SCHER: My name is Daniel Scher and I'm the Associate Director of the Innovations for Successful Societies project and I'm here with Mr. John Phatshwe at the BNPC (Botswana National Productivity Centre) in Gaborone, Botswana. It is the 22nd of July, 2009. So thank you very much for taking time out of your schedule to meet with us. I understand it is a very busy time for you so I do appreciate it. We're very interested to hear more about the BNPC’s work and in particular its work on transforming the civil service here in Botswana.

So I wonder if before we begin talking about the specific activities of the BNPC, you would mind just introducing yourself and telling us a little bit about your career background.

PHATSHWE: My name is John Phatshwe as indicated earlier on. I basically worked for the public service for 12-1/2 years before joining the BNPC six years ago. I worked firstly in the Department of Lands for 6-1/2 years, then shifted to the Department of Sanitation and Waste Management where I worked about six years before being appointed a Performance Improvement Coordinator (PIC) for local authorities. Basically that job entails dealing with all reforms issues relating to productivity in the public service but with specific reference to the local authorities and the entire public service.

Then I got interested in joining the BNPC since there was a project of installing a performance management system within the local authorities which system had been installed in the central government. So there was now a shift into the local authorities. So when I joined the BNPC basically I was coming to manage the project because the BNPC was contracted by government to install a performance management system in local authorities.

SCHER: Just for some clarification I wonder if you could describe the BNPC, what type of an organization it is and it’s relation to the government.

PHATSHWE: Essentially the BNPC was established in 1993 by an act of Parliament so basically it is a parastatal organization largely, as of now, funded by the government but as the BNPC we also do raise our own funds, so we are actually encouraged to raise more so we minimize the dependence on government really. So the essence of establishing the BNPC was based on the fact that there have been numerous complaints from members of the public about service delivery, largely in the public service because as you know Botswana is a big country but with a very small population. So inevitably, that creates a situation where you have government being the largest employer. That being the case looking at the private sector is quite small and in most cases you find it is like what we call SMMEs - small, medium and micro enterprises. So government becomes quite a substantial part that one has to deal with.

So yes, the services that government has or provides are actually essential for the establishment of the private sector but largely the government services are significantly important in driving the economy of Botswana. So as it is, what happened is that people were complaining of this poor service delivery. On many occasions, in the news, the media, there were complaints. So government decided to benchmark with countries like Singapore for instance where they felt productivity seemed to be on the high side.

Then they decided it was important to establish an organization that would help improve service delivery. So this is how actually the BNPC was established. With
its establishment, it was established on a tripartite type of arrangement where government is involved, then the employers and the workers’ organizations. The BNPC board is actually formed from the three legs which I just mentioned; the idea being that government keeps also helping to see how well we are doing in that regard. And then employers, which is very important, I mean employers everywhere, and then the workers’ organizations, this is where trade unions come in.

SCHER: The model that the BNPC was based off, am I correct in saying that that was imported in large part from Singapore?

PHATSHWE: Not quite, we looked at the Singapore model and then we needed to adapt to the local situation. So this is why maybe—I’m not pretty sure about even the board arrangement in Singapore, we needed to come up with something that would work for us which is quite similar with other boards of parastatal organizations.

SCHER: So now, your specific work with local authorities, now my understanding is that this was one of the most difficult and complicated aspects of the introduction of PMS (Performance Management Systems) in the public sector as a whole, largely because a lot of the local authorities are very far out in the rural areas, maybe there’s one or two people in the office and it’s just not as straightforward a process as instituting a system with Gaborone. Would you mind commenting a little bit on the challenging on rolling out this system to the local authorities?

PHATSHWE: I think I’ll start off by saying the fact that as I mentioned earlier on that there were complaints about the public service. I think the complaints were countrywide, whether central government or local government. But now the biggest challenge with local authorities now was to have a project that is not based in Gaborone. I think distance becomes a critical factor. And why I’m saying the complaints were an issue? Because then that also affects planning for a project because when you plan for a project of that nature you want work done as planned. But then that becomes a serious challenge.

So what we did is we, well initially we came with a product, the same product that was modified after the central government project. Then we discussed with the client, agreed on the product. Then once that was done then we were asked to deliver the project over a period of three years, which was very tight, dealing with ninety institutions. So the problem now was do we have enough resources.

We had, initially we thought we must subcontract a lot of work. But then the challenge that we would have in that regard is managing external consultants. That would be our biggest challenge. But since this came at a time when the central government project was actually winding up, we then felt well, let’s rather use internal resources and then beef up with a few external consultants, so this is what we actually did. But the external consultants were more or less like, we created a panel of external consultants who would come and assist if and when there was additional work to help or if any of our resources fell sick and could not deliver it as per the schedule.

What we did also was very interesting, to draw a plan for three years with the ninety institutions. So later on we sat down, looked at the calendars, looked at all the dates, weeks that had holidays we ruled them out. Then we scheduled all the workshops because each institution would have about 22 to 23 days of delivery, of contact. So that would be delivered like normally per week or so. But to schedule that for the ninety institutions, it really was a challenge, but we did that. We discussed with the client and indicated how important this was. Because we
had a contract with the client we then decided to make this as a significant part of the contract so that we committed the dates. So the dates were then sent to the affected institutions to look at and then give approval. So this was done. So the dates were more or less committed really.

