10. TRANSFERRING SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION EXPERIENCES

The panel:

- Mr A. A. Adamson, Head of the Civil Service and Secretary to the Cabinet, Zambia
- Professor Adebayo Adediji, Executive Director, African Centre for Development and Strategic Studies, Nigeria
- Ms Huguette Labelle*, President, Canadian International Development Agency
- Mr Kevin Sparkhall, Principal Adviser, Government and Institutions Department, Overseas Development Administration, UK
- Dr Mohan Kaul, Director, Management and Training Services Division, Commonwealth Secretariat (Chairperson)

The very lively discussion which followed the presentations highlighted the tensions between two sets of observable facts, but suggested the outline of a way forward.

On the one hand, there is an identifiable international movement of ideas in relation to the structures and functions of the public sector. Some elements of a new consensus are in place and remarkably similar developments can be seen in very diverse settings.

On the other hand, there is some fear that public sector reform is over-described but under-evaluated, particularly in relation to developing countries. At its worst, there is a concern that a standard "bag of tricks" is being applied in any situation and that, for example, its contents owe more to the imperatives facing OECD countries than to the realities in Africa. This point connects closely with a second concern, that insufficient attention has been paid to developing public sector management frameworks which address the particular public sector realities found in developing countries. In the absence of such grounded proposals for reform, less appropriate models move in to fill the conceptual vacuum.

This last point was well expressed in discussion when it was noted that the many references to external ideas unfairly imposed upon developing countries obscured a somewhat more subtle problem. Situations were described when, in discussions with donors, officials from developing countries had themselves voluntarily bought

* A paper by Ms Labelle was not available.

in to proposals for reform which they subsequently accepted were inappropriate. The officials had not been browbeaten in any obvious way – they had simply been unable to supply an alternative conceptual model and in the absence of appropriate frameworks for reform an inappropriate one was seen as better than none.

The bare bones of a way forward were suggested by panellists and conference participants when they welcomed moves towards collaboration at ground level. Where – and only where – they can be built around an area of demonstrable success, strategic alliances between professionals or organisations in two or more developing countries, with some input from developed countries, might provide more appropriate models than those which suggest that developed country frameworks for reform can simply be tailored to fit other situations. Such collaboration between professionals and organisations facing similar challenges, harnessing success, offers the opportunity for some practical ways forward particularly in reforming public sector management and will be facilitated by the networks which are emerging from the establishment of CAPAM.

The challenge beyond remains that of establishing how such focused co-operation might assist in addressing the larger questions of constitutional and political reform. Put starkly, unless some relationship is defined between reforming public sector management and strengthening national institutions and political structures, neo-colonialism cannot be distinguished from practical assistance and the development of indigenous solutions cannot be distinguished from self-interested resistance to change.

CAPAM will make a further contribution to addressing the question of what actually works in reforming the public sector at its 1996 Conference in Malta.

Transferring successful transition experiences (Zambia)

Edited extracts from a presentation by Mr A. A. Adamson, Secretary to the Cabinet and Head of the Zambian Public Service

In my long career in Government, I have witnessed and, to a large extent, been part of several transitions. Among these transitions, the major ones are:

- the transition from a colonial government to a national government;
- the transition from a multi-party system of government to a one-party system which was committed to socialist/humanist principles of governance, and
- most recently, the transition from a one-party system to a multi-party system that is based on the principles of a free-market system.

Prior to independence on 24 October 1964, Zambia, like all other colonised countries in Africa, was administered by a foreign-dominated colonial Government. As a young man, I worked in the British Colonial Civil Service in the then Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, two neighbouring countries which are today called Zambia and Malawi respectively. Based on my experience during the colonial era, Government was characterised by rigidity in the provision of services to the African population.

The Government basically existed to serve the economic interests of the colonial power while little attention was devoted to the improvement of the quality of life of the indigenous population. Even more important to the Colonial Government was the preservation of law and order, especially in the face of mounting anti-colonial activities by the nationalist movements.

In accordance with the general ethos of the time, the civil servant was, first and foremost, the custodian of law and order. In this regard, a civil servant's loyalty to the Government of the day was determined by his or her ability to impose on the people stipulated regulations that suppressed any form of disorder in the community. In addition, the civil servant was considered as an administrator whose prime responsibility was to ensure that rules and regulations were strictly followed in all aspects of civil life while providing few developmental services. Notwithstanding the moral impropriety of colonial administration, the Government was effective and efficient in fulfilling its obligations.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, I was part of a tumultuous, although relatively peaceful, transition to political freedom and self-governance in Zambia. At the time of independence, the country inherited on the one hand a healthy

infrastructure, bountiful Treasury and relatively strong economy on which to ride the wave of a newly-independent nation. On the other hand, the number of Zambians capable of organising the country's affairs, managing its Government services and sustaining its industrial and agricultural base was extremely small.

