



**AFRICA CABINET
GOVERNMENT
NETWORK**



ROUNDTABLE WORKSHOP FOR AFRICAN CABINET SECRETARIES

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

Accra, 13-17 April 2015





Cover photos:

Top: Delegates engaged in discussions on key central government relationships.

Bottom: Delegates with H.E. John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana, following the opening ceremony.

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Acknowledgements

The Africa Cabinet Government Network is deeply grateful to the Government and people of the Republic of Ghana for the welcome, hospitality and opportunities provided to the Network through their hosting of this roundtable in Accra.

We are also very grateful for the support we are receiving from the UK Department for International Development's Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence (BCURE) programme. Finally, we wish to thank the hard working team from Adam Smith International which supported our roundtable workshop.

Adam Smith
International



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report documents proceedings of a roundtable workshop for African Cabinet Secretaries held in Accra, Ghana, from 13-17 April 2015.

The African Cabinet Government Network (ACGN) has been set up by Cabinet Secretaries to provide formal and informal opportunities for collaboration, mutual support and the sharing of practical experiences, to build capacity and provide technical help to improve executive government decision-making processes across much of Africa. It is governed by the Council of African Cabinet Secretaries.

The theme of this roundtable workshop was: ‘Transparency and Accountability in Policy Formulation and Delivery’. Under this theme, the focus was on the role of African Cabinet Secretaries and Cabinet Secretariats in supporting and enabling both evidence-informed policy development and evidence-informed policy delivery. Delegates also considered how to manage key relationships at the centre of government, the effective use of Cabinet committees, specific challenges associated with the legislative process, and strategies for building capacity for policy analysis in line ministries.

Reports were also given on progress made in ACGN member governments since the inaugural roundtable workshop in Addis Ababa in February 2014. Following identification of ongoing challenges, working sessions focused on the development of possible solutions. Delegates also worked on the development of the ACGN Policy Toolkit that will be available online for reference and use by African Cabinet secretariats and, as part of this, a matrix that captures and compares key information about different Cabinet systems across the network (see annex).

The workshop also included the annual meeting of the Council of African Cabinet Secretaries.

For more information on the ACGN and on this workshop, including presentation materials and other documents, see www.CabinetGovernment.net.

2. INTRODUCTION

This report summarises the discussions and agreements that took place during the second high-level roundtable meeting of the Africa Cabinet Government Network (ACGN). Following the first annual meeting in Addis Ababa early in 2014, this second meeting had more secretariats represented (thirteen in total) and more Cabinet Secretaries or Chief Secretaries than attended last year.

The theme of this second workshop was: ‘transparency and accountability in policy formulation and implementation’. The two sub-themes were ‘evidence literacy for policy-makers’ and ‘challenges of implementing Cabinet decisions’. Focusing on these issues, sessions included presentations and plenary discussions, panel discussions, group problem-solving and interactive sessions.

The intention of all sessions was to facilitate peer-learning – the sharing of experience and the identification of shared challenges and solutions – rather than relying on external ‘expert’ input. This built on a key factor behind the success of the first roundtable meeting in Addis Ababa – the fact that most input was from Cabinet Secretaries themselves or their senior staff.

Discussions in Accra were conducted under the Chatham House rule¹ so even though this report is based on examples and arguments taken from the discussions at the workshop, no contributors or speakers are identified by name and, with the exception of elements from the public opening ceremony, quotations are not attributed to any individual, organisation or government. Edited presentations will be uploaded to the ACGN website with the permission of authors.

This report is intended to provide delegates with a record of their discussions and agreements. It is also for individuals who were not present at the meeting – especially other African Cabinet Secretaries and secretariat staff – to share the learning that took place, and to encourage wider attendance at future meetings.

The report begins with the Communiqué agreed by workshop delegates at the annual meeting of the Council of African Cabinet Secretaries which governs the ACGN. It then outlines key issues presented throughout the week, key points of discussion and agreements reached during the workshop.

The workshop was developed and delivered by the ACGN in partnership with Adam Smith International with funding from the UK under the Department for International Development (DFID)'s Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence (BCURE) programme.

2.1 Workshop objectives

The prime objective for the workshop was for delegates to learn lessons from each other to improve transparency and accountability, in particular through greater use of evidence for policy development and implementation. The agenda for the week was flexible, with opportunity provided at the start for delegates to shape the week's agenda according to their own objectives. These objectives as identified by individuals and delegations were:

- ◆ To identify shared problems and solutions facing African Cabinet Secretariats;
- ◆ To define the different attributes and elements of evidence in policy-making;
- ◆ To understand the challenges of transparency and accountability and their impact;
- ◆ To identify ways to improve and standardise procedures for the submission of proposals to Cabinet;
- ◆ To identify mechanisms for effective public communication of Cabinet decisions;
- ◆ To understand why stakeholder consultations can fail to bring about transparency and accountability and how to ensure broad-based consultation that avoids the 'tyranny of the minority';
- ◆ To understand the challenges of implementing Cabinet decisions and to identify mechanisms that can support effective implementation;
- ◆ To consider how it might be possible to manage more effectively the relationships at the centre of government to foster or evidence-informed decision-making;

¹The Chatham House Rule: participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed.

- ◆ To introduce new colleagues to the ACGN; and
- ◆ To consider options for harnessing wider resources to enhance the independence and sustainability of the ACGN.

2.2 Opening ceremony

His Excellency John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana, accorded a great honour to the ACGN by opening the roundtable. He used his keynote address to highlight the important role that Cabinet Secretaries have in helping political leaders to decode evidence to make balanced and fair decisions in the interests of all citizens and in ensuring that these decisions are effectively and appropriately implemented.²

His Excellency the President commended ACGN's self-reliance in not being donor-dependent, emphasising that Africa needs home-grown solutions to its unique challenges. On behalf of African political leaders, he thanked delegates for their work behind the scenes before, during and after each Cabinet meeting to enable Cabinet members to focus on the key issues and to make sound decisions, and expressed his confidence that ACGN will meaningfully contribute towards ensuring that Africa's development becomes a more tangible reality by improving support for executive government decision-making.

