Discussion Paper

Public Service Management and the Post-2015 Agenda

5 March 2013

United Nations Development Programme

KNOWLEDGE, INNOVATION AND CAPACITY

Introduction

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have performed the most useful function of focusing global attention and effort on addressing the leading issues of our times. They have been an 'institution of hope' following a period in which a 'narrative of progress' had been largely abandoned and when a lack of imagination and of compassion prevailed (Greig and Turner 2010; Rorty 1999). Not all countries will achieve the goals set, but on many indicators there have been significant gains. But the timeframe for the MDGs ends in

The timeframe for the MDGs ends in 2015 and the leading question has now become 'what next?' How can the momentum of hope and achievement generated through the MDGs be maintained and what will replace them?

2015 and the leading question has now become 'what next?' How can the momentum of hope and achievement generated through the MDGs be maintained and what will replace them? The UN High Level Panel on Post-2015 is set to report in May 2013 but in the meantime, numerous lobby groups and think tanks have begun to advocate their preferred programs for post-2015. There appear to be three basic choices. First, extend the deadline. This seems unlikely as it would represent a poverty of thinking and is an inappropriate response to constantly changing conditions. Second, there could be building on the old goals and third, something completely different and as yet unspecified. It is probable that there will be a combination of the second and third options whereby there is both familiarity and novelty. The former recognises the continuation of many 'wicked problems' such as extreme poverty and global warming and that there are established ways of dealing with them while the latter looks for new ideas to accelerate progress and to address emerging issues that are challenging the world.

This paper examines the future in terms of public services. It identifies some of the major issues that will confront public services across the globe but most particularly in developing countries. Also, it focuses more specifically on what are emerging as the leading organizational challenges that public services must address. How can these be addressed in an efficient, effective and timely manner?

A teacher in Bangladesh
Photo: Salman Saeed/ UNDP

The Major Challenges

This section identifies some of the major challenges that will confront public services across the globe but most particularly in developing countries.

Environmental sustainability	In order to tackle with numerous environmental problems, public services will be expected to play major roles in addressing environmental sustainability. They must adopt appropriate behaviours, techniques and practices while demonstrating leadership and a capacity for coordination.
Inequality	Growing inequality has been increasingly catching the attention of governments and citizens. In particular, public services need to take action on a) economic disparities within nations, b) gender disparity, and c) unequal access to public services. Public services must develop partnerships with organizations and citizens in all realms of society to take proactive and innovative actions.
Changing patterns of human settlement	Rapid urbanization, mainly induced by rural-urban migration, is posing big challenges such as the provision of decent settlement and livelihood. In order to maximize human potential and social mobility, public services need to take initiatives for generating sustainable urbanization futures.

Environmental Sustainability

It is generally recognised that the planet has been moving towards an environmental crisis that threatens humanity's future. The problems are numerous: climate change, rising sea levels, ever-increasing amounts of greenhouse gases, poor water and air quality, water depletion, deforestation, overfishing of the oceans and pollution. The nations of the world are aware of the problems as demonstrated in major meetings on environmental sustainability such as Copenhagen in 2009 and Rio de Janeiro in 2012 but progress has been slow. According to Randers' (2012) report for the Club of Rome this is due to over-consumption and political and economic models focusing on the short-term. Business as usual, says Randers (2012), is not an option. Governments must take the lead in addressing the environmental issues that threaten sustainable development.

The public services of all countries will need to play leading roles. Referring to some of the organizational issues that appear later in this paper, public services will need to engage much more in partnerships. These could be whole-of-government involving different government organizations in cooperation, or between government and external actors including civil society, the private sector and citizens. Responsibilities for the environment must be distributed through all levels of government, from communities to ministries of finance. Renewed and reinvigorated attention to accountability and corruption is essential to prevent environmental abuse, such as illegal logging and dynamite fishing, and to instill in public officials and societal actors a sense of shared moral responsibility for the planet and all its species. Implementation of policies and projects requires improvement so that scarce resources are not wasted. The message is that public services will be expected to play major roles in addressing environmental sustainability and must adopt appropriate behaviours, techniques and practices. They will also be expected to demonstrate leadership and a capacity for coordination. All of these demands suggest that the typical risk-averse attitudes of public services must be replaced by orientations that cultivate innovation and are willing to take calculated risks for the public good.

Inequality

Since the global financial crisis (GFC), inequalities in the ownership of economic resources, income, opportunity and access to services have been increasingly catching the attention of governments and citizens. Political concern and anger are occurring because people are questioning the systems that create the unequal allocation of resources and opportunities and the outcomes of those systems. Furthermore, there is a widespread perception that inequality is growing, a problem that the Economist (2012) has recently characterized as one of the world's 'biggest social, economic and political challenges'. These are challenges that governments and their public services will have to deal with.

While the income gaps that separate the rich and poor nations have started to fall, the economic disparities within many nations have started to increase. And this is what mostly concerns citizens. Gini coefficients (a standard measure of income differences) are on the rise in much of the world, both in rich and poor countries, although they have been on the decline in Latin America, traditionally and still a continent of very high gini coefficients. Questions are being posed of governments as to how 'harmonious societies' (China) or 'inclusive growth' (India) can be achieved in a context of widening economic inequality. If more people are being excluded from the benefits of development then it will be increasingly difficult to achieve the various visions of harmony and inclusion. It has been observed in some countries that it is not the absolute level of income that is critical but the relative level. People express dissatisfaction when they perceive relative deprivation, for example, when urban middle classes and entrepreneurs gain much more than rural farmers and workers. The latter may feel aggrieved even if their welfare is improving. Economists have also begun to question the Kuznets curve that tracks growing levels of inequality in early industrialization but a decline after that. As Beddoes (2012: 4) writes 'the inverted U has turned into something closer to an italicised N with the final stroke pointing menacingly upwards.' Recent IMF research has suggested that income inequality can slow economic growth and cause financial crises while the Asian Development Bank (ADB) found that if income distributions had not worsened over the past 20 years in Asia, the region's rapid growth would have lifted 240 million more people out of poverty (Economist 2012).