However, we left a few float periods where if there was any need to change, you know, you'd change that. But then the change was also covered under the contract that it would have to be—if you changed a scheduled workshop it would have to be given at least a week in advance so that we are able to make the necessary arrangements. So this is how we planned that work. I think success rate was very high on delivery on time, I'll say well over 95%. We had—why I'm saying that, because we scheduled a few workshops because of certain emergencies that we could not avoid. But all in all really I think we—I think there was very good cooperation from the client in terms of availability. That was the biggest challenge really, especially when you plan ahead, I mean really, to tell people you're planning a workshop for them in three years on such-and-such a date. But really that worked.

But the biggest problem also was, I think, because of the time that was given, that created a lot of demand in terms of availability for our consultants to deliver. So that created a lot of stress, I think, for them because they had to be traveling, or delivering and travelling, as they had to do the driving themselves. Then that created I think also other problems relating to family time also. So I think if you asked quite a number of them they would say if they would do it again most of them would say yes but maybe with more time in between.

SCHER: Can you talk a little bit about the product that you were delivering because I understand that this performance management system had been implemented in the central government and can you talk about that program and perhaps the modifications you made for the rollout to the local authorities.

PHATSHWE: Yes, essentially we developed a model, we normally call it a PMS model which basically had a number of modules within. The first, which we normally call Pre-work would be conducting what we call an organization diagnosis or situation analysis if you like. We would use a number of tools to assess the existing situation in the organizations. The tools would include leadership and management competencies assessment, paradigm assessment, would also include work culture assessment and organization. Then we also use the CAF, the Common Assessment Framework which is an excellence model. It is actually adopted from the EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) model. I think the details I can also give probably later on.

SCHER: Excellent.

PHATSHWE: I think basically the idea was you get into an organization so that when you develop, or help them develop a strategy plan, you know what the situation is actually. Then part of the strategy deals with the gaps that we have identified during the assessment, the situation assessment. Then we would also run another module which we called role clarity where we just wanted to find who is doing what because that is very important in terms of checking what people are doing so when you relate, delivery issues, then you want to check whether people are doing the right thing. So the second module was role clarity.

Then at a later stage we would take the results of the situation analysis to a module that we called current reality to further interrogate these results and
process them. So then we end up with a situation where we say this is where we are. This then gets followed by a module that we called desired future.

SCHER: This is with the employees themselves?

PHATSHWE: With the employees, yes. So when we come to an organization, we would suggest to them to take about fifteen to twenty people, strategic people in an organization. That would include finance. We gave them some guidelines actually in that regard, finance, a few management people, HR, IT and the like. We feel these are the people who know the organization better so that when you do the organization assessment, these are people that can give you, I think, very reliable information about the organization. So after the current reality then we do the desired future. Now basically this is where we are now dealing with formation of key results, areas, goals, objectives and the like. So it is now where people are telling us what they want to do basically. We call it desired future because that’s where they want to be from current reality. So we can clearly see the gap between the two.

Then we also, after having done that, that would lead us into a situation where we have a draft strategic plan with targets of about five years, five, six years depending on the planning horizon that they use. But now realizing that this is planning for a long period, then we would try to break that into yearly plans. So the next module would be an annual performance plan where now we go back to the draft strategic plan, look at things that can be done the first year and then help them to develop this annual plan, an annual performance plan rather.

Then we deal with module that deals with measurement because now this one that ensures that you have targets and how are we going to measure these targets. Then it brings in the aspect of reviews, quarterly reviews, monthly reviews, annual reviews, and all the linkage, so that all that is linked to the delivery of the strategic plan.

SCHER: Okay.

PHATSHWE: And then clearly it is easier now for them to draw individual activities where now they can literally measure performance—because now it is easier for them to draw up performance agreements from that.

SCHER: These are quarterly or however regular reviews are one-on-one with supervisors or—?

PHATSHWE: Yes, one-on-one. Normally the way it works, I’m sure Dr. (Omponye Coach) Kereteletswe would have explained as well, that normally with Permanent Secretaries they get reviewed by the Permanent Secretary to the President I think on a quarterly basis. Then the Permanent Secretaries themselves also review their directors on a quarterly basis. Then the directors would also review heads of divisions. Sometimes it is monthly it depends what they feel comfortable with but it shouldn’t exceed quarterly because the idea is to track the progress on all the targets and where things are not going well they would take corrective action. --- [end of file one]

SCHER: This is part two of the interview.

PHATSHWE: So basically the idea is to monitor the progress so then we see that if things aren’t going well then you know it affects overall strategy unless you correct that.
So that then during these reviews you’d also discuss like corrective actions, actions where things are maybe lagging behind.

SCHER: So if I’m understanding correctly now you’re going on to people and you’re saying to people who might be, I understand, sort of a tendency to be a little bit stuck in their ways, there’s a lot of processes, you have your sort of general orders type ways of doing things. Now you’re going to them and you’re saying, we’re going to make you more productive. You’re going to have targets and guidelines and goals to reach and all these types of things.

