



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

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MAKGETLA: My name is Tumi Makgetla. It's the 15th of September 2009. I'm in Accra, Ghana and I'm here with Mr. Seth Terkper who was seconded from the National Revenue Secretariat in 1993 to the Value Added Tax Project as a coordinator. He later became the Deputy Commissioner when it became the Value Added Tax Service. Thank you very much for joining us as part of this set of interviews.

TERKPER: *You're welcome.*

MAKGETLA: Before we begin, may I just confirm that we have your consent that this is a voluntary discussion?

TERKPER: *Yes, and I've signed to that affect.*

MAKGETLA: Excellent. Thank you. Can we start with you giving us a brief overview of your career and how you came to be working at the Value Added Tax Project?

TERKPER: *Well, I was working with the then National Revenue Secretariat which was one of the pioneer attempts to remove revenue agencies from the civil service and to make them semi-autonomous and as a result, we now have revenue authorities in Africa and other places. Then I had just qualified as an accountant. I wanted to improve my education further so I went to the Kennedy School to do my Masters. On my return I was told that my next assignment would be coordinator of the Value Added Tax project. So that's how I ended up being coordinator.*

MAKGETLA: When you think back to the first days of your work at the project, what were the main challenges that were identified as priorities?

TERKPER: *Well, of the main two or three challenges, the main one was the VAT (Value Added Tax). At that time, it was not new. VAT had also been introduced in Eastern Europe and other places and had become associated with politics. So anywhere VAT was introduced there was some form of political upheaval partly because of the inflationary trends in those places and the perception that VAT often affected prices.*

The other challenge was that, unlike other countries, we had service taxes in place already and we were going to replace these with the VAT as in some other countries. Therefore, we were not just introducing a new tax into the system we were replacing other taxes which required change of management and cultural change.

The third challenge was, by the time the VAT had started, the country already was going through some adjustment fatigue because Ghana had launched the Structural Adjustment Program back in '83-84 of which the National Revenue Secretariat, a part of which was autonomy for the revenue agencies.

Had we remained on course, we should actually have done the VAT in '85-86, so starting it in '93-94 was procrastination. By that time, we were about ten years into structural adjustment and it was becoming very difficult. In '92, you will also recall, we had just moved from military rule to a multi-party democracy where everything was in a more open constitutional and political environment. In hindsight, implementing reforms during that era was quite a significant challenge for anybody.

MAKGETLA: Why was the implementation of VAT delayed?

TERKPER: *We were doing many reforms. We were making changes in tax policies, quite a number of them including tariffs and income tax. We were also doing administration reforms and allowing greater autonomy for the revenue agencies. We were improving systems and procedures. So it was just the sheer volume of work that had to be done. Also, judging from those reforms, people had come to understand that we needed to take our time to plan the VAT, and, as I said, because of the experiences of other countries. So those are some of the reasons why there was a delay.*

MAKGETLA: At the time that VAT was implemented was there a sense that the time was right or ripe for it?

TERKPER: *In a sense, the time would have been right for it by '93-94. We felt mature which is why many people globally were surprised when Ghana failed in introducing the VAT for the first time. We had made major reforms like taking the revenue agencies out of the civil service and we felt it was time to make the change to VAT. As I said, this was something which had been studied for many years. So yes, we felt that it was time to make a change. However, you need to be ready both technically and politically and bring the public along and that's where the challenge was. The surprise came from there.*

MAKGETLA: So when you began to set up the VAT service route through the project initially, were you drawing on pre-existing strategies developed internally or particular experiences in other countries?

TERKPER: *Both. We had a lot of experience with reforms internally already. I always say I was a product of reforms from the first day I joined the National Revenue Secretariat and after my national service. So we had done significant reforms and we were drawing on those. There were no major complications. So with DFID (Department for International Development) assistance, at the time they were called ODA (Official Development Assistance), we got the Crown Agents of UK (United Kingdom) which had assisted many countries, to help us do the programming.*

They actually assigned a lot of consultants to work with us throughout the implementation. We also had to have the Harvard Institute for International Development (HIID) actually designing the policy framework for the VAT. So we had both internal and external inputs into the VAT.

MAKGETLA: What would you say were the key changes that you were involved in during your time at the program?

