

## CHAPTER 11

# Capacity Development to Transform Mindsets of Public Servants – the Case of the African Association of Public Administration and Management (AAPAM)

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As the world draws closer to the timeline of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the role of each actor in accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is becoming more crucial. In the spirit of leaving no one behind, every actor individually and collectively should play his/her part. To this effect, the African continent should not be left behind in capacity development for the achievement of the SDGs.

Stakeholders including the African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM), schools of public administration and institutes of public management have continued championing for the implementation of Agenda 2030 through capacity development on the continent. As envisioned in its mission, AAPAM spearheads best practices, excellence and professionalism in public administration and management in Africa.

SDG 16 focuses on governance. This is because governance is at the heart of development. It covers aspects like accountability, transparency, responsiveness, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, and observance to the rule of law.<sup>139</sup> Central to good governance is transformation through capacity development. Capacity development is instrumental in changing mindsets. Therefore, governments in Africa have deliberately designed capacity development approaches to transform their public services. This is evidenced by the massive investments in their human capital and institutional infrastructure. African states, like their counterparts, have continued to create awareness, promote advocacy, spearhead research and develop the capacity of their governments to implement the SDGs.

## 1

## Approaches by Africa to accelerate the achievement of sustainable development\*

Africa has adopted a multi-faceted approach in implementing the SDGs, which is contextualized within the realities of each nation. Capacity development is one of the core approaches adopted by the continent. Recognizing that change begins from the mind, such approaches aim to transform the mindsets of governments, the people, and other actors in Africa. Specifically, actors in the continent have adopted the following approaches:

1. **Localization of the SDGs** by adapting and contextualizing them within their existing national frameworks. In such instances, the goals are mainstreamed into policy and national frameworks.
2. **Institutionalization of the processes needed for the achievement of the SDGs:** in some countries multi-sectoral committees have been instituted to oversee the implementation of Agenda 2030.
3. **Prioritizing areas of focus:** since governments have competing interests, besides being at different development levels, some governments have opted to prioritize services of immediate concern to their people and accelerate their delivery. For example, the Kenyan government has been accelerating 'the Big 4 Agenda' of food security and nutrition, manufacturing, affordable universal health care and affordable housing, which are all still founded on the SDGs.
4. **Capacity development:** some of the critical ways that African countries have acted on this point is by integrating aspects of the SDGs into the existing curricula of Management Development Institutes (MDIs) and schools of public administration, promoting awareness and advocacy through the media, conducting national stakeholder participation forums and participating in international stakeholder forums, among others. Capacity development for the SDGs empowers stakeholders to implement the SDGs themselves. For instance, the Rwanda Association for Local Government Authorities (RALGA) has created an e-learning platform for the SDGs.
5. **Multi-sector/stakeholder collaboration:** resonating with SDG 17, African countries continue to participate in national, regional, continental, and global forums on sustainable development with the aim of upskilling their members' capacities. A number of African countries are part of the UN DESA Task Force of the Global Initiative on Equipping Public Servants with the Capacities to Implement the SDGs,<sup>140</sup> which has been championing capacity development for the implementation of Agenda 2030 in the continent.
6. **Promotion of innovation and creativity:** creativity is the key to accelerating the implementation of the global Agenda 2030. For example, the award winning Huduma Kenya<sup>141</sup> Programme has eased service delivery in Kenya, and
7. **Enhancement of governance:** transformation in governance is fundamental to the achievement of the SDGs. Goal 16 guides the efforts of a number of governments in Africa who are embracing good governance by harnessing technology and adopting e-governance to deal with challenges such as corruption.

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## 2

## The role of AAPAM in promoting capacity development to change mindsets of public servants in Africa

To transform the mindsets of the public servants in the continent, AAPAM focuses on capacity development with the aim of enhancing public servants' skills, attitudes, and knowledge. First and foremost, the Association realigned its policy direction, ensuring that all its post-2015 programmes and activities were founded on the SDGs and the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063. For example, AAPAM's three-year arch-theme for 2016-2018 was on the transformation of public administration and management. From 2019-2021, the Association is working on building sustainable institutions toward the achievement of the SDGs and Agenda 2063. Likewise, most African countries and institutions have strategically realigned their policies and operations to the global and continental development goals.

