



# INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

*An initiative of  
the National Academy of Public Administration,  
and the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs  
and the Bobst Center for Peace and Justice,  
Princeton University*

Oral History Program

Series:  
Interview no.:

Civil Service  
Q2

Interviewee: Angelina Muganza

Interviewer: David Hausman

Date of Interview: 10 March 2010

Location: Kigali  
Rwanda

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HAUSMAN: This is David Hausman and I'm here at the Public Service Commission in Kigali, Rwanda on March 10, 2010 with Angelina Muganza, the Executive Secretary of the Public Service Commission. Ms. Muganza, have you agreed to be recorded for this interview?

MUGANZA: Yes, I have.

HAUSMAN: Great, thanks so much. I wanted to start by asking you about your career and about the jobs that you had that led you to your current position here at the commission.

MUGANZA: *Thank you very much David. As you said my name is Angelina Muganza, I'm the Executive Secretary for the Public Service Commission. This week I'm in this post for two years. Before then, I was a Minister of State in charge of Labor and I did that job for about five years. My responsibilities then were to look at the labor laws, to look at issues of policy in promoting employment in Rwanda. Given the fact that still some of our people are illiterate we have about 50% of our population who are illiterate you found that most of them were agricultural workers and you know we have limited land in Rwanda, so my major concern was to put in place policies and programs that promote employment particularly for the youth and women. Also including fighting child labor because in poor communities the tendency is to have children work for money, for little money. And that does not only affect their health but also affects their growth and their education. So that was one of the programs I spearheaded in the Ministry of Public Service and Labor.*

*The labor issues also included working with trade unions, labor inspectorate ensuring that security in the workplace is taken care of so that people can work in comfortable places, clean places, safe places. So I did that for about five years as I said.*

HAUSMAN: And where you involved in the retrenchment efforts that took place during that time?

MUGANZA: *Yes, I was involved with the retrenchment that took place in 2006 but as I said, I was Minister of State in charge of labor so there was a minister, Professor (Nshuti) Manasseh, whom you met, and prior to him another minister who were directly responsible for the organization of the Public Service. And one of the issues they dealt with was the retrenchments. Of course, we had to talk to the trade unions particularly because they thought that retrenchment was going to have a negative impact on the workers and I took a lead to talk with the trade unions.*

*They though people were going to be thrown on the streets, this is what they said. But actually, the government had the concern that the public service must be an efficient institution. Not an institution that recruits everybody who comes regardless of numbers and capacities but have people who fit well in the specific positions and who can be paid better salaries. After the retrenchment less staff remained, probably one third, their salaries were increased. For example the lower cadres who were earning about 50,000 Rwandan francs, their salaries were increased to about 100,000 Rwandan francs, sometimes increased to four times, and the fears of the trade unions were not correct because those who were retrenched were helped go to back to school. Many of them went to the universities under government funding, others went into development projects and they were given loans and a government guarantee and the others started their small business.*

*There was a good example of government drivers—one of the reforms the government did was to remove the government vehicles. We went to zero fleet policy and all the government vehicles were sold except very few operational vehicles and that meant also the drivers had to be retrenched. And the drivers formed taxi cooperatives and many of them were saying wow if you gave me a job back in the government, I wouldn't come because now I am the boss of myself.*

*So there was a lot of benefit for the government and for the workers as well — those who stayed and those who left. Those who stayed got better remuneration and their jobs were more defined. And those who left went back to the universities, they went into development projects, they formed cooperatives so there was really double benefit on both sides.*

HAUSMAN: Can you say more about how the negotiations with the union worked? Did you—how did you start, start to address their fears?

MUGANZA: *Okay normally what we did, we have in Rwanda a tripartite forum, and the tripartite forum includes government representatives, worker's representatives and employer's representatives. So the practice has always been in the spirit of good governance that before a policy is put in place, before laws are put in place that affect the workers, the Labor Ministry invites the two sides, the workers' representatives and the employers' representatives. So this is what we did, we invited them and we shared with them the government reform program. And so questions came up, so we tried to answer questions but you could see that initially they really didn't want this to take place, so we had a series of meetings, we had a series of radio programs so we debated on the radio.*

*In 2006, around Labor Day we went on TV (television) and radio and we debated and people were calling in and the Trade Unions were showing their concerns and the government was showing how it cares for all citizens. So in promoting employment the government showed that actually we cannot promote employment by having so many people within the civil service paid so little, but we would rather have a lean civil service that is effective and efficient and then the others are helped to go to school or helped to get into the private sector.*

*So there were a series of discussions both one to one and on television, on radio, in meetings and when it happened it was the civil servants themselves that were giving testimonies, they were very happy with this program.*

*Yes, so I think it had its own challenges—one of the challenges was the limited funding for this program because almost everybody now wanted to go into business but there was limited funding for all the people who had small and medium projects.*

HAUSMAN: And do you remember was there any particular moment when you began to persuade the unions and the civil servants that this was going to be good for them or were there any particular concessions that you made to the unions during the process of consultation?