PHATSHWE: Yes.

SCHER: Now I understand that perhaps some people might not be that enthusiastic about this because basically you’re saying you’re going to work harder and produce more. How do you go about trying to convince people that this is actually important and something that they have to take quite seriously?

PHATSHWE: The most important thing that was done also was government which they didn’t engage the BNPC to do that, was to engage other consultants to run some kind of change management workshops which they called boot camps where basically the workshops were dealing with mindset issues because the biggest challenge normally is mindset because people are used to doing things in a certain way. I mean I personally was involved so I know when I started working in government the issue of targets wasn’t an issue at all but now to shift from that mindset now to say, well, this is what you have to do. On such-and-such a day maybe in a period of a month you need to do A, B, C, D. Then, so, I think basically those workshops were meant to create the readiness. So that once you come and talk about issues of strategic planning, issues of measurement, people now begin to see the difference.

So the other issue is, as I said, the essence of the situation analysis, this is where it comes in. Those instruments that we chose, basically we chose those because if you look at for instance the paradigm assessments, looking at the paradigms that we use, even the excellence model it would, we would look at issues of the processes. So basically the relationship between the processes and deliveries is very important. This is where now where, when you do that, you may realize that certain processes are now redundant, if you like. So you may want to suggest issues of business process reengineering.

But then I think we need to understand clearly the changing of the mindset, that paradigm shift, is always a challenge. So that was one of the major challenges that we actually had on this project. But since we are dealing with people that had already been taken through some kind of readiness through those change management workshops, at least people had an idea of what we were now talking about because now we’re talking to actually deliver.

SCHER: Did you have any particular strategies you used to really bring people on board in a more full way even though they’d been through some of these workshops and such like. I’m sure there was still a lot of convincing and a lot of selling that you had to do.

PHATSHWE: Yes, we felt it was important to have what we called a reference site where we were dealing with only one district with all the consultants in one district which was some kind of, if you like, pilot project. So the idea was, when you go there, then you are able to pick a lot of issues, so when you go to the entire project then a few modifications will be done.
This is actually what was done. We realized also that part of the problem that people were having was I think understanding the concepts that we were bringing. So they needed a bit more time. So we also had to adjust our times slightly. Then we also agreed with the client that for those institutions that needed additional time, because in the planning process we accommodated time for—additional time for coaching. So that was going to be used for any other institution that needed additional time.

Of course, yes, from the participants’ side of things, if you had about twenty, you could have say two or three that were not maybe, probably up to speed because of maybe a limited academic background which was the main reason why probably they were having challenges on understanding the concepts. But then, in trying to accommodate them, that’s when we actually had a meeting. We actually had some structural arrangements to manage the project. We had a technical committee that would sit every month to review progress and pick any—discuss any issues that were coming from the project and chart the way forward on improving all the problematic areas. So we discussed that problem and then we agreed at that meeting, that committee, where people need additional time. Let’s use the mandate that we allocated for coaching to do additional work for them.

SCHER: Sir, can I just ask you a sort of more technical question. What sort of numbers are we talking about here? How many BNPC people were involved, how many people were you training, what proportion of this civil service does the, do the local authorities make up? Just to get a sort of sense of the scale of the project.

PHATSHWE: I think I would have difficulty in mentioning the numbers for the local authorities, but from our side, we had a team of eight consultants and then we had four external consultants that were to be used as and when there was an opportunity or when one of our consultants was not available—.

SCHER: That you mentioned ---

PHATSHWE: Early on in the panel. So the way we planned our work was that each consultant would be given a district to handle but the way work was arranged, because each district would have about five institutions. So essentially we tried to give a week off a month, but the way situations were—maybe additional work was needed and the consultant would have to do maybe four weeks a month. But the average that was planned was actually three weeks in a month.

SCHER: And training, working with five institutions and did you say about twenty or twenty-five people that were in each ---

PHATSHWE: Yes, these were staggered. The institutions would be staggered throughout. So you would find each institution would meet the consultant maybe once a month. So in some situations we would have two consultants. You also beef up with one of the external consultants.

SCHER: You mentioned ninety institutions. Can you talk a little bit about what sort of institutions we’re talking about here?

PHATSHWE: Yes, there are some structural arrangements within the district. There is what we call the district development committee which is like the overall overseer of the district. It is a committee that comprises members from the council, the land board, the tribal administration, district administration and other government
departments and also parastatals that are working in the district or have people in the district like BPC, Botswana Power Corporation, NGOs etc.

SCHER: Okay.

PHATSHWE: And this, that committee is headed by the district commissioner. So that does the overall planning and then delivery would now go to the specific institutions like council and the like. In fact, that was our first contact because when you draw a strategy plan for the district. That was the committee that would have to do that for the entire district. Then out of that entire district, then it becomes obvious now who does what. Then this is where we would go to other institutions would draw their individual plans. The four would be the Land Board, then the Council, then we had the District Admin which is the District Commissioner’s office and then the Tribal Admin. Now the side of the chief.

