



## Strengthening Cabinet Operations in Sub-Saharan Africa



### Presentation

*Mark Johnston, Executive Director, Africa Cabinet Government Network*

### Discussants

*Chiara Bronchi, Practice Manager, Governance Global Practice (Africa)*

*Kathrin Plangemann, Lead Public Sector Specialist (Africa)*

### Chair

*Robert Beschel*

*Global Lead, Center of Government  
Governance Global Practice*

**Wednesday, June 21, from 12:30 to 2:00 p.m.**

**Room J4-044**

### Description

While much attention surrounding Center of Government reforms in Africa has focused upon delivery units, other promising reforms are moving forward that have important implications for Bank clients throughout Sub-Saharan Africa and beyond. One of the most important areas involves the reform of cabinet operations. Sitting at the apex of government, cabinets are the primary forum for government deliberation and decisionmaking and play a critical role in policy

formulation and coordination. When cabinet operations are performed well, agencies with a stake in various policies are consulted and their views are reflected. Decisions are carefully vetted for their cost, legality and consistency with established policy positions. When performed poorly, some analyses have indicated that as many as half to two-thirds of cabinet decisions may never be implemented. Also, unlike delivery units, which may be restructured or even wound up after their original sponsor leaves government, there is some initial evidence that, once established, cabinet reforms may ultimately be quite sustainable over time.

The Africa Cabinet Governance Network (ACGN) was established by interested Cabinet Secretaries to provide opportunities for collaboration and mutual support, as well as technical assistance. From 2013 to 2016, with support from DFID's Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence (BCURE) program and Adam Smith International (ASI), it brought together 14 Cabinet Secretariats from a range of African countries to improve evidence-informed decision-making. Participants include Botswana, Ghana, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Somaliland, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zanzibar. ACGN has also provided in-country support to the cabinet secretariats in Sierra Leone, Liberia and South Sudan.



Mark Johnston will reflect upon the lessons from this work to date and key challenges for the future. He will also elaborate upon the role of donors, such as the World Bank and various bilateral agencies, in helping to advance this agenda.

Chiara Bronchi, a Practice Manager from the Bank's Governance Global Practice covering a number of Sub-Saharan African countries, will serve as a discussant. Kathrin Plangemann, the TTL for a number of innovative center of government reforms in southern Africa, will also contribute to the discussion.

For more information about this event, contact Robert Beschel at (202) 458-0140].

#### **About Mark Johnston:**



*Mark Johnston is Executive Director of the Africa Cabinet Government Network, having played a key role in supporting its establishment. He has worked with Cabinet Secretaries and other senior officials in 25 governments across Asia and Africa on public sector reforms, especially Cabinet processes and policy development. Much of this work has been in fragile or conflicted affected nations. This followed a decade in the Australian Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet in various senior positions and a PhD in Public Policy from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.*