

in-touch

Public Administration International



Newsletter

Sierra Leone's historic moment of opportunity?

Professor John Benington – University of Warwick

The elections which swept the All People's Congress (APC) into government in Sierra Leone in October 2007 have created an historic moment of opportunity for this war-torn country to make a significant step in its continued maintenance of peace and stability and its democracy and economic and social development.

I had the privilege, last December in Freetown, of contributing to a series of Policy Development and Strategic Leadership Forums for the newly-elected Ministers and their senior civil servants, organised by PAI on behalf of the Sierra Leone Government's Public Sector Reform Unit, in partnership with the Institute of Public Administration and Management, University of Sierra Leone, supported by the UK's Department for International Development.

The programme began with a meeting of new Ministers, their Permanent Secretaries and senior management to work together in thinking through how to translate the election Manifesto into clear Government policies, programmes and priorities for action and expenditure.

We met with each Minister, Ministry representatives and stakeholders from the public and private sectors in a

series of bi-lateral workshops to review their responses to three questions (see panel box), and then concluded with a final plenary for all Ministers and their senior civil servants to draw these together into a draft strategic plan for the Government.

There are still many obstacles to overcome in trying to translate this kind of strategic planning into policies and practices which begin to make a real difference to people and communities at grassroots level. However, we all came away from the week with a strong sense that a real opportunity for change in government and public service has opened up in "Sweet Salone"

We used the concept of "public value" and the "strategic triangle" (Moore 1995) to ask each Ministry and Department to address and align three key questions:

- What are our top five strategic goals and priorities in terms of public value outcomes to be achieved?
- Whose authorisation and support do we need to mobilise in order to achieve these top five strategic goals and public value outcomes?
- What operational capacity and resources do we need to deploy in order to achieve these public value objectives and outcomes?



From left to right: Mr Cecil Williams (General Manager, National Tourist Board of Sierra Leone); Stephen Catchpole (PAI Team Leader); The Right Honourable David Carew (Minister of Finance); Professor John Benington (University of Warwick)

A Senior Executive Service for Liberia

George Bardwell – PAI non-executive Director

The Government of Liberia, together with its development partners – including UNDP and the World Bank – embarked on an ambitious programme to create a new generation of public service leaders. The programme is designed to inject into the civil service the “surge” capacity needed to make progress with the recovery and reconstruction of the country following so many years of civil war and rebel uprisings. The Civil Service Agency in Liberia invited PAI to lead a team of consultants to design and deliver an assessment and selection process for the first 21 posts in its new Senior Executive Service.

We did not need to look very far to put together a team with both West African experience and a civil service HR management background. Our work in Sierra Leone had involved Vicki Cooper and her Ghanaian company CoEn, and Dennis Battle and I had both worked there. Together with two Liberian consultants we carried out an initial screening process of all 255 job applications, and then embarked on a concentrated programme of assessment interviews, more than 40 of them telephone interviews with Liberians living abroad. In all we interviewed 119

candidates and, at six candidates a day, for Dennis and me it was remarkably similar to our work some years ago chairing promotion boards in the UK civil service.

After our assessment interviews we put the best three candidates for each post through to a final interview in Monrovia chaired by the Civil Service Agency and including a representative of the appropriate Ministry (sometimes the Minister personally). One of our team attended each final interview as an adviser. Despite the occasional problem with the office generator, and the inevitable difficulties in flying people in from the US and elsewhere for interviews, we managed to keep to the planned programme and were delighted to have been able to complete a fascinating project in just two months.

Sharing rare experiences

Barry Sutcliffe – PAI Associate Consultant

One of the great pleasures of life is sharing rare experiences with people you have come to respect and admire. This was certainly true of a recent study tour of the UK Government Communication Network for a group of Kosovo Government Directors of Communication late last year. A photo call on the Prime Minister’s doorstep never fails to please. A visit to the House of Lords just before Guy Fawkes Day was a novelty. And a visit to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office with its allegorical paintings of the mighty Britannia caused a few smiles.

The aims of the visit were to help build a team who would work closely together on behalf of its Government, and to share some ideas to take back to Kosovo. The group was deeply impressed by the care and attention given to communication planning – at No 10 and in the Central Office of Information. They admired the trouble taken to segment audiences and to communicate with minority



Back left: Bajram Mjeku, Bedri Gashi, Simon James Middle row: Fatmire Ibrahim, Filloreta Bytyci, Lumnije Demi, Fatmir Morina, Hamdi Sopa Front row: Barry Sutcliffe, Muharrem Shahini, Liridona Kozmaqi, Avdullah Bytyqi, Agron Bacaj

communities. They particularly liked the use of latest technology to put over messages, for example on recruitment to the Royal Air Force. They swapped experiences with the Queen’s Press Secretary, had a reality check with Tom Kelly, formerly of No 10, and renewed acquaintances with journalists at the BBC Albanian Service. They learned a lot about management and internal

communication from the Cabinet Office, and they were so impressed with the Media Monitoring Operation they wanted to take it home with them! The success of the tour was due entirely to the generosity of the Government Communication Network; its rewards lie in knowing it played a significant contribution to key people in the world’s newest nation.

