

# **Civil Service Reform and Performance Management in Ghana and Zambia Since 1990**

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## **Abstract**

Many public sector reforms in Africa have sought to improve efficiency by linking civil servants' performance to incentives. However, there is relatively little systematic evidence about the design, implementation, and effectiveness of these performance management reforms. We address this gap by documenting the patterns of all performance-oriented civil service reform since 1990 in Ghana and Zambia. We compile timelines and details of over two dozen reforms through 60 interviews with civil servants in each country and an extensive review of project reports, academic studies and government archives, including multiple efforts to implement incentivized annual appraisal and performance contract systems in each country. The pattern revealed is stark: there are no examples of governments successfully linking individual performance to meaningful rewards or sanctions. However, we also highlight ways in which some of these schemes have achieved positive results through measurement and dialogue - even in the absence of hard incentives - and discuss implications for the design of future performance management reforms. We relate this to recent microeconomic evidence on the use of monitoring and incentives in the public sector, as well as evidence from public administration research in OECD countries.

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*“The newly articulated pay policy should as much as possible, aim at explicitly linking pay to performance, signalling a major change in the incentive system and in performance expectations. Rewards and penalties are both vital for a well functioning incentive regime ...Meaningful performance incentives are a must.”*

-A Medium-Term Strategy for Enhancing Pay and  
Conditions  
of Service in the Zambian Public Service,  
Theodore Valentine (2002, 92)

*“Activities: ...Introduce a performance-related pay based on a well-designed performance contracting system adopted by the government.”*

- National Public Sector Reform Strategy,  
Government of Ghana (2017, 31)

## **1. Introduction**

The idea that a lack of individual incentives is at the core of poor performance has been widely taken for granted by reformers working in and with civil services in Africa. Performance management policies to operationalize such incentive schemes have been at the core of many of the efforts at civil service reform that have taken place since the late 1980s. In Ghana, for example, nearly every significant reform from 1987 (World Bank 1987) to the present (Government of Ghana 2017) has emphasized the need to link individuals' performance to rewards and sanctions. This carrot-and-stick approach to improving performance is intuitive, but despite all these efforts to introduce the performance-linked pay, the continued demand for such systems suggests that past reforms have been less than fully successful. How often have governments tried to put such reforms into practice? How often have they succeeded? And why?

This study addresses this gap by documenting the patterns of performance-oriented civil service reform since 1990 in two countries that have undertaken numerous such reforms: Zambia and Ghana. Individual performance management reforms such as staff appraisals and performance contracts have been among the most common such reforms, with each country having attempted to introduce such reforms on several occasions over the span of 30 years. While the details vary across schemes, they share a common ideal-type: at the start of each year, individuals agree on objectively measurable targets with their supervisor; these are then assessed at the end of the year; and based on their measured performance, individuals are rewarded or sanctioned through means such as pay, career progression, and/or contract renewal.

Yet across all these efforts, we observe no successful examples of incentives being systematically and sustainably linked to individual performance. We also observe similar mechanisms at work in each case. Whereas performance management systems are supposed to

create a self-reinforcing annual cycle of meaningful target-setting, objective assessment, and differentiated incentives that reward good performers and sanctions bad performers, we observe the opposite: targets are often vague, incomplete, and de-linked from individuals' actual responsibilities; individual assessments are almost always uniformly positive; and rewards and sanctions are therefore almost never applied. To explain why this cycle is negatively rather than positively self-reinforcing, we show how each step of the standard model of performance management makes strong assumptions about individual behaviour and organizational context. These assumptions rarely match the actual context, so the design of performance management systems is internally coherent but ill-suited to the context.

However, we also show that these performance management systems do have some benefits, despite the absence of the incentives which are supposed to be at their core. Interviews with senior leadership and rank-and-file civil servants alike provide evidence that the mere acts of discussing responsibilities, setting targets, and assessing performance help them do their jobs better – even without the associated carrots and sticks. Since the threat of incentives undermines the extent to which officers are willing to engage openly and honestly in target-setting and assessment, this suggests that governments paradoxically may be able to create more impactful performance management systems by letting go of the idea that they should be linked to incentives.

Empirically, for each country, we compile comprehensive timelines of all large-scale civil service reform episodes undertaken during this time period by both governments and donors. This allows us to examine patterns of reform both within and across countries, rather than relying on isolated case studies of individual reforms. To do so, we draw on five types of sources: 1) 177 government and donor reports on specific reforms; 2) 113 academic studies, most of which are case studies of single reform episodes or analyses of a specific aspect of public management in one of the countries; 3) interviews with 27 individuals who were directly involved in designing or implementing each of the reforms, such as government and donor officials as well as consultants; 4) interviews with 31 rank-and-file civil servants who have not been directly involved in reform implementation about how the measures introduced by these reforms have affected their work, in order to triangulate the impact claims of reformers and official documents; and 5) in Ghana, original scanned material from public records and archives of internal government plans, discussions, and reports. This rich array of data allows us to examine the mechanisms of designing and implementing civil service reform in unusual breadth and depth.

This study complements a growing body of quantitative studies on incentives and monitoring in low- and middle-income countries (e.g. Duflo *et al* 2012; Khan *et al* 2015; various in Finan *et al* 2015). These studies are mostly focused on frontline personnel such as teachers, health workers, and tax collectors, instead of the middle- and upper-level core policymakers on which this study focuses (with Rasul and Rogger [2018] and Rasul, Rogger, and Williams [2019] as exceptions). However, a theme in this literature is that governments often fail to fully implement incentive pay arrangements for political and administrative reasons (Banerjee *et al* 2008; Dhaliwal and Hanna 2017; Bold *et al* 2018), contributing to a call for greater study of the problems of implementation and scale-up. The scale-up of such incentive systems occurs through large system-wide reforms such as the ones we study, hence the reform process is itself an important object of study. The repeated failure of reforms in Zambia and Ghana to implement performance-linked incentives over 30 years suggests that these challenges are, if anything, even more severe for core civil servants than for frontline personnel, possibly

because such personnel are more politically influential and visible and their performance is harder to measure objectively.

Our paper draws on and contributes to the body of research on performance management and civil service reform in Ghana (Doodoo 1997; Ayee 2001; Adei and Boachie-Danquah 2002; Ayee 2002; Agyekum-Dwamena 2003; Haruna 2003; Stevens and Teggemann 2004; Allotey 2008; Antwi *et al* 2008; Cooper-Enchia 2008; Eghan 2008; Ohemeng 2008; Abdulai 2009; Issachar 2009; Ohemeng 2009; Olowu 2010; Appiah-Adu and Aning 2012; Ohemeng 2011; Ohemeng and Anebo 2012; Ohemeng *et al* 2012; Owusu 2012; Ayee 2013; Bawole *et al* 2013; Owusu 2014; Seniwoliba 2014; Annan-Prah and Ohemeng 2015; Larbi 2015; Oppong *et al* 2015; Ohemeng and Ayee 2016; Abdulai 2017; Atta 2017; Yanguas 2017; Ohemeng *et al* 2018) and Zambia (Kiragu 1998; Litula 2001; Therkildsen 2001; Kanyata 2009; Malambo 2013; Lumba 2015; Mulimbika *et al* 2015; Madimutsa 2016; Hinfelaar and Sichone 2019). It is also linked to a large body of scholarship within public administration on performance management systems and human resources management in governments of high-income countries (e.g. Radin 2006; Heinrich 2007; Moynihan 2008; Heinrich and Marschke 2010; Van Dooren *et al* 2010; Battaglio 2014). It is noteworthy that this literature has been broadly sceptical about the history of and prospects for performance-linked incentives even in high-income countries, suggesting that the challenges in implementing such systems in Ghana and Zambia is far from unique worldwide.

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. The next section discusses our methodology for collecting primary and secondary data. Section 3 presents brief narrative histories of efforts at civil service reform in each country with a focus on performance management, thus contextualizing attempts at introducing performance-linked incentives within the broader reform trajectories. Section 4 then discusses the actual implementation of these performance management reforms, both at the level of staff appraisal systems for rank-and-file officers as well as performance contracts for bureaucratic heads of institutions. Section 5 presents an analytical discussion of these patterns which explains the failure to implement incentive schemes with reference to the strong underlying assumptions they require to hold in order to be effective.

## 2. Empirical Methodology

For the purpose of this study, we defined a *reform* or *reform episode* as strategic and intentional structural or managerial change to the internal administration of civil service organizations, whether *de jure* or *de facto*, aimed at improving bureaucratic performance or efficiency. This excludes reforms that take place within a single organization; reforms that are exclusively customer-facing or affecting frontline workers only; and exclusively fiscally oriented reforms, although some reforms with a fiscal impact (e.g. pay reform) are included if improving performance was a significant objective of the reform.

While the above definition was used for defining our scope of data collection, this working paper reports on and analyses only one slice of these reforms: those that are focused on individual-level performance management, whether of line staff or leadership. We nonetheless describe our methodology with respect to the full scope of our data collection.

In order to capture a comprehensive set of reforms in each country while also gaining insight into the nuances of reform design and implementation, we combine five different types of qualitative data.