The new Government's immediate obligation was, therefore, to put in place ambitious programmes for training Zambians to administer the affairs of the country and improve the standard of living of its population.

Alongside this new post-colonial development, attempts were also made to remodel the Government structure to suit the political and economic aspirations of the newly-independent country.

These reforms had their successes and failures and in the course of time many new changes were made in the structure of Government, mainly to support an increasingly strong political framework in the country. It is for this reason that when Zambia became a one-party state, Government became more committed to mobilising people to support the one and only political party than providing an enabling environment for self-sustaining economic development.

At this time, the Government and especially the Civil Service, became highly centralised and politicised. The resulting effect was a significant decline in the efficiency and effectiveness of Government in pursuing economic development programmes.

During this era, it was expected that the civil servant would be partisan through active participation in implementing political programmes of what was then called the "Party and its Government", rather than operate as an agent for economic development.

Most recently, in November, 1991, the third and perhaps most significant socio-political transition took place of which I was a participant. At this stage multi-party elections were held which ushered in the Third Republic. A new era of structural adjustment programmes based on the principles of a free-market system came into being involving the dismantling of a state-owned and operated economy based on socialist/humanist principles of governance.

The biggest challenge facing the present Government is the task of revamping the Public Service machinery to provide a conducive environment for involving the private sector as the key participant in promoting economic development in the country.

As Head of the Zambian Public Service, I recognise the biggest challenge as being that of moulding a non-partisan Civil Service that is operated by managers rather than administrators or political patriots. The civil servant in our current

environment must effectively and efficiently manage a whole range of resources and must manage the change process towards the realisation of a highly productive, receptive and responsive Civil Service.

To assist us in achieving this objective, we have developed and installed a Public Service Reform Programme (PSRP), whose overall goal is to improve the quality, efficiency, delivery and cost-effectiveness of public services to the people of Zambia.

In each of the areas I have referred to above, I have witnessed and participated in successful and unsuccessful transition experiences, both for individuals and organisations, which in my view possess some fundamental attributes that make them transferable to another era or environment.

Zambia's problems have been in some degree of her own making because basically there has been much incompetence in public administration and management. As an example of a developing country, Zambia, in its successes, its tribulations and its failures, is an almost textbook model for study by public administrators, economists and political scientists. This may sound daunting, but the story of Zambia's 30 years of independence has also been shot through with human drama and excitement.

Transferring successful transition experiences (Africa)

Edited extracts from a presentation by Professor Adebayo Adedeji, Executive Director, African Centre for Development and Strategic Studies, Nigeria

The collapse of the centrally-planned economies and the disintegration of the former socialist block of Eastern Europe, along with the victory won by centrifugal forces in the former USSR, were so dramatic and traumatic that Fukuyama thought we were at the end of history. In reality, the process through which the people of these countries are seeking viable political and economic systems is unfolding with ever greater complications and complexity. The formula of parliamentary democracy plus marketisation as a straightforward and peaceful alternative to the one-party state plus a command economy has become dented on all sides. Democracy and tolerance do not necessarily and automatically succeed an authoritarian system; there is also the real possibility of a transition to fascism, sheer farces and violent ethnicism. Neither does dogmatic marketisation lead *per se* to maximising efficiency, let alone to social optima; as we painfully and abundantly know through the African experience. Proclaimed blind belief in market forces is often only the ideological companion of a very un-free, market-like power brokerage at global level with devastating and long-term effects on the socio-economic infrastructure and on people's welfare and lives.

Before discussing what might be termed "transitions" in Africa, we should bear in mind the limits in comparability between these "Third World" countries and "Second-World" countries of Eastern Europe. The "Third World" African countries are typified by structurally-vulnerable economies with a large dependence on the primary sector and low development of human resources, a low level of social and political organisation, only very recent and *ab initio* flawed conditions for nation-building, colonially-inherited civil service structures which are not capable of responding to development needs. While the "Second World" Eastern European countries have a fairly well-developed secondary sector and infrastructure, a high degree of industrial organisation, long traditions of attempting, albeit often not succeeding in, nation-building, government apparatus which, even though often paralysed by over-bureaucratisation, have been able to promote science and technology and have developed one of the best educational and health systems in the world.

A note of warning is therefore called for concerning the possibility of globalising and universalising the experiences of particular societies. Since societies and peoples are bound by history and culture, institutions differ considerably in their responses to impulses, both internal and external. Inevitably, social and political phenomena are unique. It is therefore important that we avoid all attempts to extrapolate to African and Asian countries the road which has been taken in Eastern Europe – even more so as the experiences there are far from being

successful. Russia has just made the remarkable transition from having a poverty level below 50 per cent of the population to one above the same figure.

