



**NEXT  
GENERATION**  
FORUM

Summary of Discussions  

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on Public Service in Africa  

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Friday 27 April 2018, Kigali, Rwanda



Over the 2018 Ibrahim Governance Weekend in Kigali, Rwanda, a 'Next Generation Forum' (NGF) was held for the first time prior to the 2018 Ibrahim Forum. Focused on the same topic, Public Service in Africa, the NGF convened African emerging leaders and young professionals to gather the Now Generation's perspectives on the topic of *Public Service in Africa*. Outcomes were then shared the following day at the Ibrahim Forum by NGF representatives who served as 'challengers' by sitting as panellists in each of the sessions.

The NGF was co-moderated by Jendayi Frazer, Mo Ibrahim Foundation Board Member, President and CEO of 50 Ventures, and George Ndirangu, Presenter and Producer, CNBC Africa, and supported by Christopher Cramer, Professor of Political Economy of Development, SOAS and Jonathan Di John, Senior Lecturer in Political Economy of Development, SOAS.

The NGF discussion was organised around three sessions, mirroring the Ibrahim Forum format, touching upon, in order, identifying demands and expectations towards public services, assessing the current supply of public services and building a sound contract between citizens and public service providers.

Ahead of the discussion, the 'now generation', renamed the event from 'Next Generation Forum', as initially titled, to 'Now Generation Forum', reflecting the fact that their demands and their role in African society are current and not future.

## SESSION 1

# What are your demands towards the public service as a citizen?

The first session identified the now generation's expectations towards public services in 21<sup>st</sup> century African countries and the rationale for them. The session also examined the responsible players in the delivery of public service, from the state to other public actors (African Union, RECs, cities, local communities) and private actors (private sector, civil society, multilateral actors, NGOs), and who is going to be ready to, should pay for it.

### Old and new demands, a spirit of solidarity and a key role for citizens

- NGF participants began by expressing a standard set of expectations toward public services, shared by the previous generation, which included health, education, jobs, access to justice, security and decentralised services.
- On top of these traditional demands, NGF participants expressed additional expectations, such as quality public services and inclusive and equitable access, and for these services to be expanded to cater for a growing population and provided to all citizens, mindful of country and regional disparities.
- A specific demand for culture was also stated, seen as key to the preservation of identity in a globalised world.



We want what our parents had in terms of basic services, and more, as the 'now generation' we also expect a solidaristic, equitable and inclusive service.

The state should be the custodian of our culture in the world of globalisation.

*Adesoji Solanke, MIF Scholar, MBA candidate at London Business School, Nigeria*

- In response to the changing nature of threats, such as cybersecurity and climate change, the NGF participants voiced their demand for technology and innovation to be used more effectively for service delivery.
- The 'now generation' demanded a more customer-orientated public service that is transparent and accountable to citizens and service users
- Overall the NGF argued that public services should be respectful of the human rights of their constituencies.
- The NGF also demanded that public service be independent from political influence and interference to allow public administration and public servants to carry out their duties irrespective of political change.
- The 'now generation' regard national governments as critical actors in addressing these demands. The state should leverage other actors to deliver services, this should be done in a coordinated manner and on the state's terms. Donors can support where the state is lacking, but they should not act as a surrogate government, the state should act as a central coordinator.
- The NGF reinforced the key role of citizens at the core of the state, and their responsibility to hold their leadership to account.



Who is responsible? State or citizen? It's a chicken and egg situation. We are the state, we deserve the leaders we have. We need to move beyond the election moment, engage and hold our leaders accountable on a day to day basis.

*Rama Salla Dieng, MIF Scholar, PhD Candidate, SOAS, Senegal*

- The NGF demanded that governments build on the foundation of charters from the African Union, such as the African Charter on Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration, the African Charter on Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development. These charters need to be signed, ratified and domesticated nationally. Beyond charters and commitments, delivery was also recognised as critical.
- An improved representation, participation and involvement of youth and minority groups in public service was also demanded. Practical training was proposed as a solution for strengthening the presence of these groups.



We need to solve the problem of youth. We need to entrench and deepen youth participation.

*Augustin Rugundana, Rwanda Governance Board, Rwanda*

## SESSION 2

Both as a potential entry-level civil servant and as a citizen, what do you think of public service/what should be improved?

