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# POLICY BRIEF ON DISMANTLING SILO MENTALITY IN THE UGANDA CIVIL SERVICE

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Despite all the existing frameworks for effective partnerships, collaboration and synergies of various stakeholders in the value chain of implementation of public policy and delivery of services to the citizens, civil servants are reported to operate in a disjoined manner. One of the main factors behind operation in a disjoined manner is breakdown in communication, co-operation, co-ordination and partnerships with other entities or external stakeholders leading to unbalanced service delivery with minimal impacts on the lives of the citizens.

This policy brief highlights the silo mentality, practices, causes and its negative impact in the Uganda Civil Service and makes recommendations to its dismantling in the Service. It is hoped to contribute to change of mind-set towards building strong partnerships, collaborations, cooperation and synergies among the Civil Servants for better public service delivery.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Silos are organisational units or entities where there is a breakdown in communication, co-operation, coordination and partnerships with other units or entities or external stakeholders. Silos arise within organisations as a result of a number of factors such as mandate and special status mentality, inferiority complex and greed. Operating in silos occurs in a number ways such as when civil servants in organisational units or entities do not share information, goals, tools, priorities and processes with other organisational units or entities or external stakeholders.

Good practice demands that stakeholders work together in implementation of public policy and delivery of public services due to the cross-cutting nature of public policies. The Constitution requires that citizens be engaged in matters that concern them. The various sector and subsector policies provide for roles of the various stakeholders for their effective

### **KEY ISSUES**

- i. It is a constitutional requirement to engage citizens in public policy.
- Continuous existence and practice of silo mentality in the Uganda Civil Service has resulted in negative competition and institutional conflicts which have negatively affected the lives of the citizens.
- iii. Silos create low morale, negatively impact on workflows and adversely affect service delivery.
- iv. Stakeholders should work together in the implementation of public policies.
- v. SDG 17 is on partnerships, collaboration and synergies of various stakeholders to leave no one behind in the development agendas of the citizens.
- vi. Government needs to adopt the recommended best practices to dismantle the silo mentality for realization of impact on the lives of the citizens.

implementation for the maximum benefit of the citizens. Sustainable Development Goal 17 is on partnerships, collaboration and coordination of various stakeholders to leave no one behind in the development agendas of the citizens. The National Coordination Policy also contains a framework for effective communication and synergies of all MDAs for effective and efficient service delivery.

Despite all the existing frameworks for effective partnerships, collaboration and synergies of various stakeholders in the value chain of implementation of public policy and delivery of services, stakeholders are reported to operate in a disjoined manner. One of the main factors behind operation in such a manner is the various individual civil servants preferring to work in silos.

The continued practice has resulted into negative competition, institutional conflicts, limitations of backward and forward linkages required in effective service delivery to the citizens. This has led to unbalanced service delivery with minimal impacts on the lives of the citizens.

Civil Servants are the main machinery for implementation of public policies in the delivery of public services. Civil servants are however often reported to operate in silos, constraining effective partnership and collaboration in service delivery resulting into the dismal impact. This has continued to be counterproductive. There was therefore need to dismantle silo mentality so that the citizens are served better.

#### **2.0 FINDINGS**

#### 2.1 Practices

The analysis of the current situation in Uganda Public Service revealed the following practices of silo mentality:

i. Carrying out individual planning, budgeting and lobbying for resources.

- ii. Not holding joint meetings with other units or entities for information sharing, knowledge and best practice exchange, synergies and peer learning to serve the citizens better.
- iii. Carrying out activities separately even where partnerships, collaboration, cooperation and synergies are required for better articulation of issues. Holding onto information by individuals or units or entities with limited sharing of information only within the silo or withholding information that would have been used by other units or entities or external stakeholders in enhancing planning, budgeting and implementation of programmes to benefit the population.

#### 2.2 Causes

The causes of silo mentality include:

- i. Inadequate capacity due to limited or poor training.
- ii. Greed and promoting self-interest instead of common good for better serving of the citizens' interests.
- iii. Discriminatory financial rewards based on perceived special status of individual units or entities and indifference to other units or entities' needs.
- iv. Resistance to change to adopt modern participatory management styles in preference to colonial secretive approach.
- v. Negative attitude of unit or entity Managers and isolation mind-set within entities.
- vi. Personality or management style of organisational leaders that either encourages conflicts or serves as a poor role model in terms of respecting or incorporating others' ideas or needs. Opinion and emotion based decision making by Managers instead of evidence based decisions, leading to exclusion of others.
- vii. Perceived fear to lose power among individuals and entities through collaboration with those perceived to be superior in ideology or performance.

## 2.3 Negative Impact

The following were identified as some of the negative effects of silo mentality in the Uganda Civil Service:

- i. Poor quality service and delay in service delivery resulting into disgruntled citizens that sours up the whole customer relationship.
- ii. Failure to meet customer demands.
- iii. Inability to meet institutions performance obligations.
- iv. Protection of personal interests rather than institutional and national interests.
- v. Frustrated employees due to reduction in employee morale which may contribute to the overall failure of the institution or its services and culture.
- vi. Conflicts between departments which can escalate to personal conflicts among colleagues, ultimately leading to poor service delivery to the department members and the public.
- vii. Stifling innovation and creativity in service delivery.
- viii. Promotion of archaic and outdated ways of doing things in public service delivery.
- ix. Unbalanced reward systems in favour of the members of those in the silo/ clique.

## **3.0 CONCLUSION**

The conclusion was that silo mentality and practice exists in the Uganda Civil Service in different forms and negatively affects effective and efficient delivery of services to the citizens. If unchecked it may continue to constrain realisation of the achievement of the Vision 2040 and the Sustainable Development Goals. These require partnership, collaboration, cooperation and synergies of various stakeholders for their achievement. This may ultimately interfere with the required transformation of the lives of the citizens.

#### 4.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations need to be undertaken by Government under the direct championship of Ministry of Public Service and other relevant MDAs to dismantle silo mentality and practices in the Uganda Civil Service:

- i. All public servants should be sensitized to change their mindset to appreciate the need for partnership, collaboration, cooperation and synergies for effective service delivery for transformation of the lives of the citizens.
- Government should adopt continuous exposure of Civil Servants to modern management of Government business through more transparency, accountability and involvement of citizens on matters that concern them.
- iii. Government should fast-track the use of information technology and communication in running Government business at all levels without any excuse which will also enable provision of effective and efficient services to the citizens.
- iv. Government needs to carry out systematic and structured building of trust among Civil Servants and other stakeholders including citizens for cordial partnership, collaboration and synergies which will also lead to efficient and effective services to the citizens.
- v. Government needs to establish structured and systematic transparent systems of engagement among Civil Servants and other stakeholders including citizens in policy formulation, implementation and provision of efficient and effective services to the citizens.
- vi. Government should awaken professionalism, hard work, and discipline in the Civil Servants and obedience to the principles for which the Government stands and not just obedient to the Government. Civil servants need to be educated on their philosophical roles and inherent public service values.
- vii. Government urgently needs to reevaluate the mandates of its various departments and agencies with a view to

consolidating existing mandates into related areas. This will build synergy among related functions and will see significant saving of resources, which will be put to good use.

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## CONTACTS

For further information and feedback, please contact:

Commissioner, Department of Policy Development and Capacity Building, Office of the President-Cabinet Secretariat, Parliamentary Buildings, Western Wing Tel. 256414343331/342743, Email:policy@cabinetsecretariat.go.ug, policy@op.go.ug Website: www.cabinetsecretariat.go.ug, www.op.go.ug