Gender is a second basis for inequality and a concern for public services. There have been undoubted gains for women and girls. For example, their health has improved greatly, two-thirds of all countries have gender parity in primary schools and in one third of countries girls outnumber boys in secondary schools (World Bank 2012). However, much remains to be done. Women are still dying unnecessarily at childbirth, up to 20 per cent of girls are never born because of cultural preferences for sons, 4 million poor women go missing each year and women still lack effective voice in household and public affairs. They are often subject to violence and even when they secure political representation through female quotas, powerful informal institutions mute their voices or ensure that the women selected are first and foremost the representatives of their family dynasties. Furthermore, poor women and girls are the most adversely affected. The gains that have accrued to middle class women across the developing world have rarely been shared with women from the less privileged classes where powerful informal institutions act to severely circumscribe their opportunities. While there is a quite obvious moral and human rights dimension to such discriminatory practices, economists also demonstrate that under-investment in women limits overall social and economic development (World Bank 2012).

There are other bases of inequality. There can be marked differences in citizens' ability to get access to the services to which they should be entitled. This is a matter of both quality and quantity of services. The poor and disadvantaged are typically the people who have difficulty getting access to the services they want at the times they want. The place where you are born can also affect your life chances. Poorer regions generally offer poorer services and more limited opportunities to advancement compared to regions with healthy economies, good schools and easily accessible medical facilities. Some minority ethnic groups may face discrimination by dominant ethnic groups. Whatever the basis of inequality and the mechanisms by which it is established and maintained, it is a prime task of public services to take remedial action. Working towards equity in service delivery is an obvious task (one to which we will return later in this paper). Trying to change attitudes and enforce laws that lead to gender equity is another while enforcing financial regulations and promoting equitable economic development are others. Public services need to be proactive and innovative but they cannot do it all on their own and must develop productive partnerships with organizations and citizens in all realms of society.

Changing Patterns of Human Settlements

While the world's population is still growing, its cities are growing at an even faster rate. More than half the world's population now lives in cities (Clark et al 2009). The urban population of developing economies is expected to double between 2000 and 2030 from 2 to 4 billion and the area they cover from 200,000 to 600,000 square kilometres (World Bank 2013). It is in these developing countries where the fastest urbanization rates are occurring. Furthermore, the number of megacities is growing as are the existing megacity populations. Tokyo, Mexico City and Sao Paulo each already house populations of 30 million. Eighty percent of the world's GDP comes from cities as do 80 percent of greenhouse gas emissions (World Bank 2012).

Much of the population growth associated with urbanization in developing countries comes from rural-urban migration and, to a lesser

extent, international migration. A combination of push factors, such as lack of economic opportunities and safety concerns, and pull factors, such as better services and job prospects, account for the burgeoning urban populations. But absorbing the new migrants has always been challenging and remains so in the present and foreseeable future. Many end up in slums and squatter settlements where they must endure overcrowding, poor sanitation, low-paying jobs and other deprivations. Such exclusion represents a waste of human potential and severely limits social mobility. This is particularly bad situation when one considers that one third of the urban population of developing countries are living in substandard slum conditions and experiencing a range of deprivations.

Cities are important and becoming even more important. 'Getting urbanization right' is therefore vital for the future of humanity. Generating jobs, providing housing, building infrastructure, encouraging economic development and ensuring adequate services available to all are among the many tasks facing governments and their partners over the coming years. The World Bank (2013) has suggested that sustainable urbanization can be achieved through a judicious combination of planning (charting a course for cities); connecting (making a city's markets in labour, goods and services accessible both from within and outside the city); and financing (for large capital outlays). Public services will have major responsibilities for undertaking these tasks but they will need to form partnerships with the private sector, citizens and civil society to achieve them. The tasks must also be performed within frameworks of good governance featuring such things as accountability, transparency, professionalism, the rule of law and efficiency.

Voters outside a polling station in Dili examine the lists of candidates during Timor-Leste's 2012 Parliamentary Elections
Photo: Louise Stoddard/UNDP Timor-Leste

Organizational Challenges

Environmental sustainability, inequality and urbanization are three major challenges that are already affecting world development but will continue to do so and in greater measure. As indicated above, public services must be at the forefront of addressing these problems and opportunities. In order to do this, there are organizational measures that require consideration so that public services make timely, effective and efficient responses over at least the next two decades. This section outlines some of the considerations and the organizational responses that might be considered. The considerations and responses should not be viewed as discrete categories. Rather, they are heavily interrelated and may often occur in some hybrid form. There are some familiar challenges, some unfinished business, some new issues, and some innovative paths that should be explored. At all times it should be remembered that adaptability of organizations to changing environments is the key to success but that adaptability should be guided by clear long-term aims and moral imperatives.

Accountability and corruption	Accountability is crucial for the success of public organizations. The concept of accountability includes the prevention of abuse of public authority; provision of assurance about the use of public resources; and promotion of continuous improvement in governance and public management. The rise of social accountability, coming as a "bottom-up" approach, introduced techniques such as citizens' charters; citizens' scorecards for service delivery; and participatory budgeting. However, it is anticipated that public services will need to take more initiatives using the "top-down" approach to accountability.

