



# INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

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Interviewee: Jane K Mwesiga  
Interviewer: Andrew Schalkwyk  
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ANDREW SCHALKWYK: Today is the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December, 2008. I'm with Jane Mwesiga, the Commissioner of the Human Resources Development at the Ministry of Public Service in Kampala at their offices. Before I start the interview, can I ask if you've given your consent to the interview?

JANE MWESIGA: *Yeah, I have.*

SCHALKWYK: OK. So I'd like to begin this conversation by just asking you a quick question about your current responsibilities in your -- in the role that you have now, and the jobs that brought you to this position.

MWESIGA: *As you already know, I'm the Commissioner for Human Resources Development, and basically I deal with the human resources development issues relating to capacity development for the human resources in the public service -- the entire public service -- not only at the Ministry of Public Service, but I look at the global -- the macro issues of the public service. So for example, we do some skills audits and find out the critical skills gaps and cross-cutting issues that do impact, you know, the performance of the public service and we try to address them. So basically, that's what I did with... And before I came to this position, I was an Assistant Commissioner for Human Resource Management, but in charge of policy and procedures in the public service. So basically I was working, in terms of initiation for HR issues, policies, processes, and procedures, and also monitoring and evaluating their implementation. So.*

SCHALKWYK: So I'm going to ask you some questions about -- some general questions about the reform. What have been the major issues and challenges with regards to human resources in the civil service?

MWESIGA: *Yeah, we have a number of challenges relating to the reforms in the public service, because basically, the number of reforms that we have been implementing, they've been trying to concentrate so much on the goals, on what is intended to achieve, without looking basically at the implementers, at the people that actually make these goals happen. So for example, you'd say, "Yes, the public service..." -- when we started with the reforms, they kind of said, "Maybe the public service is so big, it is bloated, it is -- that's why we are not performing." So we're looking at things related to rationalization, restructuring, you know, all those things. And then later on, they said, "Well, we would be able to ensure that once we reduce on the size, we should be able to motivate the public servants so well." But at the end of the day, you find that this was not even happening, that even once they believed some resources arising out of the size, but it never went so much into the motivation of the public servants. So one of the major challenges I'm seeing that is happening in these reforms is that the governments or the implementers of these reforms are not looking at, what kind of public service do we want, and what kind of public servant do we want? And if -- once you ask yourself that question, then you'd be able to list so much in this public servant who is going to be the implementer of these reforms. So we need -- the big challenge is, how do we invest in this public servant who is going to implement these reforms? So that has been one of the big challenges, that we concentrate so much on what we intend to achieve without looking at this public servant who is the implementer of these reforms.*

SCHALKWYK: So you mention that -- you say that the -- that there's a focus on the goals rather than on the -- on the people who are going to implement them. Who is -- who's mainly involved in setting these targets and doing this planning?

**MWESIGA:** *Yes, the public servants are so much involved in this, but at the end of the day, you find that, if for example, you're planning, and you say you have a program, but then when it comes to some of the facilitations that we need to include, they are never included in these programs. I'll give an example, that when we are making the plans, for example, this financial year our performance plans, we did indicate to our development partners that when we are saying that we want to go an extra mile, and plan some of our activities, but we need to include in elements of like honoraria, we have to include elements of other facilitators, but you find at the end of the day, say "No, no, no, no, maybe let this be paid from the government of Uganda." And yet, when it comes to government of Uganda, you're only getting what? Your salaries. And the salary is so low that it cannot motivate this public servant to perform to the expected levels. This I can demonstrate by looking at, for example -- many times, they will tell you that maybe the public servants are not very good performers. And what happens when sometimes you get a project, and the project terms come out clearly, and they say they are paying them so highly, or they are giving them a top-up allowance over and above the salaries. This project begins -- it is the same public servants that they had said they were not good performers, and then they recruit them and come to work in this other project. At the end of the day, you find they're being rated as very high performers, very good performers. So in other words, what we're saying, it's about facilitation. It is these same people who are working on government, that are not being facilitated and therefore can't deliver, but once they are put on projects and they are facilitated in terms of equipment, in terms of tools, in terms of everything they need to do, and at the same time, also facilitating them better and paying them better, they deliver so highly. So to me, I have come to prove that actually, why our reform is not working is we have not properly facilitated the implementers of these reforms.*

**SCHALKWYK:** (pause) All right. I wonder if I could ask you some questions -- talking about motivation -- some questions about pay policy. Have there been any major changes in the pay policy --

