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# **EXECUTIVE OFFICES AND POLICY MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA'S NEW DEMOCRACIES**

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## **G/DG FOREWORD**

### **Executive Offices and Policy Management in Africa's New Democracies**

Under the Implementing Policy Change (IPC) project, the USAID Center for Democracy and Governance commissioned a systematic review of “the organization, functions, and management of Executive Offices in Africa in varied settings and under different governmental frameworks” (Terms of Reference, July 24, 1997). Rather than calling for a comprehensive research exercise, the scope of work asked the IPC team<sup>1</sup> to summarize and analyze experience accumulated in working to improve the performance of Executive Offices in half a dozen democratizing African countries. In addition, the Center for Democracy and Governance hopes this study will guide the development of generic indicators for performance of Executive Offices and provide a framework for future assessments and assistance to Executive Offices. Ultimately, however, it is hoped that this study will assist political leaders and technical officers in African Executive Offices as they map out their own strategies for strengthening their national policy process.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In every state there is, or should be, a “policy management process,” a process defined as the planning, direction and oversight of the government’s program of public business at a strategic level. The aim of democratic policy making is to invest any decision made by government with a high degree of legitimacy, power, and accuracy. (Moore, 1996) Different states deal with this process in different ways, depending on their constitutional set up, the abilities and orientations of the individuals involved, and the scale and history of the state. It is useful for those responsible for the process to recognize that such a distinguishable process exists and to consider how it may best be carried out.

In many countries, those responsible for this process are members of their country’s Executive Office. The term “Executive Office” or “EO” refers to the organizations that heads of state and heads of government use to manage the policy process of government. Depending on the country and constitutional context, these organizations include the Office of the President, the Office of the Prime Minister (the *Primature* in French-speaking countries), and the Cabinet Office (*S cretariat G n rale du Gouvernement*), as well as supporting advisory, analytic or liaison units. As the center of the governmental machine, the EO should be distinguished from the executive branch of which it forms a part.

EOs’ performance partly depends on their internal organization, for example whether top decision-makers set up specialized units within the EO for analyzing policy, coordinating inter-ministerial support, or monitoring policy implementation. Their performance also depends on their ability to improve the quality of home-grown policies. Through the EO’s guidance, interactions among decision-makers and stakeholders are likely to have a major impact on executive performance.

Although few in Executive Offices would describe their function quite so plainly, their principal role can correctly be characterized as *policy management*. For EOs, strategic policy management involves the formulation and implementation of public policy from a “big-picture” rather than “micro-managerial” perspective. Rather than conducting policy analysis and implementation monitoring themselves, EO managers usually ensure that these processes occur. They also are concerned with the manner in which policy is made, working to ensure that the policy formation process is marked by an appropriate degree of coordination, information gathering and exchange, consensus building, public relations, and legislative and party liaison. Thus, the EO’s policy management task is as much motivational and coordinative as executive.

It is possible to specify five broad governance criteria against which the performance of Executive Offices can be assessed as they guide democratic policy processes: effectiveness, efficiency, participation, transparency, and accountability. These criteria, however, may not always be mutually reinforcing. Indeed, the notion of democratic governance embodies an inherent tension between values of popular accountability and governmental efficiency. For example, open public consultation may slow the pace of policy making. Since both accountability and efficiency are desirable goals, achieving democratic governance will inevitably involve trade-offs and adjustments.

The conclusion of this comparative review of six African Executive Offices suggests a widespread need to *strengthen the policy management capacity of Executive Offices* in new African democracies. But the EO need not centralize all policy management functions within its own organizational boundaries. Policy management in the EO should concentrate on *motivating* and *coordinating* the activities of the various governmental (or sometimes, quasi-governmental or non-governmental) agencies that formulate and implement policy. Wherever possible, the EO should devolve responsibility for policy *analysis* to appropriate technical ministries or private think tanks, if analysts in such ministries adhere to national

priorities. Similarly, the EO should avoid usurping control of implementation functions, instead assisting line ministries to engage in meaningful policy implementation *planning, monitoring* and *evaluation*, with appropriate reports back to decision-makers.

Strengthening EOs does not necessarily mean enlarging them. It does mean clarifying their functions and improving their performance. While EO strengthening in some African countries will likely increase the number of EO staff, in others it has actually reduced these numbers.

The ultimate objective of improved policy management is to increase the capacity of EOs to *respond* to democratic demands. The aim is to open up decision making to a broadened array of stakeholders and make that process productive -- not to recentralize or immobilize. Indeed, in order to survive, elected governments need success at delivering the fruits of democracy to their citizens. For their part, development-oriented organizations can and should make efforts to assist African countries that are undergoing a democratic transition by helping them to strengthen their policy management structures and systems, if such support is desired by them.

<sup>2</sup>, the World Bank recognizes that an effective state is a precondition of development and essential for a prosperous economy.

But the state is a complex entity with numerous levels and bureaus, complicating the task of choosing a focus for any new initiative to improve institutional performance. Helpfully, a former senior official in the British Cabinet Secretariat has pointed to “a hole in the very middle” of the argument about governance: “very little (is said) about coordination at the centre of the government machine.”<sup>3</sup> Whatever the form of government (parliamentary, presidential, or dual) there is a common need for “a mechanism to link rulers to the machine by which they rule.”<sup>4</sup> Thus a sensible starting point for nurturing democratic governance is the Executive Office (EO) at the apex of the executive branch, whose function is to coordinate and manage public policies.

**Purpose of the Study.** This applied research paper assesses how Executive Offices perform at various tasks of democratic governance. It also attempts to meet some of the needs expressed by many African governments for a framework to assess their own performance and prioritize areas for action. Thus, the paper reviews the political and management capacities of the top executive agencies in a sample of African

governments that have made public commitments to govern themselves democratically. We ask whether these agencies are able to direct the public policy process in a manner that is effective, efficient, participatory, transparent and accountable. In describing how EOs currently make and coordinate policy, the paper identifies ways in which national leaders might strengthen these offices in the future.

The study draws material from various sources: from government documents such as national constitutions and cabinet handbooks; from commentaries on the decision-making process written by insiders, both government officials and foreign advisors; from the authors’ first-hand observations and experience; from scholarly analyses in the academic literature; and from interviews with principals in African Executive Offices. (See annexes for bibliographic references and list of persons contacted.)

**Defining Policy.** Since this paper addresses Executive Offices’ role in making and implementing policy, before proceeding much further it seems appropriate to clarify the term “policy” as it is used. Policy can range from very general statements of goals to much more narrowly defined courses of action. Although “policy” is most often regarded in terms of macro-economic imperatives, there are other sources and scenarios. For example, the recognition of the need for policy can arise from enduring statements of goals (as reflected, for example, in party manifestos or directive principles that may appear in a constitution or national strategic plan), or from particular crises thrown up by either the international environment (such as refugee flows, civil war in a neighboring country, or the collapse of the diamond or copper market), or the physical environment (for example, droughts or epidemics).

**Defining Executive Offices.** For the purposes of the present paper, the term “Executive Office” or “EO” refers to the organizations that heads of state and heads of government use to manage the policy process of government. Depending on the country and constitutional context, these



organizations include the Office of the President, the Office of the Prime Minister (the *Primature* in French-speaking countries), and the Cabinet Office (*S cretariat G n rale du Gouvernement*), as well as supporting advisory, analytic or liaison units. As the center of the governmental machine, the EO should be distinguished from the executive branch of which it forms a part. The EO includes only the government's inner circle of chief political, executive and technical officers; to repeat, it includes presidents, premiers and cabinets, plus their personal and official staffs.<sup>5</sup> It does not refer to senior civil servants, individual line ministries, or specialized departments located elsewhere in the executive branch, who nonetheless play an important role in the country's policy process by interacting on various levels with the EO, for example by providing policy options to the Executive Office, implementing its decisions, and monitoring policy implementation.

**Defining Policy Management.** In every state there is, or should be, a "policy management process," a process defined as the planning, direction and oversight of the government's program of public business at a strategic level. The aim is to invest any decision made by government with a high degree of legitimacy, power, and accuracy. (Moore, 1996) Different states deal with this process in different ways, depending on their constitutional set up, the abilities and orientations of the individuals involved, and the scale and history of the state. It is useful for those responsible for the process to recognize that such a distinguishable process exists and to consider how it may best be carried out.

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working to ensure that the policy formation process is marked by an appropriate degree of coordination, information gathering and exchange, consensus building, public relations, and legislative and party liaison. Thus, the EO's policy management task is as much motivational and coordinative as executive.

**Institutional Scope.** To fully analyze the performance of any organization, it is necessary to look both inside and outside its boundaries. Through the EO's guidance, interactions among decision-makers are likely to have a major impact on executive performance, especially in constitutional systems where executive power is divided between a president and a prime minister. To the extent that a chief executive relies on a cabinet of appointed ministers, each responsible for a functional agency of government, there is an element of collective responsibility in decision-making, with all the challenges of political and administrative coordination that subsequently arise. Moreover, EO performance partly depends on its own internal organization, for example whether top decision-makers set up specialized units within the EO for analyzing policy, coordinating inter-ministerial support, or monitoring policy implementation.

In relation to the world outside the Executive Office, neither the Office nor the executive branch exists in isolation. Both operate alongside other political organizations with which they must compete or otherwise interact in seeking to establish and execute policy. First, the EO must take into account other state institutions, like the legislature and the judiciary, which may be constitutionally endowed with powers to check and balance the executive. Second, the EO must reckon with civil society, through which citizens express preferences via voluntary associations, the mass media, and public opinion -- sometimes at odds with current government policy. Also, the political context may require the EO to consult the dominant political party -- or in the case of a coalition government, political parties. Finally, the EO must deal with powerful external agencies in the international community that can lay down policies and conditions that both limit Executive

Office room for maneuver and create new opportunities for policy development.

The focus of this review is squarely on the internal management of Executive Offices, with some consideration of the EO's relations with the rest of the executive branch. Its institutional scope is broad enough, however, to allow reference to external constraints insofar as these affect EO performance.

**Geographic Scope.** The research design is comparative. Drawing data systematically from six African countries -- Benin, Botswana, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau<sup>6</sup>, Mali and Zambia -- the authors emphasize cross-national similarities and differences in the ways that Executive Offices operate. These countries were chosen because: (a) all are new democracies, having formed governments through free and fair multiparty elections, usually since 1990 (the exception being Botswana, which is considered by many to be a model of efficiency in an established democracy); (b) in each country, top government officials are undertaking measures to restructure EOs or otherwise improve their organizational performance; (c) written case

study materials describing these reform efforts are available; (d) they represent a good cross section of approaches and degrees of success with policy management; and/or; (e) the authors have close working knowledge of the cases.

In terms of cultural diversity, the selected countries -- three anglophone, two francophone, and one lusophone -- roughly represent the distribution of official languages by population across sub-Saharan Africa. Socio-economically, the countries selected also provide a fair representation of the varied levels of prosperity that exist within the continent. Initially, it was believed that the country selection would also reveal distinctive constitutional contexts that influence the performance of Executive Offices performance. As discussed below, however, all the sampled countries possess hybrid constitutional systems, primarily presidential but modified by some sort of parliamentary feature. For this reason among others, the authors came to appreciate that EOs in Africa's new democracies tend to face generic challenges, although issues specific to the various constitutional set-ups of the countries studied are noted.

## II. Towards Democratic Governance

This section of the paper explores connections between Executive Offices and democratic governance in three ways. First, with reference to past EO performance, it summarizes at a general level the problems of governance in authoritarian regimes in Africa. Second, account is taken of the new challenges for EOs arising from recent democratic transitions. Finally, criteria for democratic governance are specified, against which the present and future performance of Executive Offices can be assessed.

**Problems of Authoritarian Governance.** The *effectiveness* of Executive Offices in Africa has historically been impaired by the concentration of authority in the hands of presidents. The centralization of political power in old regimes has been characterized as “republican<sup>7</sup> an arrangement that had contradictory consequences for EO performance. On one hand, it sometimes enabled bold executive directives. More often, it involved capricious, ideological or ill-informed decision-making. Professional advice on technical policy issues was routinely ignored, whether it emanated from trained civil servants or foreign advisors. In sum, African presidencies came to be organized for purposes of political patronage rather than for effective governance or national development.

The over-concentration of power in Africa in the first three decades of independence impaired governmental *efficiency*. Bottlenecks arose in decision-making as chief executives became severely overworked. In some cases, administrative delays led to the accumulation of unused resources at the end of a planning or budget period -- an ironic outcome in situations where resources were generally scarce. Moreover, where official corruption was a problem within government bureaucracies, individual EO officers did not always set the highest standards of probity. Quite apart from any moral consideration, corruption diverted and consumed resources, thereby undermining the

effectiveness and efficiency of public administration.

From colonial times on, Executive Offices in Africa lacked a tradition of *participation*. Elected and appointed officials became accustomed to making policy decisions with limited information and without much popular involvement. Realistically, one cannot expect a modern EO to involve citizens directly in decision-making on all policy details. But authoritarian regimes almost never required that EO deliberations incorporate the views of the citizens as expressed through the ballot box, the legislature, or civil society. For example, public opinion, was rarely if ever sought or considered by African EOs.

*Transparency* (or openness) is a particularly difficult issue for Executive Offices in Africa. Colonial and post-colonial precedents established a legacy of official secrecy. This was marked by decision-making behind closed doors and by strict controls on public information, including on the proceedings of EO organs, such as cabinets. In situations where public information was artificially scarce, rumors ran rampant through civil society, and closed government contributed to the erosion of political legitimacy. Within the civil service, information was hoarded and protected, worsening the already short supply of reliable data and statistics necessary for professional policy analysis.

As for *accountability*, Executive Offices in Africa often operated with minimal legal constraints. When challenged, some African chief executives even succumbed to the temptation to change constitutional or electoral rules in order to disadvantage their political opponents or to maximize their policy-making discretion. In so doing, they isolated the EO from dissenting opinion or legal oversight which, over the long run, had the effect of impairing the chief executive's political judgement. In sum, EOs in Africa sought to minimize the effects of any checks and balances embedded in the rule of law.