First, we conducted extensive reviews of publicly available donor and government documents on reforms in each country. To undertake this, we used AidData’s Research Release 3.1 database of over 1.5 million donor projects (Tierney *et al* 2011). For each country, we extracted a list of all projects that fell into the relevant DAC-CRS codes for civil service reform projects.<sup>1</sup> For Ghana we identified 698 projects going back to 1987, and for Zambia 615 projects since 1981. We then conducted Google searches based on the name of each of these projects, augmented by other project information such as the name of donor as necessary, and downloaded all available documents on the project. Using the information in these documents, we then excluded projects that did not mean the definition of reform above, and organized the remainder by programme. While our search included projects across the full range of donors included in the AidData database, the vast majority of projects for which we were able to find documentation (particularly for older projects) were World Bank projects. Although this differential availability of documents across donors could raise concerns about the representativeness of the documentation, such concerns are of minimal consequence because our focus is not on identifying differential trends across donors and the World Bank is the main donor for CSR in both countries. Altogether we were able to collect 103 documents for Ghana and 55 for Zambia.

Second, we conducted a literature review of all available academic research and policy research (“grey literature”) on civil service reform and related topics in Ghana and Zambia. First, we began by searching for literature on reforms whose names we were aware of, through the document review above as well as prior background research. We searched first using Google Scholar, then through the University of Oxford’s SOLO system that aggregates the universe of databases to which the university is subscribed, then through Google’s main search function. Second, we used citation-tracing in these articles to identify other relevant articles, which we then searched for. We repeated this citation-tracing process until all citations referred to a source already in our database. Finally, we conducted Google Scholar searches for a range of general terms (e.g. “Ghana” + “Civil service reform”, “Zambia” + “public administration reform”) and institution names (e.g. “Ghana” + “Office of the Head of Civil Service”) to identify any other more general articles

Third, we conducted a set of interviews in both Zambia and Ghana with individuals who were personally involved in designing, implementing, and/or evaluating civil service reforms during the study period (1987-present for Ghana and 1991-present for Zambia, based on the timing of the initial wave of reforms in each country). These individuals were identified through a combination of being referred to us by a government institution or donor, being identified in documents or existing research, snowball sampling through other interviewees, and prior

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<sup>1</sup> These are codes 15110 and 15111. Projects coded 15110 are defined as: “Public sector policy and administrative management. Institution-building assistance to strengthen core public sector management systems and capacities. This includes macro-economic and other policy management, co-ordination, planning and reform; human resource management; organisational development; civil service reform; e-government; development planning, monitoring and evaluation; support to ministries involved in aid co-ordination; other ministries and government departments when sector cannot be specified. (Use specific sector codes for development of systems and capacities in sector ministries.)” Projects coded 15111 are defined as: “Public finance management. Fiscal policy and planning; support to ministries of finance; strengthening financial and managerial accountability; public expenditure management; improving financial management systems; budget drafting; inter-governmental fiscal relations, public audit, public debt. (Use code 15114 for domestic revenue mobilisation and code 33120 for customs).” We retained projects that were coded as either 15110 or 15111 in either their CRS purpose code or AidData purpose code. Most projects coded 15111 ended up not fulfilling our inclusion requirements and being excluded from the study.

connections. The individuals were predominantly present or former public servants, but also included donor officials, consultants, and others. Most had played major roles in reforms and held high-ranking positions, such as Heads of Civil Service, Chief Directors, Permanent Secretaries, Directors of Performance Management, and key consultants. One or both of the authors interviewed each individual during the period December 2018 – January 2019 (Ghana) and April – May 2019 (Zambia). Interviewees were offered a choice of whether their interview was reported anonymously or non-anonymously, and only a small number of interviews were audio recorded. Interviews were semi-structured and focused on the relevant experience of the interviewee, loosely following the interview guide contained in Appendix A. Altogether we were able to interview 17 of these reformers in Zambia and 10 in Ghana.

Fourth, in each country we interviewed an additional set of civil servants who were *not* directly involved in any reforms, but worked in rank-and-file civil service roles which should have been affected by policies introduced in various reforms, such as staff appraisal systems, pay reforms, or leadership performance contracts. The purpose in including these middle- and lower-ranked officers was to assess the extent to which specific reforms, processes, or practices introduced by reforms actually impacted the day-to-day work of normal civil servants – at least in ways of which they were aware. These individuals were selected from a common set of ministries and functions in each country to maximize comparability.<sup>2</sup> These interviews followed a more structured format and were undertaken after the above data collection had taken place, so that the interview guides were able to ask specifically about policies that had been implemented by one or more prior reforms. The interview guides for each country are contained in Appendix B. These interviews were undertaken anonymously, and none were recorded in order to reassure interviewees that their words would not be publicly linked back to them.<sup>3</sup> Altogether we interviewed 11 rank-and-file civil servants in Zambia and 22 in Ghana.

Fifth, in Ghana we received permission to conduct research in the archives and public records of the Office of the Head of Civil Service (OHCS), comprising dozens of boxes of documents from the 1980s to the present. Due to the volume of information and lack of information contained in the indexing, we were not able to pursue a systematic study of these records, but instead examined boxes that seemed most relevant to our research based on the documentary and interview evidence we had already compiled. These records provide a unique window on internal discussions, plans, and information contemporaneous to reform design and evaluation across this time period.

Each of these data sources has obvious strengths and limitations, and we triangulate across them in order to assess the accuracy, biases, and perspectives of each. Altogether, they provide us with an exceptionally rich window onto the design, implementation, successes, and failures of civil service reforms in our two study countries. The following sections draw on this body of empirical evidence to first present information on the patterns of reforms in each country, then to analyse individual performance management policies more specifically.

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<sup>2</sup> In Ghana, the ministries involved in our research were: the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Ministry of Transport and Ministry of Youth and Sport. Within these ministries, participants came from two divisions: Policy, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PPME) and Human Resource Management (HRM). In Zambia, the ministries involved were: the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Transport and Communications, and Ministry of Youth, Sport and Child Development. The divisions involved were: Human Resource and Administration (HRA); Planning and Policy (P&P) and; Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).

<sup>3</sup> Since these interviews were not recorded, quotes in this paper from anonymous interviews are usually close paraphrases. However, all quotes presented from non-anonymous interviews are verbatim.

### 3. 30 Years of Civil Service Reform in Zambia and Ghana

Paragraph explaining that this section is to provide context. Discussion of content of reforms focuses only on performance management, although lots of other stuff was involved

#### 3.1 Zambia

Zambia's recent history of civil service reform began with the Public Sector Reform Programme (PSRP), which ran from 1993-99. This reform was instigated by the 1991 transition from a single-party state under Kenneth Kaunda's United National Independence Party (UNIP) to a multi-party democracy under Frederick Chiluba's Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD). The new government faced the dual challenges of making significant budget cuts to cope with a fiscal crisis (under an IMF programme), and professionalizing and depoliticizing a public service which had become bloated and patronage-ridden under Kaunda. The PSRP comprised three components: 1) downsizing of staff and organizational restructuring; 2) performance management of staff; and 3) decentralisation (Litula 2001; Interview ZAM11, May 2019; Ndashe Yumba, Interview, May 2019). The overarching emphasis of PSRP was on the reduction of staff numbers through the first component, which was achieved through a combination of organizational restructuring that imposed institution-by-institution employment caps, a voluntary severance package for senior employees, and the imposition of minimum educational qualifications that many existing staff did not hold (Madimutsa 2016). Alongside this, the Performance Management Package under the second component introduced a new Performance Management System, the most notable element of which was a shift from the longstanding Annual Confidential Report (ACR) system of staff appraisal to the more modern Annual Performance Appraisal System (APAS) (Madimutsa 2016, Leonard Hikaumba, Interview, May 2019). Whereas the ACR consisted solely of a supervisor scoring each subordinate without discussing their performance with them, under APAS subordinates and their supervisor jointly undertook work planning and target setting at the start of the year and assessment of performance at the end of the year (Kiragu 1998; Chandiwira Nyirenda, Interview, May 2019; Leonard Hikaumba, Interview, May 2019). The more transparent APAS system was thus envisioned as the mechanism through which staff activities would be linked to organizational plans (through target setting) and incentivized (by linking performance appraisal to career progression and pay increments).

The second wave of reforms took place from 2000-05 under a successor project to PSRP<sup>4</sup>, the Public Service Capacity Building Program (PSCAP), backed by a World Bank project of the same acronym. While PSRP had been successful at reducing total staff numbers, resistance to cuts was growing due to the personal and political costs of retrenchments as well as a growing awareness of negative effects on some aspects of service delivery. While PSCAP continued the organizational restructuring and associated retrenchments, it reframed this as "rightsizing" rather than downsizing and did increase hiring in some areas, particularly in frontline social service delivery roles (World Bank 2000). Whereas staff performance management under PSRP had been focused on structures and processes, PSCAP focused on the "capacity" of individuals and organizations to deliver as the lack of logistical and financial resources was increasingly perceived as a major barrier. A performance improvement fund was created to which organizations could apply (World Bank 2005), which led to some innovative and meaningful service delivery improvements but was also criticized for spending heavily on