**MWESIGA:** *No.*

**SCHALKWYK:** -- as part of the reforms? Could you describe them to me?

**MWESIGA:** *When the reforms actually started, and one of the issues that came on board was to come up with a pay strategy -- a pay reform strategy. And the strategy had a number of objectives, and some of these included rationalization of pay, because at that time, we had -- for example, here, we had a pay structure that was motivating certain groups of public servants. For example, you'd have the medical having their separate structure, the traditional teachers having their pay - different pay structure. So it was a multi-spine structure. Now --*

**SCHALKWYK:** When was this?

**MWESIGA:** *This was before 1986. So when it came to increments of pay, you'd find the medical doctors are getting -- the prisons are getting -- or other different cadres-- the legal people getting increments, but the others are not getting. So it was around this time that -- when the pay strategy was agreed upon, one of the objectives was to rationalize pay so that it can motivate the public servants, but one of them was to remove those pay distortions, and also to increase pay, gradually. And one of them -- one of the factors that was agreed upon was to do job evaluation exercise. So a job evaluation exercise was conducted, and -- which was used as a basis to determine the single-spine salary structure. So we*

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*came up with the single-spine salary structure, but of course we didn't want -- this one single-spine salary structure, people could be rewarded according to how they were evaluated.*

SCHALKWYK: Who carried out the job evaluation exercise? Who carried out the job evaluation exercise?

MWESIGA: *It was a team -- we have a department of management services, but they were assisted by a team of consultants, so they did the job evaluation for the entire service. And on the basis of the results of the job evaluation, a recommendation was made that we abandon the multi-spine and come to a single-spine salary structure so that whatever little amount of money we have into the pay, it is evenly distributed according to the skill, according to how you've been rated. Now, this has worked up to a certain level. But as I talk now, we have gone back into the multi-spine. Because we are -- as a government, we've not been able to have enough money to reward everybody up to actually the job evaluation recommendations. We've not reached that. So what happens, that certain different groups, like if the medical workers strike today, and you have little money, you decide to reward them. If tomorrow, it is the legal professionals, you reward them differently, because you don't have enough money to pay everybody. So we are almost going back to where we started from. So yes, we have had a strategy, what to pay, but the only thing I can say: we've not yet reached that level.*

*So recently -- I think about three years ago -- again the Ministry of Public Service said, "Let's come up with a pay policy." We developed a pay policy, and the pay policy was also still emphasizing the same principles and objectives of the pay reform strategy. And under the pay policy, which was actually submitted to Cabinet and approved, it made a number of recommendations. And some of them included, for example, addressing issues of deployment and utilization of staff in the hard-to-reach areas. Of course, it was one of the issues and what we were saying that "yes, even when we are gradually increasing pay and trying to motivate the public servants, the biggest problem lies in the rural areas, in the hard-to-reach areas, especially those that were affected by the war -- the village remote -- where you find that you cannot attract and retain public servants." So one of the policies that was -- one of the -- one of the approvals that were made under the policy was that we -- we give them 30% salary -- of their basic salary -- over and above, so that it can attract. But we realize that that may not even attract them because the salary is already so small that 30% may not... But at least it would be able to help us. That is in the short term.*

*Then in the long term -- medium and long-term -- the proposal -- or what the government wants to do is to ensure that they provide the social amenities -- schools in those areas, providing housing in those areas. Because you... And one of the reforms that -- when we were doing the reforms, one of the things that started was that government divested itself from providing housing allowance -- houses, actually -- physical houses -- and monetized the benefits. So a public servant's salary is already consolidated. But you find that even then, it's not adequate, so one of the recommendations made under the pay policy was to provide housing for those remote areas, so that you can be able to attract and retain public servants there. We are working on the framework, and we want to see how best it can improve. But at the same time, Cabinet approved the medium-term and long-term pay levels that can motivate public servants. But I want to say that up to now, we have not been able to pay those because we don't have the money yet. However, Cabinet approved, and the challenge we have now is we have been asked as the Ministry of Public Service that -- already*