**The Effects of Democratization.** A wave of transitions to multi-party democracy across Africa in the 1990s has placed demands on political leaders for a new model of governance, demands that have led to institutional reforms in some countries but official resistance in others. The following challenges face Executive Offices (and executive branches) in adapting to a changed political environment, especially where a “dual transition” is being attempted, not only to democracy, but also to a market-oriented economy. Indeed, many citizens supported political change in the hope that democracy would improve their material standards of living. To meet these raised expectations, fledgling democratic regimes have discovered that they must transform their own operations from within. As the title of a 1995, five-country workshop for African EOs put it, there is need for “new leadership” within the executive branch with improved skills and reformed attitudes.

Democratization raises the following challenges for Executive Offices:

- *A more focused scope for public management within a more complex environment.* With the advent of democracy, Ministers and civil servants must increase their responsiveness to a wide body of stakeholders outside government. At the same time, there has been growing sentiment to narrow the role of government, particularly getting government “out of the business of business.” Thus, the EO and executive branch now have to operate in a much more complicated setting that requires balancing the wishes of political competitors, lobbying groups, and the electorate with their understanding of what is technically correct. Moreover, Ministers themselves are far more susceptible to criticism. With frequent by-elections in the offing, and general elections in prospect, they must always be aware of the probing eye of a newly liberated press anxious to expose official malfeasance. Ministers and civil servants alike are discovering that they must reorient themselves toward achieving

results and learn the art of effective public communications.

- *Restructuring Executive Offices.* The EO itself may need to be restructured and reformed to meet the needs of multiparty democracy. There are often two parts to EOs in Africa: the office serving the president personally and the office serving the cabinet collectively. At minimum, presidents will usually have a chief of staff, an economic adviser, a press secretary and a private secretary. Offices serving the cabinet or council of ministers typically have larger staffs, especially if they house the personnel and establishment functions<sup>8</sup> of government as well as the cabinet’s own secretariat. In some countries, there may also be a separate prime minister’s office. In a handful of countries, chief executives have begun to express a need for a *policy management unit* somewhere in the EO to oversee the entire policy process. A very recent idea in Africa, these units may be located at various places within the EO (in the president’s, prime minister’s or cabinet office). They also vary according to whether their functions are policy analysis, coordination, implementation, or some combination of the above. In all cases, however, these fledgling EO policy teams seek to attract the brightest and best individuals in the civil service -- often young, technically well-qualified officers who seem destined eventually for high public office or senior posts in the public service.
- *Improved relations between ministers and civil servants.* New African governments often inherit a depleted and demoralized bureaucracy. A major challenge is to establish effective working relations between ministers, who are often democratically elected in their own right, and their civil servant staffs. However, incoming cabinet ministers who are committed to policy reform but have little experience in government, can become restless at the apparent unwillingness or inability of civil servants to act decisively. Civil servants in turn complain of the

impatience of their political masters, including intolerance of well-established public service rules and standards. In some countries, this stalemate has only been broken with the termination or early retirement of the most obdurate officials and their replacement with new or better-qualified professionals. In the best of cases, each side over time adapts to the other, with ministers learning that government departments have complex social objectives and with civil servants learning more businesslike behavior.

- *A greater need for coordination and collaboration.* Another problem has been the decline of inter-ministerial relations. Reduced to administrative functionaries for military or one-party leaders, staff from the old public services often became accustomed to following orders and expressing loyalty and obedience. Problem solving through individual initiative and communication with peers in other ministries was discouraged. For democratically elected governments, these vertical lines of command must be supplemented with improved horizontal ties. It is widely agreed that if ministries are to make effective responses to promises made to the electorate, civil servants must communicate with each other as never before. Since old habits die hard, this will not be easy. Younger staff, often better educated than their superiors, are sometimes frustrated that they are not taken seriously; in turn, their bosses complain of young staff's lack of respect. To address these problems, serious attention will have to be given to changing behavior in the public service and building effective teams within and across departments.
- *Linking policy to budget.* In macroeconomic situations characterized by major resource limitations, a particularly difficult challenge is integrating the policy and budget processes. In many cases, the policy process is centered on the Cabinet and the budgetary process on the Ministry of Finance.<sup>9</sup> International donors routinely exacerbate

this problem by treating the Ministry of Finance as an enclave, especially through expatriate technical advisers appointed there to help reform economic policies and public budgets. Too often, the Ministry of Finance brings to Cabinet policies acceptable to the World Bank, IMF and other key donors but with inadequate consultation with Ministers, who are nonetheless expected to promote and implement them. To ameliorate this kind of scenario, the EO should consider strengthening local institutional capacity (most probably in the Ministry of Finance) for policy formulation and analysis. Part of its task could be to promote consultation with Ministers or to assure that policy proposals receive broad input.

- *Decentralization.* Some measure of decentralization is necessary if citizens are to be enlisted in the policy process. Hence the transfer of some executive branch functions to lower levels of government may be a necessary condition for facilitating popular participation. The Executive Office will have to strike a delicate balance between tightening oversight over policy implementation and "letting go" so that line ministries and regional and local authorities can do more on their own.
- *Personnel Systems.* Democratization raises new expectations that top government officials will serve the public competently and evenhandedly. For Executive Offices a particular premium is therefore placed on attracting and retaining personnel with the skills and managerial outlook that can strengthen government's policy performance. Personnel management systems that reward and promote people with such qualities are needed.
- *Codes of Ethics.* In addition, EOs would benefit from adopting professional codes of ethics, not only for staff, but for their political masters as well.

#### **Criteria for Democratic Governance.**

Abstracting from the above expectations, it is possible to specify five broad democratic

governance criteria against which the performance of Executive Offices can be assessed. The criteria presented below are normative in nature and reflect a standard to which EOs in any democracy might aspire. Indeed, EOs that adopt a *continual improvement* style of management where they regularly monitor and develop enhancements to the national policy process, will find, both in this list and in Section 5 (Strengthening Executive Offices), ample ideas for innovations that will carry them well into the future.

(a) *Effectiveness*. Organizational effectiveness refers to the achievement of stated objectives. Does the Executive Office help government focus on priority policy objectives? Are these objectives communicated clearly? Do implementing agencies actually perform the tasks set for them by cabinet? More so than in authoritarian regimes where the maintenance of public support is less critical, governments in democracies must not only “get things done,” but be seen publicly to have done so.

(b) *Efficiency*. Organizational efficiency refers to achieving objectives at least cost. Costs include both time and material resources, with an efficient organization getting the job done quickly and within budget. An efficient Executive Office requires tight management systems to ensure that government business is conducted expeditiously. Rather than creating a bottleneck, does the Executive Office enable the quick formulation and implementation of clear policy decisions?

(c) *Participation*. Participation refers to the provision of opportunities for stakeholders to have a say in decisions that directly affect them. The type of policy decision under consideration will determine whether the relevant stakeholders are government officials, the citizenry at large, or some intermediate group or groups.<sup>10</sup> How broadly do EOs consult stakeholders both before and after public decisions are made? How do they prevent inordinate influence by special interests?

(d) *Transparency*. In a transparent policy process, the reasons for public policy decisions are made plainly visible for all to see. For EOs, which are accustomed to operating secretly, transparency involves several unfamiliar innovations: more and better communications within the executive branch and between the Executive Office and other branches of government, public access to official information, open public meetings on controversial issues, and regular and timely reporting by governments to their constituents.

(e) *Accountability*. An accountable government adheres to the rule of law and responds to citizen preferences. At minimum, it observes constitutional requirements for lawmaking, regular elections, and referenda. An accountable EO accepts political and financial oversight from other constitutionally empowered institutions in the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government. At best, EOs achieve accountability by putting procedures in place to tap the public mood on policy issues and government performance.

The performance criteria outlined above may not always be mutually reinforcing. Indeed, the notion of democratic governance embodies an inherent tension between values of popular accountability and governmental efficiency. For example, open public consultation may slow the pace of policy making. Since both accountability and efficiency are desirable goals, achieving democratic governance will inevitably involve trade-offs and adjustments. The analysis that follows (see section 4) seeks to identify common and specific problems, as well as creative solutions, in African EO performance. Through this analysis we arrive at conclusions about whether programs of EO reform should concentrate on democratization or governance issues, or on some carefully balanced combination of the two (see Section 5).

### III. Executive Offices in Africa

This section of the paper describes Executive Offices in their African contexts. Moving from the general to the particular, it begins by outlining the constitutional and political factors that shape the EO and its operations, then catalogues the various organizational forms adopted by Executive Offices in the six country cases.

**Constitutional Contexts.** The first factor affecting EO performance is each country's constitutional context. For example, whether executive power is concentrated (say in the hands of a president) or divided (between president and prime minister) can determine how complex the challenge will be for EOs to manage the policy process. A basic understanding of constitutional rules is important because these set parameters for EO activity and influence the chances for success of any efforts at internal EO reforms.

Democracies take on various forms depending on how the scope of executive power and the relationship between the executive and legislative branches of government are defined in the constitution. Two main models define the range of constitutional options: parliamentary and presidential government. These models are distinguishable along three principal dimensions<sup>11</sup>:

*(a) The choice of a head of government.* Presidents are popularly elected, either directly or indirectly, whereas prime ministers are selected by or through a legislature or sometimes by the president. This distinction reflects the separation of governmental powers in a presidential system, and the fusion of such powers in a parliamentary system.

*(b) The dismissal of the head of government.* Presidents serve fixed, constitutionally prescribed terms and normally cannot be forced to resign by a legislature just because of loss of political support on a policy issue.<sup>12</sup> In parliamentary systems, the head of government must maintain the confidence of the assembly

and can be dismissed from office by a legislative vote of no confidence or censure.

*(c) The scope of the executive.* Presidential systems have individual, one-person executives; the executives of parliamentary systems are collective, for example with a prime minister as "first among equals" in a cabinet bound by collective responsibility.

At independence, most African countries inherited constitutions that reflected their colonial legacies, with former British colonies starting out with Westminster-style parliamentary charters and former French colonies adopting semi-presidential frameworks derived from the Fifth French Republic. Both of these models rejected the American separation of powers model in favor of cabinet government in which executive heads were drawn from the largest party in the assembly. Over time, the independence constitutions were adapted, usually by introducing or strengthening executive presidencies and subordinating assemblies and cabinets. In the early 1990s, pro-democracy protests prompted a flurry of constitutional reforms to reintroduce political freedoms, to convene competitive multiparty elections, and to reduce executive powers.

The current constitutional status of the six study countries is listed in Appendix 1. As these summaries indicate, Executive Offices in African countries operate in constitutional contexts that have both common and distinctive features. Some of the most important features are displayed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Basic Constitutional and Political Features of Selected African Countries**

	<b>Constitutional System</b>	<b>Presidential Election</b>	<b>Prime Minister</b>	<b>Legislature</b>	<b>Size of Legislature</b>	<b>Number of Parties in Leg.</b>	<b>Largest Party's Share of Seats</b>
Benin	Presidential	Direct	No	Unicameral	83	18 <sup>1</sup>	24.4%
Botswana	Presidential	Indirect	No	Bicameral <sup>2</sup>	40 <sup>3</sup>	2	67.5%
Ghana	Presidential	Direct	No	Unicameral	200	4	66.7% <sup>4</sup>
Guinea-Bissau	Semi-Pres	Direct	Yes	Unicameral	100	5	62.0%
Mali	Semi-Pres	Direct	Yes	Unicameral	116 <sup>5</sup>	10	63.9%
Zambia	Presidential	Direct	No	Bicameral <sup>2</sup>	150 <sup>6</sup>	4 <sup>7</sup>	87.3%

(Source: *Africa South of the Sahara, 1997*)

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<sup>1</sup> Of which, nine parties held only one seat each.

<sup>2</sup> These countries have or plan to have a House of Chiefs with limited advisory powers on selected issues.

<sup>3</sup> Excludes four members elected by the Assembly itself.

<sup>4</sup> Excludes two vacant seats.

<sup>5</sup> Excludes the 13 seats reserved for Malians abroad.

<sup>6</sup> Plus 8 appointed by President.

<sup>7</sup> Excludes 10 independents.



In the broad sense that the constitutional charters of all six countries call for an executive presidency (See Table 1, Column 1), African constitutional systems can be thought of as “presidential.” Because their presidents serve maximum or limited-length terms and cannot be brought down and replaced by a “no confidence” vote by an elected assembly, none of these countries can be described as having “parliamentary” systems. Indeed, the parliamentary form of government is uncommon in Africa, with only Lesotho (a constitutional monarchy) and Mauritius (with an indirectly elected, but largely ceremonial president) being governed along these lines.

Scholars have noted the strong tendency of poor countries that have experienced colonization to choose presidentialism as the preferred form of governance after independence.<sup>13</sup> Consistent with this global trend, African countries have wholeheartedly adopted presidentialism as the appropriate framework for managing public life. In most cases, African presidents continue to enjoy extensive powers even following the liberalization and reform of constitutions in the early 1990s; they continue to be able to make senior government appointments, to dominate the law-making process, and to dissolve national assemblies and governments. Thus, any comparisons of constitutions across sub-Saharan countries are best made in terms of sub-types of presidentialism (e.g. “pure” versus “semi-” presidentialism) or in more pragmatic terms, such as the extent to which constitutional rules are actually enforced.

In five of the six countries considered here, presidents are elected directly by popular vote. Only in Botswana (like in South Africa and Namibia) is the president chosen indirectly by a majority of elected legislators. As in a parliamentary system, this measure both binds the executive to the will of the assembly and ensures that the executive has a working majority in the legislative body. This combination of circumstances is conducive to effective and efficient Executive Office operations. Indeed, Botswana is considered to have a “strong” presidency.<sup>14</sup> While appointing

his cabinet from members of the Assembly, the president is not required to seek Assembly approval, nor has either of Botswana’s two presidents ever consulted with parliamentarians before announcing a cabinet.