In his welcoming address, Mr Roger K. Angsomwine, Cabinet Secretary of the Republic of Ghana, spoke emotively of public service as a vocation with service and public good at its very heart. He emphasised the necessity of Cabinet government efficiency for government productivity, service delivery and accountability to the people. He also appreciated ACGN for creating a platform for reflecting on critical issues of governance in Africa', and commended the unique approach in fostering peer group support and the exchange of technical assistance between Cabinet officials within the African continent. He expressed the hope that all countries in Africa would the network.

Dr. Ernest Surrur, President of the African Council of Cabinet Secretaries and Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service of Sierra Leone, thanked delegates for his election at the first roundtable in Addis Ababa in February 2014. He also expressed his desire for the ACGN to continue to grow across Africa, and extended a special welcome to secretariats represented at this roundtable for the first time: Tanzania, Botswana and Rwanda, as well as to the new the Director General of Cabinet from Liberia. He recognised the former Liberian Cabinet Secretary, Dr Rogers, who foresaw the benefits of this collaboration between Cabinet Secretaries five years ago and was instrumental in setting up the ACGN, and expressed gratitude for the UK support that has enabled the formal establishment of ACGN and greatly increased the breadth and depth of the network's reach. Finally, he expressed sincere gratitude to the Ghanaian government for their welcome, hospitality and input in hosting this roundtable meeting.

² Copies of this keynote address and others presented at the opening ceremony are being uploaded to the ACGN website: www.CabinetGovernment.net.

3. COMMUNIQUÉ

Communiqué by the Council of African Cabinet Secretaries

We affirm our commitment to strengthen each of our Cabinet Secretariats to drive evidence-informed decision-making by our Governments and the effective implementation of these decisions.

We recognize that, despite some differences among our systems of government, we share many common objectives and challenges. In particular, we share a strong commitment to ensure that policy proposals are informed by evidence, leading to decisions that can be successfully implemented and monitored.

We also resolve to assist our peers in other Cabinet Secretariats through the collective activities of the Africa Cabinet Government Network (ACGN). These activities include ongoing collaboration, mutual support and sharing practical experiences, as well as technical assistance, to help build the capacity of other members. Specific training workshops for policy analysts have been approved for July and September 2015 in Accra and Kampala respectively.

As a result of this Roundtable meeting in Accra, the Council of African Cabinet Secretaries has made a specific commitment to improve the transparency and accountability of policy formulation and implementation. In his keynote address to our meeting, His Excellency, John Dramani Mahama, the President of the Republic of Ghana, emphasised that governments “must ensure that we draw on evidence and opinion from all sources, especially affected communities, businesses and other stakeholders..... We need to ensure that the voices of powerful interest groups do not drown out the weak or the silent majority.”

His Excellency went on to recognize that “Cabinet Secretaries have an important role in this, to help decode the evidence and make balanced and fair decisions in the interests of all our citizens.”

At this Second Roundtable Meeting, we are especially pleased that the Cabinet Secretariats from Botswana, Rwanda and Tanzania, which were not present at the first meeting in Addis Ababa in February 2014, join this meeting. We also encourage other Cabinet Secretaries prepared to commit to our shared objectives. With an expanded group of Cabinet Secretaries, the ACGN will be able to build on this excellent foundation and learn more from one another about practical ways to support our Governments to make and implement policy for the good of our respective citizens.

In our Accra meeting we have also elected the new Director General of the Cabinet in Liberia, Jordan Sulonteh, as the Council’s Regional Vice President for West Africa.

We appreciate the three-year funding provided by the UK Government for the African Cabinet Government Network and thank Adam Smith International for supporting the workshop and other activities. We are also building other partnerships to allow us to broaden and deepen our contribution to African governance.

This Communiqué is issued by the participants of the Second Roundtable Meeting of African Cabinet Secretaries in Accra, Ghana, on 13-17 April 2015. The following Cabinet Secretaries were present or represented: Botswana, Ghana, Liberia, Malawi, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Somaliland, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zanzibar.



*Dr Ernest Surrur,
President, Council of African Cabinet Secretaries.*

*17 April 2015
Accra, Ghana*

Participants

Ms Kebonye Moepeng Secretary, Presidential Affairs and Public Administration, Botswana

Mr Ontiretse C. Letlhare Deputy Clerk to Cabinet, Botswana

Mr Roger Kwesi Angsomwine Cabinet Secretary, Ghana

Mr Alhaji A. Sadiq Director Cabinet, Ghana

Mr Jordan Sulonteh Director General of the Cabinet, Liberia

Mr Clement Chinthu Phiri Principal Secretary (Administration), Malawi

Mr Charles Karakye Economic Policy Analyst, Ministry of Cabinet Affairs, Rwanda

Mr Elias Turatsinze Governance Policy Analyst, Ministry of Cabinet Affairs, Rwanda

Dr Ernest Surrur Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service, Sierra Leone

Mr Samuel C. Bangura Assistant to Secretary to Cabinet, Sierra Leone

Mr Bashir Ahmed Osman Director, Council of Ministers, Somalia

Mr Abukar Mohamed Dahie Director of Administration, Finance and HR, Somalia

Mr Hassan Abdi Madar Director General, Ministry of Presidential Affairs, Somaliland

Mr Abdirahman Farah Hassan Secretary to Minister/Cabinet Secretary Assistant, Somaliland

Mr Salah Liwa Agili Director General, Ministry of Cabinet Affairs, South Sudan

Mr Gerson J.Mdemu Clerk to Cabinet, Tanzania

Mr Baraka Luvanda Coordinator, Tanzania

Mr Opio Vincent Lukone Deputy Head of Public Service & Deputy Cabinet Secretary, Uganda

Dr Abubakar Moki Commissioner for Policy Development and Capacity Building, Uganda

Mr Godfrey Kaima Principal Assistant Secretary, Uganda

Mr Bernard Kamphasa Permanent Secretary (Policy Analysis and Coordination), Zambia

Mr Crusiva Hichikumba Public Policy Specialist, Zambia

Dr Abdulhamid Y. Mzee Chief Secretary, Zanzibar

Mr. Salmin Amour Abdulla Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet, Zanzibar.

