



2018 Ibrahim Forum

Public Service in Africa

Summary

Saturday 28 April 2018, Kigali, Rwanda

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In his opening speech **Mo Ibrahim, Chair of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation**, underlined the timeliness and significance of having a conversation on public service in Africa.



Mo Ibrahim

Our public services are vitally important, but we are not talking about them.



Mo Ibrahim

Without strong public services and committed public servants, at local, national, regional or continental levels, there will be no efficient delivery of expected public goods and services, nor implementation of any commitment, however strongly voiced.

The Forum discussion was organised around three sessions, covering the relationship between public services and governance and effective leadership, new challenges and current shortcomings, and the ways and means to strengthen public services and make them appealing to the next generation. Each session included a representative from the Next Generation Forum, held the day before, Friday 27 April, around the same topic and issues.

SESSION 1

Growing expectations for public delivery

The first session, chaired by Nancy Kacungira, Presenter, BBC World News, looked at identifying the demands on African public services in the 21st Century. What are citizens' expectations, both current and new around safety and security, health, education, justice, and also peace, solidarity, jobs, business-enabling environments, culture, climate change mitigation, and rural sector development? Who should be responsible for addressing these demands? Should it be the African Union, regional communities, national governments, cities, the private sector, or multilateral donors? And who is going to pay for delivery?

The discussion began by analysing expectations, which, in the words of **Nancy Kacungira**, represent a reality check for the delivery of public services: a supply that doesn't meet demand is a non-supply in the eyes of the public. There is also the additional challenge that citizens' expectations are on the rise globally.

Herman Mashaba, Mayor of Johannesburg, and **Jennifer Semakula Musisi, Executive Director, Kampala Capital City Authority**, described the challenges of delivering public services at local level and emphasised that in order to meet demand, public services must be equipped properly, both in terms of resources and in terms of competence and capacity. In this regard, real change can only result from a shift in public servants' mindset towards greater accountability for their actions in office.

Yvonne Apea Mensah, MIF Fellow from Ghana, Head of Africa, Political Division, Commonwealth Secretariat, representing the voice of the next generation, pointed out that public servants are not superheroes, despite the expectation on them to deliver everything, from housing to responses to 21st century challenges such as climate change and cybercrime. The next generation's expectations towards public service don't differ as much from the previous generation. Nevertheless, the next generation wants a public service that is fitted and able to respond to the 21th century challenges.

Donald Kaberuka, Chairman and Managing Partner, SouthBridge Partners, former President, African Development Bank, said that there will never be enough resources for governments to be able to address these exponential demands. He called instead for a reconsideration of the role of citizens, and youth in particular, in public service delivery, drawing from the example of his native country, Rwanda, where communities work together to clean districts, build infrastructure or look after the environment (a practice known as Umuganda). In sum, a citizenry that is a part of public services, rather than one that delegates everything to them.

Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, CEO, NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency, former Prime Minister, Niger, highlighted the large disparities in delivery across the continent which see rich countries such as



Yvonne Apea Mensah

When it comes to the quality of public service delivery what the next generation wants is nothing different from what it should expect: a value-based and rights-based customer centric public service.



Ibrahim Assane Mayaki

We still have a lot to do to attract the best minds, the young ones to public service. It's done in Rwanda, Botswana and other countries but generally it is not the case. Most brilliant Africans do not want to serve in the public service.

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Ibrahim Mayaki

Citizens have a perception of the state that experts do not always have. This is why we should include them through consultative processes when we talk about the delivery of public services.

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Jennifer Musisi

It's not a rule that public service is dull and boring and ineffective. We can change public service, starting with the leadership.

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Jennifer Musisi

The moment us as public servants get over the fear of losing our jobs, then we are ready to start doing our jobs.

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Herman Mashaba

I've never worked so hard in my life. It's an almost impossible job. But at the same time I do everything possible every day to show how rewarding it is.

Angola still undergoing efforts to eradicate malaria. Moreover, he questioned the attractiveness of a career in public services, that seemingly struggle to attract the best and the brightest candidates.

In this sense, according to **Herman Mashaba**, the main challenge for public services is patronage, for which people join thanks to connections to lure state resources, rather than being motivated by the desire to serve their fellow citizens. **Donald Kaberuka** added that in two cases, captured and fragile states, building public services happens in the context of wider state building efforts, thus requiring a specific approach.