MUGANZA: *Yes I was—the whole spirit of the tripartism is to dialogue. So in dialogue you try to persuade people to understand the other side and convince them that actually the government had the all the citizens at heart, it wasn't a government that was going to make people suffer. So I think during this dialogue there was a lot of convincing. Because they came from the point of view that this was going to have*

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*negative effects. So yes, I think I did the convincing but this is a convincing one to one.*

HAUSMAN: Are there any, you know, anecdotes, or particular moments that you remember of convincing people?

MUGANZA: *Yes, there was one time we invited the Executive Secretary of the Trade Union in the Minister's office because there had been an incident where the trade unions walked out and we didn't want this to be like that because there was, yes, there was a need to dialog. So we had a meeting in the Minister's office then with the Executive Secretary of one of the big trade unions.*

HAUSMAN: And programs like this are typically very expensive with the severance packages or in this case loans and scholarships provided. Where did the financing come from for this?

MUGANZA: *This was financed by the government, I don't, know how much was spent. Actually what I didn't say was that for every staff who was retrenched she/he was paid two third of his/ her six month salary. So it means somebody had six months while getting two third of his/her salary. So the funding of the two-thirds of their salaries, funding going back to universities, the guarantee fund came from the government budget. I don't know how much it is, maybe the details you can get from the Minister of Public Service and Labor. But the government had to invest in this, it wasn't like it's money to be thrown, it was an investment both to make the civil service better and to support the retrenched staff to be better workers in the future.*

HAUSMAN: Great. Let me ask you now about the Public Service Commission.

MUGANZA: *No, I think, let me tell you something. Before then—*

HAUSMAN: Okay.

MUGANZA: *Since you asked me my career, before then I was a Minister for Gender and Women Development that is from 1999 to 2002. I think this was a great reform also in our country, it's not a civil service reform as such, but it was a reform of recognizing women's participation in the development of the country and recognizing also that they have equal rights. Women have equal rights as citizens.*

*So my role in that ministry was to put in place institutions that promote women participation, to reform the laws particularly the inheritance law. A law that allows women to inherit from their parents and from their spouse. Before then in Rwanda, customary and later on in the laws of Rwanda, women would never, inherit from their parents. Just imagine you have one daughter, two daughters, three daughters, four daughters and you are a millionaire, you would never pass your property to your daughters. It would go to their cousins, your nephews so that's a big reform in this country.*

HAUSMAN: When you were in that job did some of the reforms you did there affect hiring practices in the civil service in terms of gender?

MUGANZA: *Not so much. There were fewer educated women by then and on the other hand, you want the civil service to be very professional, so you do not hire people on quota like they may have 50/50 percent men and women. So the civil service goes through a rigorous competition, recruitment competition. And in that case,*

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*you take the winner, you take the winner because you must go by merit, you must be fair, and you must be objective.*

*So in that case you find that we get fewer and fewer women as we go up the ladder. Yes if you are looking for a secretary most likely you are going to get women, if you are looking for accountants, cashiers you will get women, maybe 50/50 but as you go up and you are looking for scientists, you are looking for directors, you are looking for researchers you get more men. But because we are aware of that the government took a decision that if two candidates have equal marks and one is a women and another one is a man, the woman is given the preference.*

HAUSMAN: Great. So now, let me ask you about the Public Service Commission. Can you describe what the central issues and challenges facing the commission were when you became Executive Secretary two years ago?