4. PROGRESS SINCE ADDIS ABABA

ACGN has developed steadily since the 2014 roundtable in Addis Ababa: new members have joined and the network has received proposals from a number of individual secretariats to obtain more intensive support for the development of evidence-based Cabinet procedures.

In a discussion on the final day of the Addis Ababa roundtable, delegations were invited to share what they had learned from the week together with priorities for action in their own Cabinet secretariats identified as a result. Continuing this focus on action and impact, the second roundtable meeting began with an invitation to reflect on what has been achieved since then by individual secretariats: what progress has been made, what success has been realised, and what issues either remain or have developed.

Key achievements identified by individual delegations included:

- ◆ building commitment to reform amongst Cabinet members that have been introduced to ACGN;
- ◆ establishment of one new fully functional Cabinet Secretariat;
- ◆ development and approval of new and/or updated Cabinet Handbooks or Manuals;
- ◆ establishment of standing Cabinet committees;
- ◆ establishment of technical committees to review Cabinet memoranda;³
- ◆ introduction of Cabinet memorandum formats;
- ◆ introduction of Cabinet agenda item request forms;
- ◆ introduction of Cabinet memoranda submissions guidelines (which have, inter alia, greatly reduced the number of submissions);
- ◆ introduction of Cabinet presentation guides;
- ◆ benefits from the ACGN training for policy analysts conducted in Kigali in August 2014 including implementation of memoranda review and analysis processes;
- ◆ delivery of policy analysis training within line ministries;
- ◆ ongoing capacity building of Secretariat staff;
- ◆ introduction of new strategies to support implementation monitoring: verbal updates requested during confirmation of Cabinet minutes; and
- ◆ increased focus on stakeholder consultation, ensuring inclusion of input from Ministries of Finance and Justice, rejecting memoranda that do not provide evidence of sufficient consultation, and ensuring that memoranda bear the signatures of all ministers consulted.

³ We have used the term 'memorandum' to refer to written proposals to Cabinet, as they are called by most of our members.

The importance of ACGN meetings in providing structure and focus to support these achievements was highlighted.

A number of ongoing challenges were also highlighted by delegates. These included:

- ◆ non-implementation of Cabinet decisions due to financial constraints;
- ◆ difficulties in accessing information on the status of implementation of decisions;
- ◆ Cabinet liaison officer networks not functioning or not working effectively, for example where Cabinet liaison officers have been appointed at an insufficient level of seniority;
- ◆ regular occurrence of 'pocket memos': papers that are produced from the pocket (or briefcase) during a meeting, often extra to the agenda and not circulated in accordance with Cabinet submission process;
- ◆ lack of sufficient or meaningful consultation; ministries being informed rather than consulted and providing comments during Cabinet meetings rather than in advance;
- ◆ difficulties monitoring implementation: over-reliance on unverified reports and challenges gaining access to information when Cabinet members are not directly responsible for implementation; and
- ◆ lack of environmental scanning by ministries to identify issues that require Cabinet approval: lack of capacity to foresee issues in time for consultation and preparation.

Delegates also discussed the challenge of motivating Cabinets to use evidence to inform their decisions in contexts where the policy-making process is typically driven largely by the debates and opinions of policy-makers rather than on objective assessment of evidence.

5. REVIEW OF CABINET PROCESSES

The roundtable received a presentation of the results of a baseline review that was conducted by three member secretariats to provide diagnostic advice, to provide a baseline to assess the impact of later changes, and to develop into an online self-assessment tool that other Cabinet Secretariats could use to analyse their own processes. This review analysed 178 decisions taken by the three Cabinets during 2013. It did not assume any one best practice model for Cabinet processes, and took great care to ensure the confidentiality of the Cabinet decisions that were subject to review.

Data from this review provides evidence to support the focusing of Secretariat reforms on addressing a number of key issues highlighted. These include:

- ◆ only just over half of the decisions analysed were based on written proposals;
- ◆ little evidence was included in Cabinet memoranda – especially little use of evidence to analyse options, to assess implementation or to consider risk;
- ◆ the majority of decisions were made on the basis of very little or no consultation with stakeholders, either within government or externally;

- ◆ the majority of decisions were made on the basis of very little or no assessment of cost; where financial information was presented, it rarely included any information on where the money was going to come from;
- ◆ many proposals were not explicitly linked to the national development plan;
- ◆ proposals supported by international advisers often failed to present options and used evidence that was indigestible and often one-sided; and
- ◆ most decisions were not subject to timely reporting (sometimes due to substantial delays in the dissemination of the decisions).

Delegates found the evidence presented to be of significant interest and suggested that these issues are common across secretariats within the network. They agreed that further reviews should be conducted on a regular basis in order to assess progress against this baseline and to provide further evidence to guide ongoing reforms. Other secretariats were encouraged to participate in future reviews in order to provide a wider and more representative sample.

The review methodology should also be extended to include assessment of implementation rates and issues. Some delegations expressed an interest in conducting a similar self-assessment as a diagnostic tool to support and guide future reform.

6. EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICY DEVELOPMENT

6.1 Government decision-making in a crisis

Delegates considered the experience of a number of governments that have faced crisis as a result of natural disaster, disease, conflict or other factors. The meeting agreed that the functions of decision-making and record-keeping, the procedures that support these and the role of the Cabinet and its secretariat become even more critical during times of crisis.

The experience of a number of delegations was that at such times of crisis the challenges to effective Cabinet governance multiply. Established procedures are often ignored, roles and responsibilities become unclear, normal processes are side-lined, ministers find themselves bypassed and key decisions are often taken without written proposals, presented analysis or consultation. At the same time the complexity of supporting political leaders in managing policy processes multiplies during times of crisis. Distrust within government, differing agendas, sudden influxes of international donors and the need for speed can all lead to key decisions being made outside Cabinet and/or with little assessment of wider or unexpected impacts and little evidence to support any analysis or conclusion.