Ordinarily what we would do, we would go into a district, first handle the DDC (District Development Committee) and finish with it. Then you have some kind of a draft, a draft plan for the district which now makes it easier for all Local Authorities to develop their individual plans and these are going to be aligned to the district one. And the district one is also aligned to the ministerial and the national one. But you find some districts don’t have Land Boards, especially towns. So it would be like you are left with only three institutions. So to schedule the three over a four-week period it is easier, a week each and then you have the fourth week free.

So where we have four, this is where we bring somebody else to do the fourth one. So the person doing the fourth one may be doing that institution say in Ghanzi district, then in another district doing another one. It really was a challenge, to be honest.

SCHER: So you mentioned, first, just one more clarification. This is a three-year project, when did it start, what year?

PHATSHWE: It started in 2004.

SCHER: So this is all quite recent. So one of the things that’s I’m interested in—.

PHATSHWE: It ended 2007, September, it was September to September.

SCHER: You mentioned that you had one district that was sort of your pilot in some sense.

PHATSHWE: Yes.

SCHER: Were there any things that you changed significantly or modifications that you made when you unrolled it to the rest of the districts? Were there some things that perhaps didn’t work so well?

PHATSHWE: There were a few modifications, They weren’t substantial The things that were changed were like where the client in some instances thought there was repetition here and there,. Otherwise they were quite happy with the product because it was the same product that had been delivered to the central government.

SCHER: Okay. So one of the things I’ve heard and perhaps you can correct this for me, this was delivered at such a—because it was delivered after the central
government’s, after it had been done there, that some of the things that were delivered had already changed at the central government, that there were new products being used at the central government and that these were unrolled at a stage when things had changed and there was some feeling that local authorities were doing things differently from the central government. Is that fair or is that not fair?

PHATSHWE: I think there is an observation made by perhaps a number of people in that regard. All I can say is, I’ll give you an example. Somewhere toward the end of the product, government adopted the balanced scorecard as an additional performance tool. Now there was a lot of confusion I think here and there where people thought central government is talking balanced scorecard, we are talking performance management system or strategic planning - these are two different things. But people didn’t realize that basically these are very related tools, which complement each other because when you deal with the balanced scorecard it depends where you start using it. If you are dealing with the entire balanced scorecard you will do basically what we would have done earlier.

So what was now important was to see that work that already had been done needed to be integrated with the part where they were using balanced scorecard. I think largely that was used for reporting issues. So that is where the confusion seems to be coming in. People felt that we are being made to use obsolete things when people have already advanced. But the good thing is I have attended meetings where the PSP (Permanent Secretary to the President) would come in and even address Permanent Secretaries, they would lead a structure called the PIC Force. I have attended a PIC Force a number of times. He empathized how the two reforms complemented each other. You always say, I understand people think PMS and the balanced scorecard are two different things or two separate things. Let us appreciate that these are related tools. Because to do what you needed to do on the balanced scorecard you needed to have a strategic plan in place. So basically this is what you are now going to use. So I think even today we still get some clients within government who invite us to come in, you know, to help them, on the integration part of it which is very important. Now people are realizing that it is the same.

But then I think other initiatives came like I know currently, I think these came after we’d finished the project. I know government is now talking systems thinking which is something that is done by a different consultant. So even the balanced scorecard, I think government had contracted different consultant to do that. So I know Coach, Dr. Kereteletswe would always say, “these are part and parcel for a toolbox.” I think he likes using that concept. So basically he says, you always pick and see what works well.

I think that’s very important to clarify because it has been an issue. But at least now people beginning to understand. I think even the people that were trained on the balanced scorecard because government introduced it, I was a Performance Improvement Coordinator. These were also introduced in the local authorities as well. So these are people who get trained on all these initiatives. At least now those people understand better.

SCHER: They’re able to—.

PHATSHWE: To clarify it.

SCHER: That these things are actually quite integrated.
PHATSHWE: I mean, if you take systems thinking, what really are you talking about? You're talking about the issues that whatever government does or work that people do, it is all based on systems basically and relationship between these systems. But then it just ties up with, now issues of strategic planning is now the “how” part of it. So it is not like anything new that people don’t know about. So I think this is what at times people fail to realize. But again, maybe if you’re not exposed yet and you hear that people are running other workshops outside which we are not involved in, they get confused.

SCHER: Okay, that’s very helpful to have that clarified and get a better understanding of that particular issue.

PHATSHWE: Exactly.

SCHER: So you ran this program for three years and at the end how did you assess whether you felt it had been successfully adopted and was being successfully implemented in the local authorities?

PHATSHWE: I think that part, I’d also hasten to say, remember I mentioned we had some days that we allocated for coaching. Unfortunately coaching normally can only be done after installation and it is very difficult to schedule dates for coaching because those normally would be like demand-driven. So what we did was we requested the client to, because the days were already there say that now the project is over but still there are man-days that we can still help. The client said they were okay, they had enough capacity so they were comfortable.

