



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

# Public Sector Management in Uganda: What are the key issues?

## Overview

Public Sector Management (PSM) is a key function for efficient and effective management of public service delivery. It entails the establishment of institutions; structures; systems; formulation and enforcement of policies; laws; regulations; standards and procedures.

The PSM sector functionally incorporates; Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), Ministry of Public Service (MoPS), Ministry of Local Government (MoLG), Ministry of East African Community Affairs (MEACA), National Planning Authority (NPA), Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA), Public Service Commission (PSC), Local Government Finance Commission (LGFC) and 133 votes in the Local Governments (LGs). However, this brief is taking the Public sector being broadly synonymous with Government and is made up of all departments, agencies and Local Governments.

The policy brief analyses persistent challenges in PSM in Uganda and proposes policy recommendations. The analysis focuses on the period between FY2013/14 to mid year 2014/15.

## Key issues

- Low motivation due to inequitable remuneration which has resulted in poor work culture.
- Poor performance management practices.
- Weak state of records management.
- Inadequate staffing levels especially in Local Governments. This is worsened by poor work environment in newly created districts.
- Limited participation and engagement of citizens due to poor implementation of Client Charters.

## Introduction

In the FY2013/4, the PSM sector received Ug shs 1,089.74 billion (97%) of their budget and spent 99% of the releases. With the resources, the sector as a whole achieved 60% of its targets. The government allocated a total budget of Ug shs1,187,234 billion exclusive of taxes and arrears to the PSM sector in FY 2014/15 and by December 2014, 51% had been released and 95% spent. Despite the increase in the budget, the PSM sector is faced with persistent challenges that have affected service delivery.

## Key Challenges

### 1. Poor motivation due to low and inequitable remuneration

Salaries are not competitive with what the private sector offers for similar qualifications and competence level. This has contributed to the deplorable service performance in the public sector because of feeble productivity, weakened commitment, corruption, and absenteeism while in pursuit for alternative employment.

Besides the salary being low, there are gross

discrepancies in the pay levels across traditional Public Service, Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). For example staff at U1S in the Auditor General's Office, earn a monthly salary 8 times more than their counterparts in the traditional public service. A driver in National Planning Authority at salary Scale NPA-OS-8 earns a gross of Ug Shs 1,137,500 million per month; while a driver in a ministry at salary Scale U 8 earns a gross of Ug Shs 181,213 per month. The KCCA Executive Director earns a gross of Ug shs 43.7 million per month while that of NPA earns Ug shs 12.5 million which is less than 50% of the former's pay. These differences lead to demotivation in the traditional public service institutions and affects service delivery.

## **2. Poor Work Culture and Attitude**

Uganda's public sector has been marred by incidences of lack of national values, poor attitude towards work, lack of ethics, absence of client centeredness in service delivery, and lack of initiative to adapt to modern technologies e.g. ICT facilities. Despite various capacity building initiatives and the existing laws, public servants have remained inward looking and self-centered. This has been persistent in the public service especially in the implementation of public service reforms and the payroll management reforms where the attitude of some staff has not changed.

## **3. Poor Performance Management Practices**

Performance management refers to the process of planning work and setting expectations, continued monitoring of actions, developing capacity to perform periodic rating of achievements, rewarding attainment of targets and sanctioning them.

Although MoPS has built capacity in the public sector, performance management is still poor.

The summary reports to MoPS on performance agreements are not submitted on time. In addition, stated results framework: outputs, targets and means of verification are not followed in assessing performance. In some instances the review meetings are not regularly held. On the other hand, adequate funds are not provided for carrying out monitoring activities in the lower local governments. There are a few heads of department engaged in performance planning coupled with inadequate sensitization, training and empowerment of staff to handle performance agreements.

Implementation of rewards and the sanction framework has not taken root in the public sector. However, individuals were being recognized and rewarded for good performance in form of promotion as well as discipline especially for misconduct but not necessarily for unsatisfactory performance. This was evident in Kapchorwa, Kiryandongo District LGs and Lira Municipality.