It was also mentioned that it can be difficult to normalise – to ‘turn off’ crisis management systems once a crisis has passed. If emergency powers have been granted or new institutions established these can be resistant to revocation. Cabinets need to consider when business-as-usual should be re-established and other national priorities be addressed.

Lessons shared by delegates in terms of how to best support evidence-informed decision-making in the face of crisis included:

- ◆ focus on speeding up normal decision-making processes rather than ignoring, bypassing or substituting for them;

- ◆ ensure absolute clarity of decision-making roles and responsibilities; and
- ◆ be cautious of tactical use of evidence – look out for evidence that is one-sided or so focused on the crisis issue as to ignore wider potential implications.

6.2 Reviewing policy proposals using evidence

Policy proposals must be based on evidence in order to enable a genuine exchange of ideas in committees and in Cabinet, with all Ministers being well informed about the implications of their decisions. By reviewing policy proposals, especially the use of evidence, Cabinet secretariats play a critical role in supporting evidence-based decision-making and achieving the benefits illustrated below:



One presentation outlined how a secretariat had built on the momentum generated and the skills developed at the ACGN Policy Analysts Training Workshop in Kigali in 2014 to introduce a new process of reviewing and questioning the content of proposals prior to their consideration by Cabinet and committees. Following this process, analysts within the secretariat now search for information relevant to the issue under consideration (the full range of information, not just information which supports one position), and consider if there is evidence to support what is claimed and if all critical information has been presented. Analysts use a simple form with thirteen key questions to guide their analysis, assessing memoranda against each point and using the findings from this exercise to form the basis of the analysis and recommendations.

Analysts also use a simple reference list of key sources of information that commonly provide evidence to inform the analysis (see table below). Some of these evidence sources are local, some regional, others international; together they provide a useful starting point for informing most analysis.

Key evidence sources	For...
National Constitution	Overarching legal framework
National budget documents	Fiscal information
National Development Plan	National policy goals and priorities
African Development Bank	Comparator country profiles and evidence by sector
African Economic Outlook	Comparator country profiles and evidence by sector
Open data for Africa	National data and country comparators
World Bank	Open Knowledge Repository and Open Data
OECD	Key information searchable by topic and country

Key evidence sources	For...
UK Department for International Development	Key information searchable by theme and country
International Initiative for Impact Evaluation	Key evidence by sector and by country
Global Health Repository	World Health Statistics, health data by theme
Food and Agricultural Organisation	Information by sector and comparable country data
Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative	Comparable country profiles
International Labour Organisation	Research on employment and labour standards
Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces	Security sector reform handbooks and policy papers

Most of these sources are available online, so reliable internet access is important.

Depending on the nature of the issue, the secretariat then either shares the analysis and recommendations with the originating ministry or with the relevant Cabinet committee, which will conduct its own analysis using the secretariat's analysis as a starting point.

Three key challenges to the introduction of this function as outlined by the presenter were:

1. Acceptance: of policy analysis as a legitimate function of the secretariat and of a perception that secretariat staff were 'challenging' Ministers;
2. Access: knowing where to find information and evidence, and to the internet; and
3. Ability: building the necessary capacity and having sufficient resources to conduct the policy analysis process.

In response to these points, delegates emphasised the importance of endorsement by the Minister of Cabinet Affairs (or equivalent) to ensure that analysis is accepted, and of supporting analysts to engage closely with line ministries in order to build their technical knowledge of different sectors, to ensure that line ministries understand the quality and value of analysis and advice from the secretariat, and to build relationships to assist in the coordination of the overall policy development process.

It was also suggested that secretariats should assess their own structures and resources to ensure that they have the required capacity to perform the analysis function, and that policy analysts should ensure that Cabinet memoranda are clearly linked to government budgets and strategic plans. Finally consideration was given to how to assess and demonstrate the value and outcomes of policy review functions.

6.3 Dealing with proposals for legislation

One presenter outlined the challenges of managing the process from policy formation to legislation in a context where backlogs of legislation mean bills can take up to five years to reach Parliament.

Cabinet members are currently presented with often lengthy draft bills on complex issues, frequently drafted by international advisers. These draft laws are frequently submitted to Cabinet without any policy analysis or policy recommendations that consider, for example, other options or issues in implementing the proposed legislation. Their consideration is sometimes the first time that Cabinet

has considered the policy issues involved and the draft laws do not provide an appropriate basis for discussion of such issues.

Other challenges include a lack of legal expertise within government, lack of capacity to review complex drafts and lack of coordination of the legislative process. There are often delays when draft laws are copied from other countries with sometimes inappropriate provisions and with translations by non-specialist translators, who lack the skills to draft legislation in the local language. Pressure from donors to pass laws can also lead to a lack of consideration of the feasibility of implementation according to the local context.

A number of approaches were identified to help tackle these challenges:

1. Adopting a two-stage process, ensuring that policy decisions are taken by Cabinet on the need for the legislation and its main features, before draft laws are submitted to Cabinet;
2. Establishing a specific legislation committee within Cabinet to coordinate and review draft laws, supported by a legislation unit within the secretariat;
3. Building legal drafting capacity within the centre of government as well as in line ministries to build capacity and source expertise for legal drafting; and
4. Developing detailed guidelines on the drafting process to improve the appropriateness and consistency of draft laws prepared by ministries, international advisers and others.

Delegates also agreed on the importance of understanding the link within the two stages described in 1 above – policy and legislation. Ensuring that this process is followed helps to streamline the number of draft laws being developed and to ensure that laws are not passed without a clear understanding of the ‘mischief’ that they are intended to address. The process also avoids wasting limited legislative drafting capacity.