Now the assessment part of it goes, our role was to first help these people. It was like you would training and also facilitating to develop strategic plans. So those plans could only be in a situation where they were in draft form because they needed approval at a certain level within the internal structures which was outside our mandate certainly. And then that also brings in the aspect of follow up. Who now was going to do the follow up to make sure that these are finalized. I think that needed some, perhaps some kind of instruction at a high level from the OP (Office of the President) for instance. That they needed to have concluded those draft plans by such and such a time and then if there is an issue of reviews, that if you want to BNPC to assist on the reviews, like BNPC did with central government, let’s draw the plans so that they can also plan well.

I think that’s one of the maybe shortcomings that didn’t seem to gel well, so that today we don’t know exactly on the actual implementation side. At least we are aware, but I mean, that’s a bit only on the informal side of things. We are aware organizations, quite a number of them that we’ve dealt with here and there are actually utilizing the product. We are aware organizations, quite a number of them that we’ve dealt with here and there are actually utilizing the product. We are aware organizations, quite a number of them that we’ve dealt with here and there are actually utilizing the product. We are aware organizations, quite a number of them that we’ve dealt with here and there are actually utilizing the product. We are aware organizations, quite a number of them that we’ve dealt with here and there are actually utilizing the product. We are aware organizations, quite a number of them that we’ve dealt with here and there are actually utilizing the product. 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We are aware organizations, quite a number of them that we’ve dealt with here and the product because they saw it as something that would really help them.

But then the issue is, it goes back again to the issue of the mandate of the BNPC. Is it really to transform or to help transform, because if you—if I come to your organization we can discuss some kind of a needs assessment and look at what you actually need. Then we help you with—then we say well, if this is what the problem is, as the BNPC we can help you with the following tools. Now who has to drive it? Is it the—normally it is supposed to be the CEO of an organization. So some of the challenges that I think initially came in was the
initial buy in by some of the heads of departments or institutions. So this is where now, even after you leave as a consultant, they are ultimately responsible to drive, to make sure that the tools are used. Otherwise it is one thing to take all those tools and then put them on the shelf.

Then I know there was an evaluation that was done, but this was for the central government. Maybe Coach (Dr. Kereteletswe) would have spoken about that, if there is actually a report to that effect.

SCHER: I think that was, one of my next questions was if you’ve implemented these and they’ve been successfully adopted then there is a whole series of things that are actually happening. The reviews are going on, the strategic plans are being made. But that’s not really within your mandate.

PHATSHWE: Yes, yes.

SCHER: That’s within the mandates of the institutions themselves.

PHATSHWE: Yes, within the institutions themselves.

SCHER: So are there any, are they compelled to do this in any way. I mean does the Ministry of Local Affairs say, okay, you’ve now had this training, you better be making these plans, you better be doing these reviews.

PHATSHWE: As far as I know, the Permanent Secretary to the President (PSP) is very serious on issues of performance. As I said, he reviews the Permanent Secretaries (PS) so that creates a trigger effect really all the way down. So if you don’t do it as a director or as a CEO somewhere, it catches up to you because whatever you are reporting on is very much linked to what your PS is reporting to the PSP. So that, I think that alignment was significantly—that’s why our approach would be such that if we come to an s an institution, we would create the alignment part. We would say let’s look at strategic planning for the Ministry and look at what it talks about? Then what are we going to deliver?

So even though maybe you don’t have an official position to say it is being implemented, but we are aware implementation is there.

SCHER: That really, I suppose, talks to the importance of high-level leadership. As you said the PSP, because he is serious about it, the PSes have to be serious about it and that I guess trickles down to all levels. I imagine it would be, if there’s no sort of official legislation or rules that required these things to happen, that this very high-level backing is important. I was wondering if that was something you sort of appreciated in your work that you had high-level support. Did it manifest itself in any particular way or were you just aware that there was backing for what you were doing?

PHATSHWE: The important thing is its linkage to the individual performance agreements because all departments, all government departments, employees within them are expected to have signed performance agreements. So where do you get the performance agreements, where do you get the targets? In Performance agreements basically you are talking targets. These can only come from the strategic plans. So that is the most important part. Then I know another reform that government introduced is what they normally call PBRS which is Performance-Based Reward System, the implementation of which I’m not quite sure what stage they are but the intention of that was to recognize performance of individuals so that they get rewarded. But you could not design that without the...
proper organization performance agenda which essentially is the strategic plan with an annual performance plan and the like which gets reviewed.

So you can only reward people on things that you have measured, where you have targets and then you measure the targets and say, “You’ve done very well.” Then when we say you’ve done well, then we must see how well that is related to the institution.

SCHER: Okay. I have questions related to your other work but before we move on from this particular issue of introducing the PMS to local authorities, I wonder if there are any key issues that perhaps I haven’t asked you about or if you have any thoughts or advice for people or your colleagues in other parts of the world who may be charged with the same sort of task, of implementing a system outside of a capital to various, diverse institutions.

PHATSHWE: Well I think as I said earlier, the greatest issue is the challenge in terms of planning. I think planning is the most fundamental issue. But then there is the aspect of commitment which commitment can only be done through some legal means, through a contractual agreement.

SCHER: So basically getting the institutions on board with you.