Even where Presidents are chosen directly, the timing of elections affects their relations with the legislature. Where presidents and assemblies have terms of different lengths (as in Benin and Guinea-Bissau), each can enjoy an enhanced measure of autonomy, with all the risks of executive-legislative deadlock that such arrangements imply. Where, by contrast, presidential and legislative elections are held simultaneously on the same cycle (as in Ghana, Mali and Zambia), the executive and legislative branches become somewhat more fused -- and thus potentially more cooperative -- due to a shared electoral mandate. Of course, it also matters whether the President’s party enjoys a working majority in the legislative assembly, a subject discussed further below.

The biggest constitutional difference among the six countries is whether the president shares executive power with a prime minister (Table 1, Column 3). In two countries (Guinea-Bissau and Mali), the President appoints a prime minister whose tenure depends on maintaining support from the legislature. As such, these are the only two countries that can be considered “semi-presidential” from a constitutional point of view, having derived their governmental charters from French and Portuguese precedents. Where prime ministers are in charge of coordinating government business, they have their own source of executive power that derives from a legislative majority and that includes the right to select ministers. Under a semi-presidential arrangement, what matters most is whether the president is able to appoint a prime minister from his own party (because it commands a majority in the legislature) or whether he or she must, in the absence of electoral control of the legislature, “cohabit” with a prime minister of a different party. The president’s room for maneuver in the policy process is obviously wider in the former case than in the latter.

Dual systems of executive authority need not undermine the power of presidents, especially where the president asserts his constitutional authority to appoint and dismiss prime ministers from within his own ruling party.<sup>15</sup> Presidents still tend to dominate even in semi-presidential systems because they can make criticisms that help bring down prime ministers or use prime ministers as lightning rods for popular discontent. For these reasons, presidents generally serve in office for longer periods than prime ministers, whose grip on power in semi-presidential systems is usually weak and who are vulnerable to dismissal by the president himself.

Mali and Guinea-Bissau differ somewhat in this regard. In Mali, the emerging preeminence of the president is embodied in a "mandate" that defines relations between the heads of state and government according to the following formula: "The president of the Republic entrust(s) the prime minister with a mandate, the main points of which are the following..."<sup>16</sup> The president, who chairs the cabinet, uses action memoranda to further instruct the prime minister to implement the president's program through his (the prime minister's) limited powers of "coordination" or "arbitration." By contrast, the president in Guinea-Bissau must negotiate the selection of a prime minister, a post sometimes occupied by an individual who is not the president's first choice. Furthermore, the president has delegated to the prime minister most day-to-day executive responsibilities, including chairing the cabinet, which he (the president) does not normally attend. Reflecting this meaningful division of authority, the secretary for the presidency<sup>17</sup> in Guinea-Bissau spends the majority of his time working in the Prime Minister's Office.

In the four remaining countries (Benin, Botswana, Ghana and Zambia), the president is not only head of state but also head of government, appointing and chairing his own cabinet or council of ministers<sup>18</sup>. These countries (with the exception of Botswana, whose indirect presidential election makes it a special form of presidentialism<sup>19</sup>) come closest in the sample to a pure form of presidentialism.

Although they are strong, the presidents of Benin, Ghana and Zambia do not enjoy unrestricted powers. In Zambia, for example, the constitution requires the president to draw cabinet ministers from among members of the legislature, a measure that introduces a parliamentary principle into an otherwise presidential system. The derivation of cabinet ministers was a major point of disagreement in struggles over Zambia's 1991 constitution, with opposition leaders resisting then-President Kaunda's efforts to retain discretion to appoint ministers from any walk of life.<sup>20</sup> In Benin, the executive branch is checked not only by the legislature, but also by a constitutional court that has shown itself willing to rule against the government. The existence of strong checks and balances in the 1991 Benin constitution reflects its origin as a declaration of popular sovereignty forged in the heat of a national conference.<sup>21</sup> The president of Ghana has most formal powers of any chief executive considered here; for example, he chairs appointed advisory councils that can be used to float policy proposals outside the National Assembly. The relative concentration of executive power in Ghana reflects the fact that the country's 1992 constitution was produced under controlled conditions by an incumbent military regime that was preparing to civilianize and democratize itself.

**Other Political Factors.** Beyond formal constitutional rules, the performance of the Executive Office is shaped also by political factors. Among the most important are the political party system and the outcomes of legislative elections. The number of parties that hold legislative seats and the number of seats in the assembly controlled by the government together determine the range of political possibilities (as distinct from legal parameters) facing policy makers in the executive branch. If presidents can obtain a working majority in the legislative assembly, the process of building sufficient support for a preferred program of public policies is facilitated. If, by contrast, presidents find themselves in charge of minority governments that cannot control the legislature,

president. Because the executive needed legislative support in order to govern, one can readily understand President Kérékou's 1996 decision to appoint the PRD leader (Houngbédji) as "prime minister," even though such a post is not stipulated in the constitution.

The other country cases cluster between the extremes of Zambia and Benin. The executives of all four countries (Botswana, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau and Mali) presently enjoy comfortable legislative majorities (in all cases over 62 percent) that allow for the routine passage of their policy programs but fall just short of the super-majorities needed to undertake constitutional reform. Thus, with the exception of Benin, Executive Offices are not generally constrained by lack of legislative support in the policy process. The challenge for Benin (and other countries with minority governments like Congo-Brazzaville and Malawi) is to avoid the paralyzing stalemate that came to characterize executive-legislative relations in Niger. Under Niger's semi-presidential system and in the absence of a legislative majority for the party of the president, the heads of state and government were unable to resolve their political differences. When a coup toppled Niger's first democratically elected government in 1995, the military justified their action by pointing to the inability of civilian politicians to effectively share decision-making power.

**Major External Relationships.** The capacity of Executive Offices to manage the policy process also depends on their relative strength *vis à vis* other political actors and institutions external to the EO itself.

Within the national political environment, the most important external linkages of concern to EOs are with the national legislature, political parties, and organized interest groups. Such institutions potentially play major roles in identifying and evaluating policies in a democracy. The extent to which African legislatures and civil societies actually play these roles, however, is an empirical question. Further research is needed, especially on executive-legislative relations, a vital subject on

*Nationale* and the president's party (FARD-Alafia), the third largest, held just 12 percent, though other small parties also supported the

which much more must be learned relevant to new African democracies.

EOs cannot always perform as sovereign bodies devising “home-grown” policies. EOs must also contend with powerful financial institutions based in the international environment. Countries like Mozambique and Rwanda rely heavily on foreign grants and loans to fund the government’s capital budget.<sup>22</sup> In such countries, the main lines of macroeconomic policy (and to a lesser extent sectoral policies on health, education and infrastructure) originate with foreign advisors, sometimes operating within domestic policy “enclaves,” most often in the Ministry of Finance or Central Bank. Of the countries studied here, Guinea-Bissau, Benin and Zambia face the most external pressure and Botswana has the greatest resource capacity to set its own policy agenda.<sup>23</sup> Wherever debt or aid levels are high and where indigenous technical capacities are weak, the external influences of international financial institutions may strongly influence policy formulation. Because this paper focuses on EOs themselves, however, external relationships, including relations with donors, are examined here only in passing.

**Internal Management Structures.** Turning now to the internal organization of Executive Offices, several important variations can be noted across African countries. First, EOs themselves vary in the degree to which they have undertaken internal restructuring, especially to establish *policy management units* of one kind or another, usually in response to the need for staff support by the senior official who directs the Cabinet Office or its equivalent. Second, there are variations in the *size and location of EO staffs* and in the extent to which EOs have put management systems in place to cultivate staff professionalism. Third, African countries vary according to the *locus of decision-making* within EOs, that is, whether the policy management tends to be most often directed in practice by the president, prime minister or cabinet. Finally, the personal style of leaders shapes the way their organizations operate.

Comparative data on the internal management structures of African EOs is presented in Appendix 2. It shows, for example, that Zambia has established a Policy Analysis and Coordination Division (PAC) in the Cabinet Office to improve coordination among line ministries and to ensure the implementation of Cabinet decisions. In Mali, a strategic team was established in the presidency to build political and administrative support for a national policy mission.

The data reveal that the internal management structures of African EOs vary in interesting ways. The well-established structure in Botswana, for example, in which the president manages policy through the civil service, has operated essentially unchanged since independence. EO reforms in other countries are much more recent: since 1993 in Zambia and 1994 in Mali. The establishment of policy management units and the streamlining of policy procedures are modest and tentative innovations whose sustainability has yet to be proven. Finally, the proposals for policy management units in Ghana, Benin and Guinea-Bissau are little more a gleam in the eye of reformers on which concrete action has yet to take place. One should not therefore overestimate the impact or permanence of any new EO reform.

In other respects, such as personnel quality and training needs, EOs resemble each other. In most cases, EO staff lack access to information and would benefit from greater computer literacy and training in policy analysis, monitoring and evaluation. In addition, participants from five African countries at a 1995 Executive Office workshop conceded that EO staff did not always perform in an effective and ethical manner. On a separate occasion, an EO official commented that performance standards were set by democratically elected leaders, many of whom seem to regard government tenure as an enrichment opportunity rather than a chance to help African peoples.

Finally, mention must be made of the qualities of individual actors, whose skills and personalities directly affect EO performance. Obviously, the leadership style of individual

presidents (charismatic or reserved? engaged or detached? decisive or reflective? hands-on or delegative?) helps determine how the powers of the presidency are actually exercised. Equally important are the personal attributes of any prime minister and the head of any cabinet secretariat, as well as whether their styles mesh or clash with that of the president. Indeed, whether powerful leaders choose to put their weight and prestige behind EO reforms will often determine whether improvements are possible in the management of policy.

To conclude this section, let us summarize the characteristics of African EOs. Taken together, *all* explanatory factors discussed so far -- namely constitutional context, legislative

strength, external relationships, internal structure, and leadership style -- combine to determine the *locus of decision-making* within Executive Offices.

No African country displays a pure decision-making system; all systems are, to some degree, mixed. But, among the six countries studied, three tendencies stand out. In Ghana, policy direction emanates mainly from the President; in Guinea-Bissau it centers more on the Prime Minister; and in Zambia, the Cabinet plays a leading part in conducting government business. Located between these extremes, the most mixed (and most contested) decision-making system can be found in Benin.

**Table 2: Organizational Features of Executive Offices in Selected African Countries (1996)**

	<b>Size of Cabinet<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>No. Of Cabinet Committees</b>	<b>Importance of Cabinet Committees</b>	<b>Frequency of Cabinet Meetings</b>	<b>Decision Items on Cabinet Agenda<sup>8</sup></b>	<b>Length (Hrs.) of Cabinet Meetings</b>	<b>Days to Distribute Cabinet Minutes</b>
Benin	18	0 <sup>9</sup>	n/a	weekly	3-8	6-8	1
Botswana	10	2	high	weekly	5-7	3-4	14 <sup>10</sup>
Ghana	17	4	moderate	biweekly	12	6	14
Guinea-Bissau	14	1	high	weekly	4-5	8	7
Mali	20	7	high	weekly	2-4	3-4	2-3
Zambia	25	7	moderate	biweekly	5	5	3

<sup>7</sup> The generic term “Cabinet” is here taken to also include Councils of Ministers in franco- and luso-phone countries. The number of Cabinet members includes Cabinet Ministers and the P.M. or President, depending on the country’s particular context.

<sup>8</sup> Excludes information or other non-decision items.

<sup>9</sup> Excludes three current ad hoc task forces on cotton, petroleum sector reform, and civil service reform.

<sup>10</sup> Refers to Cabinet “directives.”

<sup>11</sup> Not functioning after the annulment of Mali’s February 1997 legislative elections. However, while they were functioning, Cabinet Committees in Mali were very important.

**Table 2 (cont.): Organizational Features of Executive Offices in Selected African Countries (1996)**

	Size of Cabinet Staff <sup>12</sup>	Size of Pres.'s Staff <sup>9</sup>	Size of P.M. Staff <sup>9</sup>	Policy Analysis Unit	Policy Coordination Unit	Policy Implementation Plan	Cabinet Code of Ethics	Performance Based Staff Evaluation
Benin	5	23	(13) <sup>13</sup>	Planned <sup>14</sup>	No	No	No	No
Botswana	(8)	8 <sup>15</sup>	n/a	No	No <sup>16</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ghana	1	5	n/a	No	Planned	No <sup>17</sup>	No	No
Guinea-Bissau	1	2-3	4	No	Planned	No	No	No
Mali	30	23	20	Planned <sup>14</sup>	No	No	No	No
Zambia	12	4	n/a	No <sup>19</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No <sup>18</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Professional staff only.

<sup>13</sup> An informal arrangement for a non-constitutional "office".

<sup>14</sup> Attached to the Presidency but with an independent board of directors.

<sup>15</sup> The President's staff does double duty as the Cabinet Staff.

<sup>16</sup> The entire Office of President serves as a coordination unit; there is no specialized group for this function.

<sup>17</sup> The staff and functions of the Implementation Monitoring Unit, which currently exists in the Office of the President, are scheduled to be merged with the planned Policy Management Group.

<sup>18</sup> In preparation since the late 1980s but not yet implemented.

<sup>19</sup> Although there is an entity called The Policy Analysis & Coordination Division, its function is more managerial and facilitative than technical.

#### **IV. Assessment: The Performance of Executive Offices**

So far, we have described the characteristics of African Executive Offices and identified the main factors affecting EO operations. We now turn to analysis of how African EOs have actually performed at policy management. Below is a framework for capturing and presenting the varied approaches and practices for managing policy employed in the case countries. Throughout this section, country-level examples are given of the effects of external contexts and (especially) internal management structures on EO performance.

To repeat, the object of the analysis is to understand how EOs perform at policy management. In order to arrive at conclusions about performance, it is first necessary to “unpack” the complex notion of *the policy process*. The policy process involves numerous phases, each of which poses particular management challenges and which African EOs have met with varying degrees of success. Given the inherent complexity of national policy processes, this section attempts to simplify it by breaking it down as follows: First, a basic distinction is drawn between policy formulation and policy implementation. Then each of these phases is further subdivided; policy formulation, for example is approached by examining how policies are identified, how they are analyzed, and how policy decisions are made. Finally, this section examines two political tasks that cut across all phases of the policy process, namely stakeholder coordination and constituency-building. Through these steps, EO performance is assessed for each phase of the policy process.

