



# **The Africa Cabinet Government Network**

Inaugural Roundtable Workshop for Cabinet Secretaries  
Addis Ababa, February 2014

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Welcome to the inaugural Roundtable  
Workshop of the Africa Cabinet  
Government Network



## Outline

I want to do just 3 things this morning:

1. Introduce the **Africa Cabinet Government Network (ACGN)** for those not already familiar with it;
2. Briefly describe our **Africa Cabinet Decision-Making (ACD) programme**, of which this workshop is part;
3. Outline the purposes and agenda of this inaugural workshop.

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## Africa Cabinet Government Network

- **What we do:**
  - Provide **peer support** and smaller-scale technical help to Cabinet Secretariats based on insider experience
- **Who is participating:**
  - **Interim Board:** Cabinet Secretaries of Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Liberia
  - **Other Secretariats attending this workshop:** Zambia, Ghana, Malawi, Ethiopia, Uganda and Somalia, as well as the secretariats from Somaliland and Zanzibar
  - Rwanda unable to attend.

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### **Brief history:**

- **stemmed from work and discussions with Cabinet Secretaries/officials**
  - eg in Egypt, Libya, South Sudan, Zimbabwe, Liberia
- has taken some years to get to this point
- already brought together Cabinet Secretaries from **Ghana and Sierra Leone** with help from UNDP and IBSA (India Brazil South Africa fund)
- some of us met in Kigali last year at the African Association for Public Administration and Management (**AAPAM**).

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### **Demand-driven:**

- **not donor-driven**, but driven by Cabinet Secretaries and the Interim Director
- recognises **unique role** of the Cabinet Secretary
- also involves **other senior secretariat staff** to build institutions and provide continuity
- while there are other forums where some of us meet (eg AAPAM, Commonwealth and AU meetings), **there was no vehicle to bring together African Cabinet Secretaries**
- we face many **common challenges** despite differences in our government systems.

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### **Common challenges:**

- the **quality of proposals** coming to Cabinet
- considering the **impact on other ministries/ sectors**
- **collaborative leadership** to respond to priority issues (eg security; teenage pregnancy)
  - especially when performance agreements discourage cooperation
- effective working relationships between **Ministers and civil servants**
- tracking **implementation** of decisions
- relationships at **centre of government**...

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- **Ensuring Cabinet decides policy, not donors**
  - donors sometimes make collaboration harder
  - sector-specific support often driven by international advisers with no understanding of Cabinet's role
  - repeated declarations (eg 2005 Paris Declaration) that national ownership of development is critical
- **Getting decisions that can be (and are) implemented**
  - proposals need to analyse implementation issues and risks.

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## Africa Cabinet Decision-Making (ACD) Programme



- This workshop is part of our ACD Programme:
  - 3 year **funding from UK** under DFID's 'Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence' (BCURE) programme
  - aims to build the capacity of African Cabinet Governments to make better evidence-based decisions
  - delivered by Adam Smith International in partnership with ACGN
  - is providing varying support for 12 Secretariats.



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## ACD Programme

Includes practical advice and peer support for:

- **confidential process reviews** to diagnose current performance and track improvements
- **revising Cabinet procedures** – eg to give Ministers opportunity to review proposals and seek advice
- **standard format for Cabinet proposals** to ensure necessary evidence provided
  - on needs, likely impact of proposals, funding and implementation
- **Cabinet liaison networks** with liaison officers or focal persons in each Ministry...



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- **effective Cabinet standing committees** for technical advice and collaboration
- **strengthening analytic capacity in Cabinet secretariats**
- **building capacity of line ministry personnel** to assess evidence and prepare Cabinet proposals
- **helping Ministers** to implement new Cabinet procedures and seek evidence-based policy advice.

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## ACD support

ACD will provide support through:

- **technical advisers** in selected Secretariats
- **high level international workshops** to share practical experiences, this being the first
- **international training workshops** (eg e-Cabinet)
- **an evidence-based policy toolkit**
- **on-line networking**

Further information: [www.CabinetGovernment.net](http://www.CabinetGovernment.net).

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## Roundtable Workshop

- This is the **inaugural workshop** for ACGN
- Two main **purposes**:
  1. To share experience on how our secretariats can better support our Cabinets, especially to improve their decision-making through use of evidence.
  2. To expand the Africa Cabinet Government Network, agree on its governance arrangements and identify priorities for future activities.

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## Workshop agenda

- Proposed agenda is just a guide – we all should control the agenda
  - we can consider suggestions in the next session
- Key features of the draft agenda
  - most presentations by Cabinet Secretaries, focused on practical issues – not here to be lectured on theory
  - case studies and exercises
  - plenty of space for formal/informal discussion.

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## Summary of proposed agenda

Day	Specific theme
Monday	Introduction and use of evidence to inform decisions
Tuesday	Cabinet procedures (incl. discussion of real Cabinet proposals), followed by site visits
Wednesday	Role of Cabinet Secretaries and first annual meeting of ACGN
Thursday	Policy role of secretariats and line ministries (incl. more case discussions)
Friday	Feedback, planning and agreement to communiqué.

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I look forward to:

- meeting some of you for the first time,
- some lively discussion and interaction, and
- ongoing cooperation and mutual support.

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