

Foreword

As governments around the world embark on a new paradigm to improve public service delivery, it is important to document the policies and processes so that public sector policy-makers, senior managers, academics and others who are at the centre of performance management can learn from each other.

This study, therefore, forms an important part of the work of the Governance and Institutional Development Division (GIDD) of the Commonwealth Secretariat. In pursuing the GIDD mandate for public sector development, we concentrate our efforts on strengthening institutions that contribute to good governance and developing public sector capacity for effective delivery of public services through various strategies. To accomplish this, we must be able to conduct active research into the activities that contribute to good governance practices and share these results with member states.

This study is on the contract system of employment for senior government officials in four countries of Commonwealth Africa (Botswana, Ghana, Uganda and Zambia). This adds value to our work in promoting good governance principles and the development of human resource capacity in public services. The results of this study were presented at the pan-Commonwealth programme entitled 'Managing Public Sector Performance' for senior public servants in Singapore in February 2009, and at the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM) Conference 'Governance Excellence: Managing Human Potential' in Arusha, Tanzania, in March 2009.

We have completed a similar study in four countries of the Caribbean region namely: Belize, Guyana, Jamaica and St Lucia and presented the results at the Regional Caribbean Meeting of Cabinet Secretaries and Heads of Public Services in November 2007. Current research is now being undertaken in the Pacific Region. Further publications will therefore follow based on the findings of these research activities.

The results of the study point to the need for documentation of our processes in public services and for consistency and standardisation in the application of our procedures and processes.

We will continue to work with member states in advancing good government principles, human resource capacity development and performance-based budgeting, which are all key components that support a performance management framework for efficient and effective delivery of services. We will continue to share with member states public service experiences for the benefit of all Commonwealth countries.

I wish to commend Dr Philip Osei, Senior Fellow, Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies, University of the West Indies and Dr Joan N Nwasike, the Regional Adviser for the Caribbean in GIDD for this initiative. I also want to thank Dr Roger Koranteng, Adviser, Governance and Anti-Corruption, for his review of the manuscript.

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Preface

This study is an enquiry into the nature, processes and outcomes of public sector reform on the role and conditions of service of senior public service officers (specifically, permanent secretaries) in four Commonwealth African countries. These countries are Botswana, Ghana, Uganda and Zambia. The countries were selected because they introduced reforms which, on the whole, amount to institutional change in the revolution of the position of the most senior public servant in Commonwealth countries.

The study uses data from semi-structured interviews and documentary sources. It adopts an analytical framework based on the theoretical approach to public management on which the public sector reform was launched. The study provides evidence that all four countries had instituted contracts of employment and contract-like arrangements in the form of performance agreements, contracts of employment and the retention of a good mix of the old permanent and pensionable modes of employment.

It is evident from the study that to benefit from performance improvements associated with these contractual arrangements, countries must fully implement performance contracts or back up their performance agreements with performance management and performance measurement instruments which could be evaluated at regular intervals, and the performance information fed back to improve management. The study, however, cannot make over-reaching conclusions about the detailed workings of the public service systems in those countries as it concentrated on institutional aspects of implementation of the chosen models by each country, and the length of time spent in each country did not permit an ethnographic type study. The overall conclusion is that a broad range of new management practices for managing public services and senior public service officers have been adopted in Botswana, Ghana, Uganda and Zambia.