##### **Policy Formulation.**

###### *(a) Policy Identification*

In assessing policy management, a good starting point is to examine how and where policy ideas arise. Are there systems in place for identifying problems in need of policy solutions? How are the political views of decision makers translated into policy? This process will not necessarily be

the same for every policy issue, nor is this process necessarily linear. It is likely that all kinds of process loops will occur not only here, but throughout the formulation process. One such loop involves the recognition that something needs to be done and then determining what that something is. This is where the policy formation process crosses and recrosses the boundary between politician and technocrat. Although traversing this boundary can work to ensure political support, substantive value, and administrative feasibility (Moore, 1996) for policy strategies, it also seems to expand the opportunity for tension, problematic communications, and conflict. Clearly, it is a process that warrants careful monitoring and management.

Since governments cannot do all things well, to the extent that they are able, they must choose carefully the priority policy initiatives by which their terms of office will be judged. The individuals or groups who can elevate policy issues for EO attention (or bury them so that they never see the light of day) occupy strategic positions in the policy process.

In African countries, most policy proposals destined for the Executive Office originate within the executive branch, that is, from the presidency and from government ministries. In all countries, including Guinea-Bissau where the president is most constitutionally constrained, an activist president can always ensure that preferred items appear on the agenda of the council of ministers. In Botswana, the president has given planners in the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning exceptional control over economic policy and protected them from political interference by cabinet ministers and other politicians. In order to be reviewed by the Council of Ministers in Mali, a policy dossier must have been previously entered into the government’s current annual work program.

The exact source of executive branch policy ideas (whether from politicians or civil servants) seems to vary by the stages of the government’s tenure. The Zambian experience illustrates one pattern. Immediately after the country’s first democratic elections, the president and ministers



asked civil servants to draft proposals to support policies proposed in their party's manifesto; at this stage, the president sought to assert his new-found authority and individual ministers were jockeying to secure resources for their portfolios. Then, in a later phase, civil servants tended to be the initiators of policy memoranda, particularly as difficulties were encountered in implementing decisions made earlier. Finally, during the run-up to the next election, political leaders again seized control by instructing their civil servants to generate specific policy initiatives, this time to improve their chances at the polls. How representative this pattern is of other countries is yet another question worthy of further study.

Other motivations drive executive branch officials to raise policy issues. Ministers sometimes seek cabinet approval for exceptions to the budget previously prepared by the treasury and agreed to by the national assembly. At other times the cabinet itself instructs a minister to prepare a memorandum on a particular topic, for instance one that had become a matter of public interest following press reports. In Botswana, which has the most technocratic policy process of any country examined here, the senior civil servants almost always initiate discussions of policy issues and, where necessary, commission studies that lead to proposals. The insulation of this mandarin class from political pressures emanating from society is cited as a major reason why public investments in Botswana have often been economically productive.<sup>24</sup>

Whatever the source of policy initiatives, the senior public official who serves the ministerial council or cabinet acts as gatekeeper to the policy agenda. This position is known as the General-Secretary to the Government (SGG) in former French colonies and the Secretary to the Cabinet (SC) in the former British colonies. In Botswana and Zambia, the SC also exercises the functions of permanent secretary to the president and head of the civil service, thus representing the pinnacle of administrative power. Revealing where power really lies, the Botswana SC is identified officially as the Permanent Secretary to the President. In Benin, the SGG vets dossiers prepared by the "technical units" of ministries

one week before Cabinet meetings, returning those that lack sufficient analysis. In the semi-presidential system of Mali, however, the SGG, who manages the secretariat to the Council of Ministers, does not act as chief advisor to the President, a separate role that falls to the Secretary General to the Presidency (SGP).<sup>25</sup>

Because, in practice, cabinet/council secretaries are usually highly experienced and firmly decisive individuals, they are often able to influence which policy decisions come up at any given time. For example, in Guinea-Bissau, the Secretary-General meets with the president ahead of meetings of the Council of Ministers, following which the SGG places items on its agenda. The SC in Zambia is authorized to return to ministries proposals that are unsound in their rationale or inconsistent with current policy. We were told of cases in Zambia where ministers were infuriated by the failure of one of their items to make the cabinet agenda. In such cases, the minister would sometimes contact the president directly, but very often the president would take the advice given by the SC rather than bend to the minister. The SC in Ghana, however, is more constrained in exercising this discretionary power; due to lack of staff and time, he only turns back the very worst papers.

Sometimes, cabinet committees are charged with identifying policies. In Botswana, national economic policies first surface at an annual January meeting of the Economic Committee (EC) of the Cabinet. This committee, chaired by the president, is a broadly inclusive body comprised of cabinet ministers, the governor of the central bank, all permanent secretaries, and selected advisers. Through discussion of macroeconomic and sectoral papers, the EC's proceedings educate government officials about economic trends, identify the most pressing economic policy issues that require decision, and clarify through debate the major policy options. For example, the EC smoothed the way for the cabinet to make an informed ruling on the introduction of a new national currency in 1976 and to prepare the civil service to implement the changeover. Thus, in practice, the economic agenda is set by officials and technical advisors in the core fiscal and monetary agencies of state.

Occasionally, the Executive Office may address policy requests from organized social groups, especially if these form part of an official government-sponsored task force or delegation. For example, in Ghana the report of a delegation for the Beijing Conference on Women found its way in to the EO and eventually to cabinet. In most countries, special interest lobbyists tend to focus their attention on the line ministries rather than the EO, in large part because government officials are more accessible at lower levels of the administrative hierarchy. In Mali, however, because the locus of decision-making is in the presidency and the incumbent's management style is consultative, representative of religious, business and civil associations have managed to make their voices heard at the highest reaches of power.

One might expect that democratization would raise the profile of elected legislatures in the policy process, including during policy identification. But elected representatives may be less well educated or less experienced than civil servants and many legislative assemblies possess very few professional staff members and small budgets -- factors that keep legislatures weak relative to the EO and the civil service. And since the presidency remains the principal source of political power, even under reformed constitutions, African chief executives have encountered few obstacles to their continued control of elected assemblies. In most instances, public policy proposals emanate from the executive branch; and legislators, after cursory debate, continue to append their stamp of approval much as they did in earlier single-party days. Indeed, civil servants in Botswana are reported to think that members of parliament (MPs) do not need professional staff support. This view is not surprising; but whether or not legislatures initiate legislation, it can be argued that legislatures do have a legitimate role in exercising oversight of the executive branch.

Typically in Africa, EOs and legislatures have little or no experience interacting over substantive issues, but there are increasing examples of legislative muscle-flexing *vis a vis* the executive. Of the legislatures reviewed here, the Beninese is the most assertive: the National

Assembly opposed President Soglo (and won) on such major issues as the establishment of an independent electoral commission, the preservation of proportional representation in the electoral system, and the creation of new administrative districts.<sup>26</sup> And in Ghana, opposition MPs have used parliamentary committees to challenge both the nomination of cabinet nominees and the proposed budget, as well as to broaden policy debate. Careful comparative research on these and other cases is required before we can pronounce definitively on the status of executive-legislative relations in African countries.

In raising policy issues, it does appear that ministers seem to respond to pressure from the press more often than to influence from the national assembly. To the extent that the newly liberated press in African countries does not always act responsibly, commonly publishing unsubstantiated rumors under misleading or sensationalistic headlines, politicians may be taking their cues from very questionable sources. While responsible press can provide useful insights on issues of public concern, EOs can also benefit from establishing linkages with elected representatives in the legislature or from direct access to public opinion.

#### *(b) Policy Analysis*

Once a policy goal is identified, analysis is needed to estimate the likely costs and benefits of different decision options. Such analysis is of two broad types: technical and political. The former focuses on whether it is technically feasible to achieve a given policy goal and at what economic cost/rate of return; the latter asks whether the policy is consistent with electoral promises and/or national priorities, as well as its expected impact on political support for the incumbent government. On many policy issues, technical and political considerations come into conflict. Political leaders and their economic and social policy advisors must therefore engage in constant dialogue if they are to understand, respect, and adapt to each others' point of view. As Henry Bruton and Paul Clark put it, "there are no 'right' policies independent

of the process by which policy decisions are made.”<sup>27</sup>

In practice, policies presented to African EOs are rarely supported by sound analysis. Although the Government of Ghana, for example, has announced an executive branch shift from “control and implementation” to “the development and monitoring of policy,” the hard truth is that few of its officials have training or experience with policy diagnostics. This means that proposals prepared by civil servants for cabinet deliberation often reflect both shallow empirical grounding and limited analytic rigor. Before the policy process was reformed in Zambia, technical analysis was shaky, political savvy was missing, and even the purpose of the proposal was sometimes unclear. One of Mali’s recent prime ministers complained that he, himself, had to correct grammar and spelling mistakes in documents prepared by junior officials for the council of ministers, waving his *Petit Robert*<sup>28</sup> in disgust.

Different countries have distinctive strengths and weaknesses with regard to policy analysis. The Beninese civil service has a reputation for competence that derives from its officials’ experience in regional French colonial administration; as such, each ministry’s technical staff, notably in the education and health sectors, plays a central role in preparing policy documents. Moreover, the entire cabinet in Benin (except for the president) meets on Tuesdays before the weekly Wednesday cabinet meeting so that ministers can play “devil’s advocate” and eliminate ill-prepared proposals from the agenda.

In Mali, the SGG’s professional staff, who help ministerial departments prepare dossiers for the council of ministers, is comprised entirely of legal experts. In the judgement of both Malian and foreign advisors, this has led to technical advice that tends to over-emphasize law and regulation and which may neglect important social, political and economic considerations. By contrast, in another part of Mali’s EO, the reorganization of the Office of the President has allowed for more cross-fertilization of ideas and

improved analysis as advisors meet in small groups like the social-cultural sub-team within the strategic team. Guinea-Bissau faces a somewhat different problem. The country’s liberation movement tradition combined with very weak technical capacity has resulted in the over-politicization of policy discussion, a problem the council of ministers is now trying to remedy by establishing a working group to define issues clearly and arrive at more rational decisions.

Common to all countries, however, is a shortage of information upon which to base sound policy analysis. Ministries preparing dossiers for cabinet are hamstrung by lack of access to national, regional and international statistical sets and to reports prepared by other units of government or by donors. Even within the office of the presidency in Mali, advisors claimed that they had difficulty finding documents; perhaps reflecting authoritarian legacies of secrecy and scarcity, these were hoarded by individual officials in their own offices. The success of new initiatives to establish policy units within the Executive Office therefore will hinge in important part on the establishment of reliable information systems for gathering, documenting and processing policy-relevant data.

As a result of reforms to the EO policy process in Zambia, data-gathering improved and technical analysis was sharpened, though these gains are offset by lack of ongoing training programs and staff attrition. The original intention had been to establish analytic capacity in the cabinet office itself: hence the “Analysis” in the Policy Analysis and Coordination Division (PAC) established in the cabinet office; PAC was to become a think tank. However, it was subsequently decided that this policy unit’s contribution would be greater if it took on a mainly management role, with technical analysis carried out in the line ministries. Although PAC does have technically well-qualified staff<sup>29</sup>, they now use their skills to oversee analyses prepared by the ministries, rather than to carry it out themselves. On this score, the Government of Ghana is grappling with the decision of whether to invest in re-training promising members of the public service to take on

analytic functions or to contract out applied research to the handful of private think tanks that exist in the country to carry out specialized analysis.

Where exactly does analytic capacity reside in Botswana? As noted above, the cabinet relies on the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, whose minister is the vice-president. Other line ministries in Botswana's civil service, widely regarded as the best in Africa, can also deliver good-quality technical analysis in support of recommended policies. Over time, the caliber of cabinet ministers (in terms of higher education and government experience) has also risen to a point where some ministers are as capable at policy analysis as their permanent secretaries and advisors. Indeed, Botswana has been held up as an example of successful policy management from both technical and political points of view.<sup>30</sup> Since independence, politicians and the government's technocrats -- not only in the EO but throughout the executive branch and in parliament -- have reportedly engaged in exceptionally open and well-informed debate on economic policy.

Not all interpretations of the Botswana experience are so favorable, especially as concerns the democratic accountability of the bureaucracy. Critics within the country point to the strengthening of the bureaucracy in relation to the legislature, political parties, and civil society and its domination of the policy process.<sup>31</sup> Another persistent problem, present to some extent in all countries studied, is that expatriate advisors continue to perform senior analyst functions in core economic and financial agencies, raising questions about the ownership of macroeconomic policies, especially where these involve radical market-oriented reform.

Other generic policy analysis challenges include the following: How can scarce technical expertise be retained within government in the face of attractive employment opportunities in the private and donor sectors (a problem felt in extreme form in Guinea-Bissau and Mali)? Can the quality of policy analysis be raised within line ministries, say through substantial

investments in training (a problem being addressed under Zambia's Public Sector Reform Program)? Can a single unit do both technical and political analysis? Generally speaking, if the policy analysis unit is located in an economic line ministry (as in Botswana), technical considerations are likely to predominate; if the unit falls under the umbrella of the office of the president (as planned for Ghana and Mali), politics is likely to be in command.<sup>32</sup> How are these different perspectives reconciled?

Ideally, policy analysts devise more than one policy option so that, rather than confronting a *fait accompli*, decision-makers can exercise choice. The best policy analysis compares the various anticipated trade-offs to be made as a result of alternate decision scenarios. In Zambia, cabinet memos are required to show rejected options alongside the recommended policy. In Mali, where the same requirement exists, the council of ministers has sometimes opted for a non-recommended course of action. But informants in Guinea-Bissau and Ghana revealed that policy proposals in these countries are always presented as single options, in part because analytic capacity is limited but also because the EO in these countries does not require the preparation of multiple alternatives. The President of Mali has noted that, with the exception of well-regarded option papers prepared by a former military advisor, decisions are artificially circumscribed in briefing papers. By effectively shifting decision-making authority into the hands of advisors and civil servants, the presentation of a single policy option has negative implications for political accountability. In a democracy, after all, elected officials -- rather than appointees -- should make the far-reaching policy choices.