7. IMPLEMENTING CABINET DECISIONS

7.1 Evidence-informed policy delivery

The roundtable considered a presentation on the increasing prominence of Programme Delivery Units (PDUs), which have come to be widely seen as key institutional drivers of implementation at the centre of government. The presentation covered the success of the PDU model in driving delivery of government priorities in the UK and focused on the use of problem solving reviews (delivered in partnership with line ministries, sharply focused on key delivery issues and firmly rooted in evidence and data) and a service delivery model based on enhanced coordination between key central offices working on policy priorities (e.g. Office of the President or Prime Minister, Cabinet Secretariat and Policy Unit). The PDU model emphasizes partnership working, trust, sharing of responsibility and credit for success, frontline know-how, and impartial, evidence based problem solving using the following questions:

- ◆ What are you trying to do?
- ◆ How are you trying to do it?
- ◆ How, at any given moment, will you know you are on track?

- ◆ If you are not on track, what are you going to do about it?
- ◆ Can we help?

Delegates discussed a number of issues relating to the application of the PDU model to drive evidence-informed policy delivery. One participant expressed concern about the prominence of delivery units at the centre of government in environments where service delivery is devolved to local governments, especially as many local governments are significantly under-resourced and so incapable of high standards of delivery (local-level issues such as lack of capacity, underpay and lack of equipment cannot be circumvented through establishment of a high-level delivery unit at the centre).

Discussion also focused on strategies for ensuring the institutional sustainability of PDUs that are typically tied to the tenure of the political leaders who often introduce them to focus on their own strategic priorities to promote their desired political legacy. One solution suggested was to embed a PDU within the Cabinet secretariat (rather than in the leader's office) in order to ensure that the unit has the collective sanction of Cabinet.

One delegate questioned the relevance of the PDU model based on UK experience to the different challenges faced in Africa. Another questioned how PDUs get funded, as it is difficult to dedicate budgets to the tracking of implementation. There was widespread support for the conceptual shift from 'policy delivery' to 'service delivery'.

Delegates were also very interested in the potential application of E-government to eradicate 'ghost workers'; this was an example given in the presentation of the application and effectiveness of the PDU approach.

7.2 Supporting implementation of Cabinet decisions

Policy implementation is a continuous process of trial and modification, hence the need for continuous monitoring and evaluation and feedback. One strategic objective of Cabinet secretariats should be to ensure the use of accurate, relevant, and timely monitoring and evaluation information. This is not only important evidence for Cabinets to use in reviewing progress and reviewing or fine-tuning previous decisions, but also a valuable evidence source for future policy decisions. Many decisions taken by African Cabinets are not implemented in a timely and effective way because the proposals upon which they were based lacked evidence that they could be implemented and would work.

A series of presentations from delegates focused on the challenges associated with this role of supporting the implementation of Cabinet decisions: on reporting on results, ensuring evidence on implementation is used in decision-making, and disseminating Cabinet decisions. Key issues covered included:

- ◆ the need to focus on monitoring and reporting on outcomes, not just activities;
- ◆ the need to ensure that policies are linked to strategic priorities (for example from a national development plan, Annual Message or Presidential political priorities) in order to maintain incentives for delivery;
- ◆ ensuring monitoring cycles that are neither too short nor too long so that neither 'big picture' information is lost nor opportunities to fix problems missed;
- ◆ the application of ministerial performance contracts and/or performance contracts with officials at lower levels (delegates discussed how to ensure that other issues are not

overlooked if Cabinet focuses on priorities set in performance contracts only, and on whether the management of performance contracts should be the responsibility of the Cabinet secretariat or should fall elsewhere);

- ◆ the importance of having a dedicated implementation monitoring function within Cabinet secretariats; and
- ◆ the challenge of ensuring that Cabinet decisions are communicated as necessary to implementing agencies without endangering confidentiality of sensitive information.

On the last of these issues, one secretariat reported a review of the classification of Cabinet documents, using the following revised classification system to ensure that sensitive information is protected but, at the same time, decisions are conveyed promptly to those who have to implement them:

- Top secret – conveying decisions on recommendations that have been rejected
- Secret – conveying decisions on recommendations that are accepted in principle
- Confidential – conveying decisions on recommendations that have been accepted for implementation.

Another secretariat reported use of a summary matrix to record all Cabinet decisions and track their implementation using a simple traffic light system indicating whether resolutions are completed, in progress, delayed or at risk, along with a summary of the reasons why. For resolutions that require more complex multi-stakeholder implementation or relate to major priorities, more detailed information was reported on tracking forms based on the implementation plans that are submitted along with Cabinet memoranda. For these more complex issues the secretariat also tracked time-bound deliverables, sequential activities and costs.

Another secretariat reported their process of quarterly data collection through formal meetings with administrative and technical staff in implementing agencies. These monitoring meetings focused on identifying reasons for failure or delay to enable implementation blockages to be addressed and to provide evidence to be taken into account in future policy decision-making.

Key considerations and requirements that were identified by the roundtable in relation to enabling effective implementation monitoring were:

- ◆ the need to build demand for implementation evidence and receptivity to the monitoring process;
- ◆ the availability of implementation evidence and access to this evidence (including acceptance of information requests by implementing agencies);
- ◆ individual and institutional capacity to use implementation evidence;
- ◆ the challenge of lack of specified timeframes in many implementation plans;
- ◆ the need to determine what priority decisions to actively monitor; and
- ◆ the need to understand and manage the reality that political imperatives may obscure evidence on reasons for failure or delay.

8. MANAGING KEY RELATIONSHIPS

The quality of relationships with individuals (seniors, peers and subordinates) determine the results that can be achieved. A highly interactive session was based on exploring the implications and opportunities offered by this fact, alongside the premise that ‘the success of an intervention depends on the interior condition of the intervener’ or, in other words, that effectiveness also depends on a clear understanding of the self in relation to others.

Delegates were asked to work in small groups to answer the following questions:

- ◆ What are the key relationships that are most important to the success of your work?
- ◆ What are the critical challenges you face in managing these key relationships?