The second session discussed the current state of African public services, the key challenges that need to be addressed in terms of job attractiveness (salaries, career opportunities, mobility, working environment) delivery (skills, efficiency, corruption), and potential solutions or best practices (remuneration, incentives, capacity building, new technologies).

### Focus on serving citizens, modernise systems and strengthen capacity

- According to the 'now generation', working in public service means serving communities. The focus should be on service, a way of life that is based on values of furthering social progress and serving one's country.
- A need to change the culture and ethics around public services was identified. For instance, public servants are expected to be professional and hold each other to account.
- NGF participants argued that professionalism can be embedded in the public service through modernised HR management systems, performance contracts, capacity building and training including in public service commissions.
- The NGF cohort pointed out the need

for an effective mechanism for secondment of employees between the public and private sector. Moreover, the NGF identified mobility across countries and within regional and continental organisations as a way of improving the public service in Africa.



We always ask that the public sector be more like the private sector. Public servants need to be champions of the issues they work on, we need more public service activists.

*Barkha Mossae, MIF Scholar, SOAS, Diplomat, Second Secretary, Embassy of Mauritius, Addis Ababa, Mauritius*



One thing that distinguishes our generation is that we cross borders and have experiences of living in different African countries. Institutions like the AU and other regional bodies ought to formalise a rotating or exchange programme for civil servants across the continent.

*Charlotte Ashamu, MIF Fellow, AfDB, Founder of DABIRA, Nigeria*

- In the age of the Internet, the 'now generation' expects a better connection with its public services.
- The 'now generation' stressed the need for schools of government and management across the continent to equip public servants to carry out their duties, and constant training throughout one's life as a public servant is required, as challenges change over the course of years in service.
- Recognising public servants and acknowledging the impact of their work is key to ensure motivation beyond other incentives such as salary. The feeling of having an impact matters, as shown for instance in Rwanda, where the Irembo e-governance portal has brought public servants closer to citizens.
- Many African countries are advanced in the use of technology for public service- for example in Cabo Verde citizens can get birth certificates online, Rwanda has put its judicial system entirely online and Malawi has introduced in its high court an automated case management system for civil and criminal proceedings in four out of 20 districts in the country.



A lot of rebranding needs to be done in relation to the public sector. Information should be put out there to show the good work being done otherwise people will have a perception of an inefficient service.

*Omonigho Oyoma Egbegbedia, Schlumberger, Nigeria*

- Nonetheless the NGF cohort was mindful of the digital divide and cautioned that if countries are digitalising service delivery then the access and the capacity of people and public servants to use such tools must be improved.
- NGF participants pointed out that public servants are not superheroes. People working in the public service have to work within existing systems and capacity. One's expectations towards public service should remain respectful and grounded, and acknowledge that minor impact and progress can still make a difference.
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Be kinder to public servants, they are not the avengers. Let us respect those who have been there and think of different ways to ensure we are improving instead of just criticising. Let us look for ways to institute small changes.

*Natasha Kimani, MIF Scholar, Chatham House, Kenya*

## SESSION 3

# What do you see as a sound contract between citizens and public service providers/how can this be achieved in your opinion?

The third session discussed ways and means to build a sound contract/strike a strong deal between the now generation and public providers at all levels, making sure that supply is answering demand, facilitating monitoring through accountability, and strengthening ownership through the tax contract.

### A need for complementarity, ownership and localised services

- NGF participants considered that a sound social contract is where both sides understand their responsibility. The role of the government is to manage taxes, be committed and to deliver the vision of the country. The role of citizens is to engage by participating in elections, to share ideas of what the priorities of the country should be and pay taxes to fund the delivery.
- The group stressed the need for complementarity in the social contract – citizens should use the service and be responsible for maintaining it. The NGF advocated for an empowering narrative of citizenship, where citizens imagine what is possible and take ownership of furthering services.



There should be a sense of complementarity, when government provides schools and teachers are teaching, parents or users of the service have an obligation to use and maintain the service. We need to have a more active type of citizenship, we should not just criticise the status quo, instead we should imagine what is possible.