Speaking from the experience of his native country, Niger, **Ibrahim Mayaki** underlined the key role of consultative processes involving citizens to make sure governments are aware of the reality on the ground, as the needs of the people are often different from expert assessments.

Yvonne Apea Mensah said that a culture of achieving results and a sense of pride does exist in public services in certain countries, such as Kenya, Mauritius and Rwanda. In these countries, those who are willing to serve their constituencies to the highest standards can do so.

Jennifer Musisi spoke about the importance of avoiding stereotypes when assessing public services. There are some countries that have modelled their institutions on corporate work, with structures and strategies for delivering results. She used the example of how she was able to build a team, all below 35 years old, despite recruitment practices with strict requirements that had previously deterred young and bright people from joining. The Kampala City Authority also prides itself on being favourable to innovation with seven social media platforms to interact with staff and public. To sum up, if the right leadership is there, public services can become hubs for innovation.

Likewise, **Herman Mashaba's** office is made up of under 40-year olds. These young people are doing unbelievable work, and they have been chosen based on their motivation to serve their country, which is also the main mandate of the office. He claims young people have a crucial role to play in the public space, bringing the added value of a fresh mentality, unaffected by the system.

Donald Kaberuka offered the example of Rwanda, where the three most effective public services are immigration, tax collection and development. Public servants are young, they do a great job helped by technology and they work hard. After 1994 there were no public services, they had to be built from scratch based on three main criteria: public services should be transparent, they should deliver the services they are paid for, and they should be accountable.

Questions from the public enriched the debate, raising issues such as politicisation, corruption and integrity within public services. **Herman Mashaba** explained his project to build a programme for professionalising the public service in the City of Johannesburg. This has meant taking on unpopular challenges, such as dealing with as many as 200 cases of corruption in the first 22 months in service. **Ibrahim Mayaki**'s opinion is that the starting point for meeting these challenges lies in strong education and judiciary systems. Moreover, inclusivity should not be forgotten in a continent where a majority of the population still lives in rural areas far from decision-making centres.

Jennifer Musisi pointed to leadership as the key element for motivating and encouraging better practices. Bad leadership for instance can act as an obstacle for attracting talent. Moreover, change and trust should be inspired by the public service itself, through accountability to governments and citizens. As a result, in Kampala, the private sector is eager to invest and contribute to public schools, health systems and other public projects. According to **Donald Kaberuka**, public services should be accountable, and this will lead to citizens being tolerant and compliant. **Yvonne Apea Mensah** concluded the debate proposing that the public service should become a way of life, by asking what kind of civic leadership do we want in the next ten years?

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Herman Mashaba

What is interesting is that I did not employ young people in my office because they were young, but because they wanted to save their country.

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Donald Kaberuka

Don't steal our money. Deliver the services. Be accountable. If those three are met (by the public service), citizens will understand (and be supportive).

SESSION 2

Assessing the current supply of public services

The second session, chaired by Ngairé Woods, Dean, Blavatnik School of Government, Oxford University, assessed the current state of African public services and the key challenges that need to be addressed in terms of job attractiveness and delivery, and examined potential solutions and best practices. The session also touched upon the challenges of building public services and capacities in post-conflict settings.

The Chair initiated the discussion by asking the following question: at a time when people are voting for anti-establishment parties, is there opportunity for change?

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Winifred Oyo-Ita

To get young people interested in public services, I would want to see full automation of the Nigerian civil service and more investments in people.

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Adesoji Solanke

For public servants, pay cannot be their primary reason to join the public service. Your motivation has to be beyond pay, such as the mission, the impact you will have and a very deep sense of patriotism as you are contributing to your country.

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Trevor Manuel

There needs to be consequences for people who have acted incorrectly. People must go to jail, there is no question about this. We will not tolerate corruption in the public sector.

Winifred Oyo-Ita, Head, Civil Service of the Federation, Nigeria, pointed out that full automation of processes and records are key for transparency and to bring the Nigerian Civil Service in line with 21st century practices. Some agencies in Nigeria perform very well but the core public service still has a long way to go. Focus should also be placed on capacity building and training in the public service. Investment in people is key to attracting the bright young people of today.

Adesoji Solanke, MIF Scholar, MBA candidate at London Business School, representing the voice of the next generation, said that, with a background in the private sector, he would consider joining a public service with a culture of pride and integrity, and an environment where the impact of individual mattered and could be achieved despite changes in government.

