept of Civil Service Neutrality**

The notion of administrative neutrality evokes mixed if not contradictory reactions from among both academics and practitioners. Some argue, with some justification, that the civil service (i.e., public administration) is by nature a political institution, and therefore, to advocate that it should be neutral is to engage in absurdity. Esau (1997:11) observes that:

*public officials operate under political leadership, and they serve political ends...Indeed the political nature of government administration has earned it the qualificative public to distinguish it from other types of administration.*

In addition to serving political ends, civil services play political roles themselves: they are parties to policy formulation and implementation, and in several instances engage in subtle political activities. The dichotomization between politics and administration which had occupied public administration theorists since Woodrow Wilson (1887) is no longer a tenable contention, an ineluctable fact that has led authors like Mainzer (1973) to title his book 'political bureaucracy'.

These salient features of public administration lead some scholars and practitioners to a simplistic conclusion, namely, that arguments in favour of neutrality are misplaced. They are all out for politicization, and regard advocates of neutrality as hypocrites. In contrast, some supporters of neutrality regard it as a weapon to be used in direct confrontation with politicians who are perceived as bent on tempering with the professional norms of the civil service. However, the reality of the civil service- politics interface in liberal democracies is not accurately captured by either position.

An examination of several definitions reveals that civil servants and politicians relate to each other harmoniously in various ways, or there would not have been the art and profession of public administration. Finer, one of the early commentators on the concept, defines neutrality in the following manner:

By neutrality is meant impartial service with equal loyalty rendered to any chief of whatever incoming political party .... It requires of the civil servant that he exercise all his talent and intellectual gifts and that he use appeal (not force) of character to advise on the value to the nation of the minister's declared objective and yet yield to him when that objective has been decisively fixed by the former (Finer, 1965:436).

A few instructive points emerge from this definition. First, neutrality is equated with impartiality of advice and service to elected politicians of any party. This neutrality is partisan neutrality. More important in Finer's definition is the inclusion of the civil servant in the decision making process. It dispels the view that neutrality confines administrators to implementing decisions, for they are part and parcel of the formulation process. A second important point made in Finer's definition is the civil servant's commitment to political goals; but these goals are national rather than partisan goals. The phrase in the quotation "to advise on the value to the nation of the minister's declared objective" underscores the point that the civil servant's political commitment is to national goals rather than to partisan interests.

However, Finer's definition of neutrality has some shortcomings. For example, he does not make any reference to the manner of appointing civil servants. One important feature used to classify civil service systems into politicized and neutral ones is the manner of appointing and promoting permanent officials. When permanent officials are appointed on partisan considerations, the civil service is said to be politicized; and if appointed on the basis of merit, and by an independent public service commission, the civil service is said to be neutral. Stahl observes that the concept of a neutral civil service embraces the merit principle which he defines as:

*recruiting, selecting and advancing employees on the basis of their relative ability, knowledge and skills, including open consideration of qualified applicants for initial appointments...assuring fair treatment of applicants and employees without regard to political affiliation, race color, national origin, sex, religious creed, (and) assuring that employees are protected against coercion for partisan political purposes and are prohibited from using their official authority for the purpose of interfering with and or affecting the result of an election or nomination for office (Stahl, 1971:13).*



Thus, according to Stahl, a neutral civil service is one which applies meritocratic procedures in hiring and promoting officials, avoids political patronage (the spoils system), and one that does not utilize civil service programmes and officials for overtly partisan causes.

Both Finer and Stahl do not distinguish between officials who are political appointees (political executives) and permanent officials. It is common practice in both old and new democracies to appoint top officials on partisan basis. For example, American top executives are appointees of the incumbent president, and these are almost always partisan officials. Nonetheless, all officials employed permanently in the American federal civil service are subject to merit procedures.

In Anglophone countries the post of permanent secretary (or equivalent) is generally regarded as one of confidence (Lungu, 1998) and is filled by heads of government on partisan considerations. However, apart from the permanent secretary, all other civil servants below him/her are subject to merit procedures administered by public service commissions. The nature and size of political executives (i.e., posts of confidence) vary according to civil service traditions of respective countries, but all liberal democracies share one basic characteristic with regard to the civil service: they have rejected patronage or the 'spoils system' in appointing permanent officials.

Another element that should be considered in discussing neutrality is representativeness. This refers to the extent to which personnel in the civil service reflect the major demographic features of the society it serves (Kim, 1994). Such features might include race, gender, ethnicity/tribe and other significant elements of classification. Representativeness implies among other things equity in public employment. All major liberal democracies subscribe to the ideal of representative bureaucracy. Where certain sections of society are under-represented due to political oppression, affirmative action or preferential hiring is adopted in order to address historical imbalances. However, where representativeness through affirmative action is undertaken arbitrarily without plans, targets and support systems, then it ceases to be a mechanism of equity and could lead to the compromise of the ideal of neutrality. Wholesale and unplanned Africanisation programmes during the early years of independence in many African states furnish excellent examples of representativeness that was more capricious than edifying to the development of civil service systems (Lungu, 1980).

Neutrality has another element which is not readily captured in the literature, namely the rendering of public services to clientele in different categories without unjustifiable discrimination:

*Officials should apply rules and regulations impartially when serving members of the public regardless of personal, ethnic, racial or any other considerations that have been explicitly declared irrelevant in a given democratic state (Lungu, 1993: 11).*

Thus when a public bureaucracy serves its citizenry in a discriminating manner, it violates the ideal of neutrality. However, in certain cases the state makes rules for preferential treatment of certain groups in the area of public services: for example the special treatment accorded to the physically and socially handicapped and the aged. Such preferential treatment does not violate impartiality; on the contrary it actually enhances it by attempting to treat citizens equitably (as opposed to giving the same treatment).

From above definitions it is possible to construct a profile of civil service neutrality as it applies to the contemporary liberal democratic state.

First, neutrality does not require that appointed officials insulate themselves from elected politicians, as some civil servants have unfortunately attempted to do. Rather it must be acknowledged by both sides that politicians and civil servants tread the same path for the most part of their work.

Second, neutrality does not mean a lack of political commitment on the part of the civil servant to national goals; rather it demands that they avoid overtly partisan agendas and bear the national interest in mind when advising ministers of any political party.

Third, neutrality does not mean avoiding civic responsibilities like voting during national elections. In fact, in certain liberal democracies where constitutional governance and the bureaucratic culture are well entrenched, civil servants are permitted to join political parties and even stand for political office. We shall return to this point later, but what needs to be noted here is that civil servants' neutrality is demonstrated by the fact that they do not play openly partisan roles when discharging their official duties. Permanent officials cannot cultivate or pursue partisan allies or foes in their official capacity.



Finally, neutrality, as Finer's definition above indicates, does not mean that the civil servant has no position to take. One of the participants in the neutrality-politicization debate bluntly put it this way:

*It is an abuse of administrative neutrality for the civil servant to avoid personal involvement in public decisions, or as a justification for hanging tightly to the coat tails of those bearing political responsibility (Marx, 1957:137).*

Thus, according to Marx, an official who cannot take a position when advising politicians, or accepts to be bullied by politicians into accepting or implementing decisions he/she perceives to be constitutionally improper, is not behaving neutrally but irresponsibly.

The above interpretation of civil service neutrality suggests that it is not a concept that excludes politics in absolute terms, but rather it incorporates political realities (i.e., commitment to national political goals) while avoiding those aspects of politicization that are capricious and could impair and compromise the integrity of the civil service. It must, nonetheless be pointed that civil service neutrality is not an end in itself: rather as various authors from Wilson (1887) through Weber (1968) to contemporary commentators have observed, liberal democracies need to be served by competent and committed yet politically impartial officials to deliver the goods to the public. By contrast, a negatively politicized civil service - one based on the spoils system, on unjustifiable partiality, and overtly partisan in its outlook - is doomed to inefficiency and ineffectiveness as well as to maladministration.

## **II. A Review of Current Practice**

The operationalization (or more appropriate, the negation) of the concept of civil service neutrality in the new multiparty states of Anglophone Africa varies from country to country, but is generally recognized as being problematic. Constitutionally, all new multiparty states subscribe, either within the constitution itself or through subsidiary legislation or statutory instruments to the ideal of a neutral civil service. Chapter 10, Section 195 (1) of the South African constitution stipulates that:

- (a) a high standard of professional ethics must be promoted and maintained,....

- (d) services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias (South Africa, 1996:107).

The same chapter contains provisions for a public service commission which:

*is independent and must be impartial, and must exercise its powers and perform its functions without fear, favour or prejudice in the interest of the maintenance of effective and efficient administration and a high standard of professional ethics in the public service (South Africa, 1996:108).*

The **White Paper** on which this chapter draws heavily states that civil servants in the post-apartheid era should be "faithful to the constitution, non-partisan and loyal to the government of the day" (South Africa, 1995:9).

Constitutional provisions in other Anglophone multiparty states are reproduced in subsidiary legislation such as civil/public service acts and civil service regulations. Civil service regulations establish public service commissions on lines similar to that of South Africa.

Constitutional stipulations notwithstanding, the ideal of civil service neutrality is honoured more in the breach than the observance. The South African case is again highly illustrative. With effect from 1994, the public service adopted the practice - common to all Anglophone states on the continent and beyond - of appointing incumbents to the highest civil service post, that of director-general, on partisan basis. It is regarded as a post of confidence, but the South African practice as it has unfolded over the past four years is different from that found in other Anglophone states. In the latter, permanent/principal secretaries are appointed by the head of government at his/her discretion, and in several cases on the advice of the public service commission. Thus in Kenya, Lesotho or Zambia, for example, appointment to the post of permanent secretary may or may not be based on strictly partisan basis (Lungu, 1998b). However, the South African director-general at both departmental and provincial levels is personally hand-picked by a minister and premier respectively, with partisan, if not personal, considerations weighing heavily. Thus, unlike in other Anglophone states where executive presidents appoint the highest ranking officials, the South African state president is not involved in appointing director-generals, except the one for his/her office.



The involvement of the minister goes further in South Africa: all appointments in the department or province must be personally approved by the minister heading the department or the premier in the province. Muthien (1997) a member of the newly constituted South African Public Service Commission, argues that the delegation of its functions of hiring and firing to departments and provinces with the direct involvement of the minister or premier - both elected politicians - is "creative decentralization".

Indeed, many practising senior officials defend the involvement of the minister and premier in civil service appointments within the department or province on grounds that it is an effective way of removing recalcitrant officials inherited from the former apartheid bureaucracy. Although the minister or premier cannot dismiss officials below the rank of director-general, the South African experience shows that it has become addicted to accepting civil servants who are, to borrow a popular term, 'politically correct', that is those who accept the minister's partisan agendas without question.

The experience of other Anglophone African countries has been slightly different in terms of appointment of officials. Permanent secretaries, as holders of positions of confidence, have been appointed by executive presidents on the advice of public service commissions, themselves appointed by presidents and often accountable to him/her rather than to the legislature. Permanent secretaries are most 'impermanent' (Lungu, 1998b) and are removed at the discretion of the executive president. However, all other officers below the permanent secretary are appointed by public service commissions. Additionally, all public service appointees are subject to the conventions of civil service neutrality inherited from Britain at independence. Although these practices had been modified during the one-party era, they have been re-introduced in those states that have returned to multiparty governance. Standing Orders forbid civil servants from joining political parties, and from seeking elections to political office. Mutahaba's observation of civil service neutrality in Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia before one-party states were introduced in the countries captures what has been re-introduced in new multiparty states:

*No officer, without express government permission, was to 'publish in any manner anything which may be reasonably regarded as of a political nature, whether under his own name, under a pseudonym or anonymously'. Civil servants were not permitted to stand as candidates for political elections unless they first resigned from their posts. They*

*were also not allowed to form or join any political associations - the ground being that such political association was 'not consistent with the duties and obligations of a public servant who is required to carry out the government's policy unbiased by any political view he may hold'.*

They were also barred from issuing public statements or voting at party meetings (Mutahaba, 1989:116). A few of these requirements had been relaxed during the one-party era, but they have been reactivated in the 1990s in the civil service regulations of all multiparty states in the Anglophone group.

Certain prohibitions have not been problematic in practice: civil servants have generally steered out of partisan politics, and public service commissions have been in charge of civil service matters. However, the experience of most Anglophone countries has revealed serious problems with the following issues: the use of civil service for overtly partisan agendas, the appointment to posts of confidence of officials who come from particular ethnic/tribal groupings, and the under-representation of women generally at senior civil service levels.

In recent multiparty elections in Kenya, Lesotho, Zambia and Zimbabwe civil servants attached to electoral commissions, government owned media, as well as the police were pressured into favouring the ruling party. These instrumentalities of the state ignored demands from opposition parties for evenhandedness, and in the case of the police, harassment of opposition party members replaced impartiality. Electoral officers engaged in blatant rigging of elections, while in Zambia for example, the courts were coerced into passing judgement in favour of the government (Human Rights Watch/Africa, 1997). Local authorities were pressured to refuse granting trade licenses to prominent members of the opposition, while tender boards excluded bids from companies owned or associated with opposition leaders.

An excellent example of the violation of the ideal of neutrality has been the appointment of officials on tribal basis. Zambia is the most eloquent example of a new multiparty state that has appointed officials (especially to posts of confidence) on tribal lines. Immediately after winning the 1991 general elections, Chiluba and the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) abandoned the old policy of ethnic balancing pursued by Kaunda, and replaced most incumbents in posts of confidence with people from his language group



- the Bemba-speaking group. The same addiction to tribal appointments is reported in Kenya and less so in Zimbabwe.

