

# INVESTING IN PUBLIC SECTOR LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT TO ACCELERATE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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A REPORT DEVELOPED BY

HIGH-LEVEL COUNCIL ON  
LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT  
FOR DEVELOPMENT

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## Foreword

The COVID-19 pandemic has vividly demonstrated that thoughtful, data-driven, and accountable leadership has been a significant determinant of the trajectory of this emergency – locally, nationally, and globally. The current crisis also highlighted the importance of effective teams and meticulous management in overcoming complex challenges.

It is clear that we are in the midst of a long emergency and that the challenges societies around the world face are unprecedented in our lifetimes. Although we worry that this crisis could delay the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we have an outstanding opportunity to re-imagine a better world on the other side of the pandemic, one with universal access to essential healthcare, reduced inequality, increased rights for workers everywhere, more sustainable food supplies, transformed educational systems, and a greater emphasis on the long-term health of our planet.

The world appears to be learning that facing off against a common enemy – such as COVID-19 – requires a collective and multi-sectoral approach to everything from vaccine development and production, to the manufacture and distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE), to the sharing of data. Furthermore, COVID-19 is forcing us to re-examine our priorities, prompting both renewed appreciation of our common open spaces and fundamental questioning of rampant consumerism.

We are a group of former heads of state, former ministers from diverse sectors, CEOs, and civic leaders. Collectively, we recognise the strong association between value- and virtue-based leadership, and success in confronting significant threats to health, the economy, food security, education, and the environment. We acknowledge that these are times of profound uncertainty and insecurity. Yet, this could also be an era of remarkable collective leadership – an opportunity to not only overcome what is the most widespread public health and economic crisis of the past one hundred years, but also to turn it into one of our greatest leaps forward.

We understand that cultivating leaders and managers does not happen through magic, but through consistent collective action, prioritisation, and investment. There is an urgent need for meta-leadership, for leaders who understand the importance of leadership and can advocate for the resources needed to develop leadership and management capabilities, at all levels and across all sectors. We believe that massive investment in these skills is, firstly, the only way to defeat COVID-19, and secondly, the best hope that we have to reach the SDGs and ensure a bright future for us, our children, and generations to follow.

## Why leadership and management matter for sustainable development

Good leadership and management practices are essential for organisations and systems to thrive. Now, more than ever, we need visionary leadership to guide government institutions and their partners as they navigate constant change in an increasingly complex, interconnected, and uncertain world. This must be paired with the management skills needed to deliver timely results in a complex operating environment. An investment in developing both skill sets – inspiring leadership and effective management – is critical for the effective functioning of public institutions and should be seen as a public good.

A recent report from the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response (IPPPR) observed: “Leadership and competence have counted more than cash in pandemic responses. Many of the best examples of decisive leadership have come from governments and communities in more resource-constrained settings. There is a clear opportunity to build a future beyond the pandemic that draws on the wellsprings of wisdom from every part of the world.”<sup>1</sup>

Today’s leaders must have access to quality information on which to make evidence-based decisions. They must have the courage to be decisive even where this information is incomplete, and the humility to acknowledge their own limitations, knowing when to bring in others and help them shine. They must have respect for others and their opinions, the patience to listen and learn from others, and the empathy to understand people and build the bonds that enable them to inspire. They must be willing to share in a collective vision to address complex challenges. These types of leadership help organisations innovate, empowers people to be their best, and engages everyone on a common goal and mission.

Too often “leadership” is conflated with positions of authority. In contrast, we see leadership as a mindset, a set of skills and behaviours that can be learned and, like a muscle, become stronger with practice. Our view is that these skills can be taught and anybody – regardless of their job title or social status – can become a more effective leader.

The challenges that the development community aims to address are systemic and multi-sectoral in nature, requiring skilled leaders to create a shared vision of the future, and capable managers and teams to deliver projects on time and on budget. Despite this, and to our detriment, the role of leadership and management in development is often overlooked.