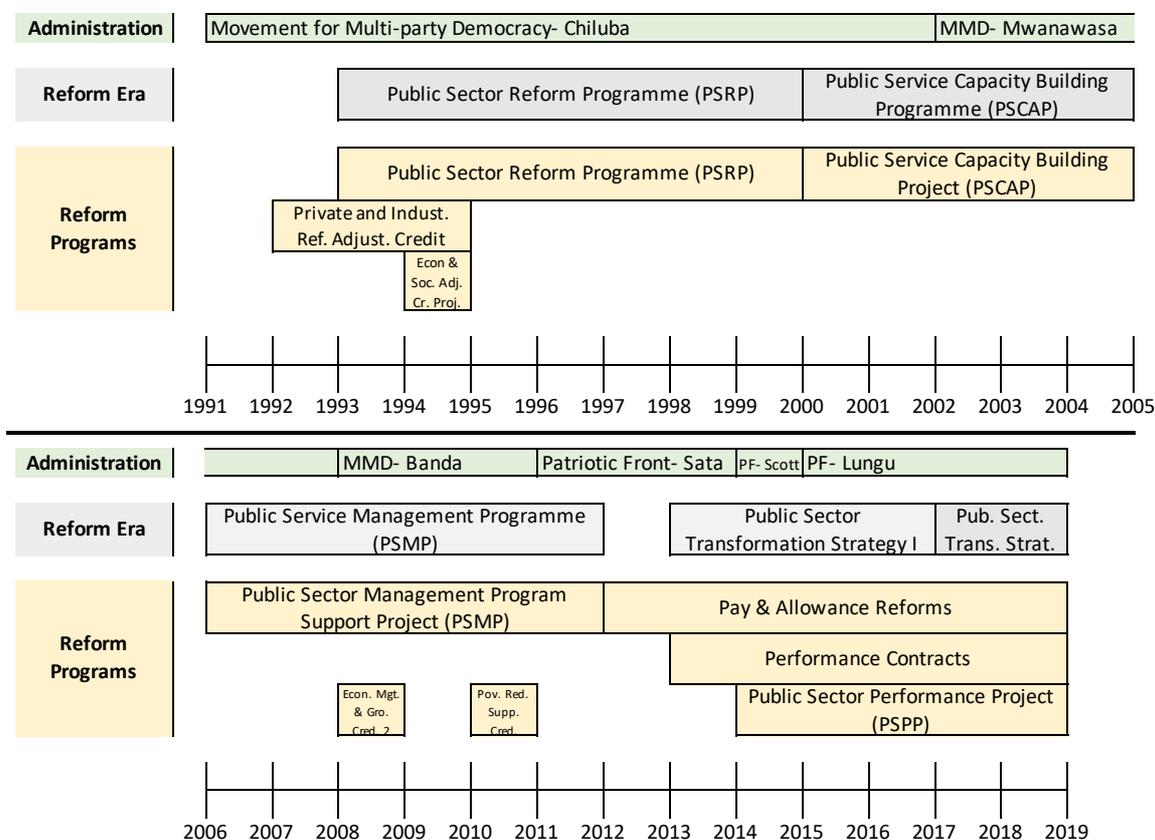
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<sup>4</sup> The PSRP did not formally cease in 1999 and has stayed in existence until the present as an umbrella for subsequent reforms. However, we refer to PSRP in the narrow sense commonly used in Zambia under which PSRP refers only to the pre-PSCAP reforms in the 1990s.

vehicles and other logistical equipment (Moses Kondowe, Interview, May 2019). In addition, PSCAP saw the first effort to put Permanent Secretaries (the bureaucratic heads of ministries) onto performance contracts, based on a suggestion by an expatriate consultant and the subsequent consultancy report of John Kasanga (Valentine 2002; Interview ZAM7, May 2019). These performance contracts were seen as the primary means of performance management for Permanent Secretaries, who were not covered by the APAS appraisal system. At the same time, the development of a new pay policy placed an emphasis not only on issues like raising salaries, cost control, and decompressing the payscale, but also on establishing performance linked incentives such as selective acceleration, rewards, and sanctions (Valentine 2002).

While PSCAP had initially been formulated with a long 13-year time horizon – seen as necessary to mobilize the requisite scale of funds and embed cultural change – an unfavourable mid-term assessment led to the programme being curtailed in 2005. It was replaced by the Public Service Management Programme (PSMP), which was mainly a scaled-back version of PSCAP with some activities curtailed, a new financial management component, and a reemphasis on decentralisation (Interview ZAM11, May 2019). While some activities continued, such as the development of the pay policy initiated under PSCAP, reform activity in Zambia gradually petered out during this period due to a combination of factors. Chief among these was political turnover, as President Levy Mwanawasa died in 2008 and was replaced by his Vice President Rupiah Banda, who then lost office to Michael Sata’s Patriotic Front (PF) in 2011. At the same time, donor interest in public sector reform was decreasing, in part due to the perceived limitations of reform projects to date (Ndashe Yumba, Interview, May 2019).

**Figure 1: Timeline of Civil Service Reforms in Zambia**



Source: Authors’ synthesis based on document review and interviews.

Civil service reform was then revitalized in 2013 by the first Public Sector Transformation Strategy (PSTS I, 2013-17), subsequently succeeded by PSTS II (2018-22). The PSTS was an internally developed and driven reform programme originating from the Cabinet Office under Secretary to Cabinet and Head of Civil Service Dr. Roland Msiska. In addition to reiterating the importance of staff performance management through APAS – lamenting the lack of “effective rewards and sanctions” that had been attached to the results of APAS (Republic of Zambia 2012) – the PSTS saw the re-introduction of performance contracts for Permanent Secretaries. Part of a renewed emphasis on strategic management, these contracts were couched in the National Development Plan and later in the Balanced Scorecards introduced for each institution. These performance contracts began to be cascaded down to Directors in 2018, with the aim of eventually cascading them down to all levels of staff so as to achieve a harmonized performance management and appraisal system through the civil service (Lusaka Times 2017; Felix Mushubati, Interview, May 2019) – a direct echo of the initial vision of the PSRP’s Performance Management Package in the 1990s.

**Table 1: Summary of Individual Performance Management Initiatives in Zambia**

<b>Reform era</b>	<b>Individual appraisal &amp; performance management</b>	<b>Performance contracts for bureaucratic leadership</b>
Public Sector Reform Programme (PSRP), 1993-99	APAS introduced	
Public Service Capacity Building Project (PSCAP), 2000-05	Pay Policy started development	Performance contracts for Perm. Secretaries (first effort)
Public Service Management Program (PSMP), 2006-11		
Public Service Transformation Programme I & II (2013-present)	Reinforcing use of APAS; aim to introduce incentives	Performance contracts for Perm. Secretaries (second effort)

Source: Authors’ synthesis based on document review and interviews.

### 3.2 Ghana

The first instalment in Ghana’s modern civil service reforms, the Civil Service Reform Programme (CSR), was a near-identical predecessor to Zambia’s PSRP. Running from 1987-93 under President Jerry Rawlings’ government, the CSR was a World Bank-imposed reform programme which aimed to reduce the size of the public sector through retrenchment of staff. While primarily fiscally motivated, this reform also aimed to improve performance and modernize performance management (World Bank 1987). Staff reduction was conducted through involuntary redundancies and reallocations informed by job inspections, organizational reviews, and manpower hearings at the Ministry of Finance (Nana Agyekum-Dwamena, Interview, December 2018), as well as voluntary severance schemes. As with the PSRP, the improvement in performance was intended to arise mainly through the staff appraisal system, as the traditional Annual Confidential Reporting System was replaced in 1992 by a

more interactive Performance Evaluation System (PES) (Public Services Commission N.D.). This new appraisal system comprised joint target-setting and assessment by supervisors and their subordinates, and was intended to provide an objective basis for linking performance to rewards and sanctions. This performance management system was intended to provide an objective basis for increasing pay for the remaining (and hopefully better-performing) civil servants after fiscal space had been created by staff reductions (Nana Agyekum-Dwamena, Interview, December 2018).

