

**PUBLIC SERVICES AND PUBLIC SERVANTS IN SSA:**

**Some Issues of Values, Productivity, Pay and Procedures**

**By**

**Reginald Herbold Green**

**(An Outline)**

**Presented To:**

**African Leadership Forum**

**"Preparing The African Public Service For The 21st Century"**

**22-24 November 1995**

**Accra, Ghana**

# **PUBLIC SERVICES AND PUBLIC SERVANTS IN SSA:**

**By Reginald Herbold Green**

## **1. Introduction**

- Good Governance As Capacity To Delivery
- Procedures (Bureaucracy) As Conveyer Belt
- Public Servants - The Basic Input Into Public Services
- No Pay No Productivity
- Professionalism And Politics
- What Culture Clash?
- Are Those Clashes Specifically African?

## **2. Good Governance As Basic Service Delivery**

- Peace, Security and Certainty - Constables and Magistrates
- Education - Primary, Adult, Applied
- Basic Health Services
- Water (Human - Agrarian - Pastoral)
- Food Security - Production and Safety Nets
- Access To Physical Infrastructure
- Access To Markets

Except for last government in most of SSA must be dominant deliverer (or at least joint deliverer/main resource supplier.

This is primarily a view from street and field not State House or University.

At this level key personnel are teachers, nurses, medical aides, constables, magistrates, water and road technicians-artisans-foremen, agricultural (and other) extension officers, district administrators, tax collection officers (to fund the others).

These cadres comprise over half (usually over two thirds) of non-military public services in SSA. In all but a handful of countries their numbers are substantially too few to provide universal access and in most have been virtually static for a decade while population has grown 25% to 30%.

Adjusted slightly for quality public service delivery **per capita** in SSA has fallen 40% to 50% since 1979. The human and macroeconomic consequences are already severe and are worsening. Undereducated, unhealthy, underfed, overworked, underpaid equals non-competitive.

### 3. **Why The 1979-95 Decline After 1960-79 Improvement?**

- Increasingly Inadequate Numbers
- Severe Gaps In Training/Retraining
- Deterioration (or Disappearance) Of Bureaucracy (Standardising standard activities to allow prompt, consistent action and serious attention to 'special' cases)
- Lack Of Complementary Resources (Operating Supplies, Maintenance, Spares, Mobility)
- Pay Levels Preventing Fulltime Services (e.g. monthly \$30 for a teachers when household absolute poverty line \$75 a month)
- War
- Corruption
- Politicisation
- Culture Conflict? (Meaning what?)

- Decapacitating Technical Assistance And External (govt. or ngo) Parallel Delivery Systems

#### 4. Is There A Basic Value Conflict

- Large Scale Service Delivery Requires New Mechanisms (thus colonial/post colonial in most of SSA)
- Delegation, Decentralisation, Standard Procedures Not UnAfrican
- Interaction Political Policy Decisions And Public Service Of All The People Articulation, Implementation Universally Produces Tensions
- Old Boy Networks And Other Opaque Affinity Group Preferences Universal Problem
- Corruption Is Corruption - In Italy, Korea, South Africa or Nigeria
- Repressive Dictatorship Is Repressive Dictatorship - In Haiti, the German Democratic Republic, Malawi or Sudan

The problems are broadly the same. the contexts - and therefore appropriate responses - can vary widely.

The expressed desire of ordinary people and of public servants for a professional, organised, productive public service is widespread and reborn states - e.g. Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somaliland - set a surprisingly high stress on it in terms remarkably like 1955-1965 Anglophone West and East African dialogues.

#### 5. Ways Forward

- Peace and Security
- Accountabl Governance
- Minimally Adequate Pay (Two thirds household absolute poverty line at base, scale to - say - top ten times base)

- Parallel Reinforcement Of Required Attendance At And To Work
- Compulsory Upgrading And Refresher Training
- Productivity Guidelines By Activity
- Professional Career Structures
- Basic Governance/Public Service Reform
  - ✓ What State Objectives?
  - ✓ Whom To Do What?
  - ✓ Personnel Required?
  - ✓ Procedural Structures To Facilitate?
  - ✓ Complementary Inputs Needed?
  - ✓ Financing Public Service Delivery?
- Adapting Imports (Personnel, Physical, Institutional) To Domestic Contexts
- Reasserting African Agendas

Reginald Herbold Green  
 IDS (Sussex) Falmer  
 November 1995