Large-scale development projects tend to drive investment in infrastructure and commodities, things more easily quantified and measured and with more immediately apparent results than investments made in human capital. However, long-term, sustainable development demands that we invest in people and ensure that they can thrive in a rapidly changing environment.<sup>2</sup> The SDGs are a bold tactic for tackling the world’s most important problems and aim at providing “a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet”.<sup>3</sup> They intend to end poverty, hunger, and inequality, act on climate change and the environment, improve access to health and education, build strong institutions and partnerships, and more. To a large extent, achieving them will depend on leadership. As the International Institute for Sustainable Development points out:

<sup>1</sup> The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness & Response (2021) COVID-19: Make it the Last Pandemic. Accessed online at: [https://theindependentpanel.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/COVID-19-Make-it-the-Last-Pandemic\\_final.pdf](https://theindependentpanel.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/COVID-19-Make-it-the-Last-Pandemic_final.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> World Bank Group (2018) “Investing in People to Build Human Capital” accessed online at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/immersive-story/2018/08/03/investing-in-people-to-build-human-capital>

<sup>3</sup> The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

- Effective leadership translates into prudent public policy formulation and implementation, as well as good public service delivery, to meet the needs and aspirations of citizens. Achieving the SDGs will require the concerted efforts of governments, the business sector, society, and individual citizens. Innovative leadership and management will be essential for organizations in all sectors to integrate these sustainable development goals into strategic plans and operational activities in service of realizing the 2030 aspirations.<sup>4</sup>

## The public-private gap and the risk of underinvestment

The private sector recognises the importance of developing skilled leaders and managers. Globally, programmes in business and management science are consistently among the most popular bachelor's degrees. Companies compete to attract the best talent graduating from business schools and MBA programmes. The private sector invests an estimated US\$30-40 billion a year<sup>5,6</sup> in leadership development, with billions more spent on management capacity-building.

In contrast, the public sector has generally not given leadership and management skills the same level of focus. Typically, programmes in development studies focus less on leadership and management than their business school counterparts, and for public services organisations, time spent on developing such skills is often seen as an extravagance.

This is a missed opportunity, as the public sector accounts for a considerable portion of the global economy. In both developed and developing economies, the public sector employs vast numbers of people, and is responsible for ensuring the availability of basic services like healthcare, sanitation, and education.

The public sector also plays a crucial role in addressing our most intractable and persistent challenges: climate change; inequality; the refugee crisis; disinformation; and the threat of new pandemics. These and other global problems will all require bold leadership from the public sector, as well as brokering complex partnerships and multi-sectoral cooperation.

Meanwhile, civil service leaders are typically technocrats, having risen to their positions through specialist, technical career paths. We expect them to stay on top of developments in their fields, and to master the political processes of passing legislation and translating this into policy. Moreover, we demand they be adept project managers capable of delivering results. All of this must be achieved within an increasingly complex and interconnected environment.

Meeting these multi-pronged expectations requires a broader skillset, including capabilities more traditionally associated with the private sector. These include vision-setting, strategic planning, project management, stakeholder management, financial acumen, risk management, innovation,

<sup>4</sup> International Institute for Sustainable Development (2018) "The Essence of Leadership for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals" accessed online at: <https://sdg.iisd.org/commentary/generation-2030/the-essence-of-leadership-for-achieving-the-sustainable-development-goals/>

<sup>5</sup> Wakefield, N. and Pastakia, K. (2016) Leadership Awakened: Generations, teams, science (Deloitte Insights) <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/focus/human-capital-trends/2016/identifying-future-business-leaders-leadership.html>

<sup>6</sup> Boston Consulting Group "Driving diversity through culture change" <https://www.bcg.com/en-us/capabilities/diversity-inclusion/driving-diversity-through-cultural-change.aspx>

change management, prioritisation, and delegation. But most public and civil servants have received little if any training in these domains.