In this context, we must draw lessons from four decades of attempts by development economists and other social scientists from industrialised market economies, including many of those responsible in the donor community for external assistance, to impose on Third World countries their own countries' and societies' particular experiences. As we know full well, this natural human behaviour to assume that what works at home must ipso facto work abroad, and of seeing other societies in the image of our own, has brought untold socio-economic disasters to developing countries. While exchanges of experience are valuable and necessary and while transfer of truly successful ones are to be encouraged, careful selection is imperative – even among countries of the South. Experience in one such country cannot be replicated in another, even though both may, on the face of it, display quite a number of similar characteristics of a historical, political and cultural nature. Just the same, in Africa, given its size and heterogeneous nature, replication and transfer must be handled with care and good judgement.

The term "transition" seems to have been coined in order to distinguish changes, such as the ones which occurred in the torment in the USSR, from revolutions. It indicates that a higher than common degree of political and economic re-engineering is taking place and that the momentum, which may initially have emanated from social pressure – be it in the form of mass protest or, as in the case of the United States in the early 1980s, the grumblings of the contented (Galbraith) – has been absorbed, and was absorbable, by the government and quasi-institutionalised political players. Transitions are therefore in the realm of the quantitative rather than the qualitative.

In the following, I am presuming that this forum can agree on the desirable goals to be achieved through transitions. For Africa, they can easily be spelled out at this stage: the reduction of poverty on a sustainable basis and the creation of conditions which can lead to a more equitable distribution – across gender, religious and ethnic lines – of income and wealth as prerequisites to stability and development.

The issue is then, how can African countries, governments and peoples achieve transitions which succeed? Given the fact that the "governments of the day" are to engineer such transitions, what is the likelihood of a successful outcome? What are the relationships between and among social/political/economic forces on the continent?

The following factors are crucial:

- social, economic and political conditions must be susceptible to reform;

- the main players must have become wise enough to recognise that their interests are ultimately better served through compromise than through confrontation;

- the main players must all be in a position of relative strength, some ascending some descending, where they are able to give and take;

- hegemony must be relatively absent, either by internal or external forces, be it in the form of a military ready at any point to use force to stay in power if the civilian surrogates deviate unduly or be it in the form of international financial institutions using the leverage of creditors to define the perimeters of change; and

- a responsive civil service and state structures, which can transmit signals in both directions, must exist or rapidly emerge.

Transitions can encompass one or more of the following:
(i) democratic and political transition;
(ii) creating or recreating a strong and effective civil society;
(iii) economic transition; and
(iv) transition in governance and administration and management.

There can be no doubt that well before the political systems in the former COMECON countries collapsed, prolonged popular struggle and an increased degree of organisation within civil society had spread in Africa. Examples are the recurrent student and workers protests against cuts in allowances and economic retrenchment which invariably implied a political dimension, especially as repression was part of governments' response. Yet, the awakening of civil society and the assumption of wider political space by its organisations had a very chequered history across the continent. Even though the transition to a government in South Africa under the leadership of Nelson Mandela, the symbolic figure in Africa's fight for freedom, has during the first two months not been as rocky as many had feared, the sustainability of change will require an even higher degree of commitment and circumspection than was needed during the days of open struggle. In other African countries, the mood, as compared to the early 1990s, is considerably more mooted: a number of horrendous failures have turned maybe naive euphoria into desperation and despondence.

Let us consider for a moment how a selection of 16 African countries, jointly representing almost two-thirds of Africa's total population and some of its most important economies, have fared since the late 1980s/early 1990s with transitions towards more democratic, transparent and representative systems (the figures in brackets are the populations in millions for 1992):

In North Africa, *Algeria's* (26.4 million) transition to a multi-party system was abruptly halted when the second round of elections was cancelled in 1992 in order to prevent the pending victory of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). Since then, Algeria has been moving towards a quasi-civil war situation with almost daily violence by the State and the opposition. Severe human rights violations have been reported on both sides. Instead of transiting from a one-party-State to a multi-party system, Algeria might be in a transition towards a non-secular State.

The transition of the *Sudan* (26.7 million) towards an Islamic state proclaimed by the Government in Khartoum (military-dominated) has engulfed the country in a civil war with Southern rebel factions. No negotiated settlement of the conflict is currently in sight. Terrible war induced suffering and the death of hundreds of thousands have been the result.

In West Africa, *Benin's* transition (4.9 million) from a military to a multi-party system has gone ahead and led to the election of President Soglo and conditions of relative political stability, even though the economic situation is highly precarious.