Key relationships identified included the relationship with the President, Prime Minister or Chair of Cabinet, and with individual ministers and members of Cabinet. Critical challenges included:

- ◆ building trust and respecting confidentiality of sensitive political matters;
- ◆ managing limited information sharing between line ministries;
- ◆ ensuring clear and transparent communication;
- ◆ managing expectations (of the President, of Cabinet, of the secretariat);
- ◆ being able to read the mood of the President and knowing how and when to present issues accordingly; and
- ◆ managing relationships between individual Ministers and enabling all to contribute in Cabinet, particularly where some enjoy ‘superior’ status.

Delegates were then asked to consider what it would take for them to manage these relationships more effectively. Strategies identified in response were:

- ◆ investing in getting to know people well and establishing coalitions of relationships;
- ◆ bringing people together in order to enable challenges to be addressed openly and frankly (through orientations, regular Cabinet briefing sessions or Cabinet Retreats);
- ◆ not relying only on Cabinet meetings but also using one-to-one conversations to enable the giving of advice in private;
- ◆ following rules but not too rigidly: knowing how and when to also exercise flexibility;
- ◆ avoiding power struggles: ensuring Cabinet members know you are there to support them, to help them rather than to help the secretariat, and avoiding taking credit;
- ◆ identifying gatekeepers at every level of government, understanding their power and knowing how to work with them;

- ◆ not being blocked by feelings of self-importance or hierarchy: understanding the context in which drivers or cleaners can be both influential and very knowledgeable; and
- ◆ being genuine and being seen to be genuine, ensuring that you only speak the truth and letting people realise that you share a common agenda and want to cooperate.

Following these discussions delegates split into groups for ‘case clinics.’⁴ During this session, each group was guided through a process in which one delegated presented a case – a leadership challenge that was current, concrete and important – and group members acted as consultants to help generate new ways of framing the issue and develop new approaches for responding to it. These case clinics were highly appreciated by delegates; they resulted in concrete and innovative ideas for how to respond to pressing leadership challenges, and high levels of trust and positive energy amongst the delegate groups.

9. BUILDING CAPACITY

9.1 Effective use of Cabinet committees

The establishment of Cabinet committees can be an effective way to lessen the burden on Cabinet, to enable complex issues to be discussed in a smaller forum, to improve the quality of decisions and to allow more timely decision-making. They can be particularly important if Cabinet is large.

Through a delegate’s presentation and subsequent plenary discussion, shared challenges to the effective use of Cabinet committees were identified, including how to encourage Cabinet members to attend committee meetings and how to enable committees to hold evidence-informed discussions, especially in situations where support staff have limited capacity. Delegates agreed on the importance of developing clear terms of reference to differentiate the role of committees, of providing guidance for committee chairs to support inclusive and effective discussions, and of developing a clear process for reporting committee recommendations to Cabinet and avoiding repeated discussion in full Cabinet meetings.

Delegates also agreed on the importance of physical space and that the environment in which committee meetings are held must be conducive to thought and considered debate.

9.2 Strategies for building capacity for policy analysis in line ministries

Finding and using evidence to identify and assess options and support recommendations that in turn support effective decisions requires skilled policy analysts in line ministries to collect and analyse relevant evidence from many sources, including from stakeholders likely to be affected. This is in addition to skilled policy analysts in Cabinet secretariats to help Cabinet members to assess and interpret the evidence that is presented. Recognising this, a panel discussion focused on opportunities and approaches to support the development of wider policy analysis skills in government ministries and agencies.

Panellists were in agreement that, when it comes to donor-sponsored capacity building, too many technical assistance projects only look inwards to build the capacity of central agencies. Instead it should be the aim not only to build the capacity of the Cabinet Secretariat but also, through the

⁴For more information on the ‘case clinic’ approach, see: www.presencing.com/tools/case-clinics.

secretariat, to strengthen the policy analysis capacity of the whole government system. This is necessary because 'good' policies cannot be entirely driven from the centre.

The view of the panel was that the best way for Cabinet secretariats to support policy development in line ministries is through provision of dedicated skills training developed and delivered in partnership with a civil service training college or similar. Panellists emphasised the need for both skills and processes to support policy analysis, as well as an enabling environment to encourage the use of evidence: for example citizens and media that demand evidence use in policy making. One delegate suggested that it was best to focus on setting up processes first as these can be beneficial even if capacity is lacking.

Panellists emphasised the importance of conducting targeted needs assessments before developing training packages, and of developing training materials with direct input from training participants in order to ensure relevance. Panellists also stressed that a learner-centred approach is critical to capacity building and the pedagogical skills of trainers are therefore critical.

Sustainability is also critical: capacity building efforts should begin by identifying what already exists and building on this, supporting existing institutions and processes rather than creating new ones.

Plenary discussion after the panel presentations focused on the different levels of capacity in line ministries, considering how the provision of orientation sessions for new Ministers and workshops on Cabinet procedures can help build the capacity of Cabinet members themselves, while training workshops aimed at lower technical levels should focus on information gathering skills, helping officials to understand the use of research and evidence in their work, knowing how to access and assess information, report writing, presentation skills and knowing how to communicate it to decision-makers in ways that are accessible.

One delegate reminded colleagues that it is the job of Cabinet Secretaries to reinforce the development of the right skills and processes at lower level to contribute to effective policy analysis. Another spoke of the importance of helping policy analysts in line ministries to build connections across sectors (e.g. with universities, journalists, unions) to engage stakeholders and build coalitions to input to and influence policy development.

9.3 ACGN policy toolkit and matrix

The secretariat outlines progress in developing the ACGN Policy Toolkit to assist Cabinet secretariats and others in building both institutional and individual capacities to support evidence-informed Cabinet decision-making. Delegates welcomed the outline contents and structure of the ACGN Policy Toolkit and agreed that once developed the toolkit will be a useful tool for information sharing, capacity building and supporting effective Cabinet decision-making across their jurisdictions.