Leadership	Effective leadership in public services is greatly needed. However, there is no agreement on the ideal leadership models. Moreover, what works varies from one context to another. Research on leadership in the public sector should be given urgent attention. Governments need to make efforts to determine the types of leadership they require, the way it is developed, and what other organizational changes are needed for new leaders to become effective.
Citizen engagement	While citizen engagement is receiving increased attention, it has not yet become a widely established practice, and patronage-style distribution of public resources is still common. More initiatives from central and local governments to engage citizens are needed. Also, local politics needs to be transformed into a competition in which the concerns and needs of the masses are those of the candidates.
Partnership in government	Some governments have started to introduce partnership mechanisms such as 'whole of government' to tackle the cross cutting issues like poverty and environmental degradation. These mechanisms have the potential for streamlining policies, making good use of resources, and improving the flow of ideas. However, there are potentially bigger transaction costs and greater organizational complexity involved in government-wide coordination. Much exploratory and innovative work remains to be done to maximize the potentials of such partnerships.
Performance management	Performance management has become very popular in the discourse of public services but it has not yet brought a huge impact on organizational efficiency. There have been challenges in setting the performance measures, defining measurable goals, and making fair assessment. Due to its highly political nature, countries face challenges such as gaining trust and support for performance management schemes and, in implementing them.
Gender	While there has been dome progress on gender mainstreaming after the UN World Conference on Women in 1995, the level of achievement varies between countries. In public services, the progress has often been slow in such matters as the percentage of women in senior management positions. Since the knowledge of women in the public services in developing countries is fragmentary or non-existent, there is an urgent need to understand the role and contribution of women in a systematic and comparative manner.
Delivering services	While the actors engaged in service delivery have been diversified, governments still have the most important roles in delivering public services. Even when partners are involved, governments must assess them and be assured of the coverage and quality of the services delivered. Furthermore, policy makers and implementers need to provide services in an inclusive manner to address inequality issues.
E-governance	E-governance of the next decade should aim at linking citizens, businesses and civil society organizations to make sure their voices are heard and taken seriously, by applying 'whole-of government' model. Indexes or frameworks for e-governance need to be introduced to measure the effectiveness of e-governance.
Decentralization	Decentralization is a major concern in most countries as a way of bringing the state closer to the people. Two major issues have been overlooked. First, it is important to devise ways in which to secure greater local participation in governance in the years between elections. Second, the central government needs to take more active roles in monitoring, compliance and giving assistance to local governments.

Accountability and Corruption

Accountability is one of the most longstanding issues in governance. This is because it is so crucial for the success of organizations, whether public, private or non-governmental. For public administration, it is about preventing the abuse of public authority, providing assurance about the use of public resources, and promoting continuous improvement in governance and public management (Aucoin

and Heinztman 2000). Accountability has both moral and managerial dimensions.

With the declines in public trust of government in western democracies and the persistence of high levels of corruption in many developing countries, accountability will remain a primary concern. For developing countries, much has been written and many projects funded but it is unlikely that they will have the desired impacts until the informal social institutions that support lack of accountability and transparency are weakened. Prime among these institutions is patronage, a 'personalization of power' in which leaders rule 'with the help of clients who get a pay-off for their support' (Khan 2005: 714). It subverts formal structures and processes that are built on principles of merit, rules and social equity and substitutes loyalty as the prevailing currency, compliance to the patron as the dominant behaviour, and extraction of state resources as the major goal (Blunt et al. 2012). Patronage is not selective about political systems as it has demonstrated an ability to adapt to a variety of regimes and levels of government.

The rise of social accountability over the past decade can be seen as a response to patronage. Social accountability comes from below and is manifested in such things as citizens' charters, citizens' scorecards for service delivery, and participatory budgeting (Caddy et al. 2004; Arroyo and Sirker 2005). It has had some success but generally where government has been a willing partner (Turner 2011). Booth (2012: 166), writing on Africa, has noted that 'bottom-up pressures should not be relied upon as a significant factor' even when democratic decentralization has occurred. He has recommended looking once more at how to create strong top-down pressure ('working with the grain') in association with bottom-up pressure. This involves persuading neo-patrimonial governments to adopt more developmental paths rather than going down the kleptocratic road.

Leadership

Despite all the leadership programs that have been devised and funded over the past 50 years, there is still a great need for effective leadership in public services, especially in developing countries. But what is effective leadership and how can it be obtained? Unfortunately, there is no easy answer. Academics, practitioners and consultants have many different ideas about what it takes to become an effective leader, even how we define an effective leader in the first place. Indeed, leadership is an 'essentially contested concept', that is one where there are seemingly irresolvable debates about a term but recognition of rival uses of it (Gallie 1955). This lack of agreement and multiplicity of leadership models creates problems for governments wishing to engage in leadership development. Furthermore, what works in one country's organizations or even different organizations in the same country may vary. Different contexts are likely to necessitate different styles of leadership for success.

The reason why there has been so much interest in leadership is that it has come to be accepted as a sine qua non for organizational success. Lacking good leadership, the management gurus tell us, spells disaster for the organization. Different gurus advocate their own distinctive models as the pathways to success. But research has not yet reached firm verifiable conclusions about the role of leadership in public sector organizations. How important is it? In part this depends on how leadership is viewed:

- Person: is it WHO 'leaders' are that makes them leaders?
- Result: is it WHAT 'leaders' achieve that makes them leaders?
- Position: is it WHERE 'leaders' operate that makes them leaders?
- Process: is it HOW 'leaders' get things done that makes them leaders? (Grint 2005: 1)

Each of these perspectives is valid but depending on which orientation is preferred, the strategies for leadership development are likely to vary.