In one recent survey, most organisations (both public and private) identify leadership as one of the key issues they need to address, but fewer than half feel that enough is being invested in developing good leaders.<sup>7</sup>

Instead, there is widespread thinking that these skills will somehow be magically acquired on the job. In reality, this does not happen without dedicated and targeted investment. This must change if we want to strengthen the capabilities of those already working in public service and ensure that there is a robust pipeline of skilled leaders and managers into public institutions. By under-investing in developing public sector leaders and managers – the very people we rely on to address our most pressing challenges – we risk limiting collective progress in achieving the SDGs.

## Limitations of existing approaches

Many current approaches to developing these critical skills rely on outdated models and mindsets. Leadership is still often thought of as inherent — qualities a select few are born with, or as something conferred upon people appointed to positions of authority. Rather, we believe that leadership is a set of behaviours that anyone can learn and, with practice, improve.

To be effective in the 21st century, leaders need to develop new approaches to tackling the challenges they face and the opportunities that present themselves. They need to consider the novel context in which they find themselves and draw on acquired competencies – including leading through change, embracing ambiguity and uncertainty, constantly innovating, and engaging with multiple stakeholders. These skills are rarely taught in traditional leadership and management programmes, and when they are, the approach is often theoretical and abstract.

Although there are current initiatives designed to address the need for better leadership and management in development, we believe many of these are limited in a number of key ways.

First, when public sector leadership and management training happens, it tends to rely on teaching methods that emphasise knowledge transfer over behaviour change. These theoretical approaches often overlook skills that future leaders will need.

Second, these programmes are typically only offered to senior leaders, and focus on individuals rather than teams and organisations. For changes to happen at an institutional level, we must move beyond these individualistic approaches.

Third, many existing programmes are characterised by international organisations delivering leadership training in low- and middle-income countries, instead of building local and regional institutional capacity to deliver context-specific programmes. However, there are a number of well-established local and regional leadership and management initiatives focused on the public sector in low- and middle-income countries, as well as public sector management and administration programmes at universities. Partnering with such initiatives and building the capacity of these institutions is a more sustainable route to building a pipeline of talent for the public sector as well as driving research, teaching, and public discourse on the role of leadership and management in development. International organisations wanting to support the strengthening of public sector leadership and management skills in these countries should look for opportunities to partner with relevant initiatives to build capacity over the long term.

<sup>7</sup> Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends Report (2019)

Fourth, the limited research, monitoring and evaluation of leadership and management programmes - especially in low- and middle- income countries - result in inadequate evidence regarding uptake, including of behaviour change approaches. In some cases, we do not have sufficient information whether, for example, the training of senior leaders was coupled with programmes for public sector teams.

And finally, leadership programmes have often reinforced gender inequality in the workplace by disproportionately benefitting men. The underrepresentation of women in leadership in all sectors has been extensively documented. Deeply entrenched gender norms and biases mean that women are less likely to be given opportunities to take on leadership positions or to participate in leadership development programmes. However, there is ample evidence that both men and women have the capacity to effectively lead public sector institutions. In addition, there is a growing body of research that has found that gender inclusivity in leadership tends to contribute to improvements in business performance.

## **A call for a new approach**

Evidently, we must rethink our approach to finding, developing, and nurturing leaders at all levels. In this effort, we need to focus on the skills needed to navigate modern challenges and engage a wide range of stakeholders. We must also ensure that we work on lasting behaviour change and creating cultures that support investments in leadership and management development.

These efforts must balance the need to build a pipeline of future leaders entering the public service with the need to strengthen the capabilities of current civil servants. Building the next generation of leaders is crucial, but the urgency and the scale of the global challenges we face today mean that we cannot afford to wait for future generations to develop solutions: we must also invest in the skills of people already in public service roles.

## **Developing next-generation leaders**

With an eye on tomorrow's challenges, we must foster a diverse pipeline of talent excited about entering public service. Young leaders bring new ideas and innovative approaches to public life, and they have a significant stake in creating a more just and equitable future. Investing in young leaders ensures that the next generation has the skills to lead and manage effectively, and it will enhance their understanding of how to be accountable managers and inspiring mentors.