A related problem has been the under-representation of women in senior grades of the civil service in almost all Anglophone multiparty states (Lungu, 1989; Botswana, 1994; South Africa, 1997). The continent-wide struggle for the Africanization of civil service systems in the early years of independence over-emphasized the element of race to the exclusion of gender. Even in countries like Botswana and Lesotho where university enrolments are slightly more in favour of women in the social sciences, females are very under-represented at the levels of permanent secretary and deputy-permanent secretaries. Maphunye observes that of the 26 permanent secretaries in the Botswana civil service in 1994 only 1 was a woman (Maphunye, 1996:4-5). Nketsi (1997:23) reports that out of 37 permanent secretaries in the Lesotho civil service in 1993 only 2 were women; out of 29 deputy permanent secretaries 10 were women, and out of 18 directors/commissioners 8 were women. Both Botswana and Lesotho have population ratios of 1 to 5 in favour of females due to high male labour migration to neighbouring South Africa.

The under-representation of women in senior civil service systems cuts across all countries in the Anglophone group, though each faces varying levels of the problem. The disturbing aspect of this problem is that apart from South Africa, and to a lesser degree Namibia, both governments' civil society are not engaged in a serious discourse, let alone debating serious programmes on women representation in higher civil service grades. Under-representation of women in higher echelons of the civil service violates the ideal of neutrality because it is based on biased historical and socio-cultural factors.

### **III. Towards a Model of Civil Service Neutrality**

What emerges from the preceding section is the fact that current practice with regard to civil service neutrality in Anglophone Africa's new multiparty states is fraught with problems, among them:-

- lack of clarity on the concept of neutrality arising from the absence of discourse both at theoretical and practical levels, especially as states are adopting multiparty constitutions in the 1990s;
- contradiction between constitutional provisions for a neutral civil service and the practice of appointing and/or excluding officials

- especially in senior grades on partisan, ethnic/tribal and gender basis;
- lack of specification on the number and levels of political appointees (political executives, or holders of posts of confidence),
- inflexible policies prohibiting civil servants from engaging in partisan politics, thus in a way denying them their political rights as citizens; and
- the failure of public service commissions to defend the principle of neutrality in the face of capricious interference from politicians.

A model of neutrality in new democratizing Anglophone African states must, therefore, seek to address these issues within the context of each country's political and administrative history. Much has been said on the need to develop "home-grown models" to underpin the operation of institutions, but a realistic model must accomplish two tasks: first, it must consider the needs of, and realities obtaining in, a given country, and second, it must seek to borrow and adapt practices from successful experiences elsewhere that are relevant to African contexts. The model proposed below attempts to accomplish both these tasks.

## **Elements of the Model**

### ***(i) Commitment to National Ideals and Goals***

The first component of the proposed neutrality model is the commitment of officials to broad national political ideals, institutions and goals. It has already been noted in an earlier definition that neutrality does not exclude officials' commitment to national political goals. In the case of Anglophone states that have adopted liberal democracy, national goals and values like popular sovereignty, equality, respect for human rights, accountability, transparency and others enshrined in the constitution must act as guides to official conduct. The civil servants' actions and advice to politicians must be guided by the national interest.

### ***(ii) Merit as the Basis for Appointment and Promotion.***

A second, yet fundamental, element of the proposed neutrality model is the emphasis on merit as the criterion for appointment and promotion at the career levels of the civil service. This implies that public service commissions assume



the full responsibility for civil service posts, save for the positions of confidence. The current practice by the South African public service commission in which the minister is involved in approving appointments of civil servants beyond posts of confidence should be discontinued. Muthien (1997:12) proudly states that the South African practice is meant to allow the commission to check on "political executives". Public service commissions are not watchdogs of politicians and ministers. The commissions are created to ensure an efficient and neutral civil service. Public service commissions must themselves be independent from undue pressures from the chief executive, as is currently the case in many Anglophone states. Presidents appoint commissioners who act on his/her behalf. Rather than be accountable to the chief executive, the commissions must answer to the legislature - although it is recognized that most African legislatures have become too subservient to heads of state, due to the dominant role of the ruling party (Africa Analysis, 1998:5). Merit is interpreted here in broad and dynamic terms to include facilities, programmes and resources of developing, skilling and re-skilling officials, especially those on affirmative action appointments.

### *(iii) Realistic Partisan Neutrality*

A third important element, one that flows logically from the merit principle, is partisan neutrality. Given the continent-wide tendency for governments to use civil services for partisan ends, it is recommended here that African states initially confine their civil servants to low-level political activities, say for the first ten (10) years. Kernaghan and Langford (1991) identify low-level political activities as: the right to vote for parties of their choice, belonging to a political party but without being actively involved in partisan debates and speeches. However, until the democratic culture stabilizes, African civil servants should not be allowed to be party activists or to seek political office, unless they resign from their posts. This restriction should be reviewed periodically, and relaxed according to the category or level of civil service. The latest practice in Britain is that the lowest level of the civil service is allowed to engage in partisan politics without restrictions, the middle level group is allowed limited partisan involvement, while the high or top level group is still prohibited from engaging in partisan politics of any kind because of their direct involvement in advising ministers (Kernaghan and Langford, 1991).

Arguments have been advanced for the introduction of continental European models where civil servants are free to engage in partisan politics and even

seek elections without first resigning their posts. This, in fact, has been the model followed in Francophone Africa. However, there has been no information on the efficacy of this model in Francophone Africa; and it should be borne in mind that continental European bureaucracies developed well before democratic political systems, and civil servants know where to draw the line between their state and partisan roles. The African situation, especially in the Anglophone zone, is the opposite: both bureaucracy and multiparty democracy are relatively new to the majority of the population, and to allow bureaucrats to fully participate in partisan politics at this early stage of democracy is to court disaster. A realistic approach would be to take an evolutionary perspective: review the level of democratic maturity in each country, and relax partisan restrictions on civil servants according to their readiness to distinguish state and partisan roles in practice.

*(iv) Posts of Confidence and the Involvement of Head of Government and the Legislature*

A fourth element in the model is to specify the types and size of posts of confidence in the public sector. At the present all top executive positions including those outside the civil service proper are treated as posts of confidence. A related issue is to determine the duration of tenure for posts of confidence, as South Africa had done for director-generals who are hired on a 5-year contract. The general trend in Anglophone Africa has been to subject incumbents of such posts to undetermined periods, often to the whims of the president, thus creating uncertainty and insecurity at the top level of the civil service system. A 5-year contract, or a contract that is concurrent with the life of the government is recommended because it makes for stability, predictability, and incumbents are not permanently stuck to ministries/departments, especially when they become ineffectual in discharging their jobs.

Another aspect of this element is that the head of government should nominate candidates to posts of confidence and legislatures or their select committees should ratify them. Currently many heads of governments appoint and remove such officials at their discretion, or in the case of South Africa where the head of government is not involved in appointing director-generals for various departments and provinces. There are several advantages in involving both the head of government and the legislature in filling posts of confidence. First, both the head of government and legislature are national institutions, and their involvement lends support to the ideal that appointed officials are national



rather than partisan actors. Second, the involvement of both the chief executive and the legislature could promote cooperation and co-responsibility for such appointments. In a continent dominated by presidentialism, such a joint venture is recommended. However, where parliaments are dominated by the ruling parties and have thus become fiefdoms for the chief executive, this proposal may make little sense.

A final issue to be raised here is that of titles for posts of confidence. In the civil service the traditional title inherited from Britain has been permanent secretary. This, however, has been found unsuitable, for in many countries these officials have been for the most part impermanent. Some countries have modified the title to that of 'principal' secretary, or simply secretary. However, South Africa use the title director-general, while Nigeria has reverted from that to the title of "permanent secretary". What is in a name? This author believes that when it comes to public service in a democracy job titles do matter, for they must be descriptive of the role of the officials concerned. The original title, permanent secretary, was adopted in Britain to denote two important aspects of the job: first that the officer represented the permanent part of government - the civil service - and second, that the role was subservient (i.e.: secretarial) to those of elected officials. The term 'secretary' denotes 'servant'. To abandon titles uncritically and adopt new ones without due regard to their functional symbolism is to mislead the public. It is thus recommended here that the title 'secretary' be maintained with possible qualificatives like 'principal' being added. Esau's argument in connection with the title director-general in the South African civil service is pertinent here:

The initial title of secretary, a modification of the British permanent secretary, is a more appropriate title for such an official in a liberal democratic state. It emphasizes the ideal that officials, no matter what their role in policy making might be, are servants and not directors of public policy in a liberal democracy. It is recommended here that the title revert back to that of secretary; it is functionally more descriptive and politically more neutral than the robust title of director-general (Esau, 1997:53, emphasis included).

#### ***(v) Monitoring Representativeness***

A fifth element of the model is that of enforcing and monitoring representativeness on the basis of both gender and ethnicity/tribe. Targets must be set with regard to appointments and promotion of women in senior

grades as well as to posts of confidence. In many African countries women easily constitute more than 50% of national populations, and the gains of education have created a pool of educated women from where qualified candidates could be selected.

Ethnic balancing is equally important on a continent that has been long plagued by tribal conflicts and wars. Public service commissions should monitor the progress of gender and ethnic balancing, while creating support mechanisms like mentorships and training programmes for affirmative action personnel. Affirmative action programmes must be backed by mechanisms for compliance: those ministries/departments that fail to comply must be made to account and be punished if need be. It is important for new democracies to create civil service systems that the public can feel are open to all sections of the population, thus in this manner contribute to the legitimacy of multiparty governance.

#### *(vi) Guarding Against Partisan Abuse*

The sixth and last element of the model is to create a unit within the public service commission to guard against, and report on, the practice of using the civil service for partisan, and often personal interests of ministers and senior officials. Current institutional checks and balances like the ombudsman, anti-corruption commission, the courts and others have failed to curtail the use of civil services for partisan ends. The proposed unit must have investigative and enforcement powers, including the authority to prosecute the party in power if found guilty. Instances to look for include license grants and renewals for businesses, title deeds for properties, police permits or refusal to give permits for meetings to various political parties, the denial of access to government-owned media to opposition groups, and a host of other public services. In some countries, notably Kenya, Zambia and Zimbabwe, members of opposition groups have been denied access to these facilities by civil servants on instructions from ruling parties. It is one way in which ruling parties weaken or harass the opposition (i.e., by suppressing the businesses of opposition leaders) in order to force the latter to join or rejoin the ruling party or fall into oblivion. A mechanism must be found, no matter how flawed, that promises to keep partisan abuses of civil services in check in Africa's new democracies.



## Conclusion

This article has discussed the ideal of administrative neutrality in relation to civil service systems in Africa's new multiparty democracies. The trend in these states is not yet clear, but they all have committed themselves to creating non-partisan bureaucracies based on merit criteria. However, the tendency of new multiparty governments is to show addiction to partisan interference in civil service systems beyond the posts of confidence. More than that, ruling parties in many Anglophone multiparty states use civil services to the disadvantage members of opposition groups while enhancing their parties' fortunes. A six-element model of neutrality has been proposed for consideration by Africa's new multiparty democracies. The elements emphasize civil servants' commitment to national political goals and working with the government of any political party. The model has also taken into consideration some elements that have been grossly neglected in current interpretation and practice of neutrality: unfair discrimination in appointments and promotion in civil services and other public institutions along the lines of gender and ethnicity, and in the case of Namibia and South Africa, race.

The final success or failure of the proposed model would depend on the strength of the culture of democracy that will emerge in these countries. Too many institutional changes and models have been tried in Africa over the past three and half decades of independence, and these have failed to take root. Part of the problem has been that models have been introduced in African polities that have scarcely been democratic. Little debate or discourse accompany such innovations in Africa, save for South Africa. Administrative neutrality is one such institutional feature introduced in Africa at independence without adequate debate and modification. Now that multiparty democracy is slowly returning to Africa, it is time that the ideal of neutrality was seriously examined and redesigned to fit emerging realities. One thing is certain: Africa's new democracies cannot be effectively served by partisan civil service systems: rather they need bureaucracies that can operate above partisan interests, backed by strong meritocratic procedures, to help address multiple crises of underdevelopment.

Lastly, if the culture of civil service neutrality is to be effectively established, it must transcend current practice which presents it as a mere constitutional provision or a civil service regulation. Rather, it must be presented as a value, among others, of democratic governance. Programmes of public administration



education and training in institutes and universities, and in-house induction or orientation programmes for new entries into the civil service must include exposure to the ideal of neutrality. In a continent where both bureaucratic culture and democratic values have shallow roots, value-engineering through education and training programmes is a viable alternative to traditions that scarcely exist in civil service systems.

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## CIVIL SERVICE REFORM IN ETHIOPIA

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*Asmelash Beyene<sup>1</sup>*

### I. Introduction

Ethiopia's long history has been marked by underdevelopment, poverty and an exploitative economic system. As a result, the administrative system that obtained under such circumstances was least developmental in its orientation. Its objective was to preserve the status quo, and its involvement in development was limited to the activities that benefitted the ruling class. It was only in 1900 that Emperor Menelik laid down the foundation for modern administrative institutions. This was followed by **qualitative and quantitative** changes during Emperor Haile Selassie's regime. But it was only in 1961 that a merit-governed civil service system was put in place.

Until the overthrow of the Mengistu regime in May 1991, Ethiopia has a centralized unitary government. Since then, following the establishment of the Transitional Government and subsequent promulgation of the Federal constitution, the centuries old centralized system was radically decentralized on the basis of ethnic settlement criteria.