*Aida Ndiaye, Blavatnik School of Government, Senegal*

- A sound contract requires an active citizenry, where citizen representation and participation are key. Modern tools like social media, the Internet and e-government platforms, should be maximised for participatory and representation purposes as well as community forums and functional suggestion boxes.
- As citizens, the 'now generation' should also be mindful of their actions at grassroots level to make the social contract work. Is the payment of bribes being perpetuated by citizens? Are taxes being paid?
- Paying taxes is seen as re-enforcing the social contract between public service providers and citizens. As funders of the service through taxes, citizens expect to access services without having to pay bribes and are more likely to respect what they pay for and hold public services accountable.
- According to the NGF, a sound social contract requires transparency and accessibility of information, for instance through publishing government budgets or broadcasting parliamentary sessions. Information is also seen as a key enabler of citizen ownership. The expectations are that governments should be transparent by providing pay grades of public officials, and that public services publish their workplan and strategies.



- As citizens, NGF participants committed to harnessing the power of information, which in turn will reinforce their reliability and capacity in monitoring government performance as well as leading to more accountable leadership. Citizens should also be able to review government performance on service delivery, in line with Kenya's e-Citizen service.
- A social contract means that the state has a duty of care towards those who cannot pay taxes.
- There are national and regional differences that should be taken into account for the social contract. Local languages should be used to ensure everyone has access and can give feedback. Citizens have the right to ask for services to be localised, and use local mechanisms and local culture to help deliver services.
- The social contract does not occur in a vacuum, it is influenced by historical context, external actors and trends. There needs to be a willingness to give space to the people in the public service to bring about change.
- The NGF cohort asserted that the social contract requires that states give public



To have a sound social contract we need accurate data. As a continent most countries are failing on delivering a system of capturing births and deaths.

*Hilina Degefa, MIF Scholar, SOAS, Lecturer, Mekelle University, Ethiopia*

servants an enabling environment to execute their mandates. The state should be transparent and accountable to its public servants, and public servants should be the same with the state and the public.

- The social contract between African citizens and states should be refreshed

and built on traditional approaches like in Benin where the national constitution is being revised to be reflective and representative of the country's context.

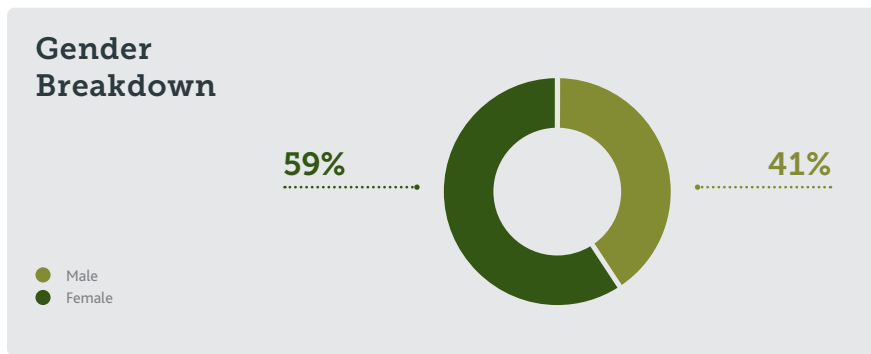


There is a need in Africa for us to look on the traditional approaches of how we do things. The idea is for us to look at the national constitutions and people should be consulted afresh to ensure the constitution is representative and reflective of the local context.

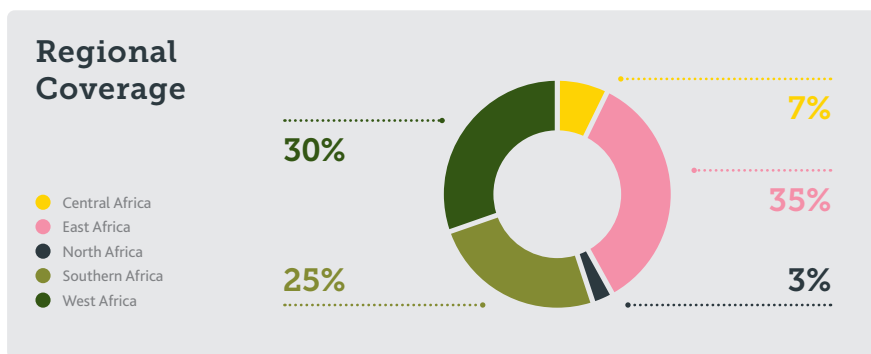
*Jean d'Amour Mutoni, One Young World, Rwanda*