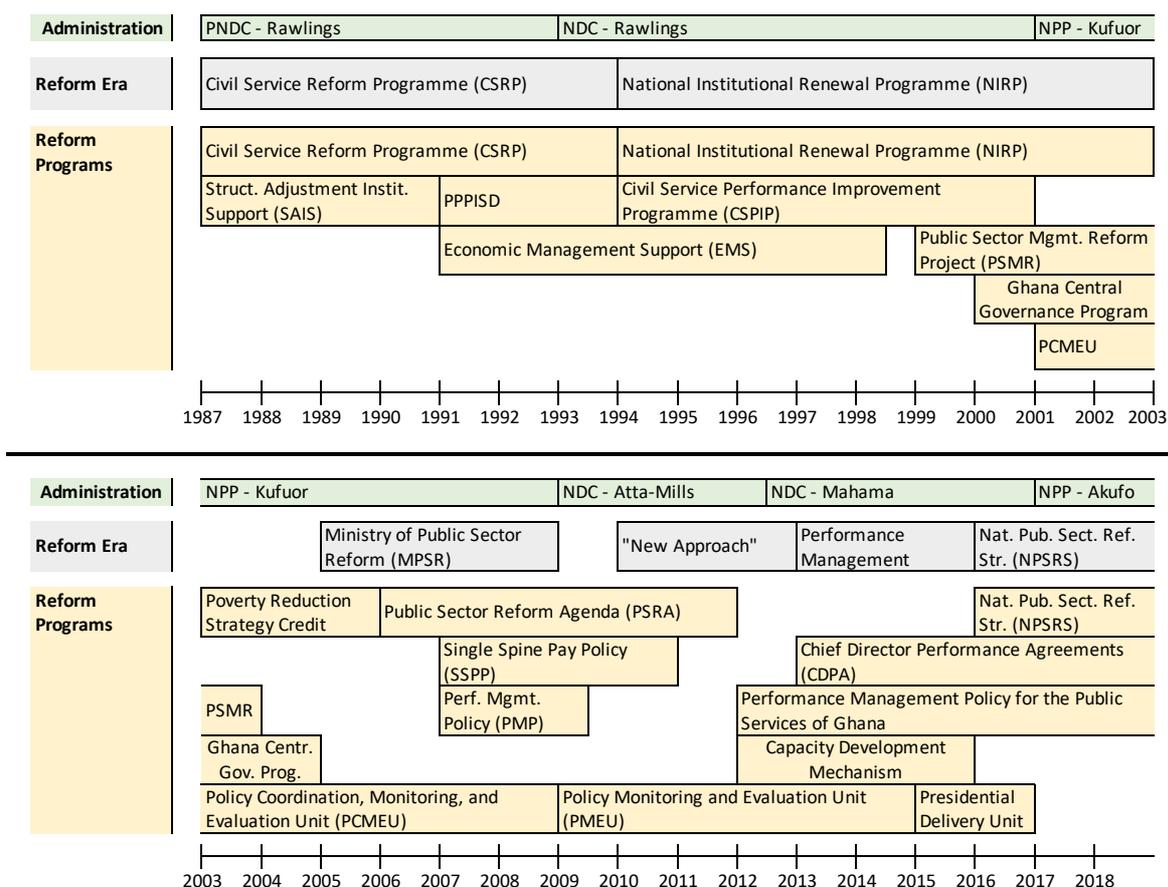
As CSRP wrapped up, a team of civil servants within the Office of the Head of Civil Service (OHCS) led by Head of Service Dr. Robert Dodoo began to plan a successor reform in which performance improvement would be the main focus, rather than an afterthought to cost-cutting. The resulting Civil Service Performance Improvement Programme (CSPIP) was a “homegrown” reform that was pitched to and funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), although it was couched within the public sector-wide National Institutional Renewal Programme (NIRP) which was aimed more at making fiscal savings through structural reforms to subvented agencies.<sup>5</sup> CSPIP comprised three main components. First, the reform team would work with public organizations to conduct institutional self-appraisals, beneficiary surveys, and participatory workshops in order to facilitate the development of a mission, vision, service charter, and Performance Improvement Plan. As one civil servant who was a member of the reform team put it, the intention was to help organizations understand “this is how you look at yourself, this is how beneficiaries see you, so this is how you are. Then where do you want to be?” (William Kartey, Interview, December 2018) Second, a Performance Improvement Fund was created, as under Zambia’s PSCAP and PSMP, to which organizations could submit proposals. Third, and most relevantly for this paper, was the creation of a Performance Agreement System (PAS) as a performance management tool for Chief Directors (the bureaucratic heads of organizations equivalent to Permanent Secretaries, who were excluded from the main staff appraisal process) (Public Services Commission N.D.). As with individual-level (PES) appraisals, this started with the definition of a schedule of targets at the start of the year (albeit with more detail and structure than the PES) which were intended to correspond to the organization’s workplan and which would be evaluated at the end of the year – again, with the intention of using these as the basis for allocating rewards and punishments. CSPIP began to wind down by 2000, when the expiration of the five-year DFID grant coincided with a transition in presidential regime and the subsequent departure of Dr. Dodoo (William Kartey, Interview, December 2018).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> In its review of civil service reforms in Ghana prior to 2009, Government of Ghana (2015, 3) notes: “All these reforms, with the exception of the Performance Improvement component of the Civil Service Performance Improvement Programme (CSPIP) were supply driven...”

<sup>6</sup> While the main activities of CSPIP wrapped up in 2000, some activities (along with the broader NIRP agenda) continued with spillover funding through 2003 (William Kartey, Interview, December 2018).

**Figure 2: Timeline of Civil Service Reforms in Ghana**



Source: Authors’ synthesis based on document review and interviews.

Presidential elections in 2000 were won by John Kufuor of the opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP), which spent its first years in power focusing on economic growth and poverty reduction through Ghana’s first Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan. Civil service reform came back on the agenda in earnest in 2003, when the Public Sector Reform Secretariat (PSRS) was created under the Office of the Senior Minister and commissioned a team of consultants to review NIRP (Ohemeng and Anebo 2012). This led to a coordinated Programme of Public Sector Reforms with the aim of receiving World Bank funding, but the Bank insisted that it be overseen by a permanent institution (Kwame Adorbor, Interview, December 2018). In 2005, a Ministry of Public Sector Reform (MPSR) was created under the Office of the President, with Paa Kwesi Nduom – an MP from the Convention People’s Party and chairman of the National Development Planning Commission – appointed as Minister. The MPSR created a five-year Public Sector Reform Agenda (PSRA). Much of the PSRA comprised of CSPIP’s work programme that had been allowed to lapse but which MPSR picked up and repurposed, such as mission and vision statements, client service units, and service charters (Government of Ghana 2015; Dr. Kodjo Mensah-Abrampa, Interview, December 2018) As one civil servant involved in CSPIP said, “they took our stuff and ran with it.” (Interview GHA7, December 2018) However, the most salient component of MPSR’s work was the harmonization and rationalization of payscales and negotiating processes across the public service through the Single Spine Pay Policy (SSPP) that would be administered by the newly created Fair Wages and Salaries Commission (FWSC) (Annan-Prah and Ohemeng 2015). The SSPP was seen both as a financial management reform as well as a step towards performance-linked pay, as

reflected in FWSC's dual mandate: first, payscales would be harmonized and increased, and then salaries would be linked to performance. This agenda also brought the issue of staff performance management back to the fore, and from 2007 the Public Services Commission began the development of a new Performance Management Policy to revisit the appraisal process – although the goals remained substantially the same (Kwame Adorbor, Interview, December 2018). In 2008, however, the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) won the presidency, as a result of which the MPSR was downgraded back to a secretariat (PSRS) and the performance management policy as well as the other activities of MPSR lost steam.

Under the new government of President John Atta-Mills, a “New Approach” to public sector reform was instituted by Secretary to Cabinet Ben Eghan. Rather than coordinating a government-wide reform strategy of internal administrative reforms, the New Approach encouraged ministers to develop sector-specific reform programmes (Annan-Prah and Ohemeng 2015). The focus of these sector reforms was specifically to be on job creation and food security (Ben Eghan, Interview, December 2018). The New Approach was interrupted by the sudden death of President Atta-Mills in 2012, and while some ministries took significant steps towards new job creation activities, the overall impact on the internal administration of the civil service was limited (Ohemeng and Ayee 2016).

After Vice President John Mahama took power and was re-elected in 2012, the public sector reform agenda came to be dominated not by reforms driven by political leadership or sweeping donor programs, but by the revitalization of performance management programmes by bureaucratic leaders. Beginning in 2012, the Public Services Commission began developing a new Performance Management Policy for the Public Services of Ghana, with donor support from Australia (Commonwealth 2016). The new Policy introduced a new annual appraisal template and slightly more elaborate process, but maintained the same approach to improving individual productivity by combining annual target-setting and assessment as the basis for allocating rewards and punishments. At the same time, in 2013/14 the Office of the Head of Civil Service under first Woeli Kemevor and then (from 2014) Nana Agyekum-Dwamena began working to re-introduce Chief Director Performance Agreements (CDPAs). The CDPAs were rolled out initially with French and Canadian donor support but subsequently funded from the general budget (Interview GHA7, December 2018). This was consciously modelled on the performance contracting system that had been created under CSPIP but fell away after 2000 – unsurprisingly perhaps, as now-Head of Civil Service Agyekum-Dwamena was a junior member of the CSPIP design and implementation team during the 1990s – with even the three sections of the template (institution-specific deliverables, general requirements, and personal development) remaining the same. The revitalization of these two key performance management systems complemented a range of other incremental revisions to promotion and training procedures (GHA\_INT1). At their core, though, they still shared the vision that “every individual including Heads of the Public Services Chief Executive Officers/Chief Directors, Heads of Departments and Directors are to have annual performance targets whose attainment will be enforced by appropriate combinations of incentives and sanctions.” (Public Services Commission N.D., 3) Both initiatives were still ongoing at the time of research for this study, having persisted for longer than previous efforts to introduce similar performance management systems.

**Table 2: Summary of Individual Performance Management Initiatives in Ghana**

<b>Reform era</b>	<b>Individual appraisal &amp; performance management</b>	<b>Performance contracts for bureaucratic leadership</b>
Civil Service Reform Programme (CSRP), 1987-93	PES introduced to replace ACR	
Civil Service Performance Improvement Programme (CSPIP), 1994-2000		Performance agreements for Chief Directors (first effort)
Ministry of Public Sector Reform (MPSR), Public Sector Reform Agenda (PSRA), & Single Spine Pay Policy (SSPP), 2006-11	Linking pay to performance the second step in the Single Spine Pay Policy, after regrading and decompression	Performance contracts nominally part of PSRA
Perf. Mgmt. Policy (PMP), 2007-09	Revised performance management policy stemming from MPSR/ PSRA reforms	
Performance Management Policy for the Public Services of Ghana, 2012-19	Revised and simplified performance management policy	
Chief Director Performance Agreements (CDPA), 2013-19		Performance agreements for Chief Directors (second effort)
Nat. Pub. Sect. Ref. Str. (NPSRS), 2016-19	New national public sector reform strategy maintains emphasis on performance-linked pay for staff and leadership	

Source: Authors' synthesis based on document review and interviews.