Ethiopia had also dismantled the command economy it had erected during the Marxist oriented Derg regime and opted for a market oriented economy. The changes under way point to the magnitude of challenges posed by the radical nature of the reform efforts being instituted. The move from a highly centralized unitary state to ethnic federalism as well as the transition from a command to market-based economy would have tremendous implications for the public administration system in general and the civil service in particular. This paper deals with the civil service reform efforts launched under the Transitional government and its successor, the Federal government in response to the changes under way. The paper will discuss the reform programmes implemented by the Transitional Government under the first phase and then examine the elements of the civil service reform currently being launched by the Federal Government, the progress made to date and the challenges to be faced in realizing the goals of the reform effort.

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<sup>1</sup>*Opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and not those of the United Nations or any of its agencies.*

## **II. A Brief Background to the Civil Service Reform under the Transitional Government and FDRE**

Derg's 17 years (1974-91) rule was characterized by civil strife, an invasion by the Somali government troops, a secessionist movement in Eritrea which had been on since 1961, and an armed insurrection in Tigrai, one of the regions. Unable to cope with the economic and political pressure and with the rebel groups having the upper hand, the Derg collapsed in May 1991 when the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) forces took over Addis Ababa. At the same time, the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Force moved to Asmara ending a 30-year civil war and eventually declaring its independence.

On assumption of power, the EPRDF had to contend with a number of urgent tasks: demobilizing the 500,000 strong Derg army, setting-up a transitional administrative machinery, purging the bureaucracy of elements considered to be loyal to the ousted government and figuring out a political governance structure capable of holding the country together. It took some time before it could extend its control to all the regions, where following the collapse of the Derg Regime, an administrative and political vacuum was created. Practically all the regions in the country were without a police force and a functioning judicial system for a year.

Once the EPRDF established its control throughout the country, the challenge remaining for it was to address the economy that was in dire conditions. At the time of the collapse of the Derg Regime, GDP declined by 5.6 per cent, a record fall since the 1984/85 drought. The decline in per capita income during the period 1987/88 - 1990/91 averaged 3.7 percent per annum. Exhausted by war and recurring drought, over-burdened by debt and subjected to consistent decline in prices for its export commodities in the international market, the economy required urgent rehabilitation and recovery strategies.

As a result, the transitional government had to formulate its economic policy designed to rehabilitate, revitalize, and eventually transform, the war-torn economy. The command economy was to be dismantled and an economic policy based on market forces installed in its place. As a result of the new economic policy, the role of the state was to be reduced and focus on designing economic policies and mapping out economic development strategies; promulgating laws and regulations that foster economic development; encouraging the participation of the private sector through creating an enabling



environment; and designing, implementing and supervising the expansion of the infrastructure, research and development, manpower training, etc.. as a basis for economic expansion (Transitional Government, 1991:17-18). The transitional government's economic policy also prescribed a number of measures to be undertaken in the various sectoral areas, all advocating a diminished role of the state. It declared its intention to privatize the public enterprises under its jurisdiction save for those considered strategic. The transition from a command to market economy and the enhancement of the democratization process through decentralized power to the regions required restructuring measures as well as fundamental reorientation, organizational restructuring and system overhaul that are consistent with the new economic policy.

Following the 1991 National Peace Conference, EPDRF succeeded in setting up a transitional government drawing its council members and ministers from the newly forged nationality based alliance. The features of the newly constituted political system include a new ethnic based political map, extensive devolution of power to the regions and a new formula for unity - based on equality of nations and voluntary membership of the union. This new spirit and formula of governance was eventually incorporated in the new constitution that made Ethiopia a federal system of government. The new legislation shifted the locus of power from the centre to the regions, which are now endowed with organs of state power and administration. The regions appear, at least on paper, in charge of their affairs. They are fully responsible for the management of the respective regional civil service systems. With the exception of foreign affairs, finance and defence, they have authority to decide on all aspects of governance, either on concurrent or residual power sharing basis.

Apart from the extensive devolution of power, the regions also use their respective languages in the affairs of the state. This has a lot of implications for the running of government services in the respective regions. With the newly acquired power and responsibilities, the regions required extensive administrative machineries to execute policies. The extensive devolution and the use of local languages in the affairs of state meant not only finding competent professionals to staff the devolved functions but also make sure they belonged to the region and spoke the local language.

Past regional disparities in development also meant that only very few regions had reasonable access to education. Yet, while the idea of regional



empowerment was a welcome development, the wide powers given to the regions under the new arrangement was a problem for those that did not have an educated and trained cadre.

On assumption of power by EPRDF in 1991, it inherited a civil service with a staff of 236,410. This is in contrast to the 93,965 civil servants at the time of the revolution in 1974. Between 1974 and 1990, therefore, there was a 252 percent increase in the size of the civil service. The large expansion of the civil service took place during the Marxist military regime, which undertook extensive nationalization measures.

Considering the country's population of approximately 53 million and compared to other African countries of much smaller population, the size of the Ethiopian civil service is relatively modest. The professional and administrative levels make up a very small percentage. For instance, out of the 200,369 civil servants in 1986, only 8.4 percent were at the professional and administrative services. The rest were distributed among the sub-professional services (48.4 percent), clerical (17.7 percent), custodial and manual (17.2 percent), and others (2 percent) (Central Personnel Agency, 1986:10). As of June 1995, the size of the civil service at the Federal and Regional levels was estimated at 293,452. As a result of the devolution of power to the regions, the Federal Civil Service has been cut down to 45,963 (Federal Civil Service Commission, 1996:4) with the remainder assigned to the regions.

The new regime also inherited a Public Service Commission that operated under the regulations issued by the Imperial regime. It had over the years played the role of enforcing the personnel regulations and position classification scheme. In spite of its efforts to guard the merit principle in the civil service, it was not always successful in this regard. With Marxism taking root and the eventual establishment of the workers' Party of Ethiopia, merit increasingly gave way to political criteria in appointment and promotion. Satisfying the requirements of the job was not sufficient for upward mobility in the hierarchy. Membership of the party proved more valuable than technical suitability for the job. The politicization of the civil service and the consequent appointment and promotion on the basis of political allegiance led to decline in leadership quality, demoralization and demotivation of the civil servants.

The political and economic reforms undertaken by the Transitional Government inevitably required institutional reforms on the part of the public service to support the new system. Hitherto existing public service laws, procedures and policies required serious reassessment. The rules and regulations governing the inherited civil service were outdated and outmoded. Experience in the planned execution of activities was limited. The civil service lacked a structural set-up capable of effectively implementing, monitoring, and controlling the planned activities. Clearly defined management systems and procedures in the management of personnel, finance and/or property were lacking. Overall managerial know-how was inadequate and there was lack of standard job classification. Weaknesses in manpower planning and utilization were rampant. The prospects for privatization of government-owned establishments in line with the economic policy; the democratization process under way and the overall decentralization of the administration in the pipeline required a sober look at what the new role of the state should be and its implications for the operation of the civil service. Having inherited an economic system that had almost collapsed there was a serious decline in productivity. Rehabilitating the economy required effective and efficient utilization of the existing manpower in order to rectify the adverse economic conditions and put the economy back on course.

### **III. Civil Service Reform under the Transitional Government: Phase I**

The foregoing weaknesses, coupled with the challenges posed by the redefined role of the state, called for a serious restructuring exercise. The success of the newly introduced political and economic reforms was contingent on a public service that is efficient, stable and impartial with an effective machinery capable of executing government policies. This recognition led the government to establish an Inter-Ministerial Committee to review the public service, including the civil service. This marked the first phase of the civil service reform. The Inter-Ministerial Committee was made up of representatives of the Office of the Prime Minister as Chairperson, and members drawn from the ministries of Education, Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Labour and Social Affairs and the Public Service Commission as the Secretary to the Committee.

The Inter-Ministerial Committee was, among other things, charged with: Reviewing the appropriateness of the current structure of the government in light of the new economic policy and devolution; reviewing the current civil



service law in light of changing circumstances and decentralization attempts; and recommending ways of installing a civil service system that is cost-effective, accountable and efficient (Central Personnel Agency, 1995:2-4).

The Inter-Ministerial Committee established six technical committees to support its review work. They included the committees for the organizational restructuring; pay, allowances and working conditions; review of position classification; preparation of pertinent directives and civil service personnel management manuals; efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and optimal level review; and training programmes (training policy). The first phase of the civil service reform concentrated on restructuring line institutions, releasing excess manpower for redeployment elsewhere in the civil service or regions or retrenching those who cannot be absorbed.

### **Restructuring government institutions**

The most notable achievement of the first phase of the reform include: Restructuring central government institutions and preparing their manning plans. Seven ministries, five commissions, the Office of the Prime Minister and four other central government organizations were covered under the restructuring exercise. In the process, the ministry of state farm, coffee and tea development, the compensation commission and four agencies/commissions were dissolved. About 30 departments were reorganized and in some instances merged with others. In other cases their status changed to that of service organizations. The exercise declared 1,421 employees redundant in 14 ministries and commissions. By mid-1994, organizational structures and manning tables were approved for seven ministries and commissions (Central Personnel Agency, June 1994:30-32).

The minimum salary base for civil servants was substantially improved. The lowest pay for a civil servant was raised from Birr 50 to 105<sup>2</sup>. All civil servants were given salary increments after lifting the suspension of increment payments for many categories of civil servants that was in force during the Derg regime. Salary increments were approved for teachers, doctors and university professors, but revision of the current salary scale is still pending. A new civil service law is under consideration. The statute revising the powers of the former central personnel agency in light of the federal structure now in force was recently approved.

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<sup>2</sup> 1US\$ is equivalent to 6.8 Ethiopian Birr



## Managing redundancy and retrenchment

The restructuring exercise has resulted in removing redundant employees. The economic policy redefining the role of the state resulted in dismantling the command economy that was in force during the Derg regime. The closure of some institutions and streamlining the operations of those that remained under government control required removing redundant staff. However, the magnitude of retrenchment was not as severe as what had been experienced in other African countries. The chairman of the National Committee for the Implementation of the Retrenchment Policy, declared in an interview he gave to the Amharic magazine "Negat": "... Civil servants who, in the past, drew their pay without having enough to do have either been deployed to the regions where shortage of skilled manpower is acute or are assigned to various public service rendering organizations where vacancies exist" (Office of the Prime Minister, 1995:18).

The devolution of power to the regions was a blessing in disguise. With extended responsibility to run governmental activities in the regions, yet with very small trained staff, the regions were ready and willing to absorb manpower from the centre, provided they spoke the local language. Some of the regions that did not have a trained indigenous cadre were willing to settle for redeployed public servants from the centre even though they might not speak the local language. The government also devised a strategy for alleviating the social problems that could be encountered by redundant employees once the retrenchment took effect. As a result retrenched employees were redeployed to the regions and the centre wherever vacancies existed. Whenever this could not materialize, those employees who were above 45 years of age and having a minimum of 20 years service had their pension rights honoured. For those who could not be accommodated in either of the two ways, the government prepared a safety-net programme where the retrenched employees were embraced by projects capable of generating reliable income within a short period of time and to which the government made the necessary technical, financial and material support. Up to now three big dry cargo transportation projects have become operational. It is estimated that these projects will ultimately benefit 3,500 share-holding members. The objective is to make voluntary participants self-supportive by buying shares in these projects by the severance pay they are entitled to when leaving their jobs.

According to the officer in charge of the project: "In addition to the significant material support, the government has created favourable condition for redundant civil servants to obtain credit at low interest rate by establishing a revolving fund designed to enable them organize themselves into these projects. The government has also decided for these employees to continue obtaining their salaries until these projects gain legal status and organize themselves as share companies. (Office of the Prime Minister, 1995:19).

A recent unpublished government report provides a better picture of the extent of the redundancy programme undertaken. 679 employees were redeployed to the regions, of which 287 accepted the assignment and reported to their respective regions; 266 employees declined to take advantage of the proposed assignments and the assignment decisions for 126 employees were reversed due to personal and health reasons. 3,961 employees (2,897 men and 1,064 women) were retired and 4,114 employees received severance pay. 72 percent of the latter were from the civil service.

The safety-net projects organized to absorb the redundant employees are in the transport, general merchandise and hotel enterprises. The enterprises established and the size of the membership are indicated below:

**Table 1 List of Enterprises Established under the Safety Net Project**

Name of Share Company	Size of Male Membership	Size of Female Membership	Total Size of Membership
Nib Dry Cargo Share Company	957	241	1,198
Tarik Passenger and Dry Cargo Share Company	532	123	655
Abyssinia Dry Cargo Transport Share Company	1,020	744	1,764
Noah Dry Cargo Transport Share Company	967	392	1,359
Addis Fana General Merchandise and Hotel Business Share Company	859	562	1,421

Source: "Be Ethiopia Betedergew Ye Economy Mashashaya program hidet lagatemu ye serategna mefenakel yetewesedew ye mastekakaya ermijawotch zegeba", Nehassie 1988, Addis Ababa.



Of those employees covered under the safety-net programme, 42 percent were from the civil service proper, while the balance represented those from government-owned transport and other enterprises.

The financial cost of the retrenchment exercise is reported to be 30,000,000 Birr (US\$ 4,761,905) for compensation and salary payment and Birr 173,000,000 (27,460,317) for loans to finance the safety net projects. The above figures do not, however, include the number of employees who were laid off before the government retrenchment policy came into effect. 16,590 employees were retrenched from the State Farms and Buildings Construction, which were disbanded; maritime transit and the oil refinery in Assab, which had to be closed because of Eritrea's independence and other government agencies where the services of the employees were no longer considered necessary (perhaps because of the suspicion of their loyalty to the defunct Derg regime). The employees laid off included 6,442 permanent employees; 1193 contract employees; 8,955 temporary employees. So, all in all, the total number of civil servants retrenched is almost 30,000 at a total cost of some Birr 50,000,000.