Another issue is whether leaders are simply the very top person(s) in an organization and thus they are the only ones who should demonstrate leadership. Alternatively, some authors believe that leadership should be distributed throughout an organization. Should all organizational members be expected to show leadership in some way and thus contribute to the enhanced performance of the

organization? This distributed leadership may be desirable but for highly bureaucratic organizations in which patronage rules to make such a transformation will require great political commitment and power.

The questions on leadership in the public sector are numerous but there is surprisingly little research especially in developing countries. It is a potentially important area that has been neglected but needs urgent attention. If governments are to develop adaptable well-performing organizations then existing organizations need to change. Structures, cultures and processes must be remodelled but there is no automatic evolutionary adjustment by organizations. Desired changes do not just happen. Reforms must be planned and implemented. People must lead them and others in the organization have to follow or collaborate. Effective leaders are needed probably throughout the organization and governments need to devote efforts now to determining what sort of leadership is needed, how it can be developed and what other organizational changes are required to make the new leaders effective.

Citizen Engagement

Local democracy in the form of locally elected councils has been around for many years in western democracies and can be found in the majority of countries in the developing world. Traditionally, it has been a matter of citizens electing councils and leaving them to look after their devolved functions, only interrupting proceedings when a highly contentious issue arises. The current trend is to encourage citizen engagement on an on-going basis in what has been variously termed network, consumer and participatory democracy. A collaborative approach between community and council is the underlying theme of this mode of engagement. Through collaboration between place-based (or they could be interest-based) communities and the council, the partners work to determine the community's future. Ideally, the processes should stress partnership and should not be piecemeal, haphazard or tokenistic. Such community engagement has occurred in western democracies such as Canada, UK, Australia and New Zealand through a combination of statutory measures (e.g. 10 years community strategic plans in New South Wales, Australia) and demand from communities themselves.

There are many precedents for community engagement in developing countries stretching back to the community development initiatives of the 1960s. However, community engagement beyond the electoral process has rarely become an established practice due to the lack of government interest and the power differentials that often separate local political and administrative elites from citizens. There have been notable efforts to incorporate citizens' views into the policy and planning process through initiatives such as participatory budgeting and awards for community projects (e.g. Galing Pook in the Philippines) but in general, local political elites have preferred patronage-style distribution of public resources. It is perhaps time for some top-down pressure from central governments to force these local elites to engage with communities, especially the poor and disadvantaged, or to encourage a style of local politics in which candidates campaign on the basis of issues such as subsidized health and educational allowances to secure the votes of the masses and so communicate to the latter that they can influence policy (Rosser et al. 2011).

Partnerships in Government

In developing countries the archetypal bureaucracy is one with high levels of differentiation (lots of levels and functional sub-divisions), centralized (decision-making being passed upwards through the organization) and formalized (many rules and regulations). It is slow-moving, risk averse, often lacks appropriate skills, and is concerned with process. Also, these bureaucratic organizations do not like cooperating with others. They have mapped their areas of functional control and defend them resolutely yet they face 'wicked problems' like poverty, environmental degradation and employment creation. These are problems which cannot be solved by one ministry or one department but require cooperation across government. Sadly, this is most often lacking and frequently token or forced when it does occur.

Some governments, such as Australia and the UK, have tackled this issue through mechanisms such as 'whole of government' and 'joined up government' whereby several organizations at one or various levels pool appropriate resources to address the problem. According to Pollitt (2003) such cooperation is premised on the elimination of contradictions and distinctions between different

policies; making better use of resources; improving the flow of ideas; and producing a more integrated set of services. One should not get too carried away by these idealized gains as many problems can emerge. These include increased transaction costs, greater organizational complexity, monitoring more stakeholders, creating accountability arrangements for different partners, disagreements between partners and communications malfunctions.

Despite these problems, the idea of enhanced coordination does have merit if used judiciously taking into account the organizational capabilities and political possibilities within particular jurisdictions. For example, in Indonesia the government of President Yudhoyono found that there were 114 poverty reduction programs run by individual organizations in a largely uncoordinated manner (DFID 2013). These were reduced to two nationwide programs that serviced 80,000 villages and 35 million people becoming the largest social protection program in the world. The strong and continuous support of high-level leadership was crucial in the Indonesian case and serves as a lesson for elsewhere. Thus, when identifying the conditions required for centre of government policy coordination (a subject for which remarkably little is written) Ben-Gera (2004) placed such leadership as the top priority. He also set other important guidelines for making policy coordination more efficient and effective:

- a government agenda that is clearly planned

- government decisions taken on the basis of adequate information

- decisions taken in line with the money to implement them

- each decision related to government's stated priorities

- a dispute resolution process for minor and even medium disagreements

- the process being regularly monitored (Ben-Gera 2009).

While many stakeholders in development acknowledge the need for enhanced coordination and partnership, securing the desired levels of cooperation is another matter. Potential partners often have different interests and even if they do agree to collaborate they may disagree about the terms of engagement. Such disagreement can break out into open conflict or result in partnerships characterized by lukewarm commitment by so-called partners. Because partnerships offer such potential gains, efforts must be made to gain greater understanding of their dynamics and acquire skills in how to make them work. Some advice on these matters may be gleaned from management literature on conflict resolution, network analysis and diplomacy but much exploratory and innovative work remains to be done to ensure that partnerships among all sorts of stakeholders fulfill their potential.