Finally, policy analysis has implications for transparency. The opening up of policy analysis to multiple stakeholders and to technical review has meant that cozy, self-serving deals between ministers and senior civil servants are now much less likely. In Zambia, permanent secretaries now call upon PAC to counter what they deem to be inappropriate proposals by ministers, for example, to undercut established grain

marketing policy. Similarly, PAC has taken matters to the president (through the Secretary to the Cabinet) when it thought a minister was trying to bypass established policy processes or agreements. Although an organizational culture of open communications may spread with the introduction of electronic mail networks in some countries, information will nonetheless remain critically scarce in the short term.

(c) *Decision-Making*

As we have seen, African Executive Offices vary in the extent to which decision-making remains centralized in the presidency, is made collectively by cabinet, or is delegated to some lower entity in the executive branch. The constitution vests the president with more power to make decisions in Ghana, for example, than in Guinea-Bissau. Even in the latter country, however, where the prime minister and the council of ministers control policy on economic and social issues<sup>33</sup>, the president acts largely on his own in making decisions about defense and foreign policy.

Following democratic elections, most African countries experienced a reduction in the proportion of decisions made by presidents alone. According to the Secretary to the Cabinet in Ghana, for example, President Rawlings now routes all major policy decisions to the cabinet. Of course, there are some politicians who prefer the older, more opaque policy process who occasionally attempt to bypass cabinet by trying to persuade President Rawlings to go it alone; we were told that these attempts are now usually unsuccessful. In a somewhat contradictory trend, Zambia's 1996 Constitutional Amendment Act, which tightened qualifications for candidates to the presidency, did nothing to weaken presidential power *vis à vis* other institutions. On balance, however, in large part due to the personal authority of leaders involved, we would still describe present-day Ghana as more "presidential" than present-day Zambia.

Democratization has probably enhanced the role of cabinets in policy-making in Africa, albeit within a context of presidential government. In Ghana, where there is no written rule that would

compel the cabinet to adhere to the concept of *collective responsibility* (this practice is encouraged during the cabinet orientation process, however), ministers nonetheless accept this as a guiding principle. (In general terms, the notion of collective responsibility implies that once a decision-making body, such as a cabinet, decides on a matter all members will publicly support the decision -- whether or not they personally agree with it.) This does not mean that a cabinet minister in Ghana cannot publicly break ranks with his or her colleagues, only that such an action would be perceived as a breach of a "gentleman's" agreement. Collective responsibility can sometimes be too much of a good thing. Early on, newly elected Zambian ministers seemed reluctant to make even minor decisions, instead bringing matters to the cabinet that were well within their ministerial jurisdictions or even within the administrative authority of their civil servants. Ministers acted in this way partly out of unfamiliarity with their responsibilities but mainly because of reluctance to take responsibility for potentially controversial decisions. Rather, they sought comfort in the cabinet's collective responsibility.<sup>34</sup>

Political liberalization strengthens the ability of individual ministries to influence decision-making and to solicit input on policy matters from outside the usual processes. Indeed, social and economic interest groups generally have more space to organize in democratic regimes and to introduce their preferences into the policy process. Their most common point of access is a line ministry rather than the relatively inaccessible heights of the EO. To the extent that interest groups can help to put items on the policy agenda or provide supporting data and analysis for policy proposals, they do so most often through individual cabinet ministers. Aid dependency enhances ministerial government, as well. Donors negotiate most aid or loan agreements at the ministerial level to the point that technical choices and financial conditions only become apparent to the EO at a late stage of negotiations. Moreover, the presence of foreign advisors representing international financial and donor interests within key economic ministries has the effect of amplifying

the voice of those ministries in cabinet deliberations.

Some cabinets/councils of ministers have developed more efficient procedures than others. Their meetings vary in length from a brisk three to four hours in Botswana to a marathon seven to eight hours in Benin and Guinea-Bissau (see Table 2). All the same, the Botswana cabinet really chews on issues before making decisions, expanding the notion of collective responsibility into something closer to consensus-building.

Policy decisions are also made collectively in Zambia. In contrast to former President Kaunda's controlling style, Chiluba introduced more decisions for cabinet consideration and encouraged of open debate in cabinet meetings. Ministers apparently do not feel constrained about speaking outside their portfolios. Consequently, cabinet meetings were lengthy in the early years of the Chiluba administration, with heated debates over issues and even facts, often ending without clear decisions. The outcomes of cabinet deliberations were sometimes so ambiguous that most of the subsequent gathering would be spent deciphering the minutes of the last meeting. Over time, EO reforms have enabled the president to run shorter meetings with clearer decisions. In some cases, the cabinet's acceptance of well-worked proposals from cabinet committees and inter-ministerial committees of officials (IMCOs) has become almost a formality. Even though discussion remains lively, cabinet minutes now record only decisions (not discussion), though the secretariat's notes are archived.

In most African countries, there is one major exception to deliberative decision-making. Key economic and budgetary decisions often are effectively made by a group of economists centered in the Ministry of Finance. This enclave may be effectively captured by the ministry's foreign advisors and donors, especially the World Bank. As stated above, decisions made by this group tend to be communicated to the cabinet/council of ministers as *faits accomplis*, sometimes to the fury of its members.

The decisiveness of cabinet meetings depends importantly on the clarity of formal procedures for preparing decisions and the adherence of staff to these procedures. Ghana has never had a cabinet handbook, though a memorandum to chief directors (permanent secretaries) exists that provides some guidance on procedures and formats for preparing policy proposals; even so, cabinet memoranda are uneven in structure and quality. According to informants, Guinea-Bissau's council of ministers spends an inordinate amount of time trying to figure out the intent and recommendations of the policy proposals on its agenda; similarly in Mali, ministers waste time on technical points that should have been clarified in advance.<sup>35</sup>

Although Zambia has always had a cabinet handbook, its procedures were not always followed, to the point that cabinet memoranda became overly long and largely unhelpful to decision-makers. To address these problems, among others, a new handbook was prepared by the Zambian PAC in 1996 to incorporate the new policy process. It includes chapters on: the organization of government, collective responsibility, the policy process, cabinet business, processing documents, cabinet meetings, ministerial and civil service responsibilities, and a code of conduct for civil servants. There is a separate *Guide to Writing Cabinet Memoranda*. The previous handbook, written in 1964 and based upon British procedures, was treated as a secret document. There are no restrictions on the current version; it is available to all.

As noted above, the inflation of cabinet agendas and memoranda is often due to the inclusion of relatively minor items that could be decided at lower administrative levels. The Botswana cabinet has addressed this problem by distinguishing between agenda items, which are supported by a cabinet memorandum, and "information notes," which advise ministers of actions taken in line ministries that need nothing more than the cabinet's formal assent. Only if an information note generates controversy is it elevated to an agenda item for discussion at a future cabinet meeting. This process helps to screen out non-priority items, limit the number

of cabinet memoranda, and keep cabinet meetings shorter than they otherwise would be.<sup>36</sup>

One way used to streamline decision-making is to delegate select policy matters to cabinet committees. Again in Botswana, a cabinet business committee screens memoranda in which line ministries propose policy measures to cabinet for format, clarity and length. And in times of economic crisis, the Botswana cabinet delegates responsibility for debate and policy recommendation to a special session of its economic committee. For example, this body quickly proposed revisions to the national budget in 1981 to respond to a drop in diamond prices, proposals that the cabinet subsequently decided to adopt. Even under normal circumstances, the economic committee meets four or five times a year to develop detailed economic policy recommendations for the cabinet's endorsement. A looser variation is Botswana's "informal cabinet," which is comprised of ministers together with relevant advisers. Unlike in Zambia, which retains tight standards of official secrecy on actual cabinet proceedings, outside experts may be invited into cabinet meetings in Botswana to make brief presentations on technical matters, though the cabinet reserves all decision-making authority for itself.

Delegation of decision-making in Zambia involves standing cabinet committees (as distinct from ad hoc Inter-Ministerial Committees of Officials, or IMCOs) which cover topics like defense and security and foreign affairs. Three committees are devoted to economic recovery and deal with priority issues like drought relief, rehabilitation of economic and social infrastructure, and privatization of public corporations. All committees are serviced by PAC, further improving the coordination of the government's policy program. A smaller number of "special" committees are attached directly to the presidency. For example, a parliamentary planning committee, chaired by the vice-president, coordinates the introduction and passage of the government's program in parliament.

## Policy Implementation

In practice, African EOs have generally paid little attention to the implementation of policy decisions, leaving this up to responsible line ministries. As a result, major lapses have routinely occurred in governmental effectiveness. For example, the Malian minister of the public service reportedly characterized his own executive branch as stricken with "administrative sclerosis."<sup>37</sup> A study carried out by staff from Zambia's cabinet office in the early 1990s found that about 75 percent of cabinet decisions were never implemented; the comparative figure for Guinea-Bissau was about the same and, for Ghana, some 67 percent.<sup>38</sup> While these studies did not systematically address implementation constraints, anecdotal evidence points to poor resource planning, unpredictable (and blocked) resource flows, and poor communications among implementers. Even in Botswana, which has a relatively strong implementation record, the ministry of local government has suffered performance delays. Delays arise in part because policy implementation does not occur until government programs are approved in a *kgotla* (traditional village deliberative process) presided over by a traditional authority.

As with policy formulation, the implementation phase of the policy process will be disassembled for ease of presentation. We consider three sub-phases: the dissemination of decisions, the monitoring of implementation directives, and the evaluation of policy results. The reader is reminded that the purpose of this section is to assess the performance of African EOs at managing different phases of the policy process.

### (a) *Dissemination of Decisions*

The first, often overlooked, step in policy implementation is recording and disseminating decisions. Much depends on the quality of the minutes that document the proceedings of the decision-making body. Because the minutes of cabinet/council of ministers meetings constitute the necessary authority for executive branch action, it is important that these clearly

communicate the intentions and instructions of political leaders.

In Guinea-Bissau, council of minister decisions are broadcast on radio and television soon after the conclusion of meetings. And, in Benin, decisions taken at the cabinet's weekly Wednesday meetings appear in the Thursday issue of the national newspaper. Despite this admirable evidence of accountability, ministers in both these countries apparently do not always sit down with their ministerial staffs to discuss the decisions or the details of policy implementation. In Botswana, two types of documents are prepared after cabinet meetings: "cabinet directives" and "cabinet minutes," both of which must be approved by the secretary to the cabinet (SC) before distribution. Cabinet minutes summarize the discussion without naming individual ministers; cabinet directives are short statements of the agreed-upon cabinet decision. Except if urgent, directives are issued 14 days after the meeting, which allows for the rare eventuality that a minister discovers an unforeseen problem and the decision must be amended.

In Ghana and Mali, decisions are conveyed in writing by the SC/SGG to the minister(s) that authored the policy proposal, at best on the same afternoon or the morning after the cabinet/council meeting. The rapid conveyance of cabinet decisions, which has now also begun to happen in Zambia, puts less urgency on the distribution of minutes. Since 1994 in Zambia, EO officials have also sent "carbon" copies of relevant cabinet decisions to the affected permanent secretaries. The replicability of this simple management intervention is questionable, however, since elsewhere in Africa it is believed that this practice would undermine a minister's position. In most cases, then, the speed with which implementation gets underway therefore depends a great deal on the relationships -- some good, some strained -- between ministers and their top civil servants. In the best case, the permanent secretary (chief director in the case of Ghana) is made aware of the decision within hours or days of a cabinet meeting and engaged in a discussion of implementation steps. Poor relations between top civil servants and their

political masters can mean that implementation is slowed, even impaired, before it begins.

Implementation problems in Mali derive from the dual structure of government and are exacerbated when elected officials are slow to take statutory action. For example, the SGG has encountered difficulty in gaining access to the prime minister, whose signature is required in order to move legislation along. Moreover, the pace of implementation has been retarded by the sluggish circulation of mail between the presidency and other governmental units, notably the national assembly. One possible solution to these sorts of logistical problems would be for elected leaders to delegate more authority to senior civil servants to implement decisions already made by cabinets or national assemblies.

#### *(b) Innovative Models for Implementation*

Moving past the conveyance of policy decisions and on to policy implementation, in at least two countries, administrative delegation is the preferred approach. Botswana has long encouraged joint ventures with foreign private capital and relied on private and semi-private corporations to implement major projects. For example, the financing and management of the country's essential diamond and copper-nickel mines has involved international marketing cartels like Debeers and Rhone Selection Trust. In Ghana, cabinet committees are used as forums for sorting out implementation details of matters that have already been decided by the full Cabinet. They also provide a venue where disagreements that emerge during cabinet discussion can be thrashed out more fully.

In an additional effort to improve policy implementation, the Government of Ghana created over the past twenty years approximately 160 independent yet accountable organizations, "subvented" with partial or full government funding. These executive agencies are meant to get things done by cutting through bureaucratic red tape and sidestepping restrictive management rules. Despite a few isolated successes, (for example, Ghana's Civil Aviation Authority has reduced its staff and increased the



efficiency of the international airport, and now even turns a profit), many kinks remain to be ironed out before the increasingly popular practice of delegating policy implementation to semi-autonomous agencies proves to be widely applicable in the African context. Among the issues to be sorted out are

- defining the results that independent agencies are responsible for achieving
- clarifying the relationships between line ministries and the independent agencies in their portfolios
- establishing a workable balance between sanctions and rewards in new incentive systems.

Suffusing all these challenges is the common constraint that the people in charge of these semi-autonomous executive agencies often are former public servants, who bring with them old attitudes about performance, communications and management, as well as resistance to the personnel retrenchment that is usually inherent to the implementation of civil service reform policies.