TERKPER: *Quite a lot. We had five elements of the program. The first was setting up a project management team with a steering committee to do the work, to plan the program and report to the minister. The second was organizational to look at the existing organization of the revenue institutions and decide what to do when we introduce the VAT. In our case, we opted to establish a VAT Service rather than integrate it with the Internal Revenue Service. We looked at systems and procedures, what required changes, what new procedures were needed. You know VAT is the credit method and the credit method is new to us. We were used to the ring method or the deferral method. That was another element. Staff training was another big one. So we did have these areas of difficulty or challenges.*

MAKGETLA: Of those, what would you say were the most significant changes that you were involved in the early days of the reform?

TERKPER: *I would say public education, which I didn't mention. Both technical and public education, because you have to bring tax payers along, those who would be registered for the VAT. You have to bring staff from the revenue institutions along to make them understand the new concept and because VAT tends to be political, you also have to bring along the general public, some of whom would never touch a VAT invoice except when they go in to buy. You still have to make them understand the concepts. VAT alone wasn't going to increase prices or affect a few commodities, and those types of things.*

MAKGETLA: Before we discuss how you went about actually developing your public education program and your training program, I'd like to ask you how you built support to implement that? Who were the key actors or institutions that you considered to be allies as you began to introduce the tax and set up the service?

TERKPER: *Well, you can see that from the composition of the steering committee. The Steering Committee was chaired by the Deputy Minister of Finance. Representatives were from the Ministry of Trade and the Ministry of Communications and the Central Bank. We also had the private sector and the consumer society represented. We tried to reflect as many societies or societal elements that would be affected by the tax, in terms of gaining political support, public support, as well as technical support in implementing a major reform like a value added tax.*

MAKGETLA: Was the steering committee set up initially when the project was begun or is this after it was reintroduced?

TERKPER: *Initially.*

MAKGETLA: I understand that a stakeholder committee was brought together later. Did the composition of the steering committee resemble that of the stakeholder?

TERKPER: *Well, after the first failure, we expanded the steering committee a bit. There was more consultation with the stakeholders. More stakeholders were brought into the education process; more stakeholders into the consultative process, and then parliament also came on board, because of the need to take the VAT bill back to parliament to have it enacted. In the planning, a sixth element of policy and legislation was added in terms of the proposed outline.*

MAKGETLA: So, in working with these other stake holders, people in other ministries as well as representatives from the private sector and consumer groups, did you have to strike any bargains to help build support for your efforts to introduce the tax?

TERKPER: *Yes, you always have to make compromises. The ideal VAT is a VAT that taxes all consumption. So, in principle, if you have a VAT as a consumption tax, any time you want to buy any commodity, goods or services you have to impose a tax. But then you couldn't impose tax on education. Ghana values its education as much as U.K. or anybody. On basic education, health, basic health, you couldn't impose a tax like VAT, comprehensively.*

You had to then discuss both with the parliamentarians and with the politicians, the industry lobby and whoever, to see the scope because you also don't want to exempt the whole of education, you know. What is education? Anything can come as "education". We used to joke that you could have Newsweek as "education," you could have Playboy as "education". Magazines! Well, you have

to discuss these things with the parliamentarians, with the legislature, with politicians, executives, the industry lobby and all who are concerned.

Yes, as with any policy formulation you have to make, you still have to stick to your goals. Otherwise, in the end, you eventually erode the tax base. The beauty of the VAT is it's a broad base and then you can have lower rates.

MAKGETLA: Can you describe to me how this engagement was structured? How did the different groups indicate where they would like to be exempt from VAT? How did you take that into consideration?

TERKPER: *Well, we did expect the representatives on the steering committee to consult their members. We had a very active public education program so we adopted various strategies. We wrote articles, we had seminars, we had training sessions, and we even had town hall meetings. We went into towns and villages. We had a comprehensive public education strategy, particularly in the second phase after the failure of the first phase.*

MAKGETLA: When the project had just started, in '93, what was the weight given to the public education activities?

TERKPER: *We gave a lot of weight to public education and publicity issues. The difference was political. In the first phase there wasn't much ownership, politically, of the reforms. So much of the work tended to be technocratic, technocrats moving around. We have a public service and we're supposed to be non-partisan so public servants often feel reluctant, like myself at the time, to respond to political charges. But the second time, the weight was strongest in terms of more mass education by politicians, as opposed to technical education for registered tax-payers.*

So I would say that was the difference. In terms of the elements, it's always been one of taxpayers, general public, and then the staff in technical areas. Those are the key elements. We tended to weight mass public education more in the second round because of the sensitivity or the perceived lack of sensitivity in introducing the tax during the first round.