#### **IV. Elements of the Civil Service Reform under the FDRE: Phase II**

The Task Force for Civil Service Reform succeeded the Inter-Ministerial Committee. It was established in November 1994 by the then Prime Minister, Ato Tamrat Layne, to spear head the second phase of civil service reform. The Task Force was composed of 9 senior government and civil service personnel, 22 experts who made up the sub-task forces, one international consultant and support staff. The Task Force submitted its terms of reference in December 1995 and resumed its assignment thereafter.

The six main areas of work of the Task Force were organization of top management; top management information systems; financial management and structuring; human resources management; central arrangements for organizing and managing the civil service and service delivery and quality of service.

The Task Force divided itself into the six sub-committees along the lines of responsibility outlined above. It developed extensive questionnaires on the various reform sub-themes. Study teams composed of the task force members were dispatched to a sample of central and regional government organizations



to undertake management audit on various aspects of the reform areas. Based on the information gathered through interviews, the Task Force compiled a list of recommendations and submitted its report to the Office of the Prime Minister in 1996. The recommendations are summarized below.

#### ***a. organization of central institutions***

The Task Force's recommendation called upon the PMO to introduce a culture of strategic planning, develop a clear vision of its role and responsibilities, define all aspects of line institution performance reporting, review its staffing needs and assume leadership for civil service management by establishing a unit on civil service management in the PMO. It also recommended that the allocation of financial responsibility between the four central government bodies should be re-examined. It called for the introduction of the culture of strategic planning in line institutions as well as in the regions. It proposed the creation of fora for discussion between central bodies and the regions and called on all government agencies to review their information needs and develop performance monitoring and evaluation plans. (Office of the Prime Minister, 1996:4).

#### ***b. expenditure management and control<sup>3</sup>***

The recommendations included the development of a comprehensive legal framework for the entire financial management of the civil service; re-orienting the budget to objectives and strategic plans; introduction of annual review of the effectiveness of the budgeting arrangements; review of budget classifications; development of budget manuals; revising the virement regulations allowing line institutions greater freedom to use of funds where central institutions concentrate adequate control over key areas; extensive improvements in the accounting system including supplementing the current single entry system with additional financial information on institution's assets, advances, debtor and creditor positions; improvements on enforcing line institution compliance with the accounting information deadline; introducing self accounting and developing their own chart of accounts; computerization of the accounting system; evolving a comprehensive system of management

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*The information relating to expenditure management and control, human resources management, top management systems, service quality and service delivery and ethics are summarized from the reports of the Task Force for Civil Service Reform, Volumes 104.*

of fixed assets and stocks; incorporating aid in kind into the accounting system, transferring national responsibility for internal auditing to the Ministry of Finance and granting broader power to the Office of the Auditor General in staffing by placing review arrangements in the Council of People Representatives.

### ***c. Human resources management***

The study group's recommendations on human resources management included, among other things, a call for the development of a civil service human resource strategy; development of expertise in human resources need analysis; instituting systems for staff projection and career profiling; preparation of annual staff supply projections; improving staff data base, improving current job specification and descriptions; reviewing effectiveness of current recruitment system; developing best practices manuals and guidelines for use in connection with various aspects of human resource management, revision of staff assessment procedures; revision of the promotion criteria; review of the remuneration and career structures for sub-regional posts; assumption of central responsibility for training in the civil service by the FCSC; introduction of training budgets in line institutions; central institutions to undertake training needs assessment and develop appropriate training for the civil service with their functional responsibilities; and incorporation in strategic plans of budgeting of staff according to objectives and targets.

### ***d. Top management systems***

In the area of top management systems, it was recommended that strategic planning and annual top management planning system be introduced; evaluation and reporting plans be developed in all institutions; best practice guidance be developed in establishing aims, objectives and targets; assessment of needs and definition of priorities, evaluation and reporting plans, evaluation methods and techniques and project management; guides and training on project management be developed; and training in strategic management for top management be launched.

As a way of strengthening responsibility, authority and internal accountability of institutional management, the study recommended that line institutions work out a comprehensive system of delegation of authority down to the division and team leaders.



#### *e. service quality and service delivery*

The study group recommended that a national policy on service delivery and quality of service be adopted; an annual award be established for institutional action on service delivery; responsibility for development of quality service be allocated to the Office of the Prime Minister; national standards for the management of quality of service be adopted; adequate arrangements for hearing and handling complaints be instituted in all institutions; measures be taken for the early possible establishment of the Ombudsman's Office; main service providers should consider establishing single point service delivery centres; introduce on pilot basis, projects on management of quality and service delivery and use the experience for producing best practice guides and management; and all institutions should develop quality of service improvement plans.

#### *f. ethics*

Even though, compared to other African countries, the violations of ethical standards may not be alarming yet, the rising trend in ethical violation seems to have become a cause for concern. The Civil Service Reform group looked at ethics in the civil service and recommended, as a way of slowing down the emerging trend and strengthening the ethical standards of the civil service, that a central body for management of ethical practices in the civil service charged with the responsibility for developing best practices and assisting institutions in adopting such practice be established. It also called for the review of the legislative framework on ethical practice in the civil service, review of civil service disciplinary regulations, establishment of a national campaign against ethical practices; encouraging investigatory reporting role for the mass media; improving education on ethics in appropriate higher education institutions; and reviewing the country's code of conduct.

### **V. Challenges and Prospects for the Future**

There is no doubt that the envisaged civil reform is both comprehensive and ambitious. The reforms are, unfortunately still at the preliminary stage. It is thus too early to talk about the impact of the reform. Clearly, the reform proposals have benefited from the personal attention given to it by the top leadership and donor support in footing the financial bill for some of the envisaged activities. But to ensure its sustainability, a number of additional



reinforcing measures have to be taken. Some of the issues that require further attention are highlighted below.

### *Need for vision and mission*

Although it is possible to piece together a sense of vision or mission of the reform from the different reports on civil service reform, there is no clearly articulated vision to guide the process. A clearly articulated vision, mission and strategic framework serves to remind everyone involved in the process as to the direction to be followed and the effort that has to be exerted to ensure success in realizing the objectives. It will give a clear and unambiguous idea of what kind of civil service the government wants to have in the next five to ten years and what has to be done to realize this.

### *Need for sustained political support*

As experience elsewhere has suggested, civil service reforms are not a one-shot affair. In a constantly changing environment, practices and institutions considered useful at one time may prove irrelevant after a while. Change is inevitable and continuous. So, it is important that governments do not expect that the reform initiative they have launched on one occasion would provide a perpetual solution. The reform effort requires sustained support if it is to succeed and make a lasting impact. The Ethiopian civil service reform appears to enjoy the full and enthusiastic support at the highest level. The recommendations have been blessed by the Prime minister and his Deputy and a mechanism for implementation has been put in place. A steering committee chaired the Deputy Prime Minister was established for the implementation of the programme. Three officials in charge of the programmes for human resources, expenditure control and management, service quality and delivery and an expatriate staff coordinating the civil service reform sit on the committee. The three programmes have assembled a number of local experts to formulate strategies and action plan for the implementation of the recommendations. This augurs well for success of the reform effort. But it is also important that the same enthusiasm is shared and sustained support mobilized at the ministerial level and at all levels in the line institutions. At the moment, the support and blessing seems at the level of the Prime minister and the Deputy. The Deputy Prime minister, who was closely associated with providing leadership and monitoring the activities of the reform committee had been recently relieved of his post on alleged unethical behaviour and another official has been appointed in his

place. It is yet to be seen how this new development will affect the momentum of the civil service reform.

Moreover, the civil service reform recommendations have not been presented for discussion and review by the council of Ministers. The areas identified in the second phase reform apparently reflected the concerns of the Ex-Deputy Prime minister (derived from his observations as Prime Minister of the Transitional Government) of the problems of the civil service and the expatriate coordinator's observation of what constituted bottlenecks in the management of the civil service.

### *Need for an effective institutional mechanism for implementation*

As Joan Corkery remarks: "...political commitment must be buttressed by the existence of an implementing agency with sufficient prestige and authority as well as the necessary intellectual and technical capacity to formulate and execute the reform programme". (Corkery, 1995:10). The civil service reform group has recommended that a unit for civil service reform be established in the Office of the Prime Minister. The nucleus has recently been set up composed of two expatriate staff and a few Ethiopians are expected to come on board. According to the coordinator, the unit will focus on quality control, providing basic policy direction, monitoring progress in the reform effort, facilitating the acquisition of internal and external consultants, liaising with lead federal and regional institutions on civil service reform matters, developing reform methodology and style and steering project documents through the steering committee of the civil service.

While the action taken so far is commendable, one wanders if a small unit within the PMO would have sufficient visibility, prestige and authority needed to make it credible in the eyes of its clientele group. Considering the novelty of some of the reform programmes for which little local experience exists, reliance on expatriate expertise is inevitable and unavoidable. But this strategy should include a conditionality requiring expatriate staff to adequately train counter-part personnel in the shortest time feasible. It is equally important to ensure that "it is the local officers who are in charge of the programme, with external agencies providing whatever additional technical support they require". Otherwise, the sustainability of the project after the departure of the expatriate staff might be put into question.



### *Encouraging ministers and other stakeholders to champion the reform effort*

It is important to involve the ministers and other stakeholders in the reform effort right from the beginning. Institutionalizing the process, ensuring that all actors are at the same wave length of reform, convincing every actor of the need to demonstrate how an improved civil service system is a necessary condition to the realization of the government's developmental efforts would go a long way in paving the road to success over the long haul.

### *Civil service reform should trickle down to the regions*

As alluded to earlier on, Ethiopia has embarked upon a decentralization exercise on a magnitude that perhaps has never before experienced in Africa. The post-independence era in Africa has been characterized by nation building efforts, even when minimum conditions for nationhood were lacking. Ethnicity was a political taboo. It has often been referred to as a cancer to be fought at all costs. Successive governments in Ethiopia, had like all other governments in Africa, tried to fight the ethnic sentiment but that did not prevent various ethnic groups from waging armed struggle against it in asserting their ethnic identity and getting their fair share of the national pie. It appears after several years of civil strife and war, Ethiopia caved in to ethnic pressures and finally created regions that are carved out of ethnic settlements and endowed them with extensive powers to run their internal affairs. This new development has indeed made the regions legally very powerful, but has also revealed their lack of capacity to effectively discharge their new responsibilities.

In view of the tendency of these regions to jealously guard their newly acquired powers, the government may be reluctant to push down the civil service reform effort to the regions. Delicate as the matter may be, it is important to bring the regions on the reform band-wagon as early as possible. The civil service reform must be owned by the regions, but lacking the experience and the expertise in the area, the Federal Government has both the moral and practical obligation to assist them in undertaking reform. Given almost the total control of the governments at the Federal and Regional levels by EPRDF, which practically contested the election alone and won it both at the Federal and Regional levels (following the boycott of the election by the opposition parties) it should not be difficult for EPRDF to rally the regions behind the civil service reform. Failure to mobilize the region behind the civil service reform, however, could seriously hamper the effectiveness of the operation of the federal civil service itself.



### *Capacity building is a must for civil service reform*

The proposed civil service reform package requires a massive capacity building effort in order to succeed. A seriously conceived human resources development programme would be required for effective implementation of the civil service reform. Training has to be extensively carried out to alleviate the gap in skills. The regions have to receive priority. The government has already embarked on training programmes for the "Woreda" level personnel, but this has to be done on a continuous basis and improved through feedback obtained from the trainees. The Civil Service College, recently established to train civil servants mostly from the regions, so far in the areas of economics, engineering, and law, has to be strengthened. Despite the urgency for public administration training, the Civil Service College has yet to include training in public administration in its programme of work. The College is supposed to give accelerated training so as to meet the critical shortage of trained manpower in the regions. Establishing the college outside the university system had enabled it not to be bound by the highly competitive standards required for entrance to the university. The college has made commendable beginnings but would need to be strengthened further so that it can become a credible institution.

In addition to the effort of the Civil service college, a number of civil servants drawn from the centre and the regions have been sent for undergraduate and graduate training in India in priority areas currently suffering from severe shortage of qualified professionals. The government has also embarked on distance education programme with the assistance of the Open University in the United Kingdom. Over two thousand civil servants are currently enrolled at certificate and diploma levels. Another interesting programme with the open university is the MBA programme, which was initially attended by members of EPRDF's top leadership. This programme is conducted over a three-year-period and entrance requirements are not stringent. The candidate's experience is weighted heavily and his or her performance during the course is more important than prior educational standards. This is indeed a novel approach which gives due credit to experience. It would, however, be useful to undertake a thorough study to determine the impact of the distance education programme on the performance of organizations. It is understandable that the government had to resort to a crash experience-driven programme to meet its demand for effective managers. However, it is important that a regular home-grown MBA and MPA programmes should be launched in one of the local universities so that the country can reap the benefits on a sustained basis. It would also prove

cost-effective and relevant in the long run as the training programme could be designed to reflect local problems and realities.