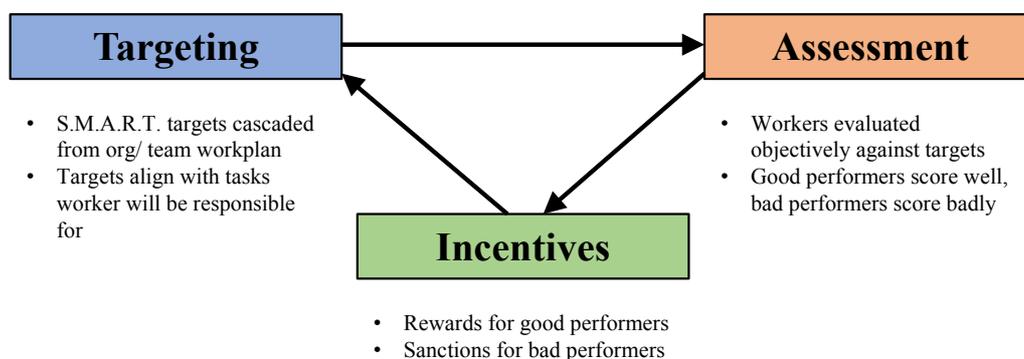
The most recent wave of reform in Ghana was triggered by the government's 2015 approach to the IMF for a programme loan in the face of a worsening fiscal situation, which coincided with a latent demand from a range of stakeholders for improvements in the effectiveness of public service delivery (Samuel Abu-Bonsrah, Interview, December 2018). The IMF and World Bank imposed as a condition that Ghana would need to develop a new public sector reform strategy which included processes to restrain wage growth as well as improve effectiveness of service delivery – but otherwise left the details of the reforms to the government (Dr. Kodjo Mensah-Abrampa, Interview, December 2018). The resulting National Public Sector Reform Strategy (NPSRS) was developed based on broad consultations with both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, and echoed the New Approach by focusing primarily on sector-driven reforms to service delivery rather than internal administrative reforms (Government of Ghana 2017). Initially developed and approved by Cabinet in 2015/16, after the 2016 change in presidential administration the NPSRS was subsequently reviewed and some details revised (while retaining the thrust of the original document) (Dr. Kodjo Mensah-Abrampa, Interview, December 2018). At the time of research, the idea of instituting 360-degree evaluation had been mooted as part of the NPSRS reforms (Dr. Kodjo Mensah-

Abrampa, Interview, December 2018) and the goal of developing performance-related pay was reiterated (Government of Ghana 2017), but the cross-sectoral internal administrative reform agenda aspects of the NPSRS for the most part are drawn from previously defined work programmes in the public sector that were ongoing during the design of the NPSRS.

### 3.3 The Design of Performance Management Reforms

Performance management reforms have been central to almost every episode of civil service reform in both Ghana and Zambia for the last 30 years. While these performance management systems have differed in their details, they have shared a dominant underlying model. This model, represented in Figure 3, views performance management as an annual cycle of three components. First, at the start of the year, officers and supervisors jointly agree targets for the year, which should align with the responsibilities or tasks the officer will actually undertake during the year. These targets should be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART), so that they can be evaluated objectively. At the end of the year (potentially after mid-year interim reviews), officers are then assessed on their performance against these targets. This assessment is intended to differentiate good performers from bad performers. Finally, the model assumes that some type of incentives should be linked to the assessment results. These incentives could include any combination of rewards and sanctions, which could be financial, non-financial, or related to career progression. The expectation of these incentives being linked to their performance is seen as a necessary tool to get civil servants to exert effort.

**Figure 3: Dominant Model of Performance Management in Ghana and Zambia**



Source: Authors' synthesis based on document review and interviews.

This mental model of how performance management systems can improve productivity is enshrined in formal policy statements (e.g. Public Services Commission N.D.) and is widely internalized throughout both Zambia's and Ghana's civil service, at both senior and junior levels. As one civil servant in Zambia explained, "if I do not perform then the Permanent Secretary will not perform. I do not want to see my permanent secretary fail. That is why we set goals and targets, we need to show if we met the target. We need to prove we shine...It is about time people realised they are being paid for something" (Interview ZAM22, May 2019). Another attractive feature of this model is that it allows targets to be cascaded down from national plans to organizational workplans to leaders' performance contracts to individual appraisals, neatly nesting individual performance management within strategic management. This unified vision is summarized by one individual involved in these reforms in Zambia as

“we’re trying to create a line of sight from the PS down to the last person.” (Interview ZAM14, May 2019)

This model represents the ideal-type performance management system envisioned in these waves of successive reform efforts in Zambia and Ghana. Of course, the actual implementation of reforms often leads to results that do not match these model systems. The next section documents what actually happened when these reforms were implemented.

#### **4. The Implementation of Performance Management Reforms in Zambia and Ghana**

To what extent did these reforms succeed in their goal of implementing performance management systems that combine target-setting, assessment, and incentives? We show that while the systems were put in place and used (at least to some extent), *in no case did they succeed in delivering performance-linked incentives*. Even without the promised incentives the systems still proved useful, due to improved communication and clarity – and in the case of performance contracts for leadership, greater public scrutiny of their records. However, the failed attempts to link hard incentives to performance may have undermined these “softer” benefits of these systems. We discuss this first for the case of the annual appraisal system for rank-and-file civil servants, and second for the case of performance agreements or contracts for senior leadership (Permanent Secretaries in Zambia, Chief Directors in Ghana). We focus narrowly on the performance management aspects of these reforms, not on the impact of the reforms as a whole on performance.

##### *4.1 Annual Staff Appraisals and Performance*

The annual appraisal systems of both Ghana and Zambia share the common goal of providing an objective basis for incentivizing performance. Since the creation of these modern annual appraisal systems in both countries in the 1990s, however, instances of actually administering rewards or sanctions based on the appraisals are extremely rare. In Zambia, for instance, external reviews in both 2005 (University of Zambia 2005) and 2008 (Universalia 2008) reported that there were no rewards or sanctions attached to the results of the APAS appraisal. This sentiment was echoed in the interviews conducted for this study (in which interviewees typically referred to the more immediate past), with nearly all interviewees agreeing that the appraisals were simply a formality required to be eligible for promotions, confirmation of positions, and annual pay increments – without any linkage to performance. For example, one senior officer remarked of APAS that it “was not taken seriously. If you have an appraisal, you need incentives,” (Interview ZAM7, May 2019) while another stated “APAS would make sense if there was something actually done as a result, it is just seen as a formality,” (Leonard Hikaumba, Interview, May 2019), and another commented “APAS has mainly been used for administrative convenience... I have never seen someone be demoted due to bad performance.” (Interview ZAM17, May 2019) Only one interviewee reported seeing any type of sanctions applied during their time in the public service – the demotion of three officers – although it is unclear whether these demotions were actually based on the APAS itself (Interview ZAM24, May 2019). The situation in Ghana is similar, with no reports of appraisals being used as the basis for rewards or sanctions, both with respect to the initial usage of the PES system introduced by the CSR and to the more recently revised appraisal systems re-designed by the Public Services Commission (Nana Agyekum-Dwamena, Interview, December 2018; Interview GHA12, December 2018; Government of Ghana N.D.).

In addition to failing to incentivize performance, governments' failure to deliver rewards and sanctions also works to undermine the two prior stages of the annual performance management cycle: the setting of targets, and the appraisal of performance. The setting of targets at the start of the year is supposed to be an interactive process in which officers and their supervisors not only set targets for the purpose of providing an objective basis for evaluation, but also to guide their work and allocate responsibilities. Yet due to the lack of consequences for setting targets that are not "SMART", an evaluation of Zambia's performance management system in the mid-2000s concluded that there "seems to be an attitude that whatever is written will be accepted" and a "[l]ack of a sense that the process is really important other than as a means of getting an increment approved" (Universalia 2008, 26).

Many interviewees expressed the view that the lack of incentives undermined the seriousness with which the end-of-year assessment process was approached by supervisors and subordinates alike, with some officers simply filling it out themselves without any discussion with their supervisor, only filling it out immediately before promotion procedures, or not filling it out at all (e.g. Interview GHA9, December 2018; Interview GHA17, January 2019; Interview ZAM17, May 2019; Interview ZAM21, May 2019; Interview ZAM26, May 2019). In both countries there is a large range of variation across organizations, supervisors, and time in how commonly and seriously the process is undertaken. But although formal compliance with the process is the norm, the evaluation of Zambia's performance management system explained:

"As time has passed the real purpose of the APAS report has become the justification of pay increments and promotions. This has led to the a [sic] view that completion of the form is a necessary evil to which one should devote as little time and thought as possible. The result in many instances is a report replete with inconsistencies, contradictions and very little assessment of performance that bears little relation to a real work plan and virtually none to the organisational and strategic plan." (Universalia 2008, 27)

When it comes to actually assessing officers' performance, there is a tendency in both countries for nearly all officers to be rated highly – regardless of their actual performance. For example, one officer in Ghana lamented that "the appraisals demand a lot of collaborative work. You need to sit with your boss but that is not actually done. If you give me the opportunity to fill in my own scoresheet, you would give yourself 98% but we know that it cannot be that." (Interview GHA17, January 2019) Similarly, interviewees in Zambia expressed their view that "every appraisal form is above target" (Interview ZAM17, May 2019). This pattern undermines not only the possibility of using the scores to administer incentives – since rewarding nearly everybody would be prohibitively expensive – but also their informational value for measuring performance or guiding career progression. As one senior civil servant in Ghana lamented, "I cannot rely on this instrument to tell me anything...Everybody is very very good, but you and I know that when it comes down to productivity, not everybody is excellent." (Interview GHA13, December 2018).