MUGANZA: *Well the biggest challenge was that there was no commission. It was the beginning when I became the Executive Secretary; my biggest challenge was to start the Public Service Commission. It was a new institution, it's still a new institution, two years old now and the three major objectives of the commission, one is to make sure the government gets personnel who are recruited based on merit as I've just said, in an objective manner and well understood by everybody. That had its own challenges.*

*One big challenge was that before 1994 with all the divisive politics of this country, it was so acceptable that recruitment was being done based on who knows who or where one comes from or whose son or daughter one is. And after 1994, after the genocide, the reforms that came into this country included the reforms of good governance, economic reforms and one of them was the establishment of the Public Service Commission. It took time, the Constitution of 2003, Rwandan came up and voted the constitution in a referendum, and Article 81 mentions the Public Service Commission. So that means the Rwandans wanted the Public Service Commission to come in the constitution, not just in any other law. Later on, the law that governs how the Commission functions was put in place in 2007. So the biggest challenge was the mindset, people were so much used that you get a job because somebody knows you, not because of your competence. So that was one big challenge.*

*The second goes with the fact that it is a new institution so we had to do things right, we had to explain what we were doing so that gradually, hopefully fast, people understand that this is a very fair commission that recruits based on merit and without any bias whatsoever. Two years down the road, I don't think everybody believes what I'm saying, but I know that the leadership of this country does. Yes, because I do not get any influence from anybody of who should be in which position.*

*People are looking for jobs, they try to call some of our staff. They come here but what we do, we explain to them. So if you call us saying "I've applied for a job, can you help me?" our role is to tell them how we do it. And often we hold meetings, we have radio programs; we have conferences, trainings to explain what we do. So that's a major challenge because when you are doing a job you always want people to believe what you are doing.*

HAUSMAN: And how did recruitment work just before the commission was established, so in 2005, 2006?

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**MUGANZA:** *From 1995 recruitment was being done by the Ministry in charge of Public Service and Labor and what the Ministry did was to supervise how other institutions were recruiting their own staff. And of course, the Ministry made sure that it is also done fairly and on merit but the fact is that it was so much decentralized and many people still had their mentalities. So I wouldn't say it was done perfectly well that's why the Public Service Commission's establishment was a major concern. So that there is one central agent that does the recruitment, that's how we started. Although gradually we are doing oversight but still the standardization is, much focused and clearer than it was before.*

**HAUSMAN:** Can you describe a little more how recruitments used to work and what sorts of—was there a large range in how well recruitment processes worked in ministries before the establishment of the commission?

**MUGANZA:** *Yes, I wouldn't be very specific here but there were many complaints from the candidates themselves. So, for example, the issue of advertising, adverts must be clear, must be known by everybody, and must stay for a quite sometime so that people respond. But there were cases where posts were not advertised. Of course people would come but if there is no advert then you are not sure whether the people who have come are the right people.*

*Then setting of written exam and oral interview was done within the institution and not always supervised so the idea of checks and balances was not always in all the institutions. Often you'd find there are complaints that, "oh I was number one but I was not given the job." And often it comes some excuses from the, from the examiners. But we believe and we insisted later on that number one should be given the job unless you find maybe the references are telling you something contrary about his behavior or his action in his previous job.*

*So there were different things that people complained about.*

**HAUSMAN:** And when you first came here and you were about to begin setting up the commission, was there an effort to sit down and plan the process of establishing the commission?

**MUGANZA:** *Yes, when the commission was given its leadership, by the way the leadership of the commission is the Board of Commissioners, we have seven Board of Commissioners who are not civil servants, who are private, who do not seek jobs in the civil service. So when the commission was established I worked with them, with the support of the Minister of Public Service and Labor who were there then and being the policy ministry and we had support from a project that was within the Ministry of Public Service and Labor, funded by DFID (Department for International Development).*

*So we sat down and came up with a plan of action for 2008 because the commission was established in March and we started operating in May. So we had a plan for 2008, which was our first plan.*

**HAUSMAN:** And were would you say the impetus for the formation of the commission came from within the government? Did it come from the ministry; did it come from the presidency?

**MUGANZA:** *I would say it came from the leadership of this country. There were discussions in the country under the leadership of the government to look at where we are taking our country. And this is how different programs came up, programs of justice, programs of good governance, economic programs, establishment of*

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*offices like the Rwanda Revenue Authority, the Auditor General, the Ombudsman.*

HAUSMAN: And then did you introduce the new recruitment policies all at one time or was there an effort to phase them in gradually?