According to **Winifred Oyo-Ita**, automation of public services is important as an enabler of improved performance, discipline and integrity. The barrier to attracting and keeping young talent is that individual impact is not recognised and there is no system for performance appraisals. Greater innovation and cross-fertilisation of ideas in the civil service is essential, and under its capacity development programme the public service has started talent sourcing. Remuneration packages are also key but ensuring the recognition of impact, effort and performance is vital.

In response to the Chair's question on the relationship between politics and integrity and how to have electoral democracy and a public service delivery that works, **Trevor Manuel, Deputy Chairman of South Africa, Rothschild Group, former Finance Minister, South Africa**, highlighted South Africa's efforts in public finance management and budget transparency, resulting in the country ranking at the top of the Open Budget Index. Post-2009, as a result of the election of Jacob Zuma as President, the state was captured. Big change is currently underway with President Ramaphosa's election in February, with major cabinet reshuffles and the focus shifted to the delivery of public services. There is a need for action, not just promises, and people who behaved incorrectly must go to jail. Corruption in the public service should not be tolerated.

According to **Trevor Manuel**, breaking impunity is fundamental in a country where the judiciary has been independent and the most remarkable state power. The provision of adequate information to

the public is also important. The entire criminal justice chain, from complaint to sentencing, has to be worked through, and this is what people in South Africa are waiting for.

The conversation then moved to the challenges of building an effective public service from scratch, and how to attract the best and brightest candidates. **Fanfan Rwanyindo Kayirangwa, Minister of Public Service and Labour, Rwanda**, recalled that before the genocide in Rwanda public service was not professionalised and it was possible to join the service with only secondary education. Afterwards, there was opportunity for reconstructing, with resources from abroad and also with substantial investment in our own human capital.

Ultimately, what keeps people motivated in public service is a sense of purpose and the desire to make a real impact. Rwanda's is a young public service, with almost half of its staff below 35, and its challenge is to retain this human capital. Pay incentives and retention policies are fundamental, but a culture of patriotism and civic education is even more important to retain talent, as well as a central element of personal sacrifice and a sense of mission related to the job.

The **Chair** referred to the case of Singapore, where a series of interesting criteria are used for performance measurement. These criteria are based on the alignment of performance with the values of the organisation and linking performance bonuses of high-ranking public officials to two elements, to GDP and to income increases in the bottom 20% of the population.

Betsy Williams, Founder and Board Chairman, President's Young Professionals Program of Liberia (PYPP), discussed the role of partners in strengthening public service. She experienced directly being involved in the Ministry of Health in Liberia and the challenges related to achieving impact. The PYPP and their second programme, Emerging Public Leaders, implemented in Ghana, intend to build an infrastructure of public service based on meritocratic recruitment and retaining talent. Moreover, the programmes focus on creating the proper working environment to make sure capable people can have an impact.

Since arriving in Liberia in 2007, **Betsy Williams** was given the opportunity to work within the government as an assistant rather than an advisor to accelerate its goals. Besides the existence of structured policy documents, such as a National Health Plan and President Sirleaf's Poverty Reduction Strategy, success in Liberia has depended on hard work, creativity and having the patience to see results. However, there is still a need for a relentlessness to get things done and to press for reform, while also investing in long-term changes to transform the culture of the public service.

Mariana Mazzucato, Founder and Director, Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose, University College London (UCL), discussed the importance of risk-taking states. Even though economists claim that states are only there to fix public market failures, the potential of governments to innovate must

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Fanfan Rwanyindo Kayirangwa

The most important thing is that we really focused on human resources. As Rwanda, we have few other resources and we took human resources as the first resource and we invested in the human capital.

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Fanfan Rwanyindo Kayirangwa

You have to have that sense of purpose. For me, I am serving in the public service. I am serving my nation and my people. I am contributing to the rebuilding of this country.

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Mariana Mazzucato

75% of the most ground-breaking medicines have come from different types of public investments.



Winifred Oyo-Ita

There are issues of young nursing mothers, there are issues of inappropriate attention from the opposite sex. (...). I am not going to turn a blind eye to inappropriate behaviour or harassment.

be recognised. Many mission-oriented government organisations sponsor innovations that made possible, for instance, the mission to the Moon or were behind the development of everyday products such as smart phones.