In *Cote d'Ivoire* (12.9 million) the country has made a so far successful political transition from the reign of Houphouet-Boigny to a new generation of political leaders. With the prices for the country's export commodities falling in the course of the last few years, the economic situation remains volatile, albeit with brighter prospects than comparable countries which suffered from the recent CFA devaluation.

Ghana's transition (16.0 million) has been, at least on the political surface, considered successful, in spite of opposition claims about gross voting irregularities. The former Head of the military Government has become the elected President. Economic reforms have had similar marginalising effects as in other African countries which had to undergo structural adjustment programmes. Ethnic clashes have led to the death of over a thousand people and a state of emergency remains in effect in the affected areas.

In *Nigeria* (115.9 million), inspired by the military, one of the longest transition programmes anywhere has, after several delays, come to an abrupt end through the annulment of the results of the Presidential election of 1993. Against a drop in the price of oil, severe misdirection of resources and mismanagement of the economy, Nigeria has transited from a budding slowly industrialising country to a state of economic apathy and political paralysis. Civil society is, however, reaffirming itself vis-a-vis the State in an attempt to effect the transition from military to civilian rule.

In *Senegal* (7.8 million) the recent political elections were accompanied by outbreaks of violence and resulted in the arrest of the prime opposition leader.

Economically, Senegal cannot cope with the provisions under the Structural Adjustment Programme and is suffering from a much paralysed economy.

In Central Africa, in *Burundi* (5.8 million) and *Rwanda* (7.5 million) the Hutu/Tutsi internecine, inter-ethnic conflicts have resurfaced with all their savagery once again. The attempted transitions to a pluralistic political system with governments representing a national consensus have been aborted. Least-developed, land-locked and overpopulated the struggle for scarce resources can only be addressed in the context of a wider regional solution and the acceptance by the elites of the two ethnic groups to co-operate, including effective civilian control over the armed forces which have turned themselves into instruments of destabilisation and instruments of "ethnic cleansing" and brutality.

Cameroon (12.2 million) has suffered a grievous set-back since President Ahidjo's death The successor Government has not been able to temper centrifugal tendencies. The half-hearted attempt at political transition was abandoned in the face of the inescapable defeat of the Government in power and has led to a protracted period of political instability and economic decline in a country which was once the flag-bearer of steady economic progress and an above-average management of the economy. The Cameroon case epitomises the crucial role of leadership.

This is also the case, albeit in a more dramatic and macabre manner, in *Zaire* (40.0 million) where the leadership has taken the transition to multi-partyism from the sublime to the ridiculous by sponsoring scores of "political parties" and frustrating the National Conference at every turn. As a result, Zaire can boast of two prime ministers and governments, one appointed and financed by Mobutu, and the other elected by the sovereign National Conference with no access to the machinery of public administration and, needless to add, public finance.

In East Africa, *Kenya* (25.3 million) is going through an uneasy transition programme due to lack of unity among the opposition parties each of whose leaders would like to be President of the Republic. As a result, no change in leadership has materialised from the last elections. However, a re-invigorated civil society has emerged and political re-alignment and coalition-building seems possible.

The transition in *Tanzania* (27.9 million) has yet to pass through a decisive test. The next general election will provide such an opportunity. In the meantime, the unity of the country, specifically the link between the former Tanganyika and Zanzibar has been put into question. And in a country, which had since independence been devoid of ethnic and religious schisms, is joining other countries in Africa in this unfortunate and unproductive battle.

Uganda (18.7 million), the third of the trio of the former East African Community countries, provides a breath of fresh air after more than a decade of political

instability, near-total destruction and untold human suffering. The present political leadership seems to have found a formula for increasing the participation of the Ugandan people in political and economic development without mimicking the Western political model.

In Southern Africa, and indeed throughout Africa, the transition in *South Africa* (39.9 million) from apartheid to a non-racial political system is the most significant so far. The successful conduct of the first-ever non-racial elections held in which all parties, including Inkhata, participated was a feather in the cap of the leadership in the Republic of South Africa. Yet, horrendous challenges face the Government of National Reconciliation under the presidency of Nelson Mandela and it may be fundamental transformation of the socio-economic structures rather than transition which will be needed.

In *Zambia* (8.6 million), a much heralded transition has gone sour. Led by one of the leaders of an important organisation of civil society, the Zambian trade union, the current administration is battered by accusations of severe economic and political mismanagement, criminal activities and corruption. The mass of the population in Zambia is described as considerably worse off today than prior to transition.