We need to take a systemic approach to cultivating leadership. Within organisations and government institutions, leadership should be seen as something that is practised at all levels, with both junior and senior positions receiving leadership development support, as well as opportunities to apply and improve their abilities.

We should also find ways of engaging with the education system to develop these skills. Work readiness programmes at educational institutions should focus on core leadership and management skills alongside the technical skills that they teach.

## Examples of different approaches to developing a pipeline of leaders:

**African Leadership Academy** - African Leadership Academy (ALA) is a pre-university programme dedicated to identifying and developing a network of young leaders from across Africa to address the continent's greatest challenges. Its two-year curriculum seeks to accelerate Africa's growth trajectory by providing hands-on leadership development in addition to the usual academic core subjects. The young leaders are then guided by a network of partners and alumni along their path to transformative impact in Africa.

**Emerging Public Leaders** works to build a stronger civil service from the bottom up. Through their public service fellowship, they recruit Africa's most promising future leaders and place them into meaningful civil service positions. Over a period of two years, fellows are provided with the supervisory support, rigorous training, and mentorship they need to launch and build a successful career in public service.

**Global Health Corps (GHC)** runs a fellowship programme that builds a diverse network of effective, collaborative, equity-driven leaders to strengthen health systems. The fellowship recruits and trains talented young leaders with a wide range of skill sets and backgrounds and places them in non-clinical roles to serve for 13 months in high impact roles in global health organizations. The fellows also receive executive coaching and training, and with funding from GHC, pool their skills and networks to implement health projects in their communities. They also pursue an individual stretch project and tap into a professional development fund for greater impact.

**Teach for All** operates in sixty countries and focuses on tackling the growing global inequities in education systems. It recruits promising leaders who commit to a two-year teaching program in their nations' under-resourced schools and communities while participating in ongoing training and leadership development. Rather than addressing inequities in education through specific interventions or products, the Teach For All approach nurtures the ingenuity of leaders to work together to solve the problems that are most relevant to their communities, informed by what they learn through being part of a global network.

## Fit-for-purpose skills

The modern workplace needs employees to be adaptable and resilient – able to handle ambiguity and constant change, and willing to maintain curiosity and adopt a learner's mindset in their approach to new situations. Leaders today need to be comfortable navigating complexity – working collaboratively across sectors and disciplines, embracing technology and innovation, using a growing amount of data to make decisions, thinking systemically and holistically, and finding creative solutions to the problems they face.

In this context, leaders must focus on relationships – how we understand and relate to one another, empathise with others, and empower those around us – and manage a wider set of internal and external stakeholders. They have to build trust across cultural and political lines, and equip others to step into orchestration and leadership roles too.

These competencies – adaptability, resilience, the ability to synthesise information, critical thinking and problem solving – are often referred to as “soft” skills, in contrast to “hard” technical skills required to perform a task. We believe this characterisation undervalues them and their importance in the modern workplace. Indeed, given how quickly technology and the technical requirements for a task can change, it is increasingly important that individuals nurture the ability to learn and adapt. We, therefore, prefer the term core skills, and believe that developing these is as important as technical training in both education and professional development.

### Examples of leadership styles that facilitate navigating modern challenges:

**Servant leadership** – leading from behind and focusing on working through people by helping them to contribute at their highest level. It requires interpersonal skills such as humility, empathy, and the ability to listen and respect others. This style helps people to learn and grow, feel purposeful, be motivated and energised, and is focused on inspiring individuals and teams to offer their best.

**Values-based leadership** – leading a team and organisation based on a shared set of values, rather than specific rules and metrics. This style requires leaders to identify and communicate these shared values to establish the foundation upon which team members will base their decision-making. Leaders are expected to demonstrate value-based leadership in their own decision-making.