PHATSHWE: But then it is also fundamentally important to involve those institutions in your plan. Maybe the other thing that I can mention also is to say that we had a workshop here that was funded by the Commonwealth. They brought in a number of countries, Commonwealth countries to this workshop. We presented our model and it was then— One of the delegates from Swaziland was quite impressed about our model. They invited us to Swaziland to -. So we were actually in the process of negotiating a project with them.

SCHER: To do the same sort of thing?

PHATSHWE: Yes, same sort of project.

SCHER: To local authorities specifically?

PHATSHWE: Well, public service.

SCHER: Public service generally.

PHATSHWE: Then we also got invited by the Commonwealth to do a needs assessment in Lesotho. So they gave us a small project to do, a needs assessment for a performance management system in Lesotho, so we did that. We came to a stage where we more or less designed a project for them. But then things have been stalling from that perspective. So there is also a likelihood that—I think their decision is that they will then put this to tender.

SCHER: Do we have time to talk a bit about some of your other work?

PHATSHWE: Yes, I think there is still time.

SCHER: Excellent. I’d be very interested to hear specifically about your role as a PIC within the Ministry of Local Affairs. That’s a different role to your later involvement. I’d just be interested to learn more about how this works, the responsibilities of a PIC and your sort of day-to-day activities and your linkage to the sort of overall implementation of a larger system.
PHATSHWE: I think the important thing on that job is to look at all the performance related initiatives that the organization has, like in the case of the Ministry for Local Government which I was working for. What would happen is you look at issues of initiatives like PMS itself. It is popularly known as PMS, Performance Management System. There is also another concept that was also originally from Singapore, the WITS, Work Improvement Teams. So basically your role is to make sure that all these—is to train actually. One of the critical functions is to train departments, critical or focal people within departments, on all these initiatives. So that when you go to them now at a later stage you now help them implement the initiatives themselves or use the tools.

So basically it is just look at a suite of initiatives that are performance related, that have been adopted and adapted by government which is very important because then otherwise you are dealing with a tool that is not really used within the public service. Then one of the critical roles also was to help conduct reviews.

So even when the PS reviews his directors, you'll be sitting there as a technical person to advise. Basically you’re like an internal consultant. This is how we view it in a different way.

SCHER: I wonder if you can help me out. I’ve heard a lot of people talk about WITS, the Work Improvement Teams, but I haven’t been able to get a very clear understanding of how they work and what type of tool it is and in what situations it would be used. I wonder if you could explain this just a little bit to me.

PHATSHWE: Yes, it is Work Improvement Teams. It is basically using teams, I think just centers on the concept of teams, because the fact of the matter is teams, in terms of achievement, in any case organizations work through teams. Whether we like it or not. Yes we have individual assignments, but all these build up into a system where, a big system which has subsystems and in these subsystems, there are teams in them. But then the tool was used to solve problems through teams.

So what WITS does basically, the WITS teams, they sit together as a team and try and identify problems within the organization. One example that I know people would deal with is, let’s say, there is a team that is looking at—maybe there is a problem, I know there was a problem largely in government of when people travel, they take money in advance. Then when they come back they have to account for that. I think there would be requirements that you need to return the money within a period of two weeks. Believe you me, in some departments it would take years where people have taken maybe a lot of money, extra, and now they are not bringing back the money.

So the WITS team would look at problems that they have. Then they develop strategies to deal with that particular problem.

SCHER: So who is under the WITS team and how do you get on one?

PHATSHWE: I think basically every department is requested or is required to establish a WITS team. It is just basically where the director appoints maybe some strategic people to say well, maybe you can spearhead that, get other people that you know can help you form a WITS team and then let’s see those WITS teams, let’s see, identify problems over a given period of time. Then they have sometimes schedules of maybe the strategies that they have adopted to combat the
problems and then they have time schedules for that and then they keep on reporting on the progress.

SCHER: I see. So these teams can be from different units within the department—.

PHATSHWE: Different units, yes.

SCHER: Different levels within the service?

PHATSHWE: Yes. So there may be those that are unit specific, but there may be those that are cross-unit type.

SCHER: Okay, I see. Sort of in addition to regular responsibilities right? You aren't like a WIT person, you do something else and—.

PHATSHWE: Right, you do something else and you have this extra. So this is where now, even when you draw your performance agreement, there may be a percentage that is allocated, say maybe 5% of your time or 10%.

SCHER: Is there any sort of prestige with being on the WITS team? I mean, do people want to—is this something people want to be involved with?

PHATSHWE: I think when it started, the people who actually started it were trained by the Singaporeans on the concept, it is actually a Singaporean concept. So people were taken to Singapore and trained on how the concept works and then now they trained other people. So I think people—because this was like some kind of a shining star type of thing so people wanted to be associated with it. Then you know, there would be some kind of prestige really.

But unfortunately maybe now the government ministries, or departments, because of issues of transfer of staff and the like that were trained then and are now doing something else, this is sort of like collapsed in a lot of government departments. All I know is within the police, the police took it very seriously. They used that quite a lot. The Ministry of Mineral also—I think they were doing quite well on WITS. I think these are people that if maybe given a chance if you visited them, at least I know one particular person from the police who was highly involved in WITS. I can give you the name later.