In summary, while transitions to democracy in many African countries have been spurred by popular protests and external demand and conditionality, the actualisation of the process and its translation into lasting political democratic structures has in many cases been hijacked, controlled and often aborted by the ruling authoritarian cabal. In countries where the military have been in power, the transition has been a particularly uphill and erratic task as the military have shown a total lack of capacity to disengage. In Algeria, Zaire and Nigeria disengagement has turned out to be "mission impossible". In Ghana, where the military Government has changed from uniform into mufti, the transition has been rather superficial. In Benin Republic, thanks to a virtually complete systemic collapse, economic paralysis and an extremely heavy dose of external pressure, the transition went through and has so far lasted.

Indeed five typologies of transition to democracy are discernible. These are:

(i) transition following systemic and political collapse (e.g. Benin);
(ii) transition brought about by armed conflict in which the former opposition assumes power (e.g. Uganda, Ethiopia and most recently Rwanda);
(iii) transition through popular revolt (e.g. Togo, Central African Republic);
(iv) transition through negotiation between the powers-that-be (military or civilian) and the democratic torches (e.g. Zambia, Ghana, Tanzania); and
(v) aborted transition by the rulers of the day refusing to hand-over power to elected representatives (e.g. Algeria, Nigeria, Zaire, Congo).

The sustainability of democratic structures emerging from transition processes naturally depends on the type of transition encountered. Given the above record, it is therefore hardly surprising that Africa continues to have a serious democratic deficit. How could democracy take root in countries embroiled in armed conflict, civil strife, ethnic, racial, religious and social conflicts and severe political crises? In such situations, quick fixes and short-cuts or any mimicry are simply futile. Transition to democracy, to be credible and sustainable can only succeed as an integral part of the transformation of the entire political and socio-economic structures where people are at the centre of the process.

Of course, all democracies are a matter of degree, falling somewhere along a continuum. However, it needs to be emphasised that given the structural rigidities – economic, social and political – of most Third World countries at the moment, a rigidity which has a lot to do with their assigned role in the world market and political system, not much can be expected in the short- to medium-term.

Still, weak democracies are preferable to authoritarian and despotic rule, particularly as they might provide an opportunity to begin the learning process that is creating attitudes, structures and procedures needed for producing a mature, effective and stable democracy. It is imperative, however, to avoid, at all costs, low-intensity democracy which I described elsewhere as a compromise between pseudo-democratic institutions and dictatorships, enjoying very little support of the populace for their political and economic goals. "Low-intensity democracy ensures that the democratisation process remains confined only to a state-oriented and state-defined, formalistic form of democracy (political parties, elections and parliaments) and that the new "democratic" regimes are in the safe hands of a coalition of conservative politicians and a segment of the business community whose main purpose will be to preserve their manifold privileges".[1]

As the case of Nigeria has tragically shown, there is a narrow, almost indiscernible line between low-intensity democracy and outright failures. After going through what must have been one of the most elaborate, protracted and expensive transition programmes which the world has ever seen, a presidential election was held on 12 June 1993 as the final lap in a process of installing elected democratic institutions. Even though judged as free and fair resulting in a clear majority, and, most importantly with a vote for the first time cutting across ethnic, religious and economic lines, the military, for reasons never revealed to the electorate, decided to declare the whole process as null and void and dissolved all elected bodies throughout the country. Since then, a combination of in-fights among factions of the ruling elite to which ever larger segments of the population are reacting with civil disobedience, strikes and protests has effectively paralysed the better part of the country.

Who could have, in his or her wildest imagination. thought of the possibility of a military regime seizing power in order to "correct" the abuses and excesses of the

political class, only to demonstrate such utter contempt for the people as to annul the results of an election that it teleguided and conducted and, by so doing, declare arrogantly and brutally the will of the people to be null and void? Why should the armed forces of an independent country continue to manifest some of the worst features of the colonial army: repression and despotism against the people? Experience has now shown beyond doubt that the military cannot be the handmaiden of the transition to democracy. This Nigerian example has, yet again, demonstrated that the scramble for political power is not the monopoly of the political class.

Low-intensity democracy or the outright abortion of any democratic move – these winners take all, zero-sum games, illegal and illegitimate usurpation's of power – can only be prevented if civil society is strengthened, recreated and rejuvenated. In other words, transition to democracy can only become a reality if a strong civil society can constitute an effective countervailing force to autocracy and despotism.

It is in the rejuvenation of civil society and their organisations that exchange of experience and transfer of techniques can take effect in a mutually beneficial manner. Civil society is the link between political transition and economic transition. It is a great challenge in institution-building as it demands a great deal of effort and resources. Establishing non-governmental or voluntary development organisations (NGOs and VDOs) is a hard and slow process, particularly if such organisations are to satisfy our five conditions. While Africa has made considerable progress in this area, still more effort is required and this must be backed up with independent sources of domestic and external funding.