Public Service Commission annual study programme

Mike Fogden CB – Director of Studies



*Front Row (Sitting from left to right) Pengiran Datin Hajah Hairani Abdul Kahar (Brunei Darussalam), Gail Atkins (Barbados), Ibrahim Mohamed Hussein (Kenya), Bernadette M Nzioki (Kenya), Bilkisu Bashir (Nigeria), Johnson Kibera (Kenya), Nashat Muhammad Raffi (Pakistan)
Back Row (Standing from left to right) Clare Walters (PAI Programme Manager), Mike Fogden CB (PAI Programme Director), Muhammad Aziz Khan (Pakistan), Salahuddin K V Kattil Veetil (India), Willie Brain Tembo (Malawi), Rogers Abok Hadao (Kenya), Claire Cameron (PAI Director), Mohamed Faizal (Maldives), Dennis Swann (Turks & Caicos Islands), Evan Conrad Howell (Turks & Caicos Islands), Kenneth Mathews (South Africa), Mashwahle Diphofa (South Africa)*

We foregathered in London on a grey November morning for what looked like a long week of study. We numbered some 20 participants from across the world from Barbados to Uganda – 11 countries in all. We had an interesting mix of public service commissioners and permanent staff and this mix soon dispelled the November grey through their enthusiastic participation in the programme. The welcome dinner on the first evening proved to be just the event to cement their commitment.

The study programme consisted of a mixture of presentations, participative sessions and external visits to those engaged, directly or indirectly, with the

work of the UK Civil Service. The trip to the Civil Service Commission not only led to us hearing about their work first hand but also resulted in us all receiving a copy of the Northcote Trevelyan Report of 1854 – written in splendid Victorian prose – which laid the foundations for the creation of the permanent civil service in the UK. An appointment with Tony Wright MP, chairman of the Public Administration Select Committee, took us to the House of Commons where we had an engaging session with him on the work of his Select Committee. Finally, a visit to the Cabinet Office found us sitting in one of the Cabinet Conference Rooms listening to developments on Reward

and Performance in the Civil Service (it means pay and bonuses in old speak!).

An integral part of the study programme is the opportunity to hear and learn from each of the participating countries of their practice and experiences. This proved most worthwhile. By the time we reached the farewell lunch on Friday there was general agreement that the week had flown by and that much had been learnt to take back home.

You can register to attend this or other study programmes in 2008 and 2009 by visiting our website at www.public-admin.co.uk.

Introducing the PAI team

Focus on Garth Glentworth

We are delighted to welcome Dr Garth Glentworth to our Advisory Group. We have known Garth since our days at the Royal Institute of Public Administration (RIPA) when he was a member of the International Division's Board.

Garth has spent thirty years with the Department for International Development (DFID), latterly as a Senior Governance Adviser. He started life with the Overseas Development Ministry (ODM), DFID's ancestor, as a Public Administration and Management Adviser in the 1970s.

Garth observes that over the years the 'governance' agenda has evolved and grown in DFID's aid strategy. Where once it was a peripheral element, it has in recent years become a mainstream development issue. The original relatively narrow focus on bureaucratic capacity has been enlarged by a political agenda of accountability and responsiveness, including personal and state security, conflict, media, justice and civil society. It continues to widen. Nobody can now claim expertise in all aspects of governance and Garth is no exception but the tricks are 'to know someone who

can' and to admit that tried and tested prescriptions are, as yet, few if not non-existent.



DFID has continued to develop and test reforms in practice and is constantly broadening its coverage both sectorally and geographically. Garth's extensive knowledge of the governance agenda will add substantially to the strength of our Advisory Group.

A British Constitution – at Last?

Professor Gavin Drewry



When contributing to PAI's ever-growing portfolio of international study programmes, I and my fellow contributors always try to make clear that we are

not engaged in some kind of patriotic sales campaign to extol the virtues of British practice. While highlighting recent UK developments, we have always tried to adopt a self-critical line (as many lessons can be learned from our failures as from our successes) and our overseas delegates always learn at least as much from one another as they do from us.

In any case, were we to go down the 'hard-sell' road, we would quickly find ourselves in difficulties with some of our products. Some features of UK government are decidedly quirky if not

downright bizarre. One particularly glaring instance is the notorious absence of a codified British Constitution. All the countries represented on PAI programmes have constitutional texts that set out, in black and white, the principles on which their systems of government ultimately rest. In many if not most of those countries the bottom line of public accountability is, at least in theory, the answerability of those in power to a constitutional court. The overriding constitutional principle in the UK has been the sovereignty of Parliament – which assigns a subordinate role to the courts, particularly when it comes to any attempt to challenge the validity of Acts of Parliament.

Most of those who enrol on PAI study programmes are already well aware of this strange gap in our arrangements, but that doesn't make it any easier to defend without blushing. However, times have begun to change. A 'politics-based' constitution has substantially been replaced by a 'law-based' constitution. This has come about through the UK's deep entanglements with the highly

juridical culture of the European Union, dating back to our joining the European Communities in 1973. The European Court of Justice in Luxembourg has always made it clear that European law overrides any conflicting domestic statute – and the UK courts have themselves taken this principle firmly on board. At the same time, the Human Rights Act 1998 has incorporated the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law, allowing the courts to declare statutory provisions 'incompatible' with the Convention.

We still don't have a home-grown codified Constitution – but we can at least begin to look our overseas colleagues in the eye when constitutional issues are on the agenda.

Gavin Drewry is Professor of Public Administration at Royal Holloway, University of London and is a member of PAI's Advisory Group. His recent article, 'The Jurisprudence of British Euroscepticism', published in the Utrecht Law Review can be downloaded at www.utrechtlawreview.org.