## **4. Weak State of Records Management**

Records management refers to the practice of creating and maintaining records by an organization. Management of records as an integral part of government is associated with workflow. Managing records is one of the cornerstones for effective delivery of public services. A country without proper records and archives management fosters systematic corruption, uninformed decisions and operational failure. Despite the strategies of MoPS since 1992 to improve records management, their state and the archives system in line with several reforms in the public sector

remain in a sorry state

This is because of insufficient budget allocations. For instance, the construction of the National Records and Archives Centre had an approved budget of Ug shs4.4 billion in FY 2013/14 but the actual release was Ug shs 3.4 billion.

There is insufficient storage space for records especially in LGs, District Service Commissions (DSCS) and Urban Authorities. For example there are no registries and records centers in Town Councils and DSCs in Manafwa, Nwoya and Rubirizi districts.



**Poor State of records management in Bulambuli District Local Government Central Registry**

## 5. Poor Work Environment

The work environment in an institution influences performance. It entails the organizational culture, interpersonal relations, tools, equipment, and support systems. These create an environment for innovation and productivity.

However, many of the new and rural DLGs and lower Local Governments (LLGs) lack office space, and equipment. For example in Bulambuli district, the Human Resource Office is in an old leaking building, with wooden filing cabinets and

an old desk computer. This is a major hindrance to service delivery in light of the public service reforms.

## 6. Inadequate Staffing in LGs

Local Governments remain constrained by the phenomenon of low staffing and poor funding for the structures. Many LGs have failed to attract qualified and competent personnel.

Staffing levels for strategic positions for districts and municipalities currently stand at less than 56% of the required staff. In 2013, 30% of District Water Officers also doubled as the District Engineers with excessive workload that affected effectiveness of the two offices.

It is difficult to envision the possibility of ensuring the decentralized service delivery with such poor staffing levels. This capacity has been intensified by the recent ban on new recruitments. The departments most affected in DLGs are Human Resource, Production and Natural Resource, Community development, Engineering and Town Councils.

## 7. Limited development and implementation of Citizen Client Charters

The client charter aims at promoting compliance with policies, standards, rules, regulations and procedures in order to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of the MDAs and LGs. Client charters promote the demand side of accountability. A simple definition of client charters is indicated as a social contract between an MDA or LG and the service recipients. The objective is to inform clients and stakeholders the services the MDAs and DLGs provide.

Despite the capacity building initiatives implemented by MoPS in the public sector, the

implementation and involvement of the citizens in the client charter is limited in Agencies, Central Government and DLGs. This is because of the limited prioritization of the development and implementation of client charters within the annual work plans and budgets of MDAs and LGs; poor dissemination of client charters to service recipients; limited use of feedback information; and most client charters are written in English. All these limitations affect demand for accountability and quality of service.

## Conclusion

Public sector management is still faced with many issues. Building a better public sector in Uganda is arduous but success depends on motivation of staff, adequate administrative and institutional capacity, transformation of the public service work culture and attitude. Adopting a culture of innovation and benchmarking best practices can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery.

## Policy Recommendations

- The MoPS, Ministry of Finance Planning Economic Development (MFPED), and MoLG should operationalize the proposed Salary Commission to address issues of pay in the public sector.
- All accounting officers in MDAs and LGs should expedite the process of developing, implementing and disseminating client charters.
- The MoPS, MoLG, and MFPED should enforce the rewards and sanctions framework.

The MoPS, MFPED and MoLG should review the staffing structures in line with the national priorities and public sector reforms to address the issue of staffing gaps.

- The MoPS should prioritize records management in light of the public service reforms in the public sector.
- MoPS and Uganda Civil Service College should conduct a national comprehensive needs assessment and develop a plan to address some critical training gaps in the public sector. This will partly address the problem of attitude; lack of innovativeness and instill a culture of results.
- The MoPS, MoLG, and MFPED should address the problem of the poor working environment of the human resource departments in the public sector since they are the champions of public service reforms.

## References

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