MAKGETLA: So, during the second round, when it came to building support, how did you change your strategy in terms of to whom you spoke to get greater support?

TERKPER: *Institutionally, there was a change in that the Ministries of Information and Communications at the time came in very strongly with a mass public education plan and strategy. It took charge of significant elements of that program, which meant that they recognized its political importance. I recall working on one of the subcommittees with the current Vice President who was then Minister of Communications, Deputy Minister, actually, for Communications, so it tells you how significant it is.*

That was the first strategic change. The second strategic change was for more outreach by the staff on the VAT service. More emphasis was given to general education as opposed to seminars with small groups of registered tax payers who wanted to know how VAT affects the oil sector or how VAT affects a specific sector. We decided we had to develop and discuss more general issues with appearances on television and on radio, just plain questions. "Does that make sense? Does that really make sense?" We had to respond to all of them.

MAKGETLA: If you were sending out people who had been selected for their ability to administer tax to reach out to the public, did that require any additional training or skills development?

TERKPER: *Yes, certainly yes, particularly for a new tax. You don't assume just technical knowledge, but you have to also recognize that you are not going to meet taxpayers who are all economists, accountants, or even owners of businesses. The owner doesn't have to have qualifications to collect the tax for you. So you've got to educate him or her in the language the people understand. That was a policy that was perceived to effect peoples' pockets and with pressure on government to increase wages as a result of that, you had to do a good job.*

Without politicizing your public sector employees, you had to make them understand the perspective of somebody who was asking questions like how will VAT affect the price of bread even though the answer is obvious. It won't substantially, because you are paying a service tax, which is embedded in the price of bread. VAT will come at the same rate and therefore, as far as you are concerned, you will be paying the same thing, however, that wouldn't be sensitive. So you've got to understand that the VAT was not going to cascade, which was one of the charges against VAT because it's collected in multiple stages. You have to take your time to explain how it is only those registered that collect the VAT. There are who can be given a refund, and all that.

I always tell the story of an elderly gentleman who was advising on a strategy, and he said to me that he had a simple test. If I could convince my driver, my secretary, and my administrator in the VAT office about VAT, I would have succeeded in educating the public about VAT. On the other hand, if my driver found himself at the end of the day in a drinking bar and they were discussing VAT and he always said, "This advice is from my boss, it's not from me", then you wouldn't have succeeded.

MAKGETLA: What would you say were the key messages that you were trying to get across to the public?

TERKPER: *One of the key messages I used to send to the public that has to pay the tax was the benefit of the tax. And we are into a tricky area because as a tax administrator, you are not in charge of how the tax is used. It's somebody who's on the expenditure end. But then you've become the face for another person. So you've got to explain how the tax which you are collecting from the general public would be used. You also have to explain the fairness with which you want to collect the tax.*

One of the things we said about the VAT was that the sales tax, back then, ended at the manufacturing stage. It was extended to the retail stage, and then on specified commodities. We were going to cover all goods and services, in principle. So even though you see it as covering more goods and services you've got to send a message that this was desirable, because if you took two people under the old regime, one was buying an item and paying the tax, the other person was not buying. But for society as a whole, if everybody is going to contribute then everybody must contribute their efforts in equal measure.

So those are some general things. And for those who are going to collect the tax, you want to make sure that they do it in a very efficient manner.

MAKGETLA: Were there any unexpected obstacles in your efforts to reach out to the public?

TERKPER: *Yes, the public demonstrations organized by opponents. There was a strong opposition to the VAT that, from a technical point of view, becomes very surprising although I suppose many politicians would understand why it occurred. It had become something to oppose in place of adjustment fatigue. It was very easy to blame that for many of the difficulties the public was facing.*

So with the implementation, people in the streets were doing all kinds of things and that was a huge obstacle to the smooth implementation of the tax. Because what it meant is that you were probably over emphasizing the general elements of the reforms rather than the technical one that would make it very efficient.

MAKGETLA: You mentioned earlier that you had anticipated there might be some sort of social upheaval associated with the introduction of VAT. How did you attempt to engage that before it became a popular protest?

TERKPER: *Initially, we didn't expect it in Ghana, to be frank. We were learning from the experience of other countries that this could happen, but as I said, we felt we had done many reforms. We also felt we had done a lot of preparation and we were prepared with a good plan to introduce the tax. That's why it became an element of surprise.*

MAKGETLA: You were saying that, initially, Ghana had not expected this level of public protest.