MUGANZA: *You know in 2004, actually, there was a Presidential Decree on how recruitment should be done. So by the establishment of the commission we didn't start from zero, we started from this order and the—our role was to make it real, to make it actual.*

*Of course there are some other things that were introduced, for example, when you hire an accountant maybe you have 50 applicants, maybe of those 50, ten will pass, will get the mark, the expected mark over 70%. But normally you hire only one person because this is the person you are looking for. So in the past it would be like that, you hire the best but the remaining nine are thrown away because the hiring was taking place in different institutions. If you find that you have ten successful accountants, one is hired but nine are put in a databank so when another institution applies—writes to us we don't advertise this post because we have one to give to this institution in our databank.*

*So, this is a good way in a sense that it saves the government money because you do not advertise every kind of post when you have successful candidates on one side. But also saves people from being frustrated because if you have done an interview and you are successful you do not go applying again and again because there is another advert that is looking for the same profile.*

*So gradually we see some innovations, which are not against the law at all and we, we use them.*

HAUSMAN: And can you describe the new system of recruitment?

MUGANZA: *Okay.*

HAUSMAN: Just fairly basically.

MUGANZA: *Okay its like this, I think the government has about 200 institutions these include the Central Government , the local Government and government Agencies and Commissions. So all those except the districts when they have a vacant post, they write to the Public Service Commission to advertise this post and they copy to the Ministry of Public Service and Labor. Why do they copy to the Ministry of Public Service and Labor, it's the Ministry of Public Service and Labor that is a custodian of the organogram. So the Ministry of Public Service and Labor is copied on this letter so that they can check that you are not creating new posts.*

*So when we receive this letter, we advertise this post in two newspapers here which are commonly read, that's the New Times and the Imvaho Nshya, Imvaho Nshya is the Kinyarwanda newspaper. But we also post this on some websites, unfortunately, we don't have a website yet but we put it on the website of Rwanda Workforce Development Authority. We put it on the MINEFFET (Rwanda Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation) diaspora website to encourage Rwandans who are in diaspora who may want to come home to apply. And this takes fifteen days but in this advert, we tell them what to annex to application letters.*

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*Then after that the institution which has received these applications will do short listing and short listing is basically to see whether the applicant actually fulfills what was given in the job profile.*

HAUSMAN: And the short listing is done by each individual institution?

MUGANZA: *By each individual institution but we have staff of the Public Service Commission allocated to the institutions.*

HAUSMAN: Great and can you describe what it was like instituting these changes for the first time? So how did you communicate to ministries the changes and get them to follow the new procedure?

MUGANZA: *Okay when the commission was put in place in 2008 the first person to write was the minister in charge of public service. He wrote to all government institutions reminding them or telling them that from now on they should not do their own recruitment unless delegated by the Public Service Commission because that's their duty. Actually now even these ones who are doing recruitment we delegated them, we should be doing it ourselves.*

*So the minister sent this letter to all government institution as a hardcopy, it was passed over the radio and TV. Then like a month later, we also sent another one because we realized that not everybody was informed. Then later on, we had radio programs like I said but last year, 2009 was a very hectic year, we started in March and we had a meeting at national level then we moved it to all districts. We moved to all provinces but in every province, including Kigali, five of them all the personnel, the human resource managers and the Executive Secretaries of the districts participated. The whole—one of the biggest objectives was to tell people how recruitment is done. And to assure them that that is the best way to do it, good for them too.*

HAUSMAN: And before this happened, did you have problems with cooperation from ministries and agencies?

MUGANZA: *No, when the minister passed over this—it was so easy because once the ministers understand it and this is something that was discussed in Cabinet. The ministers were the first people to know that the roles have changed. The first institutions we hired for was the Prime Minister's office. The Ministries of Youth, East African Community, Ministry of Cabinet Affairs — those were new. So it was easy for them, it was difficult for agencies because agencies tend to think they're autonomous but still they are governed by the law of civil servants. So those ones we had meetings with them, we went to the districts. It's never difficult to pass over the information in Rwanda.*

HAUSMAN: Why not, is there anything in particular about Rwanda that makes it easier?

MUGANZA: *Yes, yes it's so easy. One it is a small country, two we speak the same language, so you don't have to translate into 90 or 100, 400 languages like it is in other countries.*

HAUSMAN: And was there not resistance to new regulations from people who had been recruiting their friends?

MUGANZA: *I guess there was, but you know the resistance once it doesn't come up, you don't care and it couldn't come up because it was not justified.*

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HAUSMAN: But were there not people—

MUGANZA: *But there were so much, there was so much excitement from the job seekers, from the workers they were very happy.*

HAUSMAN: And there weren't, there weren't examples where people tried to subvert the process?