## ANNEX

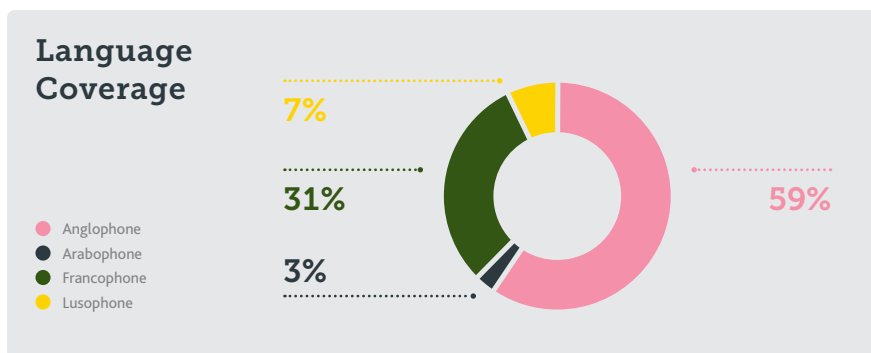
The Now Generation Forum was at full capacity, with 71 emerging and young leaders from 32 African countries participating in the discussions.



Gender Breakdown	# Participants
Male	29
Female	42
Total	71

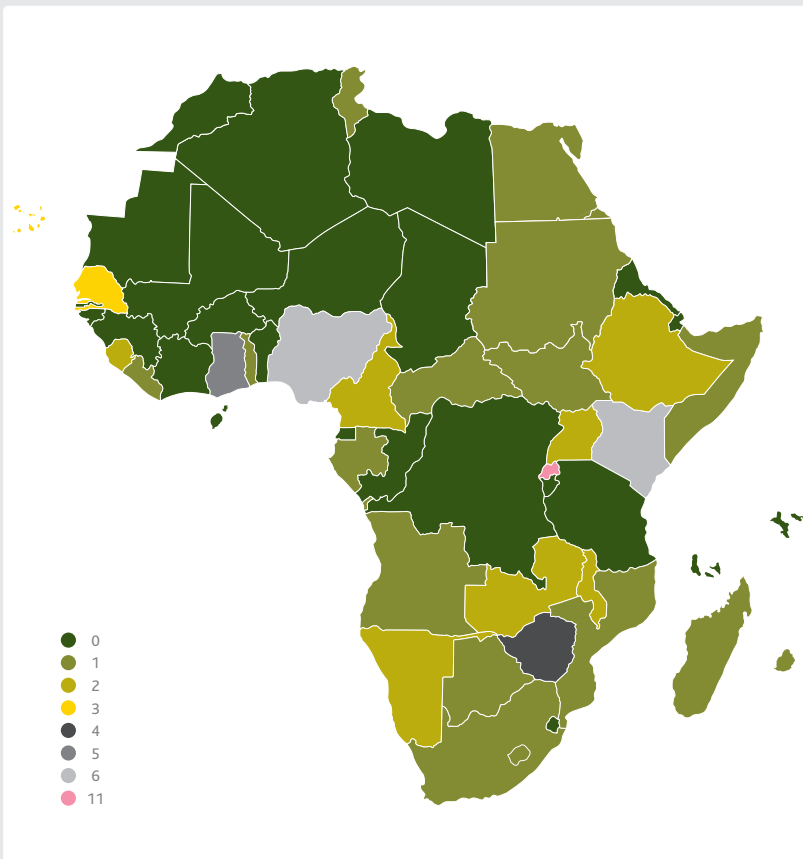


Regional Coverage	# Participants
Central Africa	5
East Africa	24
North Africa	2
Southern Africa	17
West Africa	21



Language Coverage	# Participants
Anglophone	41
Arabophone	2
Francophone	21
Lusophone	5

## Country Coverage




## Country Coverage # Participants


Country Coverage	# Participants
Rwanda	11
Kenya	6
Nigeria	6
Ghana	5
Zimbabwe	5
Cabo Verde	3
Senegal	3
Cameroon	2
Ethiopia	2
Malawi	2
Namibia	2
Sierra Leone	2
Uganda	2
Zambia	2
Liberia	1
Angola	1
Botswana	1
CAR	1
Côte d'Ivoire	1
DRC	1
Egypt	1
Gabon	1
Lesotho	1
Madagascar	1
Mauritius	1
Mozambique	1
Somalia	1
South Africa	1
South Sudan	1
Sudan	1
Togo	1
Tunisia	1




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