Performance Management

Performance management has become a mantra for public services across the world intent on improving their performance in all aspects of their work and at all levels̄organizational, team and individual. But repetition of the mantra has not brought enlightenment as the quest for the desired systems continues. There are, however, some lessons that have been learned during the quest, notably that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Organizations with different functions, structures, cultures, histories and leadership models will have difficulty accommodating to the same model. Also, their criteria for assessing performance are likely to vary. Thus, any public service framework 'must be sufficiently flexible so that each organisation can determine approaches most appropriate to the issues uniquely faced by them' (Blackman et al. 2012).

The performance management toolkit normally includes such instruments as performance appraisal, performance agreements and performance contracts. These are used to measure performance and supposedly enable the alignment of organizational, team and individual goals. The rationale is that we can set targets to achieve in line with goals and can measure whether they have been achieved and diagnose any impediments or factors that facilitate the performance management processes. Unfortunately, there are several problems that muddy the waters or simply prevent this desirable state of affairs from happening. First, there is a great deal of

sponginess in the concepts used in performance measurement such as 'alignment' of goals and 'cascading' of goals. Second, goals that are identified can be unrealistic, easily-achieved or inappropriate. Third, performance indicators may be difficult to define and hard to measure. Fourth, issues of fairness may arise in the application of performance management systems. Finally, the processes are highly political, a factor often lost on the designers of these systems who cordon them off in managerial cocoons away from the real world of bureaucratic politics as the following example demonstrates.

In 2002, in the Pacific micro-state of Vanuatu the government attempted to introduce a system of performance agreements for the top two levels of public servants. The experiment was a failure and abandoned several years later. The main cause of failure was the suspicion and hostility of public servants towards the performance contracts (O'Donnell and Turner 2005). They doubted the veracity of the imported managerial rationale but rather saw it as a method of authoritarian control, a punitive weapon that could be used to oust them from their jobs. After all, they worked in an environment of political volatility and instability. There were also no incentives for the public servants to adopt the performance agreements, they were unduly complex and took little account of the organizational environments. Other performance management systems were planned and partially implemented for other Pacific Island nations at this time but all save one (Samoa) foundered because of similar difficulties. However, these Pacific Island nations like other developing and developed countries are still very interested in performance management and are currently designing, implementing or considering new systems. We can judge in a few years whether success has remained elusive or whether the right formula has been used. Whatever the result, the quest for improved systems of performance management will continue. For example, in 2012 the Australian Public Services Commission (APSC) commissioned a review of performance management worldwide to find out how to produce and sustain high-performing organizations.

Gender

The important issue of gender was raised earlier as a major concern of global inequality. Women and girls often face discriminatory practices especially if they are poor and from developing countries. In response to this situation, following the 1995 UN World Conference on Women in Beijing the idea of 'gender mainstreaming' entered policy circles. According to the Beijing Platform for Action:

'Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively' (UN 1995).

This was to be achieved by government organizations recognizing the relevance of gender in policies and their implementation; increasing the capacity of government organizations to address relevant gender equality issues; obtaining sufficient specialized expertise; and ensuring changes in organizational behaviour and performance. While there has been undoubted progress over the years since the Beijing conference, the gains for women and society vary considerably between countries and in some instances there have even been losses. Thus, much remains to be done to make gender mainstreaming a reality.

One specific area in which this requires attention is in the public services themselves. Women have certainly increased their representation in public services across the globe. In many OECD countries they now constitute the majority of employees. This may also be the case in developing countries where school teachers are counted as public servants. But it is generally the case that the higher the public service level, the lower the percentage of women. There are some notable success stories for women, such as the Philippines where there has been large female representation in senior ranks for many years. However, our knowledge of women in the public service, especially in developing countries is fragmentary at best and non-existent in some instances. There is an urgent need to understand the role and contribution of women to public services in a systematic and comparative manner. This is not simply an academic exercise in data gathering, but has profound policy relevance in terms of the performance of public services and how equity and opportunity can enhance individual and organizational performance. We need to know why strong biases against women occur in some public services, what are the 'unconscious biases' affecting women and whether there are distinctive female approaches to leadership and management that can improve organizational performance.

Delivering Services

Who should deliver public services? Who should provide the public goods that citizens need, want and/or are entitled to? The traditional response is that it is government's job and that civil servants are there to cater to the needs of the public. In rich countries, this attitude has come under challenge as new arrangements for service delivery have been created. Even in developing countries, the traditional reliance on the state (albeit somewhat optimistic in certain instances) is coming under challenge as experiments are mounted on innovative ways to deliver services.

One should not jump to the conclusion that these developments are simply indicative of a shrinking role by government. As Alford and O'Flynn (2012: 5) have observed of OECD countries, government is 'playing both a smaller and a larger role in our society'. The role is smaller because increasing numbers of external parties are providing services. This has been through privatization of utilities and contracting out for services from simple ones, such as garbage collection, to more complex ones such as employment services. Government has also engaged in internal collaboration to achieve particular goals¯a component of the whole-of-government orientation described earlier in the paper. Voluntary organizations and volunteers may also provide services. For example, they may contribute services for national parks, assist refugees to settle or act as museum guides. A final group of providers are clients. These could be organizations who manage voluntary compliance to government regulations or clients who engage in co-production. For example, 'in the UK, 80,000 participants have completed the six-week Expert Patient programme which teaches people with chronic illnesses such as arthritis, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, and asthma, how to self-manage their health (Alford and O'Flynn 2012: 179).

While OECD governments may not be directly producing as many services as previously, they have both altered and expanded their roles in terms of interaction with the external entities which are now undertaking or contributing to service delivery. The mechanisms of interaction include 'contracting, partnering, education, persuasion, incentives, subsidies, 'hard' and 'soft' regulation, and enhancing service and information and convenience' (Alford and O' Flynn 2012: 6). Thus, governments are now not only involved in their own service production tasks but must seek and organize external parties to contribute to service production.