Similarly, supervisors naturally find it hard to be strict in their assessments when many planned activities contained in officers' workplans are called off due to factors outside their control. In part to the inherently unpredictable nature of much civil service work. As the Zambian evaluators noted, "The best laid work plans can be de-railed when urgent and pressing work duties displace work plan targets. This displacement often results in the work plan being compromised, and in some instances, rendered useless as a planning document. Political directives from above, and outside of the scope of the work plan, must be recognized as part

of the working culture...” (Universalialia 2008, 31) In addition, though, civil servants in both countries have to cope with the effects of unexpected budgetary shortfalls or non-releases of budgeted funds. One architect of Zambia’s PSCAP reform explained that individual targets were usually taken from organizational workplans, but since the Ministry of Finance would frequently give ministries budget ceilings of only 65 percent of the cost of these workplans it was inevitable that many activities would never be completed – how, then, could an individual be blamed for not meeting their targets? (Chandiwira Nyirenda, Interview, May 2019) With vague and incomplete targets, the expectation that the results are merely a formality needed for bureaucratic reasons, logistical and financial shortfalls, and the potentially discouraging effects of poor reviews for individuals and team dynamics, it is little wonder that few supervisors assign appraisal scores that correspond to individuals’ actual performance.

While this historical record of implementing performance management systems has been grim in both countries, there is some evidence that these systems can be useful even in the absence of incentives. This can be seen first in how civil servants speak about the effects of the modern participatory systems replacing the old confidential systems. While one goal of these new systems was to provide a more objective basis for providing performance incentives, another was to improve communication and planning between supervisors and subordinates. The design of the appraisal process focused on “collaboration, dialogue and inclusiveness. It is, in theory, a radical departure from the old annual Confidential Reporting System... At its core, it encourages communication between manager and subordinate at all levels” (Universalialia 2008, 24). This aim was, to some extent at least, borne out in reality in both countries. In Ghana, “the confidential one was the old one where there was no start target set, staff did not meet their supervisors for discussions for all of that. But with the new one there was a complete change. That was also a major challenge because there was a cultural shift in people sitting down to talk to their director. This was something new.” (Nana Agyekum-Dwamena, Interview, December 2018) Similarly, in Zambia one interviewee exclaimed that “that Annual Confidential Report was so confidential you wouldn’t even know what is in it!” (Interview ZAM21, May 2019), while another explained that under APAS “there has been a one on one interaction which has helped with understanding what gaps people have. It has helped me to understand at what level they are supposed to operate because at the end of the year, we find out if that has been met.” (Interview ZAM27, May 2019)

More recently, in Ghana many civil servants praised the new appraisal process which was introduced in 2015. Although this new system retained the key features of the existing system, it introduced a simplified template and put greater weight on the importance of the appraisal as a tool for communication and planning rather than as a precursor to allocating rewards or sanctions (although this formally remains a goal of the system). One interviewee explained that prior to 2015 “we would write our own appraisal and the boss signs it. Now we sit down with the bosses. If I say I will achieve four meetings there should be four meeting minutes. Now you can measure performance. Now you can set targets. This is from the chief director and down. If I fail, everyone fails.” (Interview GHA11, December 2018) Another echoed: “Previously you had to set targets and most targets were weak. You have to set it with a supervisor. Now there are smarter targets and they have improved performance. Staff are more aware of their performance and we were taken into training regarding that. Before starting work you need to set targets in terms of outputs and training.” (Interview GHA10, December 2018) Similarly, another civil servant stated:

“The system gives everyone a specific focus and I benefit from that. I know what I am expected to do by the day, month and year. It makes me stay focused and more efficient.

It makes me want to deliver and gone are the days where I sit about waiting for the work to come... Before, there was no mutuality or participation... Now you sit with your supervisor... Before you would set [targets] and there is no assessment until the end of the year... there is no way to see what has happened, [but] now there is a way to review. The old annual appraisal was sparingly used, only when people were due for promotion. Now there is care behind it. [Formerly the] head of department that would do [the assessment], now it is the one you are working with who will do the appraisal.” (Interview GHA32, January 2019)

While officers in Ghana still receive no rewards or sanctions for their performance, and the actual assessment scores are still undifferentiated and almost always positive, civil servants evidently derive utility from the process of communication. The appraisal process thus achieves (some of) its aims not by providing incentives, but by sparking conversations that would not otherwise have happened. While there is still significant variation within Ghana’s Civil Service in the extent to which these conversations are actually happening (Interview GHA17, January 2019), these positive reviews nonetheless suggest that the communication aspect of the appraisal process can be very important.

These positive views on Ghana’s recent staff appraisal reforms stand out even more when contrasted with Zambia’s formally similar process. In Zambia, officers much more commonly expressed experiences such as “APAS is not a two-way thing. There should be feedback and interactions on performance... The problem is not getting feedback or me talking [with my supervisor] about my ratings. It would have been impactful if you could discuss performance.” (Interview ZAM18, May 2019) Another lamented the lack of investment in the process, which undermined its potential benefits: “Sometimes these interactions do not happen because they are not taken seriously. Why should you fill in something which does not work?” (Interview ZAM26, May 2019) One officer summed up: “the APAS is excellent if you follow it through but without interaction it is not as effective.” (Interview ZAM18, May 2019)

#### *4.2 Performance Contracts for Leadership*

The implementation of performance contracts for bureaucratic leaders has followed a similar pattern as the implementation of staff appraisal systems: despite multiple attempts to introduce them as a way to link performance to incentives, in neither country have rewards or sanctions been consistently applied as envisioned. However, as with individual appraisals, there is suggestive evidence that some of the intended benefits can be derived even without the application of incentives by promoting communication and influencing organizational culture.

In Zambia, the initial institution of a performance contract system was done under PSCAP in the early 2000s. While the Kasanga review proposed a comprehensive performance contracting system, what ended up happening was that Permanent Secretaries were put onto fixed-term three-year contracts (rather than the permanent and pensionable civil servants they had been), but without meaningful setting of targets, assessment, or incentives. (Interview ZAM7, May 2019) Permanent Secretaries were willing to accept the temporary contracts because it promised to be a lucrative three years prior to retirement (Interview ZAM7, May 2019), and the arrangement was also “user-friendly” to politicians in that it gave them greater discretion and leverage over Permanent Secretaries (John Kasanga, Interview, May 2019). However, Permanent Secretaries lacked not only annual targets but also basic job descriptions, so in practice there was no formal linkage between performance and incentives. (Interview ZAM11, May 2019)

The more recent effort to introduce performance contracts in 2015/16 addressed these shortcomings by creating clearly delineated schedules of targets each year. While the technocratic designers of the performance contracting scheme also proposed complementary measures discussed in the Kasanga report such as meritocratic appointment and guaranteeing resources to achieve these targets, only the target-setting component was actually adopted (Interview ZAM11, May 2019). These targets were largely extracted from the ministry's work plan, which in turn came from the National Development Plan (Felix Mushabati, Interview, May 2019; Interview ZAM11, May 2019). However, since the National Development Plan itself is too ambitious, each Permanent Secretary's target was unrealistic, and so almost everyone scored poorly (Interview ZAM7, May 2019). To address the issue of resource sufficiency, the contracts now also state the obligations of the Government to the Permanent Secretary and discharge them from their responsibilities if these obligations are not met (Interview ZAM14, May 2019), but in a context where resource availability is frequently unpredictable, this may also make the contracts harder to use as an objective basis for evaluation. An even deeper issue is the question of the credibility of this contract, when the Presidency holds the ultimate say over Permanent Secretaries' appointments: if Permanent Secretaries' loyalty is to the appointing authority rather than the contract, then how can the performance contract be more than symbolic? (Moses Kondowe, Interview, May 2019)

In Ghana, the performance contracts introduced in the late 1990s under CSPIP made a promising start. Unlike in Zambia, Chief Directors were already non-permanent civil servants who were appointed and could be dismissed by the President (with formal checks by the Public Services Commission), so the termination or non-renewal of their contracts was an obvious tool. Indeed, one Chief Director's contract was not renewed during this area due to poor performance (Interview GHA7, December 2018). However, the contracting system fell victim to political turnover after the 2000 election and contracts were not upheld, and the contracting system itself fell into intermittent use (Public Services Commission N.D., 1). After being reinstated in 2013/14, performance contracts have been consistently implemented in terms of target setting and assessment – with evaluation even conducted by external consultants – but no sanctions have yet been applied. In an illustration of the credibility problem the government faces in trying to follow-through with sanctions, in one instance when OHCS actually tried to terminate a poorly performing Chief Director's contract, the Chief Director went behind their backs to the Office of the President and was able to secure a contract renewal (Interview GHA7, December 2018). Similar issues of limited resource availability also limit the government's ability to sanction poor performers in Ghana, as Chief Directors are rightly able to effectively demand “address my financial problems and if I'm not meeting my targets then you can fire me” (Interview GHA7, December 2018). Otherwise, the only incentive attached to the exercise is the circulation of results (to a limited group within the Civil Service, not the general public) with prizes for the top scoring Chief Directors.

Even without meaningful rewards or sanctions, however, there is suggestive evidence that the performance agreements are having an effect by focusing attention on performance and changing work cultures. One observer remarked that “it's gingering the Chief Director's to get to work”, particularly in delivering basic things like holding required management meetings, trainings, and so on (William Kartey, Interview, December 2018). One public servant who had been a part of the evaluation team for the performance agreements gave the example of a case where a Chief Director had signed an agreement but his Directors had not taken it seriously and so his performance was poor. The next year, however, the Chief Director applied pressure to his Directors and other middle management to make sure they delivered on their work that

fed into his targets (Interview GHA13, December 2018). This illustrates the potential suasion that carefully designed, meaningful, semi-public assessment can have even in the absence of hard incentives. As the interviewee remarked “if I’m CEO, I won’t sit there and be made chopped liver because my Directors aren’t doing their jobs” (Interview GHA13, December 2018).