The Department of management and Public Administration of the Addis Ababa University need to be reactivated to meet the needs of the private sector and supplement the efforts of the administration components were merged as both were supposed to cater to the needs of the civil service and the public enterprises under the socialist-oriented Derg Regime. However, the re-definition of the role of state which recognizes the private sector's pivotal role in the economy, the extensive decentralization measures calling for capacity building to manage the regions, the need to reorient the civil service so that it could effectively support economic development would require strengthening both the public administration and management aspects of training, preferably separating the two to act as departments in their own rights. But it would not suffice to create the departments and leave them under-resourced as is the case at present.

The decision as to the future direction of the Ethiopian Management Institute, which had been subjected to endless studies by task forces and external consultants, has to be made urgently so that it can carry on with its job. The Ethiopian Management Institute should be demand-driven and cater to the needs of short term training and consultancy services to the private sector, state owned enterprises and NGOs.

Many government agencies are in dire need of re-tooling. They lack most elementary equipment and facilities that are required to ensure the minimum efficiency. For sure, Ethiopia is a poor country with many competing demands and priorities and as such it might not be possible to attend to all the problems it currently faces. But it is important to recognize the problem and take the necessary measures gradually. Priorities are many. Resources are too limited. It should, however, be recognized that the governments envisioned development activities cannot be achieved without adequately equipped efficient governmental machinery.

### ***Lean but adequately remunerated and trained civil service a must***

The current government had taken unprecedented bold measures aimed at redressing the poor pay in the civil service. The pay for teachers, which preceding governments had avoided and which as a result led to decline in quality of education and low morale among teachers, had been resolved. A



number of other measures were also taken to rectify the deficiencies in the pay scale of the civil servants. But commendable as the efforts taken so far may be, much more needs to be done if the civil service is to attract and retain the best.

Remuneration is uncompetitive against public enterprises and the private sector. The private sector pays up to 120 percent more than the civil service for comparable jobs. As the pay scale in force was introduced in 1972 with no adjustment for inflation, the pay rates have declined significantly. This situation coupled with the deliberate socialist policy of narrowing the gap in salary between the least and highest paid followed by the Derg has also resulted in considerable salary compression. The current difference in pay between the private sector and the civil service means the civil service has a long way to go before it could successfully compete for the most talented and skilled personnel in the market.

Training of civil servants is almost non-existent. When it is given, it is because there is external financing for it. There is no civil service training policy or central guidance and line institutions do not have training budgets. Under such circumstances, very few civil servants have had access to training opportunities. Yet the need for training has become grave and urgent with the situation further aggravated by regions which lack trained manpower to run the functions devolved to them.

Obviously, the government's ability to meet the challenges of adequately remunerated and trained personnel may not be possible to address the problem immediately. According to Peter Silkin, the Coordinator of the Civil Service Reform Programme, this is "a catch-22 situation": Too few civil servants. Too little revenue. Too little wages." In any case, recognizing the problem as central to the government's effort to create an efficient and dynamic civil service and putting a plan that would gradually make the public service salary competitive is an urgent task.

It is also important to make sure that reward in the public service is linked to performance. If everyone is treated alike, in spite of differential contributions he or she makes, it could lead to de-motivation and inefficiency. So the recommendation to link reward to performance must be pursued seriously.



### *Need for cultural re-orientation*

The civil service reform under way hopes to bring about efficiency and attitudinal changes on the part of the top leadership, managerial levels, workers and the public in general. Managerial behaviour and practice are expected to undergo serious qualitative changes. Ministers have to develop strategic orientation. They have to go beyond micro-management to the development of a strategic vision for the agencies that they lead. The current practice of Ministers allowing themselves to be bogged down by minor administrative detail, and of subordinate staff refusing to take responsibility, has to be changed.

Some of the reform areas such as service delivery and civil service ethics would require changing civil servant's "hardened attitudes" towards service and towards their diverse clientele. Where public officials had traditionally relished the status of masters rather than of servants, proclaiming customer friendly attitude, treating clients with respect and courtesy, delivering service on time would not result in overnight acceptance of the new values. It would require mobilizing the support of civil society and the private sector. This is something that would require tenacity and unceasing effort.

Likewise, the public, the expected beneficiaries of the envisaged behavioral changes on the part of the civil servants need to be re-oriented to be assertive in claiming services that they are entitled to. The media has to be mobilized for awareness creation, and enlightenment campaigns on the importance of public service productivity need to be mounted on a regular and sustained basis. Likewise, the campaign for appropriate ethical values and standards has to be waged on several fronts. The need for appropriate ethical values and standards have to be instilled in the school system. Religious groups should be coopted in the campaign against corruption. The public has to be convinced to desist from promoting corruption in order to get speedy service.

### *Depoliticising the civil service*

Experience over the last few years have adequately demonstrated the dangers of politicising the civil service. When the civil service is politicised, it tends to be de-professionalised and its integrity highly compromised. It is important to assist the civil service to develop the culture of to insulate the civil service from the influence of the politician by providing the civil servants with secure

career. A neutral, professional civil service is a necessary condition in a multi-party democracy.

Unfortunately, the attitude of African governments to a depoliticized civil service is still luke-warm. When the Central Personnel Agency was established in 1961, it attempted to draw a line between the political and administrative levels. The assistant minister, who was the head of a department, was to be the highest ranking civil servant. His/her recruitment and appointment was to be governed by the principles of merit. Of course, in practice it remained a dead letter. However, with the assumption of power by the Derg and eventual establishment of a worker's party, the dichotomy between politics and administration disappeared. Party membership became the "legally undeclared" guide for promotional action. With members rising to the top of the hierarchy more on the basis of their allegiance and membership to the party, the conventional principle of merit became irrelevant. Even the current regime is following the old formula which considers department heads as political appointees. The old imperial formula that considered the head of a department as the highest ranking civil servant may prove a better alternative for continuity and development of a professional service. Until this is done, the negative features of such a practice would continue to persist thus arresting the development of a professional and merit-based civil service. It could also make the present government's effort to undertake a comprehensive civil service reform a futile exercise. Instead of a permanent, competent, impartial, merit-driven civil service, it will end up being a service of party loyalists, and every time a regime changes civil service purge will be the order of the day.

### *The danger of trying to swallow more than it can chew*

As alluded to earlier on the civil service reform under way, attempts to cover too large a ground cast serious doubt on the feasibility of its implementation. Other African countries that have launched civil service reforms have followed a more realistic approach of targeting those areas that they can realistically handle. Given the limitation of resources, both of the financial and human resources types, one wanders how much of its highly ambitious reform programme could be successfully implemented.

Perhaps as a result of its realization of the magnitude and complexity of the reform effort, the government has recently come up with an implementation plan for its reform activities until the year 2000. For instance in the area of



human resources management, it expects that by the year 2000 that the Ethiopian civil service will have a new law that gives expression to the human resources management reforms and their sustainability; improved planning and management of human resources; new or reviewed position classification and grading system; a new performance appraisal system that enables institutions to objectively measure and give feedback on the performance of employees using open, transparent, and output based criteria; a time management system that enables government institutions to budget, direct, monitor and control the staff use of time, and improve productivity and more effective use of time throughout the civil service; a more efficient and meritorious recruitment selection, transfer and promotion system; a new grievance system operating in the civil service assimilating all types of appeals and disciplinary matters into an ordinary court with jurisdiction by the administrative courts; avail an accurate, comparative data base on salaries and benefits in all sectors of the Ethiopian market place, giving FCSC up-to-date and objective data necessary for making realistic recommendations to the government on salary and conditions of service; and an effective training and development system that is capable of upgrading skills and knowledge of civil servants at all levels. This represents only one of the areas of reform. When all the reform areas are taken into account, one wonders if there will be a capacity to implement the ambitious reform programme.

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## GOOD GOVERNANCE: THE CASE OF BANGLADESH

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*M. M. Khan*

### Introduction

Governance is a multi-faceted concept. The concept can mean a number of things depending on the person concerned and his own understanding of reality. But whatever that may be, the very broad and sometimes vague nature of the concept has generated controversy among scholars and government leaders. There is no doubt about the importance of governance. There is now general agreement that governance structures which do not take cognizance of contemporary developments will not suffice in an intricate and fast-changing interdependent global environment. The rationale for governance, in general, and good governance, in particular, emanates from the following:

- maximising economic performance and ensuring social cohesion requires governments to adjust rapidly to changing circumstances, to create and exploit new opportunities and thus to deploy resources more rapidly and flexibly;
- highly centralized, rule-bound, and inflexible organizations that emphasize process rather than results impede good performance;
- large government debt and fiscal imbalances exacerbated by recession - and their implications for interest rates, investment and job creation - place limits on the size of the state and require governments to pursue greater cost-effectiveness in the allocation and management of public resources;
- extensive and unwieldy government regulations, that affect the cost structures and thus the productivity of the private sector, restrict the flexibility needed in an increasingly competitive international market-place;
- demographic changes and economic and social developments are adding to the services that the people expect from governments, while consumers are demanding a greater say in what governments do and how they do it; they expect value for money and are increasingly reluctant to pay higher taxes (OECD, 1996:7).

In other words, there is an increasing concern about the domain of the state, the failure of the public sector to meet citizen demands and aspirations, the



continuance of inflexible and ineffective public service, and the unfavourable environment for the growth and development of the private sector. All these indicate clearly the need for good governance. But then what is good governance? How is it different from other forms of governance?

## **I. Governance: Scope and Meaning**

Governance is an illusive concept. Despite many attempts, there is still no unanimity as to its exact meaning. It may be worthwhile to look at a few definitions. Governance, according to Landell-Mills and Serageldin (1991:304), is "how people are ruled, how the affairs of the state are administered and regulated as well as a nation's system of politics and how this functions in relation to public administration and law".

The World Bank visualizes governance in two related yet slightly different manner. In the first instance the emphasis is on "how political power is exercised to manage a nation's affairs" (World Bank, 1989:60). The other definition, a comparatively broader one, sees governance as the "use of power in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development" (World Bank, 1992:1).

What has become apparent in recent years is that the above-mentioned definitions are not adequate as these do not take into cognizance the role of markets, internationalization of the states and civil society. In response to these recent concerns, governance has been viewed quite differently compared to the past attempts. Governance is seen as something "achieved by the interaction of states, markets and communities" (Colebatch and Larmour, 1993). This definition is close to the idea that the state is no longer the central or only form of power (Rhodes, 1996:653-654).

Growing interest in the role of civil society in governance has resulted in looking at the concept differently. Governance, from this perspective, includes "public administration and the institutions, methods and instruments of governing and also incorporates relationship between government and the citizen (including business and other citizen grouping) and the role of the state (OECD, 1996:158). The most useful definition of governance in this regard is that it is essentially "the relationship between civil society and the state, between rulers and the ruled, the government and the governed" (emphasis in the original) (McCarney, Halfani and Rodriguez, 1995:95-96). They also

emphasize that the difference between government and governance is premised on the latter's concern with the relation of civil society with that of the state.

It is now clear that governance is not a value-free concept. However, the utility of the concept lies in successfully operationalizing it for practical uses. In order to do that normative qualities and value judgments come into play. Hence increasing importance is given to a particular type of governance - good governance.

### **Good Governance**

One way of looking at good governance is to contrast it with what can be called bad or poor governance. The other way of approaching the concept is to understand what it means by itself. Still there is a third way of viewing good governance, which is to look at the potential benefits of institutionalizing good governance.

How does one recognize bad governance? What are its symptoms? The symptoms of bad governance are:

- Failure to make a clear separation between what is public and what is private, hence a tendency to utilize public resources for private gain.
- Failure to establish a predictable framework of law and government behaviour conducive to development, or, simply put, arbitrariness in the application of rules and laws.
- Excessive rules, regulations, licensing requirements, permit regimes, etc., which impede the functioning of markets and encourage rent-seeking.
- Priorities, inconsistent with development, resulting in gross misallocation of resources.
- Excessively narrowly based or non-transparent decision making (World Bank, 1992:9).

Other symptoms of bad governance include: "excessive costs, poor service to the public and failure to achieve the aims of the policy" (The British Council, 1991). The symptoms of bad governance are too many and well-known. Yet, many states throughout the world are continuing with governmental structures and systems that inevitably result in poor governance and consequently increase the suffering of the citizens, particularly, the poor.



Pointing out the consequences of poor governance is important but it is not enough. It will not automatically lead to good governance. Also the opposite of bad governance is not necessarily good governance. We thus have to look for other ways to define good governance. One is by focusing on the essential characteristics of good governance. These include:

- promotion of democracy and open pluralistic societies;
- strengthening of transparent, accountable, efficient and effective national and local government; reinforcement of rule of law, including fair and accessible legal and judicial system;
- promotion of independent media and dissemination of information;
- anti-corruption initiatives; and
- efforts to reduce excessive military expenditure (OECD, 1992).

At least six factors are critical to the attainment of good governance ideals. These are: political freedom, constitutional and judicial protection of individual rights, a stable currency, provision of education and health care for all and executive's accountability to a freely-elected legislature (Stowe, 1992:388).

Before making any attempt to define good governance it is useful to understand the interrelationships between good governance, participatory development, human rights and democratization as proposed by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC). The DAC orientations on participatory development and good governance paper of December, 1993 indicates the following linkages:

- legitimacy of government which depends on the existence of participatory processes and the consent of those who are governed;
- accountability of the political and official elements of government for their actions, which depend on the availability of information, freedom of the media, transparency of decision making and the existence of mechanisms to call individuals to account for their conduct;
- accountability also at the political level through elected representatives;
- competence of government to formulate appropriate policies, make timely decisions, implement them effectively, and deliver services equitably; and respect for human rights and the rule of law, to guarantee individual and group rights and security, provide a viable



framework for economic and social activity and allow and encourage individuals to participate (Bilney, 1994:16).