While developing countries have not gone so far down the road of OECD countries in 'externalizing' public service delivery they do have various experiences in the field; for example, in public transport, garbage collection, health and environment. There is a history of experimentation but much more will need to be done if developing country governments are to fully tap the resources of the private and non-governmental sectors to deliver services. It will require a loosening of bureaucratic attitudes, processes and structures, some calculated risk and the acquisition of new skills in managing partnerships.

The problem of exclusion, mentioned earlier under the heading of 'Inequality', is another challenge for the organizers and deliverers of services. How do these actors ensure that services go to the people who most need them, the poor and disadvantaged? Progress has been made under the MDGs but an enormous amount still remains to be done especially as inequalities are widening in many countries. All too often in the past, the wealthier social classes have reaped the greatest benefits from the provision of public goods. Thus, the key issue for policy-makers and implementers is how to develop the means and the political will to make certain that equity prevails in the provision of services and that currently poor and disadvantaged groups can be certain of receiving their fair share of services of good quality and that government expenditure is not skewed towards middle class welfare.

E-governance

The final organizational challenge for public services is e-governance, a term which I'm using to cover the use of information and communications technology (ICT) between government organizations, between government and the private sector, and between government and citizens and civil society organizations. While there are sometimes grandiose claims about e-governance as being the all-encompassing future of how we govern ourselves, it is undoubtedly true that there have been major advances in the use of ICTs by government as there have by society in general. It is also an area of government operations that involves all of the other organizational challenges that have been discussed in this paper.

In the development of e-governance there is a movement from supplying information (e.g. about tourist sites, jobs, government services) to transactions (e.g. licence renewals, registration and job applications) to participation (e.g. open policy forums, e-meetings and e-feedback). The aim of the next decade should be to reach the participatory stage where citizens, businesses and civil society organizations are linked with government and where their voices are heard and taken seriously. It will require a whole-of-government approach whereby there is a single point of entry. Vanguard countries such as Korea have accomplished this and provide a model to emulate by moving from 'a decentralized single-purpose organizational model, to an integrated unified whole-of-government model' (United Nations 2012: 40). This will require changes in the traditional silo model of bureaucracy where functional territory and information are jealously guarded to more flexible structures and processes. It should also enhance transparency and accountability leading to more honest, equitable, efficient and effective government. This could increase levels of trust in government and reverse the trend of loss of social capital in recent decades. Leadership is another requirement because without effective and sustained leadership it is difficult if not impossible to create the enabling environment in which e-governance can thrive.

The leaders in e-governance are rich countries with Korea, Netherlands, UK and Denmark at the head of the pack. At a regional level Europe is in front followed by East Asia and North America. South Asia and Africa lag far behind clearly demonstrating a considerable digital divide. Also, particular demographic groups in all countries have low access and/or usage. This may be because of lack of ICT skills, literacy shortcomings, inability to afford the hardware, preference for face-to-face interactions or national leaders' reluctance to invest in the enabling environment. However, there are opportunities, especially with increased mobile phone penetration, such as initiatives to raise the awareness of citizens, targeting of vulnerable groups and the provision of the services that citizens want through e-government.

E-governance is not, however, the exclusive preserve of central governments. Subnational governments can also design and implement innovative e-governance initiatives. The process has already started in some countries (e.g. the Philippines) and the Global Centre for Public Service Excellence (GCPSE) can play a significant role in monitoring such experiments and disseminating good practices and novel ideas from the cities, provinces and districts.

But how do we know when e-governance is successful? When can performance management be seen to have worked? There are now indexes or frameworks that can be used to measure the effectiveness of e-governance. For example, the E-Governance Institute at Rutgers University has proposed an E-Governance Performance Index comprised of five measures: privacy, usability, contents, service and citizen participation. There is a four-point scale for ranking (see http://spaa.newark.rutgers.edu/home/ncpp/institutes/e-governance-institute.html). While e-governance developments are routinely described in such terms as 'exciting' and 'path-breaking' by their proponents, it is important to maintain a sense of proportion and look more closely at what e-governance applications are doing, what they can do, what limitations they have and how they can be used to impose regimes of compliance.

Decentralization

Decentralization is a major concern in most countries. Its popularity as a way of redesigning the state and bringing government closer to the people being served has meant that the leading question has not been whether we decentralize but how do we do it. However, much of the focus of decentralization has been on designing and implementing the structures and processes of decentralized governance. Thus, governments and citizens have been mainly concerned with the arrangements for electing councillors, defining the powers of local chief executives, the role of political parties in elections, the employment conditions of public servants and the authorities of subnational governments.

This has distracted attention from two highly important matters: first, focus on the citizens and second, relations with the centre. The citizens get the full attention of political leaders at election time but they are often not consulted or involved in governance in the years between elections. They have limited ways of expressing voice let alone being listened to, and accountability institutions are often lacking in effectiveness. Thus, one issue for the post-2015 agenda is how to secure greater local participation in governance beyond simply voting every few years. The second issue is the neglected matter of what roles the centre should take in a decentralized

state. The most important seem to be monitoring, compliance and assisting subnational governments. Monitoring is necessary to ensure that all citizens are receiving the services and opportunities they are entitled to and that inequalities are not widening between regions or even within them. Compliance is required to confirm that subnational governments are performing the functions that they have been allocated and behaving in an accountable manner. Assisting is about using the skills, knowledge and resources of central government for the benefit of the citizens of the country scattered across various subnational governments.