SCHER: Thank you. That is quite helpful in getting a better picture of what is their role.

PHATSHWE: Yes, he was technically involved.

SCHER: I understand, WITS was introduced quite some time ago, was it mid '90s?

PHATSHWE: Yes, mid '90s actually. PMS came a little later as an overall really.

SCHER: Late '90s.

PHATSHWE: Yes, PMS - the project that we had actually started in 1999. It went over a five-year period with central government.

SCHER: All right. I have a couple of questions about that but before we move on, the BNPC wasn't involved with WITS right?
PHATSHWE: No, WITS, people were trained directly, they were sent, I think they were sent by DPSM (Directorate of Public Service Management). I think DPSM was coordinating that.

SCHER: So just on the sort of the bigger PMS program from the 1999, five-year one. Can you tell me, can you help me get sort of an idea of where the drive for this came from and who was pushing for this? I understand there was a meeting in 1995 with the Permanent Secretaries at Kasane where some of these ideas were explored. But I still haven’t got a very good idea of who was sort of pushing these issues and why it was considered so necessary because it certainly doesn’t seem like the civil service was in any sort of crisis. Sure there were some complaints, but it wasn’t collapsing or falling apart.

PHATSHWE: I think that part, I’m not pretty sure. All I know is at least, at the political level there were those concerns, that the public service was not delivering up to speed with the times. So this is why it actually became an issue where it was decided that let’s establish an organization that deals with that. I mean obviously they were conscious of the fact that there were private companies, the likes of MaST and others that deal with issues of productivity and the like. But then for me my view is, I think government thought it was very important. So if they really felt that they needed to establish an organization in that sense, spend so much money, then that was—it shows that there was, I think, adequate impetus really that necessitated formation of the BNPC.

SCHER: I see. Would you mind if I just backtracked a little bit to talk about your role as PIC. One of the things that strikes me is that must have been a particularly difficult position because in some ways you’re sort of an outsider within the organization. As you say you’re an internal consultant, there to assist with some processes that are in many ways quite disruptive and I wonder if you can talk a little bit about—.

PHATSHWE: I have a personal view actually. I think as you said you are sort of an outsider but within. But then the issue is, the fact of the matter is you are within the organization. Let’s take any ministry, say the ministry for agriculture. If you are the PIC there, structurally as of now you report to the PS of that ministry. But my view is that structurally, PICs should report to the PSP, should be actually from that office and come there on secondment.

SCHER: I see.

PHATSHWE: Because so then, time and again you report on progress to the PSP. You know why I’m saying this is because at times when now you’re dealing with a PS but they have all these directors that we have to deal with. At times, you know, you find, which is natural, everything that they do they always feel PS, PS and you are sitting somewhere there in the corner. That’s actually our organogram. So at the top there is the minister, then assistant minister, then PS, then two deputy PSES. Then you find, I think we’re sitting just next to the PS. But my view is these positions actually are positions within the Office of the Permanent Secretary to the President. So time and again there’s maybe a meeting of them with a PSP now, discussing critical issues that are picking from the ministries, various ministries.

SCHER: You are sort of in many ways charged with implementing policies that are coming from the Office of the President.

PHATSHWE: Yes.
SCHER: And yet you are—.

PHATSHWE: You are sitting—.

SCHER: You are sitting under the Permanent Secretary.

PHATSHWE: Technically it could create a situation where depending on the PS of the Ministry that we work for, if maybe he or she doesn’t really have a little buy in. A lot of problems would arise for me I believe where you feel like you’re not taken very seriously.

SCHER: And in some ways you have no real recourse because you actually—.

PHATSHWE: You see what I’m saying?

SCHER: I do. So this is actually a similar issue, in my understanding to the location or the relocation of the public sector reforms unit from DPSM to the Office of the President.

PHATSHWE: Yes.

SCHER: It is the same sort of, who you’re reporting to type of issue.

PHATSHWE: Exactly. For me the Office of Coach I think PICs would be reporting, should be part and parcel of that office. For me that’s what I think. I know we, when I presented the report about the work that we did in Lesotho to their cabinet, the PSP was also invited to that meeting. So I also presented on issues of productivity, the public service. Then he spoke about structural issues. But the biggest problem that we were talking about were issues of finance, to finance this position and the like. But then I felt, I think they really appreciated the approach of having PICs. For them they felt it was something that could be done internally. But then the issue was, because you’re asking whether these people were specifically dedicated to that then they’re going to say yes, but that’s how it works.

I think now, maybe for me, my personal view as I said, is perhaps a way of improving, it is just to have these housed down in the Office of the PSP.

SCHER: I take your point there. You wouldn’t happen to know when the Coach’s unit was moved from DPSM to the Office of the President?

PHATSHWE: I have a rough idea because when we started working on the contract for the LA (local authorities) project, we were still dealing with DPSM. So that was around, it must have been 2004 because that’s when we signed the contract because before then, 2003 and the like was still. Because by the time we signed the contract it was now signed by OP not by DPSM. So I think it must be 2004.