It is apparent from the above that good governance needs to be understood from a holistic perspective. Good governance cannot be achieved without taking into consideration its vital linkages with democratization initiatives, the prevailing human rights situation, the state of participatory development and the nature and range of government policies and programmes in a particular country.

There appears to be a realization that good governance is useful because of its several beneficial effects. Good governance facilitates development - economic and social - and contributes to an environment where human rights are respected. Accountability, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability can result from community participation which is so vital to good governance. At the local level, participatory development has been equated with good governance. It is also realized participatory development is not possible without the presence of a strong civil society. Democratization in the sense of providing adequate opportunities for participation in the political life of a country is also intimately linked with good governance.

Good governance cannot be developed overnight. It takes time and it is indigenous. Lessons from other countries can be useful but transplanting those lock, stock, and barrel will not succeed. Rather efforts need to be made to judiciously use proven foreign innovations in the area of good governance keeping in mind national priorities and contexts.

Good governance in this context is defined as "the effective management of a country's social and economic resources in a manner that is open, transparent, accountable and equitable" (Bilney, 1994:17).

## **II. The Experience of Bangladesh**

The way good governance has been portrayed in the literature is conspicuously absent in Bangladesh. The discussions that follow concentrate on the review of the existing state of governance in the country. In examining the present state we ask the question whether good governance is at all feasible. To answer this question, we focus on progress in the democratization of the polity, the

human rights situation, the participatory process and the competence of government.

### ***Democratization Process***

A democratic polity is an essential precondition of good governance in the long run. Since the birth of Bangladesh, democracy as a form of governance has not been accorded the importance it deserves. It is an irony that democrats, after assuming power, turned out to be autocrats. Besides, army generals frequently grabbed power under the pretext of saving the country but proceeded to rule as if the state was their personal fiefdom. What has been the consequence of such a pattern of leadership behaviour?

There has been a general disregard of democratic norms and contempt for democratic institutions. The electoral process was frequently manipulated in favour of the ruling party. The parliament, whether in a parliamentary or presidential system of government, was not given its due importance and mostly played a subordinate role to a dominant executive - be it president or the prime minister.

Political accountability of the public service degenerated into political interference in the day-to-day activities of public servants. The much promised separation of the judiciary from the executive did not take place. The autonomy of the electronic media was proclaimed but the situation on the ground belied official pronouncements on the subject.

What is depressing is that even after two phases of military rule, and the ousting of Ershad in the wake of a mass movement, there is no realization on the part of top leaders of the major political parties that their attitudes and activities are contrary to the establishment of a democratic polity. It is now clear that the leaders of two major political parties the Awami League (AL) and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) firmly believe that no matter the cost the opponent should not be allowed to stay in power. They tend to forget that in a democracy the majority party rules with the consent and support of other parties. The role of the opposition is to prepare itself to form the next government once the party in power completes its tenure of office. The opposition have the right to criticize government policies but that criticism must be based on principles and supported with facts. At the same time the ruling party must take the opposition into confidence on all major issues. The supreme test of

a political leadership is how well it governs in a difficult situation with scarce resources and in the midst of rising expectations. It appears that in Bangladesh both Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina as the supreme leaders of BNP and AL have not been able to overcome their personal rivalries and dislike for each other. In the process they have failed to herald an era of democratization - even after being swept to power in democratic elections. Both seem to have forgotten that it is leaders like them who should be magnanimous and should contribute to the emergence of an environment that is conducive to peaceful resolution of conflict.

How has this obvious failure of democratization of the polity in Bangladesh affected the prospect of good governance? In a parliamentary system, the parliament is supreme. It is at parliamentary fora where all policies and issues be debated, and resolved. Unfortunately, the Bangladesh parliament has not been able to play its designated role. Even after the return to the parliamentary system in 1991, the dominance of the executive continued to undermine the effectiveness of the institution. Parliamentary approval of each and every act was almost a foregone conclusion. Ordinances were promulgated to bypass the legislature.

Three factors have further weakened the position of the parliament vis-a-vis the executive. The first is the attitude of the major political parties towards parliament. Whenever a major political party is in opposition it has a natural tendency to boycott parliament for an indefinite period - either to bring down the government or to create a deadlock in the governance of the country. A case in point is the boycott by AL, Jatiya Pary (JP) and Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) of parliament during last two year's rule of BNP. The BNP, now in opposition, is doing the same. Political parties feel that the issues should be settled outside rather than inside the parliament. This is the major reason for the impotence of parliament.

Second, very little has been done to strengthen parliament on a day-to-day basis. Political accountability in a parliamentary system can be ensured when the legislature is able to keep a constant vigil over the activities of the executive through such mechanisms as committees, questions raised by legislators and debates on important issues. Committees of parliament suffer from a number of problems like excessive work load due to past neglect, lack of information, non-implementation of their recommendations, lack adequate staff and other logistic support (Khan, 1994:374).



Third, appointing non-members of parliament as ministers is not conducive to parliamentary control of the executive. Of particular interest is the fact that some of these non-MPs have held important cabinet posts in such areas as finance, planning, and education.

The present parliament has been suffering from similar problems as the earlier ones. The bitter enmity among two major political parties - i.e., the AL and the BNP - has resulted in a situation where parliamentary committees cannot be properly constituted. The bone of contention is BNP's insistence that its members in each committee should be proportionate to its total membership in parliament. The AL's argument is that it is following the same principle in the formation of parliamentary committees as the BNP did between 1991-1996. A parliamentary secretariat has been set up ostensibly to improve working of the parliament but its effectiveness in that regard is yet to be demonstrated.

### ***Human Rights Situation***

Promotion and respect for human rights is critical to good governance. In Bangladesh there have been attempts to curtail the fundamental rights of citizens. One such effort led to the second amendment to the constitution effected in 1973 which curbed fundamental rights of citizens (Husain, 1994). One of the outcomes of the amendment was the coming into force of the Special Powers Act, 1974 (Khan and Ahmed, 1997:312). Even after the restoration of a democratic system in 1991, there are still a number of laws curtailing the rights of citizens. These special laws include the Special Power Act of 1974, the Special Security Forces Act 1986 and the Suppression of Terrorist Offences Act 1992. The last act was passed and effectuated during BNP's rule (1991-96). All these repressive laws "in the name of national security" violate the right to life, to liberty and security of the person. They are discriminatory in their application and they violate all safeguards against arrest, detention and provisions on torture or cruel, degrading and inhuman punishment" (Farooq and Khan, 1993:5).

The human rights situation is still far from satisfactory. Maltreatment of people of low status by the police and rape cases against women are on the increase. Most alarming is the direct involvement of police personnel in raping poor girls and women. Only few of these cases are properly investigated and still fewer reach the trial stage. Only in very rare cases are the erring staff of the law enforcing agencies punished for their part in this type of heinous crime.

Citizen's right to free movement is also adversely affected by instances of mugging and hijacking. The increase in the incidence of the various forms of crime is related to massive and systemic corruption in the police department and the government's failure to institutionalize appropriate remedial measures.

Another area of concern is the military's role in civilian affairs. This has bearing on the rights of citizens. It is gathered that even now no appointment to administrative positions of high significance can be made by the relevant authorities unless vetted and cleared by the National Security Intelligence (NSI) and Directorate of Field Intelligence (DFI) both of which are staffed with and controlled by the military (Khan and Husain, 1996:331).

Continued control of the government over television and radio has adversely affected citizens' access to information. The present government has not been able to break free from the past tradition in this regard. Though a government-appointed commission has recently submitted its findings and recommendations pertaining to granting of autonomy to television and radio, nothing has transpired in practice.

Newspapers and other publications now enjoy greater freedom of expression than the pre-1991 period. All the same, attempts are still made occasionally to influence the views of the print media by pursuing a selective and discriminatory advertisement policy.

How does the present human rights situation affect good governance? The retention of a number of oppressive laws enables the government to arrest any individual and detain him/her for an indefinite period without giving any reason. This means that the rule of law, which is a key component of good governance, tends to be disregarded. Indeed, the fundamental rights of citizens, as enshrined in the constitution, cannot be ensured. As noted by Muthith (1997:8):

*"Human rights are violated by ... black laws that abridge basic rights and legalize arbitrary and coercive actions by the state which in reality means (the) government of the day ... and by a plethora of legal provisions in many ordinary laws authorizing arbitrary and coercive actions by the authorities."*

The judiciary as the last resort for citizens to seek justice has its own share of problems. The independence of the judiciary has not been ensured. The



complete separation of the judiciary from the executive, as envisaged in the constitution, has received almost no support from successive governments. The executive continues to maintain direct control over the judicial system up to the district level. Even for appointment of judges to the High Court, political considerations tend to be more important than the competence of an individual. Corruption at different levels of the judiciary has further aggravated the citizens' problems, and consequently dimmed human rights prospects in general.

### ***Participatory Process***

The legitimacy of any government is invariably linked with the prevalence of a participatory process and the voluntary consent of the governed. It is important to discern the nature of such participatory process and the role of citizens in it. If the state of participatory process is assessed on the basis of voting in elections it may be argued that increasing number of individuals casting their votes in local, sub-national and national level elections provide a good indication of popular participation in governance. However, can the participatory process continue in a meaningful manner with citizens only casting their votes in elections? How are these elections conducted? Who influence the outcome of such elections?

In Bangladesh it is well-known that money plays a big role in any election. Corruption also enters the scene and works hand-in-hand with violence (Khan, 1991:7). The other important feature of elections in Bangladesh is the dominance of the elite in the process. The poor, who constitute the majority of the population, play the role of the passive voter. A yawning gap exists between the economic background, social status and education of the candidates, on the one hand, and the majority of the electorate on the other. Once the election is over the voters hardly see their 'chosen' representative, leaving almost no opportunity for the former to meet the latter. As a recent UNDP study observes:

*"The current extent of popular participation in local government operations and management is minimal ... the operations and laws of local government are structured to discourage participation" (UNDP, 1996:62).*

The observation above succinctly presents the reality of participation. If this is the nature of participation at the grassroots level then one can guess what is the nature and extent of participation at higher levels, especially at the national



level. It needs to be mentioned here that for political mobilization process like organizing meetings and "hartals", ordinary citizens participation is sought by political leaders. However, the extent to which that type of participation is voluntary needs to be carefully examined.

How does participatory process relate to good governance? For one thing unless citizens are directly involved in local level decision making or are encouraged to make inputs into decisions, the participatory process does not work. Here, the immediate victims are accountability and transparency the - the components of good governance. If people are not actively involved in the governance process, how can they ensure that there is transparency in the decisions taken by public servants? And without transparency, accountability cannot be ensured.

### *Competence of Government*

The competence of a government is demonstrated by how it formulates and implements policies keeping in mind the needs and aspirations of the citizens at large. It is not possible here to discuss in detail the 'achievements' of successive governments in Bangladesh in terms of the competence criterion. What can be done is to look more closely as to what this competence means. Competence of a government in the literature means a host of things including appropriate policy formulation keeping in view the time constrain, effective implementation of such policies, delivering such services in an equitable and courteous manner. Of course, there are other things that falls within the domain of a competent government, e.g., promoting the rule of law and respect for human rights and encouraging individuals to participate in the affairs of the state.

The competence of successive governments in Bangladesh can be gauged from recently available data on the existing state of affairs (World Bank, 1996:XV). Fifty per cent of the population live in poverty. The level of public investment programmes remains stagnant at 8 to 9 percent of gross domestic product (GD). Private investment is low, standing at 6 - 7 percent of GDP. The annual losses of public enterprises are about 2 percent of GDP. Exporters spend 7 percent of sales revenue to bribe public officials at different levels and to induce them to expedite decision making.

A World Bank-sponsored survey contains opinion of a nationally-representative sample of 1,500 rural/urban households about government and services

provided by the government. The surveyed individuals saw the government as preoccupied with process, too pervasive, highly centralized, overly bureaucratic, too discretionary in governance, unaccountable and unresponsive, and wasteful (World Bank, 1996:XV). Not surprisingly the respondents felt that not only is access to the education, health, and extension services provided by the government deficient in quantitative terms, but the quality of service is also poor (World Bank, 1996:XV).

There is little doubt that governments in Bangladesh have fared poorly on the competence score card. This has direct bearing on good governance. The competence of a government is in any case not an isolated phenomenon. Rather it is closely linked with social, political, economic and administrative variables. What needs to be emphasized here is that the perpetuation of a political culture characterized by insincerity and opportunism, and the retention of an outdated, non-responsive and repressive administrative system are the main reasons behind deficiencies in competence.

Government leaders have come and gone but nothing fundamental has changed regarding the philosophy of governance. Promises have been made with increasing frequency but with the intention of not keeping them. Far-reaching reform measures have been nipped in the bud. Fundamental issues pertaining to society, politics, economy and administration have not been tackled. Minor and peripheral issues have been propped up from time to time to confuse the people and to continue confrontation with political opponents. Under these circumstances serious and timely consideration are not given to competence by any government.

## **Conclusion**

Good governance has come to occupy the centre stage world-wide. Still there is discussion and debate as to its meaning and under what circumstances good governance can become a reality. Research on good governance has reached a certain stage of maturity when it can be looked at from a holistic perspective. This way of viewing the concept has increased the possibility of its wider application in divergent cultures and countries.

Bangladesh and good governance still remain far apart. Applying all the four criteria of good governance - democratization of the polity, human rights situation, state of participatory process and competence of government -

Bangladesh's record is dismally poor. Perhaps if all the actors have a change of attitude, the institutions underpinning good governance can begin to function and the negative trend can still be reversed.