The vacuum created in many African countries by the lack or the inadequacy of grassroots peoples organisations and NGOs and VDOs is currently filled by non-African NGOs and VDOs. It is to be hoped that this will be just temporarily the case and that the people of Africa will shake off their lethargy, restitute and modernise their traditional grassroots organisations that have become moribund for too long and/or establish new ones. It is by so doing that they can develop their capacity to participate effectively in debates on political and socio-economic policies and strategies and promote education, literacy, skill training and human resource development as a means of enhancing popular participation. In the meantime, every effort should be made to strengthen co-operation and dialogue between African and non-African NGOs and VDOs.

As far as conventional wisdom is concerned. economic transition means the sovereignty of the market, the rolling back of government and the public sector and the removal of all protectionism and tariff walls. Marketisation, liberalisation and globalisation are names of the game. The yearning for political freedom has been extrapolated to economic freedom. The rediscovery of the nineteenth century neo-classical economics of laissez-faire by the industrial economies of the North – a phenomenon of the 1980s under the influence of monetarism and the joint

Thatcher-Reagan leadership – was in response to the peculiar needs and circumstances of these countries.

Whatever domestic controversies reactions to post-war socio-economic policy orthodoxy, which derived from the Keynesian revolution, might have provoked, the most regrettable development was their global extrapolation. Marketisation has thus become both a domestic and an international development. Technology change, particularly the communications revolution, migratory forces and institutional development have greatly facilitated the globalisation process.

Domestically, marketisation has meant reduced state intervention, reduced subsidisation and increased privatisation. Global markets include principally the operation of international financial markets and the actions of transnational corporations in flows of technology, finance and management. Unregulated financial and capital flows have increased beyond belief. Computerised dealings are estimated to transmit more than US$300 billion across national borders each day. Such a volume of unregulated flows cannot but cause severe problems particularly for Eastern Europe and Third World countries. The reverse flow of capital from these countries to the advanced industrial countries has accentuated severely the marginalisation process. Such biases in the global markets have strengthened the forces of inequity for while these markets (except the labour market which rather than expand and be globalised has been severely restricted through discriminatory migration and labour policies in Europe and in North America) have expanded rapidly there has been a serious lag in the development of a rational and equitable system for regulating them.[2]

In emulating the Industrial Revolution of the English, while deliberately avoiding the path of the French Revolution, the East Asians have opted for the *competitive-regulated* economies which had been a central element in the economic growth of the West. They have definitely shunned the free-unregulated market system that the neo-classicists of the 1980s, using the Bretton Woods institutions as their instruments, have been forcing on Russia, Eastern Europe and the Third World. As David C. Korten and Paul Ekins have observed:

> "while the market is often touted as the necessary companion of democracy, this claim holds true only for the competitively-regulated market. Unbridled power, whether that of the unaccountable state or the unregulated market, is the enemy of democratic accountability, justice, peace and ecological sustainability. The unregulated market leads to unbridled market power. The human interest is poorly served by a tyranny of either the state or the market ".[3]

I have for years argued that the market versus state argument is most unhelpful as it creates two artificial extremes, instead of focusing on how the private sector, the

labour movement and the State can collaborate in effecting development. Pretending that it was the "free market" which enabled the West to prosper, is not only a deliberate misunderstanding of its economic history, but also a romanticisation, if not a deliberate misrepresentation. Even today, in spite of the Thatcher-Reagan counter-revolution, the West is still closer to the competitive-regulated market economy than to the free-unregulated market system – the latter being specifically crafted for export only! One does not need to be an economist to appreciate that:

> "a well functioning modern society depends on the countervailing powers of a strong accountable government and a strong regulated competitive market – each serving its distinctive role in the service of the public good".[4]

The transition from authoritarian to democratic structures of governance which is accompanied by the growing strength of unregulated market forces inevitably results in a shifting allegiance of democratic political systems from the people's interest to corporate interests, and in an inevitable weakening of the state as an effective instrument for managing society's affairs in the public interest. As Korten and Ekins quite rightly concluded, those who herald this process as a harbinger of democracy's growing hegemony have confused market freedom, which is a freedom of the rich and powerful, with democratic freedom, which is the freedom of all people. A strong and dynamic civil society is required to bring the citizenry into direct and active involvement to achieve the required balance between market and State.

Transition is usually seen only in terms of traumatic change in the political and economic systems. Little thought has been given to the impact of transition on the institutions and instruments of governance, particularly on the public service. What is often emphasised, as a requirement of the unfettered free-market ideology, is the rolling back of the State and the privatisation of public services and utilities. Particularly in Africa, public administration has not survived the decay and decadence that was the plight of the continent throughout the "lost decade" of the 1980s. Not only has its effectiveness become, in most countries, severely impaired, but organisational loyalty and programmatic commitment have all but disappeared. The management of African economies has suffered greatly both on account of lack of relevant institutions and poor institution-building and development and as a result of such basic problems as poor accountability and policy discontinuity.