As can be observed, this broad program for decentralization is not discrete. Even more than the other organizational challenges it is cross-cutting. It is about service delivery, e-governance, gender, partnerships, performance management and leadership. All of these challenges are found in subnational governments and to address inequality and environmental sustainability in those territories it is necessary to utilize a range of approaches and techniques.

The Politics of Public Service Reform

A cross-cutting issue in this paper has been the centrality of politics in public service reform. However, public sector reform has been most often portrayed in managerial terms where design activities focus on the technical aspects of change and make assumptions about both the amenability of actors to change and the predictability of the results of taking particular actions. Such an approach overlooks the difficulties inherent in policy-making and implementation and has led to disappointment in many public sector reform initiatives. In this rational approach, the influence of politics is underplayed yet it is always present. There will always be resistance and competition, and these political activities occur especially at the implementation stage. As Grindle (1980) observed more than three decades ago, implementation is the stage in the policy process when individual and collective demands are especially made and where conflicts and their resolution occur. Implementation is the time when stakeholders are best able to participate in policies that affect their interests and where politics based on factions, patronage and other affective forms is used to make competing demands for the allocation of goods and services that best suit particularistic interests.

Despite the longstanding acknowledgment in academic literature of the importance of the politics of public sector reform, political or political economy analysis has been a missing or underutilized tool in reform initiatives. Through such analysis, risks can be identified, understood and evaluated. Courses of action to overcome obstacles can be planned or proposals suspended because they can be expected to arouse too much opposition or face insurmountable obstacles. The political analysis should also detect where political controversies will be generated by reforms or where they will torpedo them. As a variation on that theme, political analysis should also be able to identify reforms for which government is unwilling or unable to enforce collective discipline.

Considerations for an Agenda for the Global Centre for Public Service Excellence

The purpose of this paper has been to raise issues and provoke discussion on a range of relevant topics for the new Global Centre for Public Service Excellence (GCPSE) in the post-2015 era. The paper has peered into the future from a public sector management point of view. It has highlighted three major issues facing the planet environmental sustainability, inequality and human settlements which public sector managers across the globe will have to deal with over at least the next couple of decades. The paper has also selected nine leading challenges and opportunities that are specific to the public sector. These include accountability and corruption, leadership, citizen engagement, partnerships in government, performance management, gender, delivering services, e-governance and decentralization. Some recommendations for action have been made and some trends identified. There has also been a reiteration of the importance of politics in public sector reform.

The contents of this paper do not represent an exhaustive list of potential agenda items for the GCPSE, but they do comprise a range of topics that should be seriously considered for inclusion in the Centre's planned activities. To determine what these are, several important decisions have to be made. The first is the nature of the components of the GCPSE's program of activities. How does it perceive itself? Does it wish to focus on particular activities such as conferences, workshops, training, consultancy, research or outreach? While GCPSE will obviously engage in a range of activities, will it focus on a few or try to be all things to all people?

The second issue is the choice of the content areas in which it should be active. It could simply be reactive to stakeholder demands but this tends to produce a rather fragmented approach and threatens an identity crisis for the organization. Selecting themes and specializations with specified timeframes could be a useful way to proceed. For example, each year or for every two years there may be a major theme (or two) such as public services and environmental sustainability. This could then be addressed in a variety of ways: research on identifying good practice in environmental management or cooperation between levels of government for environmental management. There can be workshops at which such experiences are disseminated as well as on-line resources. There may be training in particularly successful methods of enforcing compliance with pollution regulation, perhaps even the drafting of appropriate regulations. This is not a concrete proposal but is intended to indicate how integrated programs of activities can be designed and delivered to have an impact on particular problems that are confronting governments and their citizens. Equivalent programs could be developed for the other global issues of inequality and urbanization that have been presented in this paper. Alternatively, some of the items in the Organizational Challenges section of this paper could be bundled together. For example, 'public services, partnerships and development' might involve whole-of-government, community engagement, leadership and partnering with private and non-governmental organizations.

Another issue facing the GCPSE concerns staffing and physical resources. How many staff and what type of staff are envisaged? The answer to this question could have a profound effect on what activities are undertaken. For example, will there be researchers in-residence? If so, will they be contracted for specific tasks and times? What will be the tasks of permanent staff? There are many related questions, all of which have a bearing on the way the Centre will operate and the activities in which it will engage. Thus, the various items that have been discussed in this paper provide some topics that can feed into an agenda for the GCPSE but while choosing which topics to include in a program there needs to be simultaneous consideration of the type of activities, what functional strengths will be developed (e.g. outreach, research etc.) and what human and physical resources will be made available.

The Elements of an Agenda for the Global Centre for Public Service Excellence

The construction of an agenda for the GCPSE is a collective task performed by the Centre's multiple stakeholders and drawing on evidence from many sources including items such as this horizon-scanning paper. It should be seen as an emergent strategy, that is, a strategy that has certain broad guidelines and procedures but which is evolving to adapt to changing needs and circumstances.

For the construction of an agenda for the GCPSE, the first step is to select two leading global issues on which the GCPSE will focus over the first three years. The second step is to identify the organizational challenges that must be met in dealing successfully with the leading issues. The third step is to take one of the organizational challenges and make it a focal point as all of the other organizational challenges in some way relate to it.

The first step is to select two leading global issues on which the GCPSE will focus over the first three years. These should be inequality and environmental sustainability. Issues relating to exclusion and human settlements can be subsumed under these two heading. For example, exclusion is a problem that generates and maintains inequality and is a major concern in the organization of services and investment in public goods in cities. A wide variety of concerns and problems can be placed under the broad umbrella of inequality and environmental sustainability.