### *(c) Monitoring*

In the past, Britain had “no formal machinery of <sup>39</sup> the hierarchical structure and bureaucratic discipline of the civil service were assumed to be adequate to ensure implementation. Over time, that assumption proved largely to be false. Remedial action began in earnest in the 1980s, with the introduction of the Next Steps program and Citizens Charters through which government performance objectives were clearly defined and their achievement monitored by both the machinery of government and citizens at large. A similar re-orientation may be called for in African countries. Granted, this is no small job, especially in countries that have been plagued by declining real salaries, falling professional standards, and emigration of the most talented managers. Nevertheless, efforts to institute formal implementation plans and monitoring systems are required to ensure that decisions are actually carried out. While a fully rational system to measure outputs against inputs (let

alone against policy intentions) is beyond the capability of even well-endowed agencies in donor countries, the introduction of some kind of monitoring system can pay dividends in implementation.

Ideally, the task of monitoring should begin well before implementation gets underway. Draft implementation plans are best drawn up by the originating ministry at the same time policy proposals are prepared for submission to cabinet. In so doing, the proposer demonstrates the practicality of the action. The early preparation of implementation plans helps to identify which stakeholders need to be consulted during policy formulation (for example, through IMCOs) and to provide advance warning of potential implementation hazards.

As a management function, monitoring plans can help make public servants better managers. Especially where governments are trying to decentralize power, well-functioning EOs do not dominate the implementation process or use monitoring as a pretext for recentralizing government. Instead, senior civil servants in line ministries put in place plans for monitoring their own performance. Active involvement in policy design and development promotes a sense of ownership on the part of ministry staff in the monitoring process and encourages the development of realistic performance indicators.

Four of the six countries studied lacked plans or procedures for holding ministries accountable for implementation of policy decisions (See Table 2, Column 13). In Ghana, for example, cabinet memoranda do not spell out implementation steps; instead, the implementation monitoring unit (IMU) in the office of the president keeps a rough tally of progress in policy implementation by telephoning their contacts in the ministries on an “as needed” basis. The usefulness of this process is questionable since the IMU staff is not privy to the original cabinet memoranda or cabinet minutes, which record the intent of the policy decision. Thus, if the IMU is told, “Yes, the decision has been implemented,” the IMU staff has little basis for following up further. The government of Ghana is aware of this weakness

and may eventually fold the IMU and its monitoring responsibilities into its proposed policy management group.

In Mali, the staffs of the presidency and primature (prime minister's office) are hazy about their responsibilities, if any, for monitoring policy implementation. At a strategic management workshop for presidential staff in 1995, agreement could not be reached on whether the presidency had such responsibilities. Following an intervention by the General Secretary of the Presidency, the entire group eventually conceded that the president of Mali had constitutional responsibilities to "watch over the functioning of the government." But a heated debate broke out over the meaning of the English word "monitoring" and how to translate it into French; unable to find a compromise between *suivre* (to follow) and *controler* (to verify or check), the group decided to stick with the untranslatable Anglo-Saxonism. More substantively, the prime minister's advisors, who believed that monitoring the implementation of public policy should be one of the core functions of their office, complained that they had not been invited to the retreat to develop the Third Republic's first annual government program. Under these circumstances, it was hard for them to imagine how they would ever be able to monitor the performance of line ministries.

Only Zambia and Botswana have devised procedures for monitoring policy implementation. Shocked to learn about implementation lapses, the Chiluba cabinet at first reacted by strongly challenging the data, but later undertook more measured self-criticism. Responsibility for achieving intended outcomes is now supposed to be laid out in an implementation plan prepared by each ministry. The plan specifies who does what, when, how, and with what resources. Against this plan, ministries are required to prepare progress reports for submission to PAC. PAC's role is to monitor the monitors, making sure that ministries are tracking action against a timetable and reporting any problems up the line. If implementation problems cannot be solved by ministries on their own, the matter is supposed to be taken up by cabinet or one of its

committees. This monitoring system is not yet operating precisely as designed and predictable implementation hitches persist in the forms of unpredictable resource flows, lack of realism in costing policy proposals, and weaknesses in communication and coordination.

Botswana has fared better in its monitoring efforts. In addition to weekly cabinet meetings in Botswana, ministers (accompanied by permanent secretaries) hold monthly meetings with the president and his staff. Each minister gives a status report on his or her portfolio responsibility. Problem areas are defined, bottlenecks identified, and solutions sought. The January meeting of the economic committee also plays an informal role in monitoring implementation of the previous year's policies. Ministers are expected to explain to the economic committee why any planned programs were not executed; to give teeth to this monitoring scheme, resources are withheld until past commitments are met.

Finally, monitoring plans alone will not guarantee implementation. The Rawlings government in Ghana has encountered obstacles when trying to implement technically correct policies that were poorly communicated to citizens. In the early 1990s, for example, a value-added tax had to be rescinded before it had scarcely been introduced in the face of widespread confusion and, eventually, popular resistance<sup>40</sup>. Similarly, the devaluation of the CFA franc caused a popular backlash throughout francophone Africa because the policy's intent of making exports competitive was not well explained by governments and not well understood by citizens, who only saw prices rise for consumer goods. In Mali, the government's efforts to reform education led to a student rampage; though in Zambia, where the government followed through on promises to raise school standards, citizens begrudgingly accepted the introduction of school fees. The lesson to be learned is that policy implementation requires public relations and political salesmanship as well as managerial control.

While to date, relatively weak African legislatures have not played a meaningful role in monitoring, as they grow more sophisticated and experienced, we can expect them to assert themselves more by monitoring executive branch performance.

*(d) Evaluation*

As opposed to monitoring, which tracks policy *outputs*, evaluation concerns policy *outcomes*. It asks whether policies achieve their intended results, at what actual costs, and with what unintended economic, social, environmental or other impacts. Unlike monitoring, which takes place during the policy implementation and is aimed to increase efficiency, evaluation occurs after the fact. It summarizes what has been learned about the effectiveness of a given policy and feeds any lessons learned back into the policy process.<sup>41</sup>

How well do EOs perform at this function? Generally speaking, not well. African EOs do not systematically conduct policy evaluations. Botswana, however, does offer some of the better examples of evaluation currently in practice in Africa. There, officials in the office of the president/cabinet office (a fused unit) state that they occasionally conduct internal “evaluations,” for example of civil service salary rates and conditions of service to ensure that they remain attractive and competitive. The central bank of Botswana and the Ministry of Finance have put mechanisms in place to periodically assess the impact of specific policies relating to money supply, foreign exchange and social transfer spending. And NGOs like the Botswana Society have convened conferences on the government’s agricultural, environmental and indigenous peoples policies at which independent evaluations, some quite critical, are offered.

All other African examples are less encouraging. Ghana’s Civil Service law of 1993 requires each government ministry to have a planning, monitoring and evaluation division but, in practice, these exist largely on paper only. In Guinea-Bissau (as in other countries dependent on foreign aid) any policy evaluation that does

occur is usually sponsored by international donors and addresses donor, rather than government, concerns. In several countries, including Zambia, government officials (often in a private capacity while on leave from the executive branch) have been recruited to join these donor-driven exercises. Even in Botswana in 1989, parliament attempted to set up a policy evaluation unit of its own but the office of the president refused to include a line item for this activity in the government budget.

Policy evaluation is an attribute of mature management systems in which policies are reliably carried through to the end. For the most part, it is safe to say that the evaluation ethos remains unfamiliar in African EO and executive branch culture. Not to minimize the importance of evaluation, but since African EOs still face basic challenges of putting policy decisions into effect, they may wish to place priority emphasis for the time being on implementation before investing heavily in evaluation. The recommendations at the end of this paper reflect this emphasis.

### **Cross-Cutting Political Issues**

As stated earlier, policy management is both a technical and a political process. Policy results will not be forthcoming if either aspect is neglected. Policies must not only be prepared according to high standards of technical quality and implemented by well-trained professionals, but they must pass a basic political test: do the policy goals possess sufficient political support to be adopted and sustained? This section assesses EO performance at handling the political dimensions of the policy process, that is, building constituencies of support and ensuring coordination among stakeholders. These tasks arise not only at discrete moments during the policy process but pervade all its phases.

*(a) Coordination*

Coordination stands at the heart of policy management. The role of the Executive Office is to orchestrate the behavior of multiple actors in making and implementing policy decisions.

This inevitably involves containing and balancing conflicting interests; thus coordination is an inherently political endeavor.

To produce coherent policy outputs, at least three types of coordination are required. First, coordination must be obtained *within the Executive Office*, a more pressing challenge for EOs in countries where executive authority is divided between a president and a prime minister. Second, coordination is necessary *between the EO and line ministries*, a problem most marked in countries that have large cabinets/councils, with each minister or deputy-minister heading his or her own ministry and/or specialized department. Third, policy coordination involves synchronizing executive action *across two or more line ministries or agencies*. Regardless of the setting, it is clear that both formal and informal communications are important, ranging from substantive technical exchanges to seemingly mundane issues, such as communicating where meetings will be held, who will attend, and what is expected of the participants.

One lesson to be drawn here is that, all other things being equal, policy coordination is easier where Cabinets are smaller, in which case Botswana potentially constitutes the most conducive setting studied (see Table 2, Column 1).<sup>42</sup> The coordination of the policy process is most difficult where there are dual centers of authority within the Executive Office. In Mali, for example, the division of executive power is symbolized by the two-kilometer distance between the prime minister's office in Bamako and the presidential palace in Koulouba on top of the *colline de pouvoir* (hill of power). The SGG now reports to the prime minister, but he and his staff (especially those without official cars) find it difficult to coordinate with the prime minister's office, with whom they have no formal schedule of meetings.<sup>43</sup> By 1995, relations between the SGG and prime minister's staffs were distant. And, despite the fact that the Secretariat is part of the Primature, the prime minister's staff of highly competent technical advisors are not invited to attend inter-ministerial coordination (IMCO) meetings.

In Benin, the coalition government that represents several parties has experienced difficulty reaching consensus, a problem that President Kérékou's personal interventions have apparently been unable to overcome. Vying political and ethno-regional loyalties within the council of ministers undermine cohesive government action in important policy domains. Specifically, there is a tension between the president and "Prime Minister" Houngbedji, appointed as coordinator of government business but with no constitutional powers and an uncertain political future. At a cabinet retreat in 1996, World Bank-funded consultants attempted to demonstrate to ministers that everyone would lose if they chose not to cooperate. The government of Benin has since asked donors for technical assistance to strengthen communication and coordination at three levels: within the cabinet, among ministries, and between government and citizens.

Coordination is also an endemic challenge because Executive Offices oversee an array of functional ministries or departments. In all countries, the political and permanent heads of line ministries often have distinct preferences that diverge from those of the head of government or the collective leadership. And the bureaucracies they head may be responsive to their own constituencies and have little incentive to consider externalities, resulting in isolated actions that incur wholly unexpected consequences.<sup>44</sup> Under these circumstances, government operations may lack what the OECD calls "policy coherence."

In all countries considered here, the secretariat supporting the EO is responsible for ensuring that every affected minister is consulted before a policy proposal comes up for decision. For example, where proposals incur financial costs, treasury review is essential prior to submission for decision. And for countries involved in regional economic groupings, the foreign policy implications of domestic policy initiatives require the consent, or at least acquiescence, of the foreign ministry. For politically controversial issues, legislative whips (those responsible for "rounding up" votes) from the ruling party may be consulted before the cabinet decides on a

measure destined for parliament. In some cases, cabinet committees are the appropriate forum for coordination, but for out-of-the-ordinary issues, ad hoc meetings may have to be called. Although a cabinet handbook or other standing orders may specify which staff are responsible for consultation and coordination, these tasks are sometimes honored only in the breach.

In Mali, the Secretary-General of the Government (in the prime minister's office) calls inter-ministerial meetings for all governmental units affected by a policy proposal. During 1994, for example, 46 such meetings were held. The proposals emanating from these meetings are submitted direct to the council of ministers or, if issues remain to be resolved, through the coordination committee of the secretaries-general that is chaired by the SGG and includes the director to the prime minister and all the secretaries-general of the ministries. In addition, the Mali government creates inter-ministerial committees as the need arises. Chaired by a minister, these have been found useful to coordinate, among other policies, health promotion (involving eight ministries) and structural adjustment (involving six ministries, the SGG, the SGP, and the prime minister's cabinet director). But as the preceding paragraph illustrates, policy coordination is hardest in semi-presidential systems where presidents and prime ministers each have their own large staffs of advisors and functionaries. In Mali, these numbers reach 23 and 20 respectively (See Table 2, Columns 8 and 9)!

In Zambia, the powerful secretary to the cabinet (SC) tries to settle inter-ministerial differences before policy proposals reach cabinet. The energetic individuals who have occupied this pivotal office have preferred to personally call ministers and permanent secretaries (PSs) on the telephone than to convene formal meetings. There, the experienced SC deals with ministers respectfully, but as equals. His power lies in "knowing the ropes," the result of forty years of service, and his access to the president, with whom he speaks many times a day. In fact, it is he and the president who select all permanent secretaries; ministers are rarely consulted. Thus, if PAC wishes to make a point to the president,

possibly in opposition to a minister, they do so through the SC.

The leadership of Ghana's public service is more diffuse. The cabinet secretary, the head of the civil service, the chair of the public service commission, and the chief presidential advisor are offices occupied by different people having blurred responsibilities. In addition, the National Development Planning Commission hosts a cross-sectoral planning group to provide input into the budget. Although its brief is narrow, its very existence has preempted the emergence of alternative coordination mechanisms, particularly for implementation.

In large part, stakeholder coordination boils down to forward planning. This and other core aspects of policy management together constitute an effort to achieve control over the government's agenda by anticipating events rather than responding to crises. Staying one step ahead is difficult when the availability of resources is uncertain or when carefully planned timetables are disrupted by unforeseen incidents, conditions that prevail with a vengeance in low-income African countries. To some extent, capacity for forward planning can be built by introducing formal mechanisms like forecasting systems for cabinet business or implementation plans for collective decisions.