During the 1960s and '70s, we had completely ignored the ecology of the bureaucracy approach. We had down-played it in favour of development and social engineering through the various institutes and schools of public administration that had been established after independence. We had opted for a system and culture of development administration that could meet the challenges of expanding government operations and their growing involvement in the development process.

It was our perception that such a development-oriented public service would also conform to the Weberian definition of rational bureaucracy i.e. the application of the norms of professionalism, universalism, detachment and strict objectivity in policy analysis and decision-making with a hierarchical pattern of supervision and an information system which ensures continuity and certainty.

Hence, the main thrust of administrative reforms during the first two post-independence decades was on structure, organisation and the internal administration and management of public service operations, rather than on addressing the priorities and values of the political system or on opening that system to broader popular participation. Although we had perceived development administration as being capable of providing the catalysis for change in the developing, transitional societies of Africa, unfortunately most reform measures were more focused on the conventional administrative development aimed primarily at improving the instrumentalities of administration.

Had we but followed through with the logic of our perception, we would have taken fully into account the ecological factors and in particular the ecology of bureaucracy. By so doing, administrative reforms would have been conceived as a component – a major component – of large-scale political and socio-economic reform. As it turned out, administrative reform became a main ingredient in circumventing critical issues and in frustrating large political and socio-economic reforms. As Dwivedi and Nef have succinctly put it:

> "Proceduralism and technicalities took precedence over objectives, and reform became an aesthetic and rhetorical exercise, quite harmless to the status quo.[5]

That is why, when the economic crisis assumed such a threatening proportion in the 1980s, the state bureaucracies were unable to meet the challenges. The public services, weakened and ineffective as they had become, were burdened and dominated by the ever-growing concern and pre-occupation with short-term crisis management almost to the exclusion of the pursuit of long-term objectives. Worse still, senior officials were shunted aside and marginalised as the role of foreign experts and managers, particularly officials of multilateral development institutions, in national economic decision-making and management became predominant. With this virtual taking over by foreigners, the scope for independent policy-making disappeared. As if this was not enough, the downsizing of these services, which was required by SAP, threw them into complete and total disarray and paralysis and the devaluation of their labour through the devaluation of their national currencies gave overt encouragement to moonlighting and barefaced, shameless corruption, even in high places.

Thus, today, bureaucracies in Africa have lost their dynamism, resilience and commitment. Instead, they have become stagnant, dependent and largely

unproductive. Lack of probity, of accountability, of equity and of professionalism and a merit system along with scandalous and unchequered corruption have conspired to undermine any semblance of respectability. There is the virtual collapse of law and order in many African countries today. We are also confronted with the dangers of institutional decay which is spreading daily in our societies. Public utilities and infrastructural facilities are malfunctioning because of the poor standard of maintenance. Good humane governance has become a thing of the past in many countries. Those who exercise power are busy inflicting injury on their people because ethics and morality have disappeared from governance and indeed from public life.

The differences between Africa and South-East Asia are tremendous. In contrast to the decay in African public administration, the state in South-East Asia has been entrepreneurial and pro-active in steering social and economic change. It has put strong emphasis on selective treatment, competence-building, surveillance of imports of technology and almost continuous restructuring.[6] Thus in contrast to the push by the World Bank to villanise and minimise the role of the state in Africa, an overwhelming weight of empirical evidence shows that the state in South-East Asia, by Western standards authoritative and rather autocratic, has played, and is playing, a very active, direct and pervasive role in the economy.

The consistent effort of the South-East Asian governments to foster effective bureaucracy has paid dividends. Competent and relatively honest technocratic cadres who are insulated from day-to-day political interference and who wield substantial power have helped their political leaders to devise credible strategies and policies which have also been faithfully implemented. The civil servants are relatively well paid compared to the private sector. For example, Singapore, which is widely perceived to have the region's most competent and upright bureaucracy, pays its bureaucrats best. In bureaucracies, as in everything else, you get what you pay for. Recruitment and promotion in the Civil Service is highly competitive and by merit. Not surprisingly, the Civil Service enjoys high prestige and attracts some of the best and most able people in these countries.

These are experiences that African countries should emulate.