Key components included sources of evidence, policy roles of secretariats and line ministries, Cabinet procedures, memorandum templates, checklists and use of Cabinet standing committees.,

Delegates requested a few changes or additions to the draft outline as presented, including:

- ◆ The toolkit should include sections on managing Cabinet Retreats, supporting relationships between Ministers and Permanent Secretaries, controlling 'pocket memos', managing Ministerial travel and Cabinet seating arrangements.
- ◆ The structure of the toolkit should give greater prominence to the sections on monitoring and implementation and on consultation.
- ◆ Online content should be separated into public and confidential sections.

- ◆ The online site should include a forum for the provision of mutual advice and support.

As part of the toolkit, delegates also developed a matrix (see annex), which captures key information on specific aspects of the different Cabinet systems across the network. Although still incomplete, this draft matrix can be used to identify options for reform as desired, and to identify sources of information and comparison across ACGN secretariats.

10. ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF AFRICAN CABINET SECRETARIES

On Thursday-Friday 16-17 April the Council held its annual meeting for 2015. Key agenda items included:

- ◆ a report on formal registration of the Africa Cabinet Government Network as an International Non-Government Organisation based in Sierra Leone, together with establishment of bank accounts;
- ◆ an oral report by the Executive Director on ACGN activities since the previous annual meeting in February 2014, including the Policy Analysts Training Programme conducted in Kigali in August 2014, ongoing support for the Cabinet secretariats in South Sudan, Liberia, South Sudan and Somaliland, and proposals for additional support;
- ◆ election of Mr Jordan Sulonteh, Director General of the Cabinet in Liberia, as the Vice President for West Africa to replace Dr Rogers;
- ◆ discussion of strategic options and possible activities for the future;
- ◆ possible delivery and funding mechanisms for ACGN activities; and
- ◆ membership fees and other funding sources.

The chairperson, Dr Surrur, highlighted that the current funding support from DFID being managed through Adam Smith International is due to end in mid-2016. The meeting agreed that the ACGN should prioritize resource mobilization and engagement with diverse partners to ensure the sustainability and independence of its objectives and activities.

The Council meeting reviewed options for membership fees, other fund raising and a draft 3-year programme and indicative budget prepared by the Executive Director. Following consideration of the recommendations of a sub-committee chaired by Mr Sulonteh, by majority vote the meeting to a flat of USD 10,000 per calendar year for all member secretariats, commencing in 2016, based on a formal membership agreement to be signed with each secretariat.

The meeting also agreed that the headquarters of the organisation should remain in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Throughout the meeting and in the Communiqué unanimously agreed by delegates (see section 3 above), members emphasised their commitment to maintain and expand the role of the Network in supporting evidence-informed decision-making for the development of Africa.

11. CONCLUSION

On the final day of the roundtable, delegates were invited to consider what they had learned during the week and to identify priorities for action in their own Cabinet secretariats as a result. The action plans that were developed are not captured within this report, as they were for each individual's own use. However planned next steps that were shared by delegates included:

- ◆ supporting provision and use of evidence in decision-making;
- ◆ improving Cabinet proposal submission system;
- ◆ ensuring consistent consultation to inform Cabinet decisions;
- ◆ Establishing a system of standing committees;
- ◆ Introducing e-Cabinet;
- ◆ Facilitating the follow-up of Cabinet decisions and monitoring of policy implementation;
- ◆ Building the capacity of Cabinet secretariat staff and those in line ministries;
- ◆ Extending advice from just technical to some aspects of relationships, opening up discussions without being judgmental or fearful and giving honest feedback; and
- ◆ Revisiting the current Cabinet system in relation to some elements of the ACGN matrix.

Delegates also expressed their commitment to share workshop materials with colleagues back in their offices, and more than one delegate provided feedback that they had been reinvigorated and were now more appreciative of their role.

During the closing ceremony, delegates were reminded of the scale of the challenges that they face and of the need to look inwards to develop their own personal leadership skills and influencing ability in order to meet that challenge. They were invited to reflect on the unique role and character of African Cabinets, rather than considering them only as Cabinets in Africa, and to focus on maintaining the traditions of Africa within the systems that they are all building.

The independence of the ACGN was recognised, as was the strong collective leadership of the network.

ANNEX: Draft ACGN Matrix

	ACGN Cabinet Secretariats – comparative matrix (last updated September 2015)	Botswana	Ghana	Liberia	Malawi	Rwanda	S. Leone	Somalia	Somali- Land	S. Sudan	Tanzania	Uganda	Zambia	Zanzibar
	<i>Secretariat functions</i>													
1	Secretariat acts as gatekeeper to Cabinet		•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	
2	Secretariat provides advice on managing conflicts of interest	•		•	•		•	•	•				•	
3	Secretariat has role in monitoring Minister performance contracts		•	•		•		•						
4	Secretariat provides policy capacity building across government		•		•	•	•				•	•	•	
5	Secretariat provides policy advice across government		•			•	•					•	•	
6	Secretariat provides strategic leadership on policy development		•									•	•	
7	Secretariat conducts analysis of content of Cabinet memoranda	•	•	•		•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•
8	Secretariat provides periodic implementation reports to Cabinet		•	•		•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•
9	Secretariat actively supports policy development in line ministries		•	•	•	•	•	•			•	•	•	
10	Secretariat includes a legislative drafting unit				•			•						
11	Secretariat independently verifies implementation reports	•		•	•	•	•	•	•		•		•	
12	Cabinet liaison officers or focal points in Ministries actively support Cabinet process ⁱ		•	•		•	•			•	•	•	•	
13	Secretariat conducts orientation for new Cabinet members	•	•		•	•						•		
14	Secretariat gives training to Cabinet liaison officers or equivalent	•	•	•	•	•	•			•		•		
	<i>Structural aspects</i>													
15	Cabinet Handbook or Manual is in place and is usually followed	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•