But the effectiveness of planning devices should not be overestimated. There is a danger that formal arrangements for policy coordination that work well in some countries will exist only on paper in others. Although there is widespread reliance on bureaucratic procedures, one should not forget that in most African countries politics is part of a society-wide oral culture, conducted by word of mouth more than written procedures. Networks of personal loyalty are often stronger than formal political institutions, and informal coordination procedures are not to be discounted. Effective members of the EO secretariat develop their own networks of personal contacts: "knowing who to call in another office was, as so often, the key to success."<sup>45</sup> Telephone conversations, office meetings, home visits, and other social events provide important occasions to exchange

information and broker agreements. Because official roles and rules can be relaxed in casual settings, difficulties encountered in formal meetings can often be surmounted and political alliances can be negotiated and cemented.

(b) *Constituency-Building*

Although politics pervade the policy process, the scope of relevant political constituencies varies across different policy phases. Direct participation by the mass public is most common (and most appropriate) at the beginning and end of the policy process, that is during policy identification and evaluation of results. Even in democracies, constituency-building around the time of the policy decision itself concerns more proximate stakeholders within the government and executive branch itself.

As conferees at the 1995 African Executive Office workshop agreed, citizens often have been routinely excluded from decision-making in the aftermath of the continent's founding elections of the early 1990s. Benin's experience is emblematic. Its democratic regime was established by a 1991 national conference representing a broad array of organized social forces drawn from both city and countryside. Ordinary citizens, individually and organized into civic groups, participated directly in the formation of the new order, the result of which was an elected government that promised to "manage institutions with the participation of the people." In practice, however, the new government was unable to sustain high levels of popular involvement once it took power, falling back instead on established bureaucratic habits. These tendencies were only reinforced by the technocratic style of policy management that President Soglo tried to introduce based on his previous experience as an African representative to the board of governors of the World Bank.

African EOs possess few systematic procedures that would allow top government officials to directly learn about the views of various groups in society. For example, none of the EOs reviewed here had commissioned regular public opinion polls to reveal citizen attitudes toward policy initiatives, to provide data on public trust

in government institutions, or to track the approval rating of the president. Of course, nearly all African politicians and some bureaucrats have ties to local communities and their home-area visits provide informal opportunities for individuals and groups to "bend ears."<sup>46</sup> Where the ruling political party is reasonably well organized (as in Ghana) or where the country is geographically small (as in Guinea-Bissau), personal contacts between leaders and constituents are relatively easy and can be regular. Otherwise (especially in vast countries with weak parties like Mali and Zambia) constituency coverage is far from complete. Moreover, African political leaders worry that if they invite public comment, they will be overwhelmed immediately with complaints about undelivered services or demands for special favors. Hence, over time, even the most committed democrats tend to draw back from contacts with constituents.

Against this trend, the Government of Mali has pioneered three innovations that enable public consultation and warrant replication elsewhere. First, it introduced *concertations regionales*, local forums for public debate, to tackle major national issues such as the Tuareg rebellion, the impact of CFA franc devaluation, and the school crisis. Second, the Government has institutionalized a system of inviting representatives of civil society to pose questions and air their complaints in annual national forums with the Council of Ministers (*espaces d'interpellation democratique*).<sup>47</sup> And third, line ministries have begun to support research targeted at the opinions of users of government-delivered services, for instance a pilot survey organized under the auspices of the World Bank-sponsored Institutional Development Program.<sup>48</sup>

Along similar lines and following in the tradition of its national conferences (where a cross section of Benin's civil society is represented), the Government of Benin has also sponsored *états generaux* to bring together interest groups in particular sectors for policy discussions. And in Guinea-Bissau, there is a practice known as "reflections groups," which are periodically

formed by government and include a large number of participants from the private sector and civil society interests as well as academics and government. Guinea-Bissau's entrance into the West Africa Monetary Union was the subject of public debates by such a reflection group.<sup>49</sup>

For its part, the government of Botswana regularly uses presidential commissions and public forums on national issues (like incomes

policy, land tenure, economic opportunities, and tribal grazing land policy among others) whose public hearings generate reports for debate in parliament. Public consultations in Botswana aim at educating the electorate and building popular support, though questions remain whether these are merely formal showpieces intended to legitimize policies already decided upon within the bureaucracy.<sup>50</sup>

## V. Strengthening Executive Offices

**Policy and Program Opportunities.** This paper concludes with a set of recommendations for African policy-makers who are interested in enhancing policy processes in the executive branch to consider. The first is to *strengthen the policy management capacity of Executive Offices* in new African democracies. A program of this sort would be distinctive in several respects. It would:

- a. focus on a strategic and influential political institution that lies at the very center of the governmental machine: the Executive Office;
- b. emphasize improvements in the politico-managerial (rather than technical) aspects of the policy process as a means of achieving policy results; and
- c. promote small policy management units within EOs geared to helping African leaders pursue home-grown and sustainable solutions to difficult policy dilemmas.

What is a suitable strategy for building policy management capacity? In general, EOs must, more than ever, focus on “delivering the goods.” This means becoming more effective and efficient at providing the policy environment and services that have been promised to the electorate. Any recommendations for strengthening EOs should also lie within the manageable scope of African governments and donor field missions. Generally speaking, we think that reformers can gain greater leverage over the policy process by concentrating on the internal management of EOs than by attempting to change the external environment. Because such external factors affect EO performance and predict the success of EO reforms, donors should nonetheless be aware of them and take them into account. But the recommendations in this paper concentrate on EO internal structures and procedures and on EO relations with key policy constituencies.

To survive, democratic governments must do a better job at delivering on promises made to the electorate. Thus, at the heart of the policy process should be a strong Executive Office capable of strategic policy management in the sense of making tough choices, setting clear objectives, and motivating policy implementation. This places a premium on *building capacity within African EOs to manage the policy process effectively and efficiently.*

The recommendations that follow can be regarded as a menu of options from which EO practitioners can choose. The menu is purposefully broad, addressing the wide range of EO needs and opportunities revealed by EO performance assessments, although the items in the menu are presented in a preferred priority order that leavens concern with democratization with an even heavier emphasis on governance. They are:

- a. strengthening policy management at the locus of EO decision-making;
- b. establishing clear organizational objectives for EO units, clear job descriptions for EO personnel, and agreements on what is expected from individuals in terms of results through workshops and training;
- c. streamlining internal EO decision-making procedures and improving stakeholder coordination through technical assistance and training; and
- d. articulating policy for and building consensus around a shared national mission<sup>51</sup> through open stakeholder forums.

### Approaches to Consider

Practitioners may wish to choose further among the following approaches. Again, these are presented in a priority order derived from this paper’s assessment of the comparative advantage and most pressing needs of African EOs.



1. Build implementation capacity in order to achieve policy results.

Policy implementation in a democratic and free market environment involves not only energizing the public bureaucracy but also mobilizing private and non-governmental resources in support of national goals. EOs must become oriented to achieving results, with all the emphasis on implementation, monitoring and evaluation that such an emphasis implies. Indeed, implementation tasks require management capabilities different from those associated with traditional principles of administration (Crosby, 1996). To improve capacity for implementation, priority might be given to:

- a. closely linking policy-making to the national budgeting process through technical assistance, procedural reform and training;
- b. developing systems for monitoring policy implementation -- this can be accomplished through technical assistance and training to EOs and line ministries; and
- c. learning about and disseminating the experience of African democracies with innovative systems of policy implementation (e.g. management for results, performance contracts, administrative devolution, and public-private partnerships).

2. Integrate the technical and political dimensions of the policy process

The most effective EOs foster ownership and compromise among politicians and technocrats on policy issues. Cabinet ministers need to reach agreement with economists in the core fiscal agencies of state (who are often donor-funded foreign advisors) on a socio-economic reform strategy (e.g. reconciling structural adjustment with basic needs). The rationale for any controversial EO decisions also needs to be communicated to all interested parties. To improve on the integration of technical and political considerations in policy formulation and implementation, consideration might be given to:

- a. fostering exchanges between ministers and civil servants through short policy retreats;
- b. with few exceptions, when technical assistance is required, ensuring that advisers practice facilitative consultation rather than the traditional model of supplanting (or undermining) local capacity with “expert” advisors or technical assistance;
- c. promoting greater and more productive interactions between the executive and legislative branches of government; and
- d. improving EO skills at public relations and mass communications<sup>52</sup>.

3. Promote both entrepreneurship and institutionalization within the EO

Executive Office performance is most likely to improve if in-country EO officials seize ownership and initiative. This creates a paradox: While “movers and shakers” are needed to overcome resistance to reform in the executive branch, the best EO leaders will create routines that do not depend on “indispensable” individuals. Instead, they use their tenure in office to put in place permanent systems of professional management.

Actions to be considered include:

- a. cultivation of EO officials who demonstrate commitments to EO institutional reform (e.g. study tours, and attachments to well-functioning EOs, training opportunities, information technology); and
- b. institutionalization of in-service training for members of the EO and those elsewhere in government with responsibility for policy formulation or implementation.

4. Strengthen EOs’ capacity to adapt responsively to a democratic political environment

Democratization requires opening up of the public policy process. The EO’s contribution in a democracy is to encourage collaboration

between senior and junior executive officers, coordination between different line-ministries and departments, and regular consultation with the public. Approaches to accomplish this include:

- a. exposure of promising EO staff to models of delegated decision-making elsewhere in Africa and the world (both face-to-face through cross-national EO networks and electronically through Internet);
- b. the creation of independent capacity to tap public opinion on policy issues (i.e. outside the EO, but accessible to it); and
- c. applied comparative research on executive-legislative relations in new African democracies, with a focus on executive branch accountability.

**Concluding Remarks.** In sum, our comparative review of the available evidence suggests a widespread need to *strengthen the policy management capacity of Executive Offices* in new African democracies. But the EO need not centralize all policy management functions within its own organizational boundaries. Policy management in the EO should concentrate on *motivating* and *coordinating* the activities of the various governmental (and quasi-governmental and non-governmental) agencies that formulate and implement policy. Wherever possible, the EO should devolve responsibility for policy *analysis* to appropriate technical ministries or private think tanks, if analysts in such ministries adhere to national priorities. Similarly, the EO should avoid usurping control of implementation functions, instead assisting line ministries to engage in policy *monitoring* and *evaluation* and to report back to decision-makers.

Strengthening EOs does not necessarily mean enlarging them. It does mean clarifying their functions and improving their performance. While EO strengthening in some African countries will likely increase the number of EO staff, in others it has actually reduced these numbers. Nor does the introduction of new incentive systems necessarily increase budgetary commitments. Experience has shown that it may be possible in some settings for EO policy management units to attract and retain top quality officials without resorting to salary increases above civil service scales; the professional prestige of the unit and special opportunities for travel, access to information, training and promotion are sometimes incentive enough.

The ultimate objective of improved policy management is to increase the capacity of government to *respond* to democratic demands. The aim is to open up decision-making to a broadened array of stakeholders and make that process productive — not to recentralize or immobilize. Indeed, in order to survive, elected governments need success at delivering the fruits of democracy to their citizens. For their part, development-oriented organizations can and should make efforts to assist African countries that are undergoing a democratic transition by helping them strengthen their policy management structures and systems, if such support is desired by them.

## Appendix A: African Constitutions, 1996

- a) *Benin*. The President of the Republic of Benin, who is both Head of State and Head of Government, is directly elected for a five-year term, renewable only once. The Constitution (adopted by referendum, December 2, 1990) abolished the post of Prime Minister and holds the President legally responsible to an 83-member National Assembly elected on a four-year cycle. The Constitution upholds the principle of an independent judiciary and allows for a Constitutional Court, an Economic and Social Council, and a media authority, all of which are intended to counterbalance executive authority.
- b) *Botswana*. The Constitution of the Republic of Botswana took effect at independence in September 30, 1966. It provides for an executive President whose election every five years is linked to the election of the 40-member National Assembly. Every Assembly candidate must declare support for a Presidential candidate; the Presidential candidate who commands the votes of more than one-half of the elected members of the Assembly is declared President. The President appoints a Vice-President (VP), whose office is ministerial, and a Cabinet, which is responsible to the National Assembly. Recent constitutional amendments introduced a two term limit on the presidency and presidential succession by the VP.
- c) *Ghana*. Under the Constitution adopted by referendum on April 28, 1992, Ghana has a multi-party political system with executive power vested in an executive President, directly elected to a four-year term (with a limit of two terms). Legislative power is vested in a 200-member unicameral Parliament, elected simultaneously with the President. A Council of Ministers is appointed by the President, subject to approval by Parliament. The Constitution also provides for two presidential advisory bodies: a 25-member Council of State of presidential nominees and regional representatives and a 20-member National Security Council, chaired by the Vice-President.
- d) *Guinea-Bissau*. The 1984 Constitution was largely rewritten in May 1991. The President of the Republic is directly elected to a five-year term. He nominates the Prime Minister and a Council of Ministers (chaired by the PM by delegated authority), as well as senior legal, judicial and military officers. A National People's Assembly of 100 members is elected by universal adult suffrage to a four-year term, whose powers include confirmation of ministerial nominees. The President (who, like all listed so far, is also Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces) is advised by a consultative Council of State (including the PM, the Supreme Court President, and prominent citizens), which is convened at his request.
- e) *Mali*. Approved in a national referendum on January 12, 1992, the Constitution of Mali's Third Republic provides for the rule of law and separation of powers in a secular, multi-party state. Directly elected for five years, the President appoints a Prime Minister (a post introduced for the first time in 1992) who, in turn, appoints other members of a Council of Ministers. Legislative authority resides with a unicameral legislature, namely a 129-member National Assembly. The Constitution guarantees freedom of the press, freedom of association, and independence of the judiciary, with final jurisdiction vested in a Constitutional Court.

- f) *Zambia*. The Constitution of the Republic of Zambia dates from 1991 but was significantly amended on May 28, 1996. The Head of State is the President of the Republic who is elected by popular vote to a five year term at the same time as elections to the National Assembly. Among citizens, persons of foreign parentage are prohibited from contesting the Presidency. The President appoints a Vice-President and a Cabinet from members of the 150-strong National Assembly. The Constitution also provides for a House of Chiefs and a Supreme Court, which is a final court of appeal with unlimited jurisdiction.