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*the wage bill is so big compared to the revenue collection -- so big that the only way we can maybe pay these approved pay targets is to find means and ways of, for example, either offloading or removing the non-core functions to look for areas of cost savings internally. So that's the challenge we have. We want to see, where are the areas? Are there functions currently being performed by government that are non-core and can be offloaded to the private sector, for example, so that we can save and reduce understaffing, remove some functions and so on. Can we move some of the allowances? Is it the issue of the projects where you find that most of the monies are going into these projects? Can we remove some of the duplications that we are having between the mainstream public service and those other project sample? So the question, is public service -- we want to see how we can rationalize and remove duplications and non-core functions that can be offloaded, so that we can help saving -- otherwise, as far as we are concerned now, yes, we want to pay very well, but we don't have any leverage, until we have looked for the cost-setting areas. And as we talk now, we are going to conduct a comprehensive restructuring and rationalization exercise once again, for the entire public service to see where the duplications... Because you realize as we are doing the restructuring, one of the reforms under the structuring, we also created some problems, duplications. You find that you have a function and a main ministry. Once you create a project with another program, the same functions are performed; you don't even offload them from the mainstream. So --*

SCHALKWYK: What sort of functions are these? Can you give me an example?

MWESIGA: *I'll give an example. For example, under the Ministry of Agriculture. You may have a project like the NAADS -- National Advisories -- Agricultural Advisory Services. It's a very huge project, which is supposed to help the farmers and so on, provide seeds, help them do this and that. But still, even when you've created this, the people working in there are paid very highly. OK? But at the same time, you find the Ministry of Agriculture. You don't remove the people who have actually initiated, the technical officers in the Ministry of Agriculture that have been performing that function. We have the agriculture extension workers throughout the country. We've not removed them. So now, the only thing that they can say -- say, "Yes, the NAADS people are going to be -- to implement this program through the agriculture extension workers." So that's a riddle and a duplication. You have to continue paying the agriculture extension workers, but at the same time, this project is taking money to do that kind of work. The ministry retains a function for policy guidance and implement -- and -- and -- and the monitoring and the evaluation. But you've not even removed the people there; you've not even reduced. The ministry remains a ministry with it's -- all its departments. But you already have a project doing that kind of work. That's what I mean. That -- And this is happening everywhere. Ministry of Finance. You create a National Planning Authority, but the Department of Planning remains under Ministry of Finance -- planning and economic development, duplication of roles and functions and resources.*

SCHALKWYK: So you describe an effort to -- to evaluate the core -- the core functions of government. Has this happened in the past? Has there ever been a concerted effort to identify government's core functions?

MWESIGA: *Yeah. It was done --*

SCHALKWYK: Why don't you tell me about it?

*MWESIGA: -- and I think the last time it was done was in 1989 -- 1989, '90. And at that time, all ministries were reviewed -- their functions and mandates -- and they reduced even in terms of size. But as I talk now, we have gone back. The ministries have become big. Roles -- there has been a duplication of roles, as I've mentioned. So we want to see, how can we go back and address this problem? So we want to do a comprehensive restructuring again. Of course, this is not unusual, because structures keep growing, and, you know, they are not static. So we want to go back and see if there are roles and functions we can offload, and also see how we can work under the private-public sector partnership. How can we work with the private sector? For example, if you look at health within Uganda, you realize that government's using so much money to invest into the public hospitals and facilities, to provide a small percentage of what is actually being provided by the private sector hospitals and facilities. They use so little, but they provide bigger, they provide more health facilities to the public. So the question has been, where can, for example, government use the private, not-for-profit hospitals or health providers to provide the health facilities if they're doing it better? So we want to identify, what is it that the private sector is doing so well, so that government can actually put in money, using the private sector to deliver - - because at the end of the day, what did we want? It is the service for the citizens and for the population. It doesn't matter whether it is provided by government or the private sector. What is -- government can invest in it if they find out that actually the private sector is doing better, invest in them to provide the service. So this is what we want to encourage.*

SCHALKWYK: Have there been discussions about pay ratio within the Ugandan public service?

*MWESIGA: The pay ratio?*

SCHALKWYK: The differences between different levels.

*MWESIGA: During the -- there was a comparative study. I don't recall when it was done -- and I had actually not even joined the public service at that time -- but when they did it, they found out that actually, the compression ratio was so high between the lowest-paid and the highest paid. And the --*

SCHALKWYK: So, sorry. What -- I get a little bit confused. Does that mean that there was a very small gap or a very large gap?

*MWESIGA: A very large gap. And the -- and it was one, actually, of the objectives of the pay policy, to close that gap. Improve the pay, but at the same time, close that gap.*

SCHALKWYK: And was that to be by increasing the lower pay or decreasing the upper pay, or doing both?

*MWESIGA: Doing both. So -- because even the highest pay was paid low -- the pay was still low compared to the market rates. Even the lowest was still paid. So we wanted to increase --*

SCHALKWYK: But also decrease.

*MWESIGA: -- but also reduce on that ratio. Yeah.*

SCHALKWYK: And how has that worked?