MUGANZA: *Yes you know they could, they could do it differently. They would say "but is the Public Service Commission able to recruit everybody?, But do you have all the skills, can you hire doctors and nurses and teachers and agriculturist?" There were questions like those, but of course the answers were there. No institution has all the competence but you look for it.*

*Then of course, there were some concerns — "the Public Service Commission is getting late" and actually when we started we were getting late, we were delaying like taking two months before an institution gets staff because we had not gotten our own staff. Yes there were such complaints, which were correct but often which were like saying why don't we, why don't we do away with it, it's creating problems.*

HAUSMAN: And are there still some delays in the process?

MUGANZA: *No, not now. It's very quick.*

HAUSMAN: So how long does the process take from beginning to end?

MUGANZA: *The process from beginning to end actually can take like even two months, but even those who were saying it was taking too long often it was within the limits. They couldn't take shorter, but we are revising the law, we are revising the Presidential order so that recruitment takes shorter than that.*

HAUSMAN: And you mentioned that districts don't send you letters when they have vacancies are you involved at all with recruitments for districts or no?

MUGANZA: *No, no but this one we have delegated the districts to do that for the time being. And our fears weren't high because there are District Councils. So District Councils—at the district level the recruitment goes through the same process, the executive does the advertisement, the interviews written and the oral are given but there is approval by District Council and then approval by the Governor. So in a way we realize that there are still—the decentralization law put in place some checks and balances so we say since we are starting let's start with central government, delegate to the districts to continue the way they have been doing it but give us a report.*

*By the way, all the process, be it district or national ministries, agencies, it all leaves room for appeal. If a candidate or candidates feel that they do not or they were not fairly treated they appeal to the commission.*

HAUSMAN: So even from a local level, they can appeal to you?

MUGANZA: *They can appeal to the commission, yes and if an appeal is lodged then the commission follows it up from beginning to end.*

HAUSMAN: And even though it's decentralized is the procedure for recruitment at the local level similar to the one that you follow?

- MUGANZA: *Yes because the Presidential Order is for all —civil servants and they are governed by what we call the General Statute of Civil Servants of Rwanda.*
- HAUSMAN: And I was told that the Rwanda Association of Local Government Authorities manages some of the recruitment for local governments?
- MUGANZA: *Rwanda Association of Local Government Authorities can be contracted to do the recruitment*
- HAUSMAN: Do you work together with them at all?
- MUGANZA: *No, we have exchanged letters and we've discussed but RALGA, Rwanda Association of Local government is hired. A district has a choice to give the job to RALGA or not but they realize—I was told that they realize that RALGA is well conversant with local government and they are cheaper. So often they are given that and the report we got from districts shows also what RALGA went through and we have the right to question anything.*
- HAUSMAN: So do you get a report on each appointment made at the district level?
- MUGANZA: *We get a recruitment report from each district but we have questions, actually we are dealing with—we want to meet the relevant ministries to see at what time does the report come to us. I realize that the report comes to us after recruitment, hiring is complete, but I want see if we can change that so that the report comes after the interviews are completed but before the successful candidates are hired.*
- HAUSMAN: Great well one last more general question. If you were giving, advice to someone else setting up a Public Service Commission elsewhere what are the things you might advise them about or warn them about before they started.
- MUGANZA: *I think I would advise them to go progressively. Progressive in the sense like deal with specific, certain institutions first and let everybody know who are the first ones, who are the second one, who are the third ones. Of course, it has its own risks that meanwhile the institution is the place but some malpractices might continue somewhere else.*
- Yes, the second advice I would give them would be to have maybe more board members. We have seven but I think it's important to have more board members and maybe apportion them some responsibilities, yes. We've talked about recruitment but you have also the appeal, the appeal can come from recruitment but from management of civil servants also that is unfair. So I would propose more board members. I have seen this in South Africa they have more board members and I think they have like twelve. In South African there are even some responsible for provinces, yes maybe we are a small country of course we are not like South Africa but maybe to be some responsibility to provinces.*
- HAUSMAN: What were some of the problems with implementing it so quickly and across the board here in Rwanda?
- MUGANZA: *There wasn't a problem. It was was sort of hectic. Of course, it came into place also when you were doing reforms. So when you are doing reforms there's a lot of work.*

HAUSMAN: Great well thanks so much. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

*MUGANZA: No, I don't think there's much. I thank you so much for the interest you've had in this subject and in Rwanda and we hope that this is going to be useful to other countries particularly those that are emerging from difficulties like we did in Rwanda.*

HAUSMAN: All right thank you.

*MUGANZA: You're welcome David.*