TERKPER: *No, not at all. We recognized the need for public education and we did our best because, as I said, we were using a very reputable firm of international consultants, and Crown Agents, who had been involved in the introduction of VAT. Harvard Institute for International Development which was also involved heavily in Eastern Europe had provided us with some advice. We, ourselves, made many reforms, so we did not take reforms for granted. Even though we've had serious challenges with reforms we've always felt confident that we could prepare for them and as they came we'd solve them. So this was a surprise and that's why I mentioned it as one of the obstacles.*

MAKGETLA: You mentioned the fatigue with reform and those sorts of factors affecting the level of public opposition to the introduction of VAT. Some authors have also suggested that it was because the political opposition at the time was outside the government and therefore saw this as a campaign to back because they were generally excluded from formal politics. But then after '96, their inclusion in the government was one of the reasons that there was less opposition. Do you think there was less opposition?

TERKPER: *I don't think they were included in '96. In '96, the government won. The government had the majority in Parliament. The government appointed its parliamentarians, so I think what changed was that the government was better prepared to defend its policies. To date we still have two strong factions. From Independence, we've always had two strong political dynasties as we called them. At any point, you will always find a strong opposition, either from the left of center or the right of center.*

I think the lesson for us was preparing and preparing well and not necessarily the main opposition in parliament.

MAKGETLA: In the preparations that you made, the public was sensitized to a VAT figure of 15% but it came in 17.5%. Can you explain why that was not addressed earlier? What did you see happening?

TERKPER: *It was addressed. Actually, some of the sales tax rates were as high as 25% and we had been reducing them at 2.5% points from 25 to 22.5 to 20 to 17.5 in anticipation of the introduction of the VAT that was to be done at 15%. So it wasn't that there was one rate increase, it was a trend we were following. The sales tax had a narrower base and we were going to expand the base of the VAT, use the VAT to expand the base of the consumption tax. So with the sales tax base, we had been reducing it. It was one of the reasons we didn't introduce the VAT in '86 also. It was planned to gradually reduce the rates so we wouldn't have a sharp reduction in the rate.*

We had some bad publicity, admittedly, with 15% the fiscal figure at the time. '95-96, was also a difficult year globally and Ghana had droughts. So the fiscal numbers were not balancing. There was a halt to the reduction from 17.5 to 15. We started printing materials that suggested that the VAT was to come in at 15%. So this was a headache the program had.

MAKGETLA: When the government decided to repeal VAT in 1995, what was the impact of the decision on the office?

TERKPER: *Well, initially there was the thinking that VAT would never come back. But then we were told that the government was not cancelling the VAT, the government was only withdrawing it to do its homework. We had recruited beyond the skeleton of the VAT project. Those staff members were put into the Internal Revenue Service. The VAT project itself was put under the Internal Revenue Service. The commissioner at the time was the President, the current president. So he was charged with responsibility for the small VAT project until it could be reintroduced. Therefore, after the elections in '96, a program was put in place to reintroduce it. So the VAT project was actually never dissolved. Rather, we used the whole period to plan new strategies for the reintroduction.*

MAKGETLA: Can you describe some of the negotiations that might have taken place to work that configuration and to send staff into positions they were satisfied with, in other agencies?

TERKPER: *The most obvious one was a 10% rate at which the VAT was introduced. You started to work from 17% to 15% and then 10%, but that wasn't the rate at all and then the negotiations that were about that with the both the majority side and the minority side. And a year after that, the negotiations to increase it that gave us the Ghana Education Trust Fund. After the NPP (New Patriotic Party), who opposed the VAT, came to power, there were negotiations to increase the rate again to 15%, but to allocate the 2.5% to establish the National Health Insurance.*

All of these are collected as though they were a VAT, so in essence, we've had the VAT giving us two very important health and education funds. We have a VAT rate of 15%, but in practice only 10% goes to the consolidated fund and 2.5% goes to the education fund and another 2.5 % goes to the health fund, which are very good initiatives. So that is the most significant negotiation that had to be made. And also there were negotiations on the base of the tax; some more education, health, food items were brought into the exemption list.

MAKGETLA: At what level did the negotiations take place? Who was involved in this?