*MWESIGA: We -- we -- we seem not to be doing badly. We've tried to reduce it, but I can't give you the figures. But what I can say, that it's not easy to demonstrate to the public*

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*servants... Because for them, at the end of the day, what do they want? They want a real good take-home package. So before we can attain that, it's difficult for you to go about telling them that, you know, we've reduced on the compression ratio, and therefore, we've motivated you. For them, the motivation is about how much do they have to take home and take care of their families and so on. So while we are trying to address that, we should also continuously try to improve their pay. But I'm sure when you talk to someone who is responsible for -- who has been handling the pay issues, they will be able to tell you that actually, we've moved great strides to improve pay. Because when I joined the public service, the pay was not even -- you could spend your salary, like, say, in two weeks, and you don't even have any money. But government -- under the pay reform strategy, government committed itself to say every financial year, that we are putting minimum of \$15 billion. That's what was agreed. Every financial year -- over and above there would be \$15 billions. But of course, I told you the challenge we've been having under that pay, is the increasing public service. And why have we increased it? Basically because of two major reasons: One was the education. Because of the primary education. Because we started universal primary education, and also recently, the universal secondary education. So we had to increase the number of teachers, because enrollment at primary and secondary level was so high, once it became universal. So the public service became so big. So even when we would get that money to pay, it would now disappear because the size of the public service, actually, increased. Then the second issue was the primary health care, where government policy was that we want to improve on primary health care, and they established a health facility at every sub CAO [Chief Administrative Office] so we needed more health workers. So that increased also the size of the public service. So even when they were injecting more money into the pay policy, and through the pay, it will still be swallowed up because of the size of the public service. So those are the challenges.*

SCHALKWYK: So I wonder if I could talk to you about performance management and performance evaluations. Have you been involved in the implementation of ROM (results-oriented management)?

MWESIGA: Yes.

SCHALKWYK: And then could you talk to me about the structure of results-oriented management in the Ugandan civil service?

MWESIGA: *Yes, the structure... You see, when ROM was introduced, it was introduced to look at the general performance. It's a tool for performance. And under ROM, at the same time, we came up with an open performance assessment -- appraisal -- for the individuals. Now, so ROM basically helped us at the higher level -- for example, in terms of planning, making clarification on the -- on the mandates of the ministries and other institutions. Of course, under that, every ministry was very clear about its mandate, about its strategic objectives, about its goals. And now, ROM also helps, as at the end of the day, that, below the institutional level, you come to the departments. The departments are clear what they are supposed to perform. You go down the section, up to the individual level. So the structure is that now -- of course, at the higher level, from the ministry level, how do you contribute to the sector, and how does that sector contribute to the national goals and objectives? So it was moving from the national goals -- so for example, in Uganda, currently we've been using the Poverty Eradication Action Plan as our National Development Plan (NDP). So every sector would want to see, how do you -- how do you contribute to the national goals, and how does this ministry or institution contribute to the national goal, and the department, so*

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*that it relates up to the individual level. So that's how the structure has been working. Now, once you've agreed as a ministry, this is what we are going to do for this financial year, this is our national -- this is our annual performance plan. So everybody in the ministry would ensure that whatever your individual performance plan is, that you must also contribute to that and your performance plan. Now, on a quarterly basis, ministries come -- the ministry comes together -- the heads of department -- to see how they have performed, to assess the performance. This is what we agreed. How have we performed? What are -- are there any slippages? If there are any slippages, what are the reasons responsible for them? How can we address them in the next financial year? So it provides room for strategic planning; it provides room for performance assessments, so that you can see how best to address the gaps. So at the individual level, it is the same. At the individual level, we developed an instrument -- performance assessment instrument -- for the individuals. And it's still -- in those -- in that instrument, every beginning of the year -- of the financial year -- you agree with your supervisor on the deliverables. What are you going to deliver? What are your outputs? And outputs are linked to the annual performance plan of the ministry, because you are contributing to it, in view of your mandate as a department, as an individual, what it is you should do. So once you've agreed, you perform, and you get assessed with your supervisor and say, "This is what we agreed, this is what I've delivered..." But we encourage continuous assessment of performance, not that you waited at the end of the financial year. No. Continuous performance assessment to see where there are any slippages, identify the reasons, discuss with your supervisor, and then see how you are doing. So this is how ROM has really helped us to perform, in terms of planning. Even budgeting -- our budgets are linked to our plans.*

SCHALKWYK: And what were the challenges in implementing ROM?