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## BUILDING NEW CAPACITIES FOR IMPROVED MANAGEMENT OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR IN AFRICA

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*Bruno Mukendi*

### **Introduction**

1. As a new millennium approaches, the evidence of change is all around the globe. The Soviet empire has collapsed. The east-west rivalry is increasingly giving way to cooperation in space exploration and in the field of science and technology. The world has entered a new area of computerization and high-speed information processing. Democracy and good governance are reaping the benefits made possible by developments within the information-rich and knowledge-intensive global village. With globalization comes the linkage of economies to an intricate web of currencies, commodity markets, and the attendant threats and opportunities.

The emerging global trends make it imperative for countries to develop structures of economic and social interaction that allow for compromise and accommodate multiple interests at the local, national and global levels. There is now an urgent need for systems that are competitive, adaptable as well as capable of introducing new ways of doing business.

The momentous changes taking place in the contemporary world probably explain why the role of the state is being questioned, particularly in developing societies. The state is expected to create a new environment in which citizens, the private sector, public and non-governmental entities can creatively and effectively join their efforts toward the construction of a vibrant political and economic system.

2. The state must find new ways of managing societal affairs - bringing business, labour and the academic community together to stimulate technological innovation and promote job creation. The process further entails bringing communities, public services, and the private sector together to solve the problems of poverty and mass deprivation. In other words, the state is faced with the challenges of building new capacities to facilitate social and economic transformation.

Capacity refers here to the human capital component required in planning and managing development strategies to fulfil human development aspirations and objectives. The African continent is endowed with considerable natural and human potentials, yet it has not been able to convert these potentials into a source of strength and power for the alleviation of human conditions. The inability to effectively integrate all social forces in the development process and to constructively work together in designing and implementing desirable goals, has in part, hampered the state's capacity to make significant changes in living conditions.

This study assumes that by forging solid partnerships with the various actors in society, the state can create the foundation for institutional cooperation and collaboration, and promote active public participation in the development process. For such partnerships to be effective, there will be a need to strengthen social capital skills in ways to facilitate team-work, cooperation, mutual assistance, coordination and compromise.

This paper will therefore focus on the role of networks for strengthening cooperation and inter-institutional relations, the role of coordination and negotiation for building synergy, facilitating interface and convergence of views as well as reaching compromise and mutually acceptable agreements. These are essential elements for building solid partnerships within the public sector and between the public sector, on the one hand, and all other sectors of society, on the other.

The paper is divided into four sections. The first section briefly explains the necessity to harmonize capacity building efforts, focusing on the integration of formal technical skills with processes designed to enhance social capital skills. The second section focuses on how networking with key social sectors can increase the state's capacity to solve public problems. The third and fourth sections will respectively take up the issues of coordination and negotiation within the broad perspective of enhancing communication, fruitful collaboration and constructive partnership for development.

### **1. The Challenge of Balancing the Strengthening of Traditional Capacities with the Enhancement of Social Interaction Skills**

Shortly after many African countries became independent in the 1960s, the need to reform the state institutions inherited from the colonial era was



identified as a priority, particularly, in view of the mass exodus of expatriate personnel. The challenge was not only to Africanise civil service institutions, but also to transform them so that they can effectively help to promote economic and social development, which became their main goal. Training constituted, and still constitutes, the main strategy for providing governments with the capacities required to effect the desired changes. With external assistance, skills were developed in almost all the areas of state action, and public enterprises were established to achieve the state's socioeconomic and political goals.

Most capacity-building activities focused on restructuring and administrative reforms, the establishment of training institutions, the acquisition of modern management techniques and methods in the area of planning, programming, financial and personnel management in order to foster development management that makes efficient use of resources. The same approach was continued in the 1980s with structural adjustment programmes which stressed the strengthening of economic and financial processes and structures, computer systems, personnel management, and enhancement of capacity for macro- and sectoral economic management.

Training activities helped to strengthen the technical infrastructure, which enabled the central government to assume its guidance and control functions, albeit from a narrow, sectoral perspective. Agronomists specialized in the techniques of agricultural production, doctors in diagnostic and curative techniques, finance specialists in accounting and budget management, and administrators in organization and management. However, neither agricultural, nor health problems can be resolved sectorally by a small group of people without the active involvement of other actors whose activities affect the satisfactory implementation of the objectives of these sectors. For one, a project will not necessarily achieve its goals and have a positive impact on its beneficiaries just because it is technically sound. The manager must be able to mobilize support from his staff, the political authorities, donors, secondary organizations and target population groups in order to achieve the desired goals.

Unfortunately, development specialists are usually trained as if they were going to work alone and in a stable environment. Rarely has training in its current form equipped its beneficiaries with the skills required for cooperating, catalyzing action through other actors and facilitating changes, roles which they are constantly required to play.

A survey of the Sierra Leonean civil service conducted in 1996 by that country's senior civil servants, showed that the main constraints facing the civil service included a lack of effective communication networks, individualism and a lack of teamwork in carrying out public duties. Consequently, all of the approximately 150 senior government officials who had answered the questionnaire asking them, *inter alia*, to indicate what skills they felt were the most important for a leader to possess had unanimously stated that negotiation skills, defined as the ability to work with others and to secure their support for the implementation of goals, were the most important (Institute of Public Administration and Development, 1996).

In a study that provoked very sharp reactions in French-speaking Africa, Axelle Kabou shows that one of the reasons why Africa remains underdeveloped is the Africans' inability to close ranks or to work together in order to better address the root causes of their backwardness (Kabou, 1992). The lack of unity and social solidarity and the recourse to mutual exclusion strategies, heighten the institutional and political conflicts that are paralysing a large part of the continent. To-date, strategies aimed at modernizing the state have accorded little importance to the strengthening of human and social interaction skills.

Yet research increasingly shows that the winning strategies are based on close cooperation and networking. Those countries or institutions that record substantial and sustainable economic development are those that have developed working arrangements based on cooperation, participation, consultation and negotiation. According to a World Bank study covering 192 countries and analyzing the causes of economic growth, at least 64 percent of growth is attributed to human and social capital (Dia, 1996).

The work improvement strategy, which is one of the driving forces behind Singapore's increased productivity, is based on the principle of team work, cooperation and mutual assistance. Groups of civil servants meet regularly to discuss common work problems, consider alternative solutions and develop team approaches to problem and conflict resolution.

The entrepreneurial spirit that is transforming the public sector in America is fueled by the catalytic role of the government in joining with community groups for solving local problems. For example, in criminal justice, community policing is spreading all over the country. Community Boards are used with



voluntary mediators in place like San Francisco, to resolve the kind of everyday conflicts that often erupt into violence. In education, public schools are increasingly run by officials elected by parents and their control over the schools has reportedly brought significant improvement in the concerned schools.

The government has learned that it can be more effective in public problem-solving by collaborating with community groups and all sectors - public, private and voluntary. As Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman have also demonstrated in their study, successful organizations tend to adopt management styles that encourage team-work, consultation, and involvement of employees in the work process (Peters and Waterman, 1984).

These new experiences illustrate the critical importance of what has come to be known as social capital or social interaction skills in the change process. The experiences call into question the uni-dimensional approaches currently applied as part of institutional and capacity-building efforts in Africa. As most African governments embrace a more catalytic and facilitating role, they need to upgrade their social capital skills in ways to effectively tap the potentials of all societal forces for accelerated transformation of the continent.

## **II. The Nature of Internal and External Networking**

The movement towards democracy and good governance has relieved the state of its monopoly of development activities in favour of close cooperation between the state and organizations representing or defending the interests of the population and private institutions. Even within the state, efforts aimed at ensuring greater efficiency and effectiveness in the activities of the public sector as part of a new client-friendly public service, requires new approaches to work. More than ever before, there is need for collaboration among the various state and civil society institutions.

The crucial question which arises is how to promote internal and external partnership in order to develop the public sector's capacity to provide quality services to the citizens. Internal partnership has to do with the ties of cooperation within public services, while the external partnership refers to collaboration between the state, civil society organizations and the private sector.



Experience shows that networking concept and techniques can facilitate collaboration and cooperation between individuals or organizations within a society. A network is defined as a set of mutual assistance, cooperation or collaboration relationships or alliances with individuals or organizations whose assistance is deemed necessary to achieving certain goals (Allan and Bradford, 1989). A network of contacts comprises not only people who work inside an organization such as immediate superiors, peers and subordinates, but also those outside such organization whose contribution is deemed vital to implementing a specific goal. Network members do not have the same skills, resources and means. That is why the activation and operationalization of a network necessarily requires team work. In other words, no member of a network is ever isolated, since members have to help each other. Members can access the resources of other networks through their partners, because their friends' networks become, by extension, their networks.

The effectiveness of cooperative networks depends on four main elements which are at the heart of the success of any team relationship, namely:

**Understanding:** understanding the other person (or institution) in terms of his/her situation, problems, aims, actions, requirements and his/her functional criteria, is a prerequisite for any good long-lasting relationship.

**Communication:** for there to be understanding, there must be good communication; in turn, good communications foster understanding. The frequency and establishment of communication channels (two-way communication) facilitate consultations and the joint settlement of problems, and make it possible to dispel doubts and suspicions and to maintain good relations. At the operational level, communication requires consultation, the exchange of information and the genuine involvement of concerned groups in projects of common interest.

**Interface Facilitation:** in a group situation, each party may function according to its own logic and interests. Interface facilitation skills are necessary to improve

communication and participation of groups in projects of common interest and to enable the groups to reach mutually acceptable agreements.

**Trust:** communicating is not very useful if there is no mutual trust, and people are suspicious and envious of each other. Trust enhances communication and forms the basis for cooperation.

Building on the above-mentioned elements, networking can help an organization to open itself up and to enhance its efficiency through feedback and a more positive public image. Opening to the environment may be reflected by the involvement of various stakeholders in decision making and through the sharing of information, consultation and joint management. Such an involvement of interested parties can create a sense of collective responsibility and ownership and facilitate the realization of goals.

Following the failure of the bureaucratic and sectoral approaches to solve social problems, some countries are forced to establish and rely on networks with community groups to come up with lasting solutions to institutional issues and development problems. One needs only to think about the primary health care strategy under which community members are mobilized through decentralized structures to participate in a wide range of inter-sectoral activities in order to improve health conditions in communities.

The Bamako initiative is another aspect of this strategy which, through cost-sharing between health centres and the people, and through their involvement in management committees, has enabled the local population to serve as active partners in solving basic health problems. This strategy is promoting, through its participatory processes, a sense of accountability and ownership which is vital if development activities are to be sustained.

Another good illustration of how networking with community groups appears effective in solving public problems has to do with the fight against corruption. Corruption is one of the symptoms of bad governance in Africa. In many countries, it has reached systemic proportions and is preventing the proper execution of development programs by thwarting any attempts to carry out administrative and economic reforms (Mukendi and Gould, 1987).



Conventional approaches to fighting corruption have by and large yielded disappointing results for several reasons:

- (a) Legalistic emphasis of corruption-control steps taken, i.e. issuance of laws and administrative regulations. Some of these laws and rules are sweeping and/or lacking in clarity, which leads to confusion at the implementation phase, thereby providing ample opportunities for more corruption;
- (b) Concern with investigation and prosecution of individuals rather than with structural changes aimed at the prevention or reduction of opportunities for corruption.;
- (c) Investigations are often undertaken more with the intention of discrediting the former regime so as to enhance the reputation and perceived integrity of the new leadership. Hence, there is little sustainability or follow-up action;
- (d) Continuing deterioration in economic conditions and the subsequent inadequacy of financial resources to mount effective corruption control strategies;
- (e) Adoption of measures to promote high ethical standards is not matched by adequate implementation of supporting legislation regarding the organization of a career system that ensures job security, salaries based on the cost of living and job responsibilities, the use of appropriate methods of selection and promotion, continuing in-service training and sound personnel management practices.

In an attempt to stamp out corruption, some countries are now moving away from this traditional approach that mainly relies on the bureaucracy and its judiciary, to forging close ties with community networks. Some governments that are committed to curbing corruption have come to the realization that their efforts cannot bear fruit without comprehensive institutional reforms integrating all the spheres of the society. Since corruption is systemic, they therefore concentrate their efforts on finding system-wide solutions rather than focusing on specific individuals.

The case of Uganda is illustrative of this system approach of catalyzing all societal forces outside the government to deal with widespread public corruption (Langseth, Staphenurst and Pope). The fight against corruption in



this country is an integral part of the reforms of the public sector undertaken with donor support. The World Bank-sponsored global programme on governance and civil service improvement has as major goal to promote partnerships in order to strengthen the government's capacity to provide better services to the public. This program stresses changing ways of problem formulation; developing leadership in order to motivate people to work together towards the achievement of common goals; bringing services closer to the public; and involving organizations of the civil society in problem solving.

Apart from the comprehensive civil service reform and the democratization of the political process, a national coalition, made up of a network of organizations driven by a common desire to restore integrity into public life, has been established. This coalition, under the national integrity movement, sets itself the goal of making corruption a risky and unprofitable operation throughout the country. Since anti-corruption activities are perceived as mutually-reinforcing, members of the coalition pledge to work together and to do their utmost in every area of activity. The actors associated with the coalition include:

- The Head of State, who is responsible for political leadership, has adopted the necessary measures for vigorously fighting against corruption (democratization, appointment of an ombudsman with sweeping powers, profound economic and administrative reforms).
- Watchdog agencies (Office of the Government Inspector General) and the audit agencies have tightened their functions of investigating and preventing acts of corruption, and ensuring that state accounts are audited in a proper manner.
- Transparency-Uganda, a national non-governmental organization and a branch of Transparency International, and other non-governmental organizations work closely with the Government. They organize awareness-raising campaigns on corruption to get the public's support and enhance its understanding of anti-corruption programs; organize seminars on corruption for central and local government officials; monitor public appointments so as to ensure that unscrupulous people are not appointed to public office; monitor elections and authorities responsible for organizing them; raise the public's awareness of the need for transparency and accountability among officials, and urge all parties involved in transactions concerning matters of national interest to demonstrate

a high level of integrity. Trainees and information activities are used to train catalysts for the promotion of national integrity. These trainees become facilitators in their organizations or communities, thus bringing about the convergence of synergy towards a common goal.