TERKPER: *Well, all of us in the room, Parliament and civil society. We were also holding consultations with business, civil society groups, and all kinds of people.*

MAKGETLA: If you take one of those, where did the initiative come from? Would it have come from the Ministry of Finance presented to the VAT services that then presented to Parliament? Can you describe the assembly?

TERKPER: *There were bureaus, maybe to a side, two or three. You would have Parliament's Finance Committee, which was very technical, looking at a bill and suggesting that this or that be done. You would have an academic who was writing, or somebody who was a journalist, who had been to UK and seen that there is no VAT on children's clothing and was even zero-rated and didn't understand why we shouldn't do the same. Supporting it through an article or talking on the radio gives currency that this commodity shouldn't attract VAT, so you have to explain carefully why it should. Otherwise it becomes policy.*

Then you have the cabinet itself. We did seminars for the cabinet and they asked questions. Remember, they have constituencies who are putting pressure on them. We have MPs (members of parliament) who have constituencies, so they also ask questions. They came in with their point of view, and you have to, too.

You had trade groups like the Ghana Traders Union Association (GTUA), playing a key role, the Chamber of Commerce who were on the steering committee, so points of view came in all forms and shapes.

MAKGETLA: So you said that once the VAT had been repealed the VAT Secretariat was reduced to a skeleton staff and went under the IRS. After it was reintroduced, could you explain the process of rehabilitating and expanding the service?

TERKPER: *Once VAT was reintroduced it was given its own budget and placed back under the Ministry of Finance. Then there was a program on the organization side to establish the VAT Service, even before the VAT was introduced, to take over. So with the project gradually changing to a service, more staff was employed. So that's how it's evolved.*

MAKGETLA: Was there any opposition to this organizational change?

TERKPER: *Yes, even internal, because we followed the British tradition where the sales tax has always been under customs and therefore the sales tax before and after the consolidation of the VAT was under customs. Therefore, there were many people who believed strongly that the VAT should be administered by customs, so there was internal opposition, even though there were people who wanted us to follow the examples of other countries and put the VAT under the Internal Revenue Service so that we would have only one domestic tax administration. Which, incidentally, is an element of the reforms that we are about to launch now.*

MAKGETLA: How was that opposition dealt with?

TERKPER: *At seminars you had to explain to some of them that the minister determined the policy and that is where we had to go. But some of the lobbyists never give up so they went to parliament and they challenged us in the Finance Committee so patiently again, we had explain why their point of view was not the way to go so it could be resolved.*

MAKGETLA: Would you say that the final structure was approved because that was what the Minister of Finance wanted? How would you explain that?

TERKPER: *Essentially, yes, but the Minister of Finance had to make a lot of compromises.*

MAKGETLA: Such as?

TERKPER: *The rate, for example. It's never the wish of any Minister of Finance to be forced to introduce a tax that is five percentage points more, but surprisingly we didn't lose revenue, probably because of the better preparation during the second time. We didn't lose revenue even with that low rate. Structurally we won so we established the VAT Service with its own board. So, yes, we won some of the arguments, lost some of the arguments. But on the whole, VAT, like tax administration, is a global practice, and therefore, ultimately what is the best practice prevails. With some, you know, you can't change it too radically.*

MAKGETLA: You mentioned some of the lessons that were learned after the protests and after it was appealed. What were some of the additional lessons that were learned that effected how you behaved differently once the service was established?

TERKPER: *Technically, I would say that we probably became better educators of taxpayers, the public, which is a function of tax administration, because nobody wants to pay tax and you have to educate the public better. Politically, I think I would leave that to the politicians at the time. I think they learned to defend government policy better. But in terms of procedures and systems, we would not change much, because the VAT, as I said, is a credit method that conforms to its own set of rules.*

MAKGETLA: You mentioned that in terms of education of the public, you shifted your weight towards their public education, but was there anything else that you did that you saw as changing how you went about conducting the education drive?

TERKPER: *We didn't cut education. We got better at programming. The better program was not just for people who were going to feel the pinch in paying the tax. Part of the program also lay with people who were to be registered for the VAT, to collect the VAT, and do it correctly.*

For example, what you would perceive to be a very simple process like producing a wrist watch; you bought the band to attach to it from a subcontractor who charged you VAT, and for as long as you were not the final consumer you get a credit or a refund for the VAT on the band when you sell the entire wrist watch. So you don't have to add the cost of the wrist band to your price because you're getting a credit or refund.