SCHER: So it is still relatively recently that these sort of modifications and improvements to the system have been happening.

PHATSHWE: But perhaps what still remains is maybe—I’m sure Coach can confirm that, because I know, DPSM, I think does drive some initiatives. I know they have been spearheading business process reengineering. We, at BNPC have a project that we have been having with the Japanese. But DPSM - part can be confirmed by them.
SCHER: I have got some information on the business process reengineering and it is my understanding that it is really a DPSM project.

PHATSHWE: So this is what I’m saying. That you know maybe it is also an issue of understanding to what extent does DPSM do reforms as of now when there is a unit that is dealing with reforms at OP. Does that mean part of the reforms were left behind at DPSM? I guess, something that perhaps needs to be improved—.

SCHER: But certainly these are very sort of innovative structures and just the idea of having an internal consultant to assist with all these things is quite something.

PHATSHWE: For me it shows how maybe how serious the matter was taken. It shows a very high level of seriousness. Because as of now a lot of the first PICs advanced to positions of directors because on recognition of their understanding of strategic issues of organizations. Some of them are already PSes, like him. You see where it says Gabaake Gabaake - he is a PS for Water and Minerals (Ministry of Minerals, Energy and Water Affairs) but at the time he was PS for local government.

SCHER: Sorry he was PS for?

PHATSHWE: For local government. He was working for minerals where he was PIC. Then later on I think he was made deputy PS was it works or labor? I’m not sure. But later on he was appointed PS Local Government. Then he was transferred back to his original ministry.

SCHER: That’s very interesting.

PHATSHWE: Yes.

SCHER: Excellent. That certainly helped clarify a lot of the questions I had. I wonder if there are other initiatives that you’d like to talk about or any current projects that the BNPC is involved with.

PHATSHWE: At the moment, at least with the public service there isn’t per se, but I think in the BNPC a lot of work has been done on training on QMS, Quality Management Systems, where we - I think specifically, the issue of ISO (International Standards Organization) standards and the like which is very much related to the business processes reengineering project that they have. I know local government, I think is thinking of having a project on but there are still issues I think of funding, but there is that possibility of us having maybe a bigger project on installation of PMS.

SCHER: One question I did have and you explained WITS very nicely for me so I wonder if you would mind doing the same for balanced scorecard because this is another thing that I’ve heard a lot about but don’t have a very clear idea of how it works in practice.

PHATSHWE: As I said earlier the balanced scorecard is really I think looked in a different way it is strategic planning tool also, if you like, because it does have strategic planning elements in it. It does talk about key result areas, it does talk about— maybe instead of key result areas they would call them themes. So I think there is just an issue of nomenclature but really all in all it is talking about more or less the same thing. But then the emphasis of the balanced score card lies in the fact
that it talks about the four perspectives, the four perspectives where as the name suggests balance. Just basically give balanced attention to all the perspectives.

So this is where it appears to be different but really, in the end you start talking specifics and financial perspectives, people perspective, but the strategic planning model that we talk about, as I said, we use excellence models as well. They talk about processes like balanced scorecard. So it is only like, not an uncapped plan where you just emphasize the fact, let's give balanced attention to that. But then, if you are a profit-making organization obviously you emphasize more financial results. But then I think some of the challenges, in fact it was developed largely focusing on profit-making organizations. Then there was this issue of borrowing it and bringing it to the public sector type of setup.

I think in that regard yes there is a financial perspective which is maybe a little bit invisible. Then there is normally a saying that though public service is not really, we don’t really see people—you don’t necessarily have to make profit per se, but there is financial deliverable because people who pay tax it is tax money that is used to pay the public servants. So therefore, when they deliver, they must be conscious and regard that people have already paid, like in advance if you like.

SCHER: Okay, I see.

PHATSHWE: But currently I think they are largely using it as just a reporting format.

SCHER: Thank you very much for your time and before we end I did just want to give you an opportunity perhaps to say things I haven’t given you an opportunity to say or maybe tell me if there are any key questions I haven’t asked or any reflections you have about the type of work that you’re engaged in.

PHATSHWE: I was only going to say since I’ve given you I think, at least some of the products that we have, then the other thing that I was going to mention is that though it would appear that there is this program is specifically for private sector as you’ll see there is also the enterprise support that focuses on private sector, but there is always an overlap. As the BNPC we are always trying to identify ourselves as one when we deliver. There is always an emphasis of delivering as the BNPC and not as specific programs. So that overlap I think will be okay, unlike before. Before it used to be like well specifically this is a public service issue so it is going to be dealt as a public service problem. Or this is specifically for the private sector so it goes specifically to the enterprise support. So now the situation is quite different.

I think we, like the QMS that I spoke about, currently it is driven from the enterprise support program within the public sector. It is just fine really.

I’m done. I can’t think of anything else. If there is anything else I can always communicate via emails.

SCHER: Excellent. Thank you very much for your time, I do appreciate this. It’s been very helpful in clarifying a lot of the things I have been hearing about and I’m very pleased I got the chance to speak with you before you head off to South Africa tomorrow. Thank you sir.

PHATSHWE: You’re very much welcome.