The performance agreement system has now started to be cascaded down to Directors, and while the target-setting and assessment are even less formalized and incentivized here, some civil servants feel that it has nevertheless impacted on performance, as people think “if they evaluate me one day, it’ll be based on that” (William Kartey, Interview December 2018). Even some lower- and middle-level civil servants believe that they see positive effects from these performance agreements. For example, one interviewee remarked “I think Chief Directors were doing whatever [before the CDPAs], but now they ensure they provide resources to [you to] to do what you need to do” to achieve your targets (Interview GHA9, December 2018). At least some rank-and-file civil servants have started to internalize the idea that their performance matters because it is connected to their leaders’ performance: “The director’s key result areas derive from their performance agreements. You realise what you do is indirectly linked to the director. If I deliver, then the chief director is able to satisfy what he has to do. if I do not then my director and chief director are affected” (Interview GHA10, December 2018). As with the case of staff appraisals, these are examples of potential positive effects from the performance contract system even in the absence of hard incentives, due to the ability of target-setting and assessment processes to spark communication and culture change that may not have happened otherwise.

## 5. Discussion

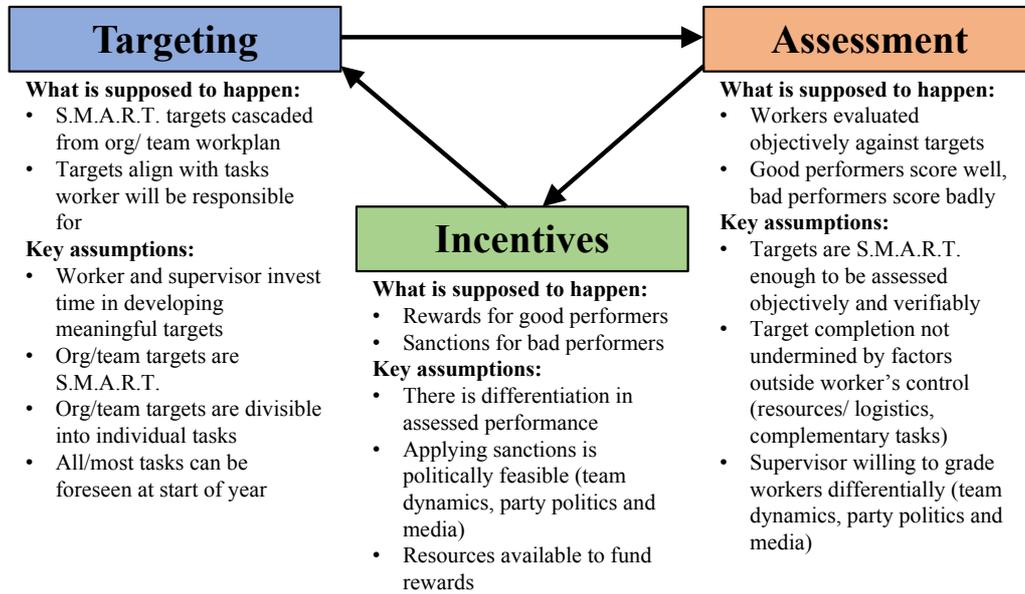
This paper has documented the past 30 years of civil service reforms in Zambia and Ghana, with a focus on the performance management systems they aimed to put in place. We have argued that linking performance to incentives has been a core goal of these reforms, but that there have been no successful instances of systematizing the link between performance and incentives – either for bureaucratic leadership through performance contracts or rank-and-file bureaucrats through annual appraisals.

We document a set of interlinked causes and consequences of the absence of incentives. These are summarized in Figure 4, which starts in panel (a) with the simplified model performance management cycle that these reforms aimed to create (as we summarized earlier in section 3.3). To this model we have added a set of key assumptions which underlie the steps that were supposed to be taken at each point in the cycle, based on the evidence we present in section 4. Below, in panel (b), we have mapped out what actually tended to happen in both countries under these performance management systems. We discuss each step in turn.

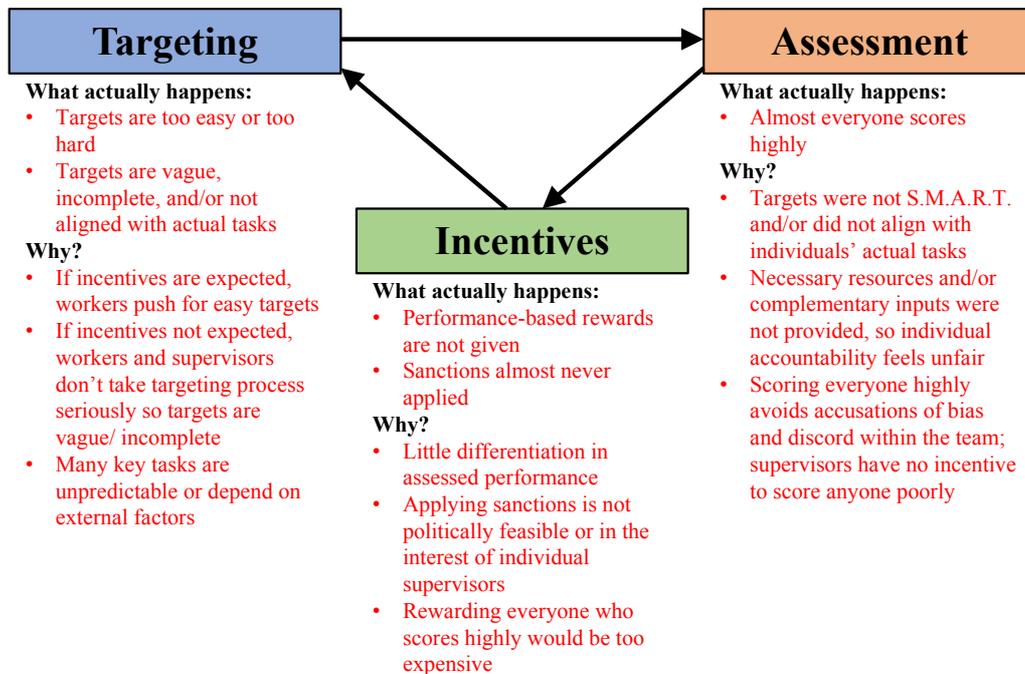
At the targeting stage, in order for workers to be set SMART targets aligned with both their workplan and the tasks they will be responsible for during the year, the following conditions (panel [a]) must hold: workers and supervisors must both invest adequate time in developing meaningful targets; the organizational or team targets from which the individual targets are derived must themselves be SMART; organizational or team targets must be divisible into individual tasks, so that lines of responsibility can be clearly defined; and all or most of the key tasks that individuals will undertake during the year must be able to be foreseen at the start of the year. However, in reality, most workers ended up with targets that were vague, incomplete, or disconnected from their actual duties. In most cases this was because the promise of

Figure 4: Intended versus Actual Performance Management Cycles in Zambia and Ghana

a. Intended Performance Management Cycle



b. Actual Performance Management Cycle



Source: Authors' synthesis.

incentives was not credible – particularly after they had failed to be delivered before – and so workers and their supervisors did not think it was worth investing time into developing a meaningful set of targets. In the rare cases when the promise of incentives was credible, workers then had an incentive to set up relatively easy targets that would be easy to overperform on. Furthermore, the work of most civil servants is difficult to predict in a comprehensive fashion, and so workers and supervisors found it necessary to retain some degree of ambiguity in order to accommodate unexpected tasks.

At the assessment stage, the overwhelming trend in most cases was that almost everyone scored very highly – with the exception of performance contracts for Permanent Secretaries in Zambia, where everyone scored poorly. Both outcomes arguably arise from failures at the target-setting stage: since targets were not SMART they could not be objectively evaluated, and the dependence of many civil servants' tasks on external factors like budget availability or stakeholder cooperation made it obviously unfair to penalize civil servants for many of their failures to meet their targets. Supervisors' path of least resistance was therefore typically to score (nearly) all workers as performing well, to avoid bad feelings, accusations of bias, and discord within their teams.

These failures at the targeting and assessment stages had knock-on effects that made it impossible to allocate meaningful incentives. Since everybody scored well and there was little differentiation in performance, rewards would be prohibitively expensive or infeasible and sanctions would be unfair. Even in the rare cases when there was strong evidence that an individual was performing poorly, both governments found it politically difficult to actually punish people. This was both due to individual managers' hesitancy to get involved in messy and time-consuming fights, as well as to political interventions and the desire to avoid accusations of bias or politicization. This absence of incentives then undermined the next year of the cycle, since officers and their supervisors had even less incentive to invest energy into developing meaningful targets – and so on. This has led to some degree of scepticism around the impact of these reform efforts: “We’ve done performance management reforms, the project came, we’ve trained people on the instruments and so on, but have we got our money’s worth? I’d say not.” (Interview GHA13, December 2018).

But while this study provides strong evidence that the dominant model of performance management has not been successful in Zambia or Ghana, it also suggests that these reforms have had some positive impacts to the extent that the target-setting and assessment stages have been successful at convening conversations around responsibilities and performance that would not otherwise have happened. Numerous civil servants at all levels of seniority emphasized during interviews that these conversations were valuable, and attributed them to the performance management process. While we lack the large-scale evidence and counterfactual that would be necessary to be certain that the performance management process caused these conversations to happen, this is nonetheless suggestive evidence that the target-setting and assessment stages of performance management can have positive effects on performance even without hard incentives.

Most importantly, this finding poses a question for the designers of future performance management reformers. This study has argued that the focus of performance management systems on linking performance to incentives has not only failed, it has also undermined the benefits that officers and their supervisors derive from the target-setting and assessment aspects of performance management. So if linking performance management systems to incentives is unlikely to succeed and risks undermining the parts of the system that do create benefits, is it

still worth trying to implement incentive systems? And if not, how might this enable performance management systems be re-designed to maximize the benefits of communication, conversation, and culture change?