	ACGN Cabinet Secretariats – comparative matrix (last updated September 2015)	Botswana	Ghana	Liberia	Malawi	Rwanda	S. Leone	Somalia	Somali-land	S. Sudan	Tanzania	Uganda	Zambia	Zanzibar
16	Permanent standing Cabinet committees are constituted	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
17	Ad hoc committees are constituted to consider specific issues	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
18	Network of Cabinet liaison officers or focal points in place		•	•		•	•	•		•	•	•	•	
19	Senior technical panel reviews content of Cabinet memoranda	•	•	•	•		•			•	•		•	
20	Cabinet Secretariat is integrated within Head of State's office	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•
21	Guidelines are in place for the legislative drafting process	•			•	•	•	•			•	•	•	•
22	Joint retreats (Ministers/Permanent Secretaries) held regularly ⁱⁱ	•	•	•		•						•		
23	Secretariat staff receive formal orientation in Cabinet processes	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
24	Training programme for policy development is available		•	•		•	•		•			•	•	
25	Guide on policy development in place and used	•	•		•	•			•			•	•	
26	Some elements of e-Cabinet are in place	•	•		•	•		•				•	•	
27	Cabinet Secretary usually changes when government changes		•	•	•									
28	Secretariat includes a monitoring and evaluation unit ⁱⁱⁱ		•		•	•	•					•		
29	Policy analysis units exist in line ministries	•	•									•		
30	How many members of Cabinet are there?	19	19	28	20	33	26	65	67	23	30	75	22	23
31	How many staff are in the Secretariat?	6	27	3	10	12	39	6	3	10	18	15	15	6
	<i>Before Cabinet</i>													

	ACGN Cabinet Secretariats – comparative matrix (last updated September 2015)	Botswana	Ghana	Liberia	Malawi	Rwanda	S. Leone	Somalia	Somali-land	S. Sudan	Tanzania	Uganda	Zambia	Zanzibar
32	Cabinet committees review all proposals before Cabinet	•	•		•	•		•		•	•			•
33	Secretariat supports proactive identification of agenda items	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•
34	Ministries use request form to add an item to Cabinet agenda		•	•		•		•						
35	Standard process is followed for all or most Cabinet submissions	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•
36	Standard format is used for most Cabinet memoranda	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•
37	Most Cabinet memoranda submitted a week or more in advance	•	•		•	•	•			•	•	•	•	
38	Secretariat uses checklist to review Cabinet memoranda	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	
39	Some memos submitted to Cabinet with insufficient evidence	•	•	•	•	•	•			•	•	•	•	•
40	Cabinet memos are sent back to originator if options not assessed	•	•		•	•	•	•		•	•		•	•
41	Cabinet memoranda are accompanied by a record of consultation	•	•		•	•	•			•	•	•	•	•
42	Clear criteria in place and followed for determining agenda items	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
43	Cabinet agenda is approved prior to Cabinet meetings	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	
44	Memos are sent back if no comments from Ministry of Justice	•	•		•	•	•				•	•		
45	Memos are sent back if no comments from Ministry of Finance	•	•		•	•	•	•			•	•		
46	Secretariat uses checklist to review policy development process		•	•		•	•	•		•	•	•	•	
47	Summary of agenda items is prepared for Cabinet Chair	•	•	•	•	•	•		•			•	•	

	ACGN Cabinet Secretariats – comparative matrix (last updated September 2015)	Botswana	Ghana	Liberia	Malawi	Rwanda	S. Leone	Somalia	Somali-land	S. Sudan	Tanzania	Uganda	Zambia	Zanzibar
48	Annotated agenda summary is prepared for Cabinet members		•			•	•					•		
49	Secretariat provides guidance for presenters of agenda items	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
50	Secretariat briefs Committee chairs on content of memoranda ^{iv}		•		•	•		•	•	•	•		•	•
51	Secretariat briefs Cabinet Chairperson on content of memoranda	•	•		•	•	•	•		•	•		•	•
52	How many Cabinet memoranda are received in an average week?	8	3	3-5	8	8	3	8		8	2	8	5	
During Cabinet														
53	Secretariat takes minutes of Cabinet	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	
54	Issues sometimes raised and discussed at Cabinet without memos	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•		•	•
55	Deputy Ministers attend Cabinet in absence of Ministers	•	•	•	•		•		•		•	•		
56	Cabinet agendas include oral updates on status of decisions		•			•	•		•				•	
57	Policy memoranda are approved before draft bills submitted	•	•	•	•	•	•				•	•	•	•
58	How many times per month does Cabinet meet on average?	4	2	2-4	4	2	2	4	4	6	2	4	2	2
59	How many items will typically be on the Cabinet agenda?	20	11	3-5	5	10 -15	15	5	6	4	4	6	7	
60	How many hours do Cabinet meetings typically last?	4	5	3	5	3	7	4	3	3	2	4	2	
After Cabinet														
61	Mechanism in place to track implementation of Cabinet decisions	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
62	Secretariat tracks implementation of most Cabinet decisions	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•
63	Mechanism exists for public communication of Cabinet decisions	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	

	ACGN Cabinet Secretariats – comparative matrix (last updated September 2015)	Botswana	Ghana	Liberia	Malawi	Rwanda	S. Leone	Somalia	Somali-land	S. Sudan	Tanzania	Uganda	Zambia	Zanzibar
64	Cabinet resolutions are promptly published in official gazette ^v													
65	Media briefing occurs after Cabinet meetings ^{vi}		•							•		•		

ⁱ In Uganda this is done by Policy Analysis Units in Ministries

ⁱⁱ In Rwanda, Government Retreats involve Ministers, Ministers of State, Permanent Secretaries, other senior government officials and some development partners.

ⁱⁱⁱ In Rwanda, the Government Action Coordination Unit within the Cabinet Secretariat is responsible for M&E.

^{iv} In South Sudan this briefing is done orally.

^v In Rwanda, Cabinet resolutions are posted on the Government website.

^{vi} In Uganda this media briefing is done on a Thursday after Cabinet meets on a Wednesday and is given by the Minister of Information and National Guidance.