The second step is to identify the organizational challenges that must be met in dealing successfully with the leading issues. Each leading issue should be approached through a cluster of interrelated actions aiming to build complementarity between the actions. The impact of the actions should be the principal guide to what is selected and implemented. This does not necessarily mean an exclusive concern with immediate impact. Such activities as research or leader development can take much longer to have a significant effect.

The third step is to take one of the organizational challenges – service delivery – and make it a focal point as all of the other organizational challenges in some way relate to it: leadership to encourage and introduce improved services; e-governance to make services more accessible and transparent; partnerships to maximize the different strengths of participating parties; accountability to enforce honesty and promote efficiency and effectiveness; citizen engagement to enable the voices of the poor and disadvantaged to be heard, listened to and acted upon; performance management to reorient bureaucrats from preoccupation with process to a concern for results; and gender to encourage equity in policy and make the best use of women's talents and under-utilized potential.

This means that any activity must be justified in terms of (a) the leading issue (b) organizational challenges, and (c) contribution to service delivery. While there should be a mix of activities it is important that the GCPSE

- Sponsors research

- Disseminates research findings and evidence of good practice

- Builds capabilities among public services, civil society and the private sector

- Is a resource for high quality and timely information and advice

- Encourages innovation

- Creates and promotes networks among public servants, civil society, the private sector, academics and donors whereby interaction is on an equal footing

The program of activities will be an evolving one with some longer-term components that require greater inputs over extended periods and short-term activities. GCPSE must be reactive to client needs but must still have an overarching framework with clear aims and favoured types of activity so that its mission and strategy are clear to all, and not all things to all people. The Centre's governing body will be required to review and revise the strategy as appropriate on a regular basis.

ANNEX I

References

Alford, J. and O'Flynn, J. (2012) Rethinking Public Service Delivery: Managing with External Providers. Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke.

Arroyo, D. and Sirker, K. (2005) Stocktaking of Social Accountability Initiatives in the Asia and Pacific Region. World Bank: Washington DC.

Aucoin, P. and Heintzman, R. (2000) 'The dialectics of accountability in an era of reform', International Review of Administrative Sciences, 66(1) 45-56.

Beddoes, Z. (2012) 'For, richer, for poorer', Economist, 13 October.

Ben-Gera, M. (2009) 'Coordination at the centre of government for better policy making', paper for conference on public administration reform and European integration, Budva, Montenegro, 26-27 March, 2009.

Ben-Gera, M. (2004) 'Co-ordination at the Centre of Government: The Functions and Organization of the Government Office: Comparative Analysis of OECD countries, CEECS and Western Balkan Countries', SIGMA Papers No. 35. SIGMA-OECD, Paris.

Blackman, D., Buick, F., O'Donnell, M., O'Flynn, J. and West, D. (2012) 'Developing High Performance: Performance Management in the Australian Public Service, Research Paper Prepared for 'Strengthening the Performance Framework Project', a joint research program of the Australian National University, The Australian Public Service Commission, the University of Canberra and the University of New South Wales @ADFA.

Blunt, P. Turner, M. and Lindroth, H. (2012) 'Patronage, service delivery and social justice in Indonesia', International; Journal of Public Administration, 35(3) 214-220.

Booth, D. (2012) ''Working with the grain and swimming against the tide', Public Management Review, 14(2) 163-180.

Caddy, J., Peixoto, T. And McNeil, M. (2007) Beyond Public Scrutiny: Stocktaking of Social Accountability in OECD Countries. World Bank Institute and OECD: Washington DC and Paris.

Clark, A., Fujiki, M and Davidson, M. (eds) (2009) The Urban Transformation in Asia. East-West Center: Honolulu.

DFID (Department of Foreign International Development) (2013) Summary Report of the Public Sector Governance Reform Evaluation. DFID: London.

Economist (2012) 'Special report: world economy', Economist, 13 October.

Gallie, W. (1955) 'Essentially contested concepts', Proceedings of the Aristotlian Society, 56, 167-198.

Greig, A. and Turner, M. (2010) 'The MDGs as an institution of hope', paper presented at the Ten Years Against Poverty Conference, University of Manchester, 8-10 September.

Grint, K. (2005) Leadership: Limits and Possibilities. Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke.

Khan, M. (2005) 'Markets, states and democracy: patron-client networks and the case for democracy', Democratization, 12(5) 704-724.

O'Donnell, M. and Turner, M. (2005) Exporting new public management: performance agreements in a Pacific microstate', International Journal of Public Sector Management, 18(7) 615-628.

Pollitt, C. (2003) 'Joined-up government: a survey', Political Studies Review, 1(1) 34-49.

Randers, J. (2012) 2052: a Global Forecast for the Next Forty Years. Chelsea Green: White River Jct, Vermont.

Rorty, R. (1999) 'Globalisation, the politics of identity and social hope', in Philosophy and Social Hope. Penguin: London.

Rosser, A., Wilson, I and Sulistiyanto, P. (2011) 'Leaders, elites and coalitions: the politics of free public services in decentralized Indonesia', Development Leadership Program, Research Paper 16, AusAID: Canberra.

Turner, M. (2011) 'Social accountability in South and East Asia', paper presented at UN Workshop on Social Accountability, Vienna, 11-13 July.

UN (United Nations) (2012) UN-E-Government Survey 2012. United Nations: New York.

UN (United Nations) (1995) Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. United Nations: New York.

World Bank (2013) Planning, Connecting and Financing Cities Now: Priorities for City Leaders. World Bank: Washington DC.

World Bank (2012) World Development Report: Gender Equality and Development. World Bank: Washington DC.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of UNDP, the United Nations or its Member States.

For more information: **www.undp.org/**

United Nations Development Programme

One United Nations Plaza • New York, NY 10017 USA