**Appendix B: Internal Management Structures of African Eos**  
(with special reference to established and proposed *policy management units*)

- a) *Benin*. The presidency is being restructured with the introduction of a semi-autonomous Unit for Economic Policy Analysis Support (CAPE) with strategic planning and applied policy research functions. Presidential staff include a Cabinet Director and a Secretary General of the Presidency (SGP), a position of ministerial rank. The Conseil de Ministres is serviced by a Secretary General for the Government (SGG), who is responsible for policy coordination including relations with the National Assembly, and who attends meetings of the Conseil. To address persistent problems of communication and coordination between the SGP and SGG (see Section 4), the present Kérékou administration has requested assistance from the World Bank and other donors.
- b) *Botswana*. For many years, the president and civil service have led decision-making in Botswana. The president chairs the cabinet and a powerful vice-president serves as minister of finance and is delegated to deputize for the president on routine matters of government business. The small size of Botswana's Cabinet (only 11 ministers, excluding the VP and deputy ministers) has greatly facilitated governmental effectiveness and efficiency. Botswana's Cabinet has no in-house units that specialize in policy analysis or implementation; these functions are reserved for line ministries in the highly professional civil service. Policy coordination is achieved through a Cabinet Office of 8 persons who double as the staff of the Office of the President.
- c) *Ghana*. The Cabinet is currently served by only one professional: a Secretary to the Cabinet. This officer reviews all submissions from ministries to cabinet and conveys cabinet decisions back to ministries. The Ghana government's National Institute Renewal Program aims to streamline and strengthen the national policy process. Part of this effort involves building agreement for ministerial policy assignments and strengthening coordination among administrative divisions. A Policy Management Group (PMG) will be established at "The Castle" (Office of the President). Among other tasks, the PMG will provide training to address critical skill gaps within the civil service and institute a policy evaluation system. (See Note 1 below)
- d) *Guinea-Bissau*. The locus of decision-making is principally with the prime minister's Council of Ministers, although individual ministers sometimes take decisions independently. A policy management unit, to be located in the Office of the Prime Minister, is on the drawing board but it has not yet been constituted. There are indications it will become functional in the near future: a Task Force has been formed to define terms of reference and organizational design. The principal staff for the Council of Ministers currently is comprised of four (previously only one) civil servants.
- e) *Mali*. The presidency of the Republic of Mali was restructured in 1994 to enable the president to focus on *grande lignes* of government policy and to build team spirit in support of the president's political objectives. A Strategic Team of nine advisors was established, headed by the Secretary General to the Presidency (SGP) and supported by *chargés de mission*, *chargés de régions* and a planned, semi-autonomous Development Policy Analysis and Formulation Center (CAFPD). The Strategic Team caucuses with the president before and after weekly meetings of the council of ministers so that the President can give instructions on the formulation and implementation of policy. In these tasks, the relatively powerful President must coordinate with the Secretary General to the

Government (who administers the business of the council of ministers) and the Office of the Prime Minister (staffed with 20 permanent officials whose jobs have never clearly been defined and who meet rarely with the current PM).

- f) *Zambia*. After years of presidential rule, the Cabinet has recently emerged with an enhanced role in the policy process in Zambia. In 1993, the Zambian Government established a ten-person Policy Analysis and Coordination Division (PAC) in the Cabinet Office (*See Note 2 below*). As a key element in the government's Public Sector Reform

Program, PAC was designed to improve coordination among line ministries and to ensure the implementation of Cabinet decisions. Under a reformed policy process, ministries wishing to bring a policy proposal to cabinet first contact a PAC official through Cabinet Liaison Officers (CLOs) (*See Note 3 below*). Where coordination is necessary, PAC, in liaison with the initiating ministry, constitutes and chairs ad hoc Inter-Ministerial Committees of Officials (IMCOs), staffed by senior civil servants, to screen policy proposals before they are introduced to cabinet.

### **Notes to Appendix B**

1. It is worth noting in passing that South Africa also intends to establish a policy coordination unit along the same lines as Ghana's, only it will be located in the Office of the Deputy President rather than in the Office of the President.
2. PAC was created by merging two existing Cabinet divisions -- "Economics and Finance" and "Cabinet Affairs" -- and retaining the best of their staffs. The remaining vacancies in PAC were filled through a public service-wide recruitment.
3. Each ministry appoints two senior staff members from their established ranks who serve as chief points of contact between their ministry and the cabinet office, and between their ministry and other ministries affected by proposals destined for cabinet's decision.

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## Acronyms

BDP	Botswana Democratic Party
BNF	Botswana National Front
CAFPD	Development Policy Analysis and Formulation Center (CAFPD)
CAPE	Unit for Economic Policy Analysis Support (Benin)
CBC	Cabinet Business Committee (Botswana)
CCSG	Coordination Committee of the Secretaries-General (Mali)
CPRS	Central Policy Review Staff (U.K.)
CSPG	Cross-Sectoral Planning Group (Ghana)
EC	Economic Committee (Botswana)
EO	Executive Office
FARD	Action Front for Renewal and Development (Benin)
IMCO	Inter-Ministerial Committee of Officials (Zambia)
IMU	Implementation Monitoring Unit (Ghana)
IPC	Implementing Policy Change (USAID)
MMD	Movement for Multiparty Democracy (Zambia)
MP	Member of Parliament
MSI	Management Systems International
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NPM	The New Public Management
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAC	Policy Analysis and Coordination Division (Zambia)
PM	Prime Minister
PMG	Policy Management Group (Ghana, proposed)
PRD	Party of Democratic Renewal (Benin)
PRED	Project for Economic Development Reform (USAID)
PS	Permanent Secretary
SGG	Secretary-General for the Government
SGP	Secretary-General for the Presidency

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 Management Systems International (MSI) and Abt Associates, its subcontractor partner
- 2 See also the World Bank's (1996) capacity-building strategy which identifies key locations within the state, including Executive Offices, to be targeted for institutional support
- 3 Mountfield (1995), 1
- 4 *ibid*
- 5 Rhodes and Dunleavy (1995) use the term "core executive" which they define to include "all those organizations and procedures which coordinate central government policies and as final arbiters of conflict between different parts of the government machine" (p2).
- 6 Prior to the June 1998 coup
- 7 Samake, 1995, 51
- 8 Establishment functions include determination of personnel compliments and gradings for the civil service
- 9 Botswana has devised an interesting means of integrating its budgetary and policy process -- it gives its Vice President the additional role of Minister of Finance
- 10 For example, the scope of a policy measure will partly determine who needs to be consulted: a value-added tax affecting all consumers would require broad consultation, an export promotion scheme would affect mainly export producers in the agricultural and mining sectors, and civil service retrenchment would be of concern mainly to affected public employees
- 11 According to Arend Lijphart (1992), 2-3
- 12 This does not preclude impeachment of a president for abuse of office, which is a quite different circumstance
- 13 See Prindle, 1991, 60-62; Stepan and Skatch, 1993
- 14 Holm (1994), 200
- 15 The introduction of the post of Prime Minister as part of democratic reforms in 1992 has posed distinctive challenges in Mali. How should executive power be divided in a formerly "pure" presidential system? Without historical precedent, the precise roles of the President and P.M., as well as the Primature (Office of the P.M.) were at first unclear in practice in Mali's democratic Third Republic. Committed to respecting his constitutional mandate, current Malian President Alpha Oumar Konaré sought to avoid usurping the decision-making powers of the head of government. He nonetheless did dismiss two PMs during his first term. And when the President was persuaded by his advisers to take charge of events in Mali's rebellious northern region, his action was welcomed on all sides as a firm response. Filling a potential leadership vacuum, President Konaré thus used his first term of office to define national unity and internal security as clear domains of Presidential prerogative.

<sup>16</sup> Samake (1995), 53

<sup>17</sup> Known officially as the Minister of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and Parliamentary Affairs

<sup>18</sup> The position of Prime Minister was introduced briefly in Benin during a transitional period of regime transition in 1990-91 as means of offsetting an all-powerful President. Thereafter the post was abolished when a new Constitution was introduced.

<sup>19</sup> In practice, Presidents in Botswana have chosen to delegate considerable powers of day-to-day management to their vice-presidents, making them *de facto* heads of government business, and drawing the Botswana system closer to semi-presidentialism

<sup>20</sup> The Zambian Constitution provides that the President may appoint up to 8 MP.s in addition to 150 elected members. President Chiluba has used this power to appoint individuals whom he later elevated to the rank of Cabinet minister or Deputy Minister. In this way, the President retains (and has used) powers to offset parliamentary influence over the composition of his government.

<sup>21</sup> In Mali, too, the Constitutional Court ruled to nullify the results of the legislative elections of April 1, 1997 in which the President's and PM's ADEMA party won a majority of seats

<sup>22</sup> According to the World Bank (1997, p 218), Mozambique and Rwanda received aid in 1994 totaling 101 percent and 96 percent of GNP respectively!

<sup>23</sup> Whereas 1994 aid flows amounted to 17 percent of GNP in Benin, the figure for Botswana was 2 percent. See World Bank (1997), 218.

<sup>24</sup> Holm (1994), 202

<sup>25</sup> The SGP attends Cabinet meetings as the President's right-hand man, which grants him seniority over the SGG and which reflects the relative power of the Presidency in Mali

<sup>26</sup> The Assembly also rejected the Benin Government's 1993 austerity budget

<sup>27</sup> Cited by Stephen Lewis in Stedman (1993) p 19.

<sup>28</sup> A commonly used French dictionary

<sup>29</sup> Most of PAC's Principal Policy Analysts have graduate degrees from abroad

<sup>30</sup> See Lewis in Stedman, 1993, 11-25; see also Raphaeli et al., 1984.

<sup>31</sup> See the chapters by Molutsi and Somolekae in Stedman, 1993, 51-63

<sup>32</sup> Chief executives who wish to have a major policy impact are likely to opt for the latter approach: in Britain in 1980, for example, Prime Minister Thatcher abolished the Cabinet's Central Policy Review

Staff (CPRS) and replaced it with a more overtly political “think tank” inside the PM’s own office at Number Ten.

<sup>33</sup> Ministers in Guinea-Bissau have considerable autonomy. The Minister of Finance and the Minister of Fisheries are known for issuing implementing decrees and for making decisions that affect their portfolios.

<sup>34</sup> Or as Sir Humphrey said in “Yes Minister,” the principle of collective responsibility means that if it goes well, I take the credit; if it goes badly, they forced this policy on me.

<sup>35</sup> Poor quality Cabinet submissions result in two possible scenarios: either the file is withdrawn from the Council and sent back to the technicians in the initiating department for review; or the ministers discuss the technical details among themselves, leading to unnecessarily long meetings. In this latter instance, the file is adopted provided that changes will be made by taking the ministers’ observations into account. Thereafter, technicians in the originating department often have difficulty redrafting the document, because their Minister does not properly brief their Secretary General on the reasons why the Council of Ministers decided to reject it. One Minister cited Cabinet confidentiality as the reason why ministers sometimes choose to withhold certain pieces of information from their SGs.

<sup>36</sup> Partly following this precedent, new procedures in Zambia call for three types of cabinet memoranda: an *agenda memorandum* seeks cabinet approval for an intended course of action; *legislative memoranda* propose new legislation; and *information memoranda* inform the cabinet of actions taken to implement decisions. The material presented in cabinet memoranda is more complete than in the past since it includes data on the economic, social and financial implications of the proposal, as well as implementation plans, not to mention greater clarity of purpose and rationale for the policy. Ministers report that the quality of proposals presented to the cabinet has greatly improved.

<sup>37</sup> Rielly, 1997, 2

<sup>38</sup> Source: interviews conducted by the authors with EO officials

<sup>39</sup> Mountfield, 1995, 7

<sup>40</sup> The VAT was successfully reintroduced in Ghana in 1998 — this time its introduction was accompanied by a broad-reaching public education campaign.

<sup>41</sup> This is not to say that there is never need to perform what amounts to mid-term evaluations of the policy implementation process -- in fact, this can be a useful process to test the soundness of the original decision and to make mid-course corrections if unforeseen negative results are occurring.

<sup>42</sup> The advantages of a small cabinet for policy coordination are offset in Guinea-Bissau by the dualism of its constitutional structure; that is, all other things are not always equal.

<sup>43</sup> Because the SGG (as a Minister) outranks the PM’s Cabinet Director, protocol concerns led the SGG to stop attending weekly meetings with the PM’s staff.

<sup>44</sup> Mountfield, 1995, 1



<sup>45</sup> Mountfield, 1995, 6

<sup>46</sup> In 1995, after discussions with a team of foreign communications advisers about how he could do a better job at eliciting the views of the rural majority, President Konaré of Mali took a series of *tournees* (field trips) to three important regions outside of Bamako. The President spent each of these 2-3 week trips listening to villagers speak about their problems, often sitting with them under a tree, an important Bambara tradition.

<sup>47</sup> For over six hours, Malian citizens from human -- including prisoners -- rights' groups, opposition leaders, the media, women's groups and a wide array of other NGOs asked frank and critical questions directly to specific Government Ministers, including the Prime Minister, who responded to the inquiries. The President did not attend. A bi-partisan jury representing African and European human rights groups evaluated the Government's responses on each issue, strengthening the legitimacy of the concept of an open dialogue, in the eyes of both foreign advisers and Malians.

<sup>48</sup> See Government of Mali (1995)

<sup>49</sup> This innovation was aimed to address "the absence of coordination between public sector agencies involved in the development of policy and the private sector; policy making is done on a largely ad hoc basis" (USAID, 1993)

<sup>50</sup> The new cabinet handbook requires wide-ranging consultation: "in writing a Cabinet Memorandum you are required to consult as widely as possible in order to obtain all necessary information and take into account the views of persons and institutions affected by the proposed action"

<sup>51</sup> The ENI Bureau of USAID assists EOs in Eastern Europe with such activities

<sup>52</sup> See previous footnote