This seems simple enough, but we had businesses resisting, who were used to collecting sales tax and would treat it as a cost, because it was not like a regular VAT. Secondly, we had businesses that had terrible experiences with government when it came to refunds and so they were skeptical when they were told that government would give them a refund. They would rather add it to costs recovered and if they get a refund, fine, even though it increased prices. But then once they added it to cost, it increased prices and that affected the whole VAT project.

So these are some of the elements that we had to deal with. It's not just about educating the public but also even taxpayers and accountants and others about the concepts of the VAT.

MAKGETLA: Given the importance of education to the success of the introduction of VAT, did you set yourself any benchmarks or ways to measure the success of your education efforts?

TERKPER: *Yes, the whole VAT plan was benchmarked. We had benchmarks in the six areas that I mentioned. In policy and legislation we knew exactly when we wanted to pass the law. But then we started with drafting the law and you start with getting cabinet approval and you submit it to Parliament and there is a period of debates by the Finance Committee before a debate by the House. So you have to have two or three education programs going with these events. So targeting is very important. While the bill is being drafted you have to do technical education for your staff. While the bill is going through cabinet you have to educate either the entire cabinet or the cabinet's Subcommittee of Finance that would be dealing with the bill. When it goes to parliament, education for key parliamentarians as well as the finance committee and the public is necessary because then it becomes public. You have people grandstanding and saying things which you have to respond to or educate about.*

So the education went through various phases. First, when we were establishing the organization and the tax structure, we had to educate the taxpayers to know that we're in a new office in their locality and they have to go there to register. When setting up systems and procedures, we have to target registered taxpayers and tell them the procedures they have to conform to. Education runs through the whole thing. You have to look at the groups that are affected at various points by your programs.

MAKGETLA: Who was in charge of education?

TERKPER: *We had one of my colleagues on the project in charge of education. But as I said, in the second round, the Ministry of Information and Communications was in charge of the working with this and the public mass education. We also recruited some PR (public relation) people to help us with education.*

MAKGETLA: I'd like to ask you about how you developed the capacity within the VAT project initially and then the VAT Services. Did you face any particular challenges finding individuals with the necessary skills to work at the service?

TERKPER: *No, and the reason is simple. Thanks to the autonomy that was added in '86, we took the revenue agencies out of the civil service. They were relatively better paid and at the first entry point, senior staff were college graduates or were going to be a graduate. And then we had accountants, we had economists and whatever, so staffing wasn't a problem. We had qualified staff. They might not know tax, but they were trainable.*

MAKGETLA: Was this true even after '92, or was '92 when it went under the Ministry of Finance and the staff was still outside the civil service?

TERKPER: *That went as far back as '86, '84, that pre-dated the VAT, under the revenue autonomy plan, autonomous revenue agencies or revenue authorities that you have in many countries.*

MAKGETLA: Did you take efforts to develop the capacity of the staff? Can you describe this?

TERKPER: *Yes, we had a detailed training program for we had the UK Crown Agents send somebody. You know, UK is very strong in VAT. So they brought in a training advisor and we established a whole training department, part of which still exists in the VAT to train all the staff who came in and do it UK representatives working with them. And they were also involved with part of the public education. So we had a very strong training program.*

MAKGETLA: Thank you. As we wrap up, I'd just like to ask you whether you think there's anything within your personal management style or background that helps you to do this work and to implement the reforms in setting up the VAT Service?

TERKPER: *Coming from Princeton, I hate to say that thanks to my Harvard education I had done public administration and I knew I had learned there various perspectives of public administration and policy formulation and so that, in a sense, I was also prepared as a practitioner before going in. I went in mid career, so I had learned quite a lot. I also met a lot of people who had done these things and I met some distinguished lecturers who later became our advisors. So that affected my personal style in the sense of building confidence. But I wasn't still so young back then, when you believe everything is possible.*

Yes, there was a lot that happened and I suppose we became more mature even with the failure to introduce the VAT and then the reintroduction. It was a useful experience. So personal style, I guess, still somehow marks the way you do things. You never take the public for granted in any policy initiative you want to launch. That for me is a lesson in public administration.

MAKGETLA: Thank you very much. This program is designed to help people share their experiences in developing innovations to address the challenges they face in reforms. Is there anything you'd like to add that you think is important in that context?

TERKPER: *Oh, yes, public service has its benefits and challenges. I would encourage anyone who is on the path of public service to think about it carefully and it's worth to make a contribution to the public.*