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**APPENDIX A- Reformer Interview Guide**

INDICATIVE INTERVIEW GUIDE

Note: This interview guide is indicative as to the topics and phrasing of questions, as interviews will be semi-structured. However the flexibility in interview conduct will be with regards to the interviewee's involvement in specific reforms, and will not be directed towards sensitive topics (except as discussed in the study protocol). Note also that sections 1 and 6 of the interview will occur once for all interviewees, while sections 2-5 will be repeated for each reform the interviewee was involved in.

1. Interviewee background
  - a. When did you join the public service, and what was your motivation for joining?
  - b. Please describe your career trajectory, i.e. which organizations you worked in and in what positions.
  - c. Thinking back on your career, what were the major reform episodes or efforts you witnessed or participated in? [Clarify definition of reform if needed.]
    - i. Were the others significant efforts to improve performance that may not have been called reforms but were nonetheless important?
    - ii. Were there reform ideas that were discussed or planned but never got off the ground?
  - d. Could you describe your personal role in each of these reform episodes?
2. Reform content
  - a. What was the reform trying to achieve? [Probe for detail.]
  - b. Were the changes all formal (i.e. in written structures/processes), or were some also more informal and/or practice-oriented?
  - c. Why did the reform aim to make these changes?
  - d. Are there any published or unpublished documents that would have more detail on this?
3. Reform process
  - a. How did the idea for the reform originate? Which individuals or institutions were key?
  - b. Once the idea was created, how did it then get turned into a detailed reform program? What role was played by:
    - i. civil service leadership
    - ii. non-senior civil servants
    - iii. civil service unions
    - iv. donor organizations
    - v. consultants
    - vi. political leadership
    - vii. media
  - c. What stakeholder consultation was done on this detailed program? Did the input actually affect the design of the reform, and how?
4. Reform outcomes
  - a. To what extent was the reform actually carried out? Did all of the changes that were planned actually get made? Which did and did not, and why?
  - b. To what extent did these changes actually affect how civil servants carry out their work on a daily basis? How do you know? Was this measured in any way? Can you give me examples?
  - c. What happened to the reform's legacy and impacts over time?

## WORKING PAPER – IN PROGRESS

- d. Was any evaluation of the reform's impact conducted?
5. Reform politics
  - a. Returning to the key stakeholders discussion, why did each of these groups/individuals push for the reforms? Did they have different visions of what they wanted to happen?
  - b. How was the reform shaped by the actual or perceived views of political leadership? Did electoral politics play any role in shaping the reform's design and implementation?
  - c. To what extent did the actual or perceived views of civil servants themselves and/or civil service unions shape the reform's design and implementation?
  - d. Did the reform have an effect on the politics of the public service after the reform period itself was over?
- Comprehensiveness check
  - a. Can you think of any other examples of efforts to improve performance in the civil service that we haven't discussed? Even if these weren't necessarily formal programs?
  - b. Who else can we talk to in order to learn more about any of these reforms?
  - c. Are there any published or unpublished documents that would have more detail on this?
6. Wrap-up
  - a. Which of these reforms would you say was most influential in a positive way, and why?
  - b. Which of these reforms would you say was most influential in a negative way, and why?
  - c. What could have been done differently to improve the implementation and impact of public service reform in the country?
  - d. Who else can we talk to in order to learn more about any of these reforms?
  - e. What advice would you give to future reformers in this country, based on this history?
  - f. What can other countries learn from this history of reforms in this country?

**APPENDIX B- Non-Reformer/Rank-and-File Interview Guides**

MDAS INDICATIVE INTERVIEW GUIDE- GHANA

1. Introduction
  - a. Background: how long have you been in the service?
  - b. Please describe your career trajectory, i.e. which organizations you worked in and in what positions.
2. Changes in work practice
  - a. In the past, what changes have affected the way you do your work? For example:
    - i. Formal rules, structures, or processes that have been put into place
      1. To what extent have these actually be implemented in practice? Do they actually affect your performance and how you do your work?
    - ii. Other unwritten practices, processes, or managerial behaviors
  - b. To what extent are your work practices and performance affected by [probe below categories based on what was not covered in open-ended section above]:
    - i. Changes in processes/structures/rules/systems across the whole Civil Service?
    - ii. Changes in processes/structures/rules/systems specific to your organization?
    - iii. Changes in leadership of the government and/or civil service (e.g. new President, new Head of Civil Service?)
    - iv. Changes in leadership of your organization (e.g. new minister, new chief director)
3. Specific reforms
  - a. Are you aware of any of the following reforms? If so, to what extent did it affect how you do your job and your performance, and why (not)?
    - i. New annual appraisal system (around 2014) and performance management policy
    - ii. Chief Directors/Directors Performance Agreements
    - iii. Client service units
    - iv. Service charters
    - v. Pay restructuring and regrading (e.g. Single Spine [impl. 2010], earlier regrading in 2001)
    - vi. Cross-government policy coordination (Policy, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit [Mills] or PCMEU [Kufuor] or Min of M&E [Akufo Addo])
    - vii. Organisational Performance Improvement Plans (CSPIP - late 1990s)
4. Staff reactions and politics

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- a. Thinking about these various reform efforts, what has been the perception and attitude of staff towards these changes? How has this affected their implementation and impact? Can you give examples?
  - i. Were these attitudes mainly due to individuals' personal feelings, or was there any kind of organized or collective action? Did unions, the media, or other stakeholders get involved?
- b. Were there any specific reforms that you were opposed to or in favor of? Why?
- c. Aside from those we have already discussed, have there been any other reforms or changes in the Civil Service that have been especially influential in either a positive or negative way?
- d. In your view, what is the main reason why past efforts to improve performance in the Civil Service have not had a greater impact than they did?
- e. is there anything you would like to add?

### MDAS INDICATIVE INTERVIEW GUIDE- ZAMBIA

#### 1. Introduction

- a. Background: how long have you been in the service?
- b. Please describe your career trajectory, i.e. which organizations you worked in and in what positions.

#### 2. Changes in work practice

- a. In the past, what changes or reforms to your MDA have affected the way you do your work? For example:
  - i. Formal rules, structures, or processes that have been put into place
    1. To what extent have these actually be implemented in practice? Do they actually affect your performance and how you do your work?
  - ii. Other unwritten practices, processes, or managerial behaviours
  - iii. What sort of staff development opportunities have been made available particularly around performance and productivity?
  - iv. Have you ever received training connecting to the civil service centred on productivity and performance-improvement?
    1. If so, what sort of training did you receive?
    2. What impact, if any, did the training have upon returning back to your duties?
- b. To what extent are your work practices and performance affected by [probe below categories based on what was not covered in open-ended section above]:
  - i. Changes in processes/structures/rules/systems across the whole Civil Service?
  - ii. Changes in processes/structures/rules/systems specific to your organization?

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- iii. Changes in leadership of the government and/or civil service (e.g. new President, new Head of Civil Service?)
- iv. Changes in leadership of your organization (e.g. new minister, new chief director)
- v. Changes in ICT practices or processes that involve technological/computer usage?

### 3. Specific reforms

- a. Are you aware of any of the following reforms? If so, to what extent did it/does it affect how you do your job and your performance, and why (not)?
  - i. Annual performance appraisal (APAS)
    - 1. How seriously do officers tend to take it? Is it completed every year by everyone, or only intermittently?
    - 2. Do the scores reflect actual performance, or does almost everyone score highly?
    - 3. Has it been linked to any form of rewards or sanctions, whether financial or non-financial?
    - 4. Has it had any other positive effects? For example, has it been a useful way of getting direction and feedback from supervisors?
  - ii. Performance contracts for permanent secretaries
    - 1. How does it affect your work, as someone who is not a permanent secretary?
    - 2. Would performance contracts for staff below permanent secretary level also be beneficial for performance? What types of implementation challenges do you foresee with these?
  - iii. Service charters for the ministry
    - 1. Has it improved people's understanding of what the ministry does? Has it also changed actions and/or performance? How sustainable have such changes been?
    - 2. How closely aligned are the service charter outputs with the objectives of the ministry?
  - iv. Organizational reviews or performance improvement plans (under PSMP – 2006-11)
  - v. Pay reforms (including changes in allowances)?
    - 1. Have the overall pay reforms improved productivity and motivation? Which aspect of them? Why?
    - 2. Has there been any attempt to link pay or career progression to performance? What has happened to those efforts?

### 4. Staff reactions and interests

- a. Thinking about these various reform efforts, what has been the perception and attitude of staff towards these changes? How has this affected their implementation and impact? Can you give examples?
  - i. Were these attitudes mainly due to individuals' personal feelings?
  - ii. Was there any kind of organized or collective action? Did unions, the media, or other stakeholders get involved?

## WORKING PAPER – IN PROGRESS

- b. Were there any specific reforms that you were opposed to or in favor of? Why?
- c. Aside from those we have already discussed, have there been any other reforms or changes in the Civil Service that have been especially influential in either a positive or negative way?
- d. In your view, what is the main reason why past efforts to improve performance in the Civil Service have not had a greater impact than they did?
- e. Is there anything you would like to add?

### 5. Donors

- a. How would you describe the role and impact of donors with respect to civil service reforms?
- b. Have you noticed any differences in reaction and uptake toward reforms that are government led versus donor led?
- c. Are there any improvements that can be made with respect to government and donor relations concerning civil service reforms?