## Contextual, collective, and systemic approaches

Traditional teaching methods are often limited in their ability to drive behaviour change because they primarily focus on knowledge transfer (through lectures) and the individual (rather than the wider team and organisational culture).

Individualistic approaches to leadership development are unlikely to result in change at an institutional level. Environments shape behaviour, and so to bring about systems-level change, a collective approach to leadership is required so that the broader environment encourages and celebrates good leadership and management practices. When a team, and the wider organisation into which it fits, share a common language and understanding of what good leadership and management means, they create a culture of joint accountability and collective leadership that brings out the best in everyone.<sup>8</sup>

The latest thinking on developing leaders places more emphasis on coaching, experiential learning, contextualised (*in situ* and personalised) learning, and peer learning.<sup>9</sup> This moves education out of the classroom, and provides opportunities for individuals to practice their nascent leadership and management skills in an environment where they can receive constructive feedback, reflect, and adapt as they hone their skills and develop a culture of lifelong learning.

<sup>8</sup> Fitzsimons, D. (2016). How Shared Leadership Changes Our Relationships at Work. Harvard Business Review. Accessed online at <https://hbr.org/2016/05/how-shared-leadership-changes-our-relationships-at-work>

<sup>9</sup> Moldoveanu, M, & Narayandas, D. (2019). The Future of Leadership Development. Harvard Business Review



## Examples of different approaches to developing leaders:

**AMP Health** – AMP Health supports governments to strengthen the leadership and management capabilities of public health teams. Collaborating closely with these teams, AMP Health tailors its approach to develop leadership and management capabilities that are the most critical to their strategic priorities. The approach combines: embedded mentoring and capability development; experiential learning through interactive in-person and online training; executive coaching; curated self-directed learning; and peer exchange across countries.

**Harvard Ministerial Leadership Program** – Every year, approximately thirty serving education, health and finance ministers from low-income countries are brought to Harvard to undergo a week-long training on leadership effectiveness, priority setting, policy implementation, and more. The forum is led and facilitated by senior Harvard faculty members, external experts, and a panel of former and serving ministers. The programme serves to foster a network of ministers who continually share best practices and support each other in their leadership journeys.

**The International Program in Public Health Leadership (IPPHL)** – The programme brings together mid-career African public health professionals (virtually) to fine-tune their leadership and management skills. It focuses on individual coaching and mentoring, as well as the development of a community of practice for participants to continue their learning as well as peer support after the programme.

## Building local capacity to develop leadership and management skills

Local institutions that work with government in developing context-appropriate content and pedagogical approaches will be essential to sustaining leadership and management efforts at national and subnational levels. In addition to academic institutions, civil society organisations, and the private sector can also play important roles in the development and delivery of experiential learning content. Bringing together vibrant multi-sectoral leadership and management communities of practice helps a broad range of partners become (and stay) engaged in locally driven efforts to develop these capabilities.

## The opportunity: what can be achieved through better leadership and management in the public sector.

Beyond the SDGs, improving leadership and management for development will also lead to better approaches when tackling crises and the complex challenges government face.

A recent example is the exemplary way in which New Zealand handled the COVID-19 crisis with strong leadership at the top, exceptional competence in the management of the crisis by government bodies, and the trust built by government leaders with the public.

## Further examples highlighting the effect of better leadership and management skills in the public sector:

### EDUCATION: SINGAPORE<sup>10</sup>

**Situation:** Principals and education system leaders in Singapore were not being equipped with the expanded skill sets needed to succeed in their work (e.g., handling diversity, adaptability to change).

**Solution:** Singapore designed the Leaders in Education Programme (LEP) as a six-month full-time programme for aspiring leaders in education. Through the programme, participants were exposed to interactive lessons in leadership and strategic management to guide organisational reform. There was a focus on real-world scenarios based on the individual context of each participant. School principals were asked to mentor others in their school throughout the programme; an effort to create meta-leadership so that existing leaders invested in developing leadership in others.

**Outcome:** Singapore continues to be a global leader in education, ranking highly on almost all relevant