A question from the public addressed the challenge of transferring knowledge from high-level rankings to newcomers into the service and how to encourage young women to join the public service in a way that makes them feel safe and heard. According to **Adesoji Solanke**, locals on the ground need to be fully aware of best practices.

Winifred Oyo-Ita underlined the importance of bridging the gap between public service structures and young people joining the service. In Nigeria she forced civil servants to look for their own local solutions (rather than bringing foreign partners), and as a result local buy-in was immediate. Moreover, her presence in the civil service has supported women and protected them from harassment in the workplace.

In Rwanda, the protection of female employees is ensured by the presence of a legal framework and reporting mechanisms. According to **Betsy Williams**, bringing about meritocratic recruitment by levelling the playing field creates opportunities for women and youth to enter.

According to **Mariana Mazzucato**, there is no investment to build capacity in the public sector. London used to be a city where 70% of top architects and urban planners worked for the City of London, and the solution lies in how to make public service attractive again for these talents.

Questions from the public raised the issues of political interference, the importance to putting in place a system of apprenticeships to facilitate entry of youth and women, the need to partner with the private sector, and training as a means to retain human capital but also a system of capitalising best practices for cross-country learning.

SESSION 3

Building a sound contract between citizens and public service providers

The last session, chaired by Nancy Kacungira, Presenter, BBC World News, discussed how to build a sound contract between citizens and public service providers, making sure that supply is answering demand, embedding accountability through monitoring mechanisms and strengthening ownership through the tax contract.

Defining public service as the customer service arm of government, the **Chair** started off the discussion by asking what can an engaged public service achieve, and what is the contract that exists currently between citizens and public service providers?

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Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala

Trust is a very important factor in any social contract, even more important than money.

According to **Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Chair of the Board, Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), former Finance Minister, Nigeria**, the starting point of the social contract is non-existent as trust is low between governments and people. The 2018 Edelman Trust Barometer reveals that trust in governments is low from the US to Africa. Civil society is generally trusted more. In order for policies to work, trust needs to be rebuilt, and someone with integrity should oversee the delivery and execution of policies and programmes. Trust is more important than money. Nigeria does not spend enough on health, however spend is above the global average on education, but citizens are not happy with outcomes. The social contract is about delivering services and getting the right quality and outcome to meet the demand.

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Jay Naidoo

We need a much more participative process to shape that vision of what Africa is in the future.

Discussing the social contract, **Jay Naidoo, Founding General Secretary, Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), Trustee of Earthrise Trust**, referred to Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's speech delivered the previous day, 27 April, during the Ibrahim Leadership Ceremony. He said that there is an urgent need for more trust, and that trade unions are captured at the leadership level and so do not serve the interests of the people. He pointed to a deep level of alienation outside of public service, questioning whether the economy is working and serving the people. A participatory process is necessary to shape the vision that citizens have of Africa, and the first lesson for this is to listen to what people have to say.

Continuing on the issue of trust in government, **Aya Chebbi, Founder, Afrika Youth Movement**, said that the first condition for a sound social contract is to bridge the generational gap. The 2017 Forum Report addressed the age gap between heads of states in Africa and the respective countries' population. The youth are trapped in disempowering discourses and it is rare for government to trust and give responsibility to them, despite the fact that youth are impacted by government choices and public services. Comparison between liberation movements and young people now is not relevant, as the struggle of the 1960s was completely different. The task then was to build nation states, and now the youth are fighting a system of dictatorships and corruption. It must be acknowledged however that the youth are not a homogeneous entity and should not be considered as such.

Barkha Mossae, MIF Scholar, Diplomat, Second Secretary, Embassy of Mauritius, Addis Ababa, Mauritius, representing the voice of the next generation, brought to the discussion the perspectives from the previous day's Next Generation Forum, that was re-labelled the 'now' generation forum, as many young people are already working in key sectors of public service. The social contract does not exist in a vacuum, it is influenced by historical context, external actors and trends. The relationship is two-fold, on one hand there is the expectation that public services should be more functional, modern and digital, but the willingness to give space to the people in the public service to bring about change is also key.

How do we move past the basic issue of paying taxes and delivering services? According to **Akere T. Muna, Candidate to the Cameroonian presidential election 2018**, there are two elements in a contract, offer and acceptance. What is the public provider offering and what is the citizen accepting? **Donald Kaberuka** talked about the mindset whereby citizens make sure they build the demand. For instance, the role of citizens is key in monitoring progress in public service delivery and tracking expenditure. It is true that leadership is necessary to allow people the space, but citizens must have access to information and technology.