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Supporting governments in transition: assistance from the Overseas Development Administration (UK)

Edited extracts from a presentation by Kevin Sparkhall, Government and Institutions Department, Overseas Development Administration, UK

The changing pattern of assistance

The Overseas Development Administration (ODA) is responsible for the UK's overseas aid programmes. ODA has provided assistance on public administration to Commonwealth countries for over thirty years. Initially, most support consisted of long-term personnel carrying out line jobs for which there were insufficient national staff. Alongside this went a training programme which usually gave priority to localisation objectives.

Over the years the balance of ODA assistance has substantially changed. The number of long-term line posts filled has fallen dramatically. At first this was partly offset by a rise in long-term advisers but these too have now declined. Meanwhile provision of consultancies whether through individuals or organisations has significantly increased. Training has retained its importance but with a shift towards shorter-term post-graduate and post-experience courses and an increasing emphasis on in-country and third-country training.

These trends reflect changes in recipient countries. The supply of manpower within countries has increased as has domestic training capacity. Countries have also diversified their sources of assistance both to other bilateral donors and to multilateral agencies, such as the World Bank and UNDP. The UK is however still a major donor in the area of public administration. This reflects shared traditions and systems and our wider long-term relationship with Commonwealth countries. For the same reasons there is a wealth of experience in the UK in this area, not only in Government itself but in universities, consultancy companies and individuals.

A further change in the pattern of assistance has been a move away from a scattered approach of many individual posts and training awards to one of greater focus. This partly reflects a view that greater concentration of effort is likely to yield more substantial impact. It also responds to the need which many countries have identified for reform of public administration. In some cases this follows from a wider rethinking of the role of government, recognising both the role that the private sector can play and the need for government to concentrate on what only it can do and on key priorities. Often there has also been a review of the size of the civil service, of management arrangements and of policies on pay and personnel management. ODA has helped in all these areas.

Assistance currently provided by ODA

ODA assistance takes many forms and operates at many levels from the most strategic to the most detailed. Projects are based on a dialogue with the country concerned about priority needs rather than any preconceived model of assistance. There is therefore no standard programme. The following examples illustrate recent experience:

(i) high-level advice from current or retired senior civil servants on overall reform strategies;

(ii) study visits to the UK and sometimes to third countries to look at outside experience, either across the board or at specific innovations such as agencies, efficiency units or audit systems;

(iii) sponsorship to attend short courses or seminars which bring together ministers or senior officials from a range of countries to compare ideas and experience;

(iv) support for public service reviews undertaken by governments, for example to look at the structure of government;

(v) consultancies to help develop and implement specific reforms or innovations such as in management of the public service;

(vi) support with the design and implementation of programmes to reduce the size of the civil service;

(vii) assistance with the design and implementation of pay reform;

(viii) strengthening of public service training institutions;

(ix) support for detailed systems improvements such as personnel records, financial management or public records management; and

(x) assistance with the reform and strengthening of local government.

There are many forms of support not covered in this list including much long-term personnel and training assistance provided through a wide range of sector projects. Nor does the list cover the substantial area of public enterprise reform and privatisation. It may however serve to demonstrate the range of ODA activity in terms both of objectives and of ways in which ODA is able to assist. Aid is primarily in the form of technical co-operation but in some instances financial assistance is also provided. Examples include part-funding of pay restructuring,

meeting some of the costs of redundancy programmes, and financing essential building work or equipment.

Lessons of experience

Experience illustrates both the value and the limitations of external assistance. The conclusions which can be drawn include the following:

(i) Aid can support local commitment to change but it cannot substitute for it.

(ii) Change needs strong local leadership, often from a key individual, to achieve momentum and overcome inertia, but to sustain it a wider measure of support is needed.

(iii) Reform of the public service frequently raises issues of good government or governance which only ministers can address. Where such larger issues are important but unresolved, other efforts to reform the public service are likely to be of only limited effect.

(iv) While there is a need for a vision of where a reform programme should head, attention also needs to be paid to issues of transition, that is how to get there from where we are now.

(v) Institutional strengthening is as important as the immediate task if impact is to be sustained, though it is also important for programmes to demonstrate success in the short-term to help build or maintain support.

(vi) Significant change takes a long time; unfortunately it is all too easy for this truth to be used to mask resistance to change.

(vii) Providing personnel and training in environments where government cannot fill posts due to inappropriate pay policies is an unending and ultimately thankless task. It is better to address the causes of manpower shortages.

(viii) Subject to the above, external assistance has a valuable and often essential role in providing access to outside ideas and experience, developing skills and supplementing available expertise.

(ix) There are no universal models for good public administration, though there are general principles, such as on the need for accountability, and there are common constraints. Outside experience therefore provides ideas and skills for designing and implementing a reform programme rather than providing the answers themselves.

(x) Specific aid activities need to have clear objectives, outputs and accountabilities albeit that there may need to be flexibility in the overall reform programme within which such assistance is provided.