*MWESIGA: Yeah, we -- we have a number of challenges, because every day, people come and say, "Look here. We planned." But at the same time, we don't get the resources according to what our plans are. So the first challenge has been we don't have adequate resources, in terms of even -- even the facilitation, in terms of even tools and equipment. If I commit myself that yes, I am going to deliver this, but if I don't have enough stationery, if I don't have -- the printer has broken down (laughs) and the computer is not working... So I'm running around, and I'm wasting a lot of time here. So my outputs may not be delivered according to my plan. But we always tell people as a way for it and say, "Look here. ROM is not about resources -- the size of the resources. ROM is about how -- what you are able to achieve within the available resources." So if I want 100,000 and I've -- to achieve my plans -- and have been given 50, I should be able to account for the 50 that I have been given. So this is what we've been telling people, that -- "Don't misunderstand ROM. Yes, the resources may not be available, but they will never be adequate all the time." So what is what we advocating -- we are saying, "Look here. You may not get enough for what you wanted to do, but go back to your plan with your supervisor and say, 'Look here. I didn't -- I was planned to construct 100 kilometers of the road, and this was the budget, but we were given half of this budget.' So then when the supervisor would ask, "What were you able to achieve within what was available?" So we go back to the plan -- I will not assess you negatively. We shall go back to the plan because there is continuous assessment of performance. So this is what was given? Then we change the deliverables, the output. If there has been a delay of facilitation, of equipment, we can even change the date for effectiveness. But we work together with the supervisor and plan and achieve... But that is one of the challenges.*

*But the other challenge, as I mentioned earlier on, was the -- the issue of now, the individual public servants, do they have the capacity to deliver what we want them to deliver? And you find in most of the time some of the reform activities are contracted out. And -- because they say, "No, no, no, we don't have the capacity" -- then you get consultants. And sometimes these consultants -- the way they work, they don't transfer their knowledge and their skills to their counterparts. But one thing we've been trying to encourage and personnel have been really strict on this I say, "If we have to engage a consultant to do some work, let's ensure that we attach a counterpart. And this consultant, within our terms of reference -- within the contract agreement -- we must ensure that there is transfer of knowledge and skills to the counterparts." But the truth is that we actually have a problem -- a challenge -- in terms of the capacity for the public servants to deliver. So what the government needs to realize that, as I said earlier on, if we are working on these reforms, if we want to see where we want to go with our reforms, we must ensure that we facilitate, we motivate, we provide whatever it takes to this public servant, because we know this is the implementer -- public service is the implementing arm of government in terms of its processes and programs. And therefore, this public servant must be enabled. We must say, "This is the kind of public service we want; this is the kind of public servant we must have. And therefore, we must invest in this public servant." So this is the challenge that we are having.*

*So ROM has had those challenges, but the other challenge we have had under ROM is that people keep looking at it as a project, (laughs) you know? ROM, ROM, ROM, ROM. So we are taking time to see it as a management tool, which should be integrated within all of the performance management processes, beginning with planning, to budgeting, evaluations, rewarding performances in pay. In everything that we do, we should be... And ROM, we should not simply start thinking of big concepts of ROM. Because I keep telling people that ROM didn't come to -- just yesterday, when they kept saying that it was piloted in two ministries and so on. We were using ROM -- results-oriented management. Even our grandfathers and grandmothers were using ROM, because if they were to sit down and plan and say, "It's going to rain within this period," and therefore they start planning when they put their seeds, and when they do what. To me, I said, "That is results-oriented management." People planning, "When do I get the best out of this?" So when we are using ROM, but what happens is that it's just really giving it a concept name and saying, "This is result-oriented management. So if we can simplify it -- for me, the message I give is that we better, you know, demystify and say, "ROM has been there and will continue to be there, but we help people to ensure that it is integrated." It's about planning, it's about using discussed resources to achieve what you want to achieve for purposes of improving service delivery for the citizens. So that's what we need to do, but people keep thinking about it as something that is out of the blues, and they are not able to put it down and see how they can use it in day-to-day situation. But on the whole, here in Uganda, ROM has helped us greatly. Because even when people don't understand the concept, I want to say that even at the lower levels, we are using results-oriented management.*

SCHALKWYK: So I have many more questions, but if you need to go...

MWESIGA: Yeah. Maybe you can pick just a few? Oh, we have to go. (laughs)

SCHALKWYK: OK. So thank you very much.

MWESIGA: Yeah.

SCHALKWYK: I appreciate you giving me your time.

MWESIGA: *OK, thank you.*