There is a free press which also organizes debates on corruption. Journalists vigorously denounce corrupt officials without feeling threatened. The press helps with investigations initiated by the government, while applying pressure to ensure that guilty persons are punished. Donors are constructive partners in the fight against corruption. Openness and transparency are sought in all the programmes that they finance, including the Civil Service Reform Programme. The World Bank, especially through its Economic Development Institute, contributed to the preparation of the theoretical framework of the national integrity system, publicizing it through the organization of training seminars, and in helping to find solutions to problems of corruption. Transparency International is also actively involved in these activities.

This is not to convey the impression that corruption has been contained in Uganda. There is still a long way to go. However, all evidence points to significant progress when compared to the situation about 10 years ago. Some officials convicted of corruption were dismissed from their jobs. Job peddling and embezzlement have decreased. There is much less talk of extortion and harassment of tax payers. Although several factors are contributing to the improvement in the situation, the crucial role played by the inter-organizational cooperation and collaboration with community groups within the framework of the national integrity system, should be acknowledged. A national coalition against corruption composed of a network of public and non-governmental organizations that have rallied around a common ideal. The attributes of this coalition include:

- An understanding shared by all the members of the coalition of the need for integrity in public life.
- A willingness of all concerned individuals to work together, to exchange information and to support each other in actions aimed at reducing or stamping out corruption in public life. This strategy has proven cost-effective as hitherto marginalized groups are actively providing information and support for corruption prevention and control.



- An atmosphere of mutual trust among the groups and individuals making up the coalition.

In this regard, one can observe considerable mistrust among Africans which prevents them from working together and coordinating their actions in order to achieve common goals. Information does not often reach individuals, target groups or the institutions that need it. People tend to conceal information either because of rivalry between individuals, or because the information in question may potentially damage their interests or substantially contribute to helping others. Even if this kind of behaviour is not limited to Africa, its prevalence in a context where every effort must be mobilized to improve the productive capacity of the continent and to its competitive edge in the global marketplace, can act as an hindrance to significant progress.

Lack of cooperation at the individual level is carried over into the world of organizations where it produces a culture of defensiveness. Yet the example of the spirit of mutual assistance and collaboration among the Lebanese in Africa could have shown Africans that without unity, collective strength is impossible. One sees Lebanese arriving in Africa for the first time often with modest resources. After a few months, they put together a considerable fortune. The main reason for such success is primarily due to the strong relations the Lebanese are able to forge among themselves and with other nationals for the purpose of advancing Lebanese interests. For one, there is a Lebanese association in almost every African country. The association enables Lebanese to get better acquainted with, and help each other, and to organize themselves in order to defend their interests in the host country.

Over the years, each member of the team is helped to acquire capital and consolidate the fortunes of his business unit. Meanwhile, Africans are observing the hard-working Lebanese while picking quarrels with one another. The Africans often manage to come up with all kinds of reasons why they cannot follow the example of the Lebanese. They are green with envy because of wealth and social success of the Lebanese, but they cannot muster the strength to work together among themselves.

Indeed, wherever Africans congregate, whether on university campuses, in enterprises, or in national and international organizations, the idea of unity and sustained understanding is rarely broached. The mutual friends of Africans remain non-Africans, who may either set the Africans at loggerheads or bring



them together, depending on circumstances and their own interests. Among Africans, when it comes to promoting African interests, words speak louder than action. Insignificant issues are blown out of proportion in order to discourage those who sincerely want to take action. Everyone is jealous of his/her neighbour. The upshot is that no action is taken. It is therefore not surprising that, as Axelle Kabou says, despite the abundance of holders of university and higher education degrees, Africans generally continue to be treated like children who can be exploited, even on their own soil (Kabou, 1992).

For there to be productive partnerships for development, efforts would have to be undertaken to make Africans aware of the dangers of institutional isolationism given the challenges of globalization, participatory governance and the need for enhanced cooperation among Africans and coordination of their activities.

### **III. The Need to Improve Coordination Capacities**

It is one thing to come together, it is another to motivate a group for a constructive action. This is where coordination becomes significant. Coordination means organizing the parts of a whole logically so that all the concerned parties can work in harmony and towards achieving a common goal. The main aim of coordination is to ensure that all the institutions involved in a project or activity understand the needs, orientations and goals of participants; that the necessary human, financial and material resources are available and adequate, and are used in such a way as to maximise the chances of achieving the desired goals, and; that all parties are working closely together towards the satisfactory achievement of common goals.

The dialogue generated by effective coordination can provide the parties with useful information for identifying opportunities for action and potential obstacles, facilitating conflict-resolution and the monitoring of operations. It can also assure them that a coherent and well understood strategy is being pursued by all the actors. In this regard, coordination is the best instrument for improving management efficiency.

Although every one acknowledges the importance of coordination, studies of the African public sector reveal serious problems in this area. There is a lack of institutional coordination in the use of resources with a view to the

harmonious control and management of the economy. Most of the time, public and semi-public agencies carry out independent activities without any coherent frame of reference, and without the government playing its coordinating role as regards its goals in terms of planning and inter-sectoral programming. The technical or "line" ministries tend to restrict their activities to their areas of jurisdiction instead of cooperating closely with other institutions. The lack of coordination is evident at all levels in most projects and programmes involving several institutions of ministries.

Perhaps the most visible and most critical area where inadequate coordination has had adverse consequences on Africa, is undoubtedly that of coordination of external aid. External assistance accounts for over 70 per cent of all investment resources in Africa. However, the fact that such aid does not translate in any significant economic and social development is partly attributable to the shortcomings in the mechanisms for its management and coordination (Mutahaba and Balogun, 1992).

The reasons for such shortcomings are many and vary from one country to another. However, some broad trends may be identified:

- Government institutions are organized and function on the basis of hierarchical, vertical and pyramidal models which run into problems when it comes to promoting cooperation with other institutions, and fostering the establishment of networks and the participation of external actors.
- Focal points, when they do exist, are incapable of elaborating coherent coordination strategies. Therefore decisions are taken according to the circumstances, without any common thread, and rarely with a view to coordination.

In this regard, it is necessary to recall the approach we (the author and others) had initiated in 1991 to help the Government of Guinea Baste to improve aid coordination (Mukendi, 1996). This experience underscores the role that a technical assistance project can play in facilitating the interface among the main Government ministries and between the Government and donors through multi-sectoral training, information dissemination activities and the preparation of basic of coordination instruments, and therefore creating a foundation for effective coordination instruments. A sound understanding of the country's development goals, strategies and priorities by all partners; a clear-cut allocation



and understanding of each other's responsibilities; a heightened capacity to understand differences and to resolve them; a common determination to work together and to succeed, are all factors that revitalize coordination. The resulting dynamics of consultation and collaboration gave a new image to the ministry of Planning and Cooperation and paved the way for fresh financing prospects for the country.

In view of the special situation that Guinea Baste inherited at independence, that country capitalized on the sympathy of the international community in order to lay the foundations for social and economic development. Guinea baste received on average an overall volume of aid estimated at \$US 60 million a year between 1974 and 1986, which represented more than 55 per cent of its gross domestic product. This average nearly doubled from 1987, following the implementation of structural adjustment and financial stabilization measures, to about \$123 million a year between 1987 and 1990. These high levels of aid are also reflected by the presence in the country of several bilateral and multilateral cooperation agencies and non-governmental organizations.

However, as a result of the weakness of state institutions, especially as far as the coordination of aid is concerned, the country was unable to take full advantage of all the external aid that was available. Many of the commitments signed with the partners were not implemented, efforts to mobilize external assistance were hampered by a lack of consultation and coherence and there was no systematic monitoring of programs and projects in order to guide the aid and cooperation policy. To redress the situation, the Government drew up, with UNDP assistance, a project to provide support for improving aid coordination. The aim was in fact to strengthen the already existing project in a second phase in order to set into motion a momentum for dialogue and consultation with development partners.

Housed within the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, the Project comprised two expatriates, a senior technical advisor responsible for the revitalization of coordination and training, and a computer expert responsible for developing and implementing an integrated information systems and data bases on the different components of aid. Apart from the two officially appointed national counterparts, the Project had also given priority to developing a system of team-work involving not only officials of the Ministry of Planning and Cooperation, but also those of the other ministries directly involved in aid management.



In order to facilitate an appreciation of the problems of coordination as well as ways and means of resolving them, the project first organized a five-day national seminar on aid coordination. The seminar was primarily targeted to institutions implementing cooperation projects, the macroeconomic ministries involved in aid coordination as well as the representatives of bilateral, multilateral and non-governmental cooperation agencies.

All the donors endorsed the initiative by participating actively in the seminar. The presence of ambassadors representing their respective countries (Brazil, Cuba, Senegal), heads of multilateral cooperation missions (World Bank, UNDP) and of bilateral cooperation agencies (France, Portugal, the United States of America, Sweden) attested to the support of donors for this Government initiative. Each donor was asked to make a statement on its cooperation programme highlighting the goals, strategies, policies, execution modalities, ongoing projects, and potential implementation difficulties, and recommendations for improving present and future cooperation. Government officials and all major donors had the opportunity to meet face to face for the first time, to review the impact of their collective efforts, discuss substantive issues, and outline plans for the future.

At the end of the deliberations, participants came to the following conclusions:

***Coordination problems:***

- There was no action plan to provide guidance on government development policies, objectives and strategies, leaving each donor agency to formulate its programme in accordance with its own understanding of the Government's problems, aims and strategies.
- There is overlapping in the programmes and projects financed by donors, resulting in duplication of effort.
- Some donors bypass the ministry of Planning and Cooperation and establish direct contacts with the sectoral ministries in order to provide support to the programmes of such ministries. One of the consequences of this state of affairs is the appearance in the implementation of public investment programs, of projects that have not been programmed, therefore widening the gap between programming, execution and investment priorities.
- The lack of involvement of nationals in project formulation exacerbates conflicts in project execution.

- The inadequate number of competent personnel in project management and in negotiation of international cooperation agreements leads to poor project monitoring and evaluation as well as to ineffective uses of existing aid coordination mechanisms.

#### **IV. The Need to Enhance Negotiation Skills**

Constructive partnerships for development require skills, not only in networking and coordination, but also in negotiation. The key qualities which can be acquired through negotiation include: the establishment of good relations with others; the definition of strategies that are suited to problem solving; developing qualities that, in any relationship, allow differences to be addressed in a flexible and effective manner; finding mutually advantageous solutions that are considered fair and durable by all parties despite differences of opinion and different systems of values or possible disagreements.

There are three main reasons why strengthening negotiation capacities must be a priority on the training agenda. First, with the collapse of the Soviet empire, external aid is no longer granted on the basis of the ideological persuasions of governments. In view of the fact the world has embraced a new brand of liberal capitalism, there is now fierce competition for access to the financial resources available on the international financial market. In this regard, those countries with solid negotiation skills have a greater chance of mobilizing sufficient resources in support of their development programmes.

Second, the behaviour of African representatives at meetings with donors illustrate serious shortcomings which damage their countries' interests. For instance, joint commissions constitute excellent tools for monitoring and programming bilateral cooperation (such as tripartite meetings and programme reviews organized by multilateral agencies). They provide a framework for consultations on cooperation policies, programs and strategies between two friendly countries. After a review of the programmes under implementation, they often turn their attention to areas of future cooperation. If it is properly used, this modality can help a country to focus its cooperation on priority projects that are vital for its accelerated development.

Unfortunately, many African countries lack coherent strategies that would enable them to take full advantage of such meetings. Important pre-negotiation discussions are held a few days before the arrival of the foreign delegation in

the country and without any prior consultations with all the concerned national parties. More effort is put into preparing some introductory remarks than into studying an overall strategy. When it comes to overseas tours, sometimes officials who know very little about the matters to be discussed are included in the national delegation; they are only interested in the pecuniary aspects of the mission.

The need for improved negotiation skills is also dictated by sociopolitical circumstances. Africa is grappling with political and ethnic conflicts that militate against the establishment of a favourable climate for economic development and good governance. Some foreign investors who are interested in the continent are hesitant to invest there or to diversify their investments against a backdrop of political instability created by political and/or ethnic tensions.

## **Conclusion**

The importance given to participatory governance underscores the need for finding innovative ways and approaches to generate a momentum for the effective participation of all the different partners in development efforts. The state is bound to join forces with the private sector and civil society in order to improve its capacity to respond and to provide services to the citizens.

In this regard, it has become necessary and urgent to balance capacity-building efforts, stressing the acquisition of conventional technical tools with training activities designed to provide development agents and officials with skills that would enable them to work effectively in groups, cooperate towards the achievement of common goals, handle disagreements and facilitate change. Networking, coordination and negotiation techniques could facilitate the emergence of such leadership if their underlying strategies are based on a better understanding of others; regular, open and transparent communications; interface facilitation skills and perfect mutual dependability among partners.



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