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Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala

Citizens can't act unless they have information. Once they have it, it empowers them.

With 70% of citizens still offline, there is a requirement to fix the infrastructure gap, and **Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala** believes technology and information are crucial to the social contract. Citizens need access to technology to facilitate information-sharing and empowerment. In Nigeria, the constitution provides a formula for sharing budget information. She encouraged the then President Obasanjo to publish this information in newspapers so that there is transparency and people can monitor expenditures.

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Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala

There are like three people in the audience who know who the president of Switzerland is, but everyone is ready to invest their money in Switzerland because they have the rule of law. We need to get to that.

The **Chair** asked how this could be replicated for public servants to feel accountable. The response was not to depend on personalities. Everyone wants to put their money in Swiss banks, educate their children and go on holidays in Switzerland, although only few could name the president of the country.

The way ahead is to build strong institutions and technology can play a fundamental role in this process, with, for example, biometric systems for voter registration and payroll where salaries are transferred straight to employees' accounts that can yield savings. **Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala's** book, *Fighting Corruption is Dangerous*, gives hope on the issue of corruption.

According to **Jay Naidoo**, social media is a tool, but no country is yet run by Twitter or Facebook. The new generation has been alienated, despite the fact that the system changed in South Africa, with progressive constitutions, and 24 years later the state is captured. It is not enough to change the system, each individual should change. The idea of being an active citizen is key, where the beneficiary is society and not the individual. The power of people will make sure there is accountability, and this is not only top-down, but a two-way process where bottom-up is key.

The question is where to find people who are willing to risk themselves and change the system. **Jay Naidoo** quoted Steve Biko, 'we have nothing to lose but our chains', and public service is a way of life.

Aya Chebbi added another quote, 'the power of the people is more powerful than the people in power'. Different types of leadership must be explored, value given to femininity more than masculinity, to common goals rather than individual ones, and to rethink top leadership.

According to **Akere Muna**, leadership is important as leaders can provide traction and have zero tolerance for corruption. A strong political will is required for this, and mindset is key. Systems should also be changed, for instance cash is an enabler for corruption, and so technology and electronic payments could be tools in the reduction of corrupt practices, which in Cameroon has been applied to e-procurement.

Barkha Mossae suggested that leadership should give space for others to be leaders and that after the conference, leaders should go back to their workplaces, identify a hardworking colleague and acknowledge their work.

The public touched on the need for governments to ratify the African Charter for Value and Principles of Public Service and Administration, and also the need to take into account traditional authorities and the institution of chieftaincy that deliver public services in Africa. A question was addressed to the panellists on what to do in the case of an unresponsive leadership. **Jay Naidoo** replied that the assumption that there was no system pre-colonialism is incorrect, that there had been kingdoms and great civilisations. A return to indigenous movements and systems would be an improvement and would create pride for Africans in their own history. According to **Jay Naidoo**, Africa needs to stop looking for another messiah, or another Nelson Mandela. Citizens should acknowledge their power and not just delegate everything to leaders.

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala observed that the role of citizens is essential, and change should come by believing in one's own strengths, as ultimately Africa must depend on itself and not on any external actor. To civil society, she said they should keep pushing for change, and to the people, go to the ballot box.

According to **Aya Chebbi**, young people struggle to have a voice. This political voice should be protected as it is a driver of development. For instance, it was a coalition of Tunisian civil society groups that won the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize. Creating space for citizen participation is key. Citizens should start by doing something that can lead to change, for example Robtel Neajai Pailey wrote a book on corruption, *Gbagba*, that later became a policy in Liberia and is taught in schools. The youth can change the system as activists both within and outside public service.

Akere Muna, as a possible future president, closed the panel by saying that "every time you design a policy, always ask the question, 'How does this benefit my people?' If you can't answer that, you should resign".

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Barkha Mossae

Leadership is about creating space for other people.

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Jay Naidoo

Stop looking for another messiah. In South Africa we don't need another Mandela, we need to find that Mandela within ourselves, 55 million South Africans.

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Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala

Keep making your point, refuse to give up, if you have a chance to go to the ballot box go to the ballot box. It's not always about elections, it's about changing the system but civil society can do a lot.

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Aya Chebbi

Our struggle as young people is a struggle for voice. Young people are the drivers of development, not the subject of it. We need to be in leadership positions.



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