Secondly, in line with Goal 17, the Association collaborated with like-minded institutions in Africa and across the globe with the aim of empowering stakeholders to implement the SDGs and Agenda 2063. Partnerships are pivotal in harnessing external expertise and resources. For example, in 2018, AAPAM collaborated with the National Institute of Public Administration of Lusaka in Zambia and conducted a course on Promoting Peaceful and Inclusive Societies: The Role of Public Administration and Management. This program empowered participants to develop capacities in promoting peaceful and inclusive societies as envisioned in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the AU Agenda (2063). In the same year, together with the Uganda Management Institute, AAPAM delivered a course on Transforming Performance Management Competency to Ensure Inclusive Service Delivery. This course equipped participants with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to harness the "diversity dividend" in service delivery. Notably, aspects like inclusivity, diversity management, and promotion of peace were placed at the core of the course design.

Thirdly, AAPAM recognizes the importance of SDG 16. As a cross-cutting goal, it is important to the achievement of all the goals. Governance challenges in Africa have been identified as one of the causes of its underdevelopment. Therefore, AAPAM, in partnership with other stakeholders, continues to place emphasis on improving governance in the continent. AAPAM capacity development programmes continue to centre on aspects like transparency, accountability, ethics, and citizen participation. Some of the Association's Programmes

in this category include the Seminar on Citizen Participation: Inclusivity and Integration within the context of Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs) held on 17-19 September 2018 in South Africa. The seminar was premised on the fact that citizen participation, inclusivity, and integration not only enhance accountability but also foster support for the implementation of sustainable development plans. Equally, the Executive Course on Enhancing Public Financial Governance and Management in Africa, held in June 2016 in Gaborone, Botswana, reinforced the leadership competencies in the continent to establish a culture of stewardship for public funds. This course focused on governance in the public sector. It dealt with practical realities in public administration and management and highlighted anti-corruption strategies. The course also focused on transformed leadership, which is foundational to change in any institution.

*Transformational leadership begins with possessing the right mindsets, including attitudes, for propelling growth and wellbeing.*

Fourthly, through recognition and the promotion of excellence and innovation in the public sector, AAPAM champions enhanced service delivery in the continent. The AAPAM Innovative Management Award (IMA) Programme recognizes and celebrates innovations that create effectiveness in the performance of organizations in the public sector through the introduction of new ideas and new operational and management methods. Award-winning projects are shared with stakeholders during the annual roundtable conferences to enable them to replicate such innovations.

In the same vein, African countries have continued to innovate, as attested by their numerous submissions to the All Africa Public Service Innovation Awards managed by the AU and to the United Nations Public Service Award Programme. The Awards Programme provides practical case studies for nations to harness creativity in dealing with the challenges impeding the achievement of the SDGs.

The 2019 AAPAM IMA Gold winning project “Ending Child Marriage” by the Ministry of Chiefs and Traditional Affairs’ (MOCTA) of Zambia provides a practical case study of how to end child marriages and the perpetuation of harmful traditional practices, which result in a high number of teenage pregnancies and school dropouts. The high point of the submission was illustrating MOCTA’s effort to ‘do more with less’ in terms of resources from the national treasury. Such an initiative has immense benefit to the society as it contributed to poverty eradication, improved children welfare, reduced health challenges, promotion of gender equity, and enhanced education for girls, amongst other aspects that are central to the SDGs and AU Agenda 2063.

Likewise, the AAPAM Gold Medal award recognizes individuals who have made outstanding contributions to public administration and management. It is the highest and most prestigious honour conferred by AAPAM to an individual in celebration of achievement and excellence. It marks the exceptional achievements of a person who has shown distinctive leadership or made significant contributions to the advancement of excellence in public administration and management in Africa. This award is key in promoting individual excellence in service delivery, hence a model for public servants to emulate.

Further, mentorship is one of the other strategies needed to transform the mindsets of public servants. Through its mentorship platforms like the Young Professional Network (YPN), AAPAM is assisting young people to become better mantle bearers for the posterity of our nations. This initiative allows new and young public servants to be skilled and empowered through activities like training, networking, and exposure to best practices, among others. The Association thus designs specific programmes to change the mindsets and attitudes of the young professionals in the continent.

For instance, in June 2018, AAPAM conducted a Young Professional Network International Forum in Kisumu, Kenya. The forum focused on “Building Accountable and Inclusive Institutions: Challenges and Opportunities for the African Youth”. One representative of the YPN was also sponsored by UN DESA to attend the 2019 United Nations Public Service Forum (UNPSF). Indeed, most African Countries have invested in inducting new entrants into the public service to imbibe them with the pre-requisite skills, competencies, and attitudes. In such inductions, they are sensitized not only to their government’s development agendas but also the continental and global development agendas.

Besides, the Association has re-aligned its premier annual event, the roundtable conference, to build the capacity of public servants on the SDGs and Agenda 2063. 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 themes were: Transforming Public Administration and Management in order to Contribute Towards the Agenda 2063 within the context of the Sustainable Development Goals; A Transformed Leadership: Managing Natural Resources to achieve the Objectives of African Union Agenda 2063 within the context of the Sustainable Development Goals; Innovation, Resourcefulness, Integration and Inclusivity; Fundamentals for the Transformation of Governance and Public Administration in Africa to achieve the Agenda 2063 and Sustainable Development Goals; and, Transforming Institutions in Africa for Sustainable Development, respectively.

The conferences aim at sharing knowledge, networking, and fostering a common agenda towards development in Africa. The themes of the conferences are identified based on prevailing challenges affecting public administration and management in Africa. The roundtable conference brings together senior African government officials to enhance their knowledge of international best practices and awareness of global socio-economic successes, challenges, and lessons learned; find common solutions to public sector problems; enhance the profile of the public service within governments and the public and develop public sector networks and public service delivery. African governments and other stakeholders actively participate in the conferences and thereby utilize the acquired skills and knowledge to better their governments and institutions.

Additionally, the AAPAM continues to enhance knowledge sharing through diverse publications and robust electronic platforms. Advocacy and sensitization of the SDGs in Africa is an ongoing process. The approach is multi-sectoral and inclusive. For instance, the Ghana Parliamentary Institute has conducted sessions on the SDGs for their parliamentary staff. In Kenya, Kenyatta University encouraged its students to form SDG clubs in 2018. Furthermore, AAPAM and most African countries continue to participate in the Global meetings on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development like the United Nations Public Service Forum (UNPSF) and other regional capacity development initiatives.

Indeed, the continent’s capacity development programmes, in recent years, have deliberately focused on leadership skills and mindset change as soft skills. They are key in the achievement of the 2030 Global Agenda. The continent has created diverse platforms for civil servants to network and learn about best practices.

### 3

## Lessons learnt on capacity development for changing mindsets in Africa

- Efforts to change mindsets should be embraced by the whole society.
- It is important to teach ethics to children at home and lower/elementary school level.
- Open dialogue and discussions are also critical to enhancing the attitudes of public servants in Africa.
- Transformational leadership is key at both the political and technocrat level.
- Cultural orientation has a bearing on one's attitudes. Thus, harmful traditional and cultural practices must be realigned to embrace the principles of sustainable development.
- The harmonization of approaches through collaborative measures across various stakeholders is paramount to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.
- Innovation and case studies are powerful tools for research, and for accelerating change. An enhanced policy framework is essential for the practical implementation of the SDGs.
- Stakeholders should similarly institute strategic resource mobilization to fast-track the implementation of the SDGs.

### Endnotes

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139. Accessed from <https://www.civilserviceindia.com/subject/General-Studies/notes/important-aspects-of-governance.html>
140. For more information about the initiative please visit the UNPAN website at: <https://unpan.un.org/capacity-development/global-initiative-on-governance>
141. <https://publicadministration.un.org/unpsa/innovation-hub/Winners/2015-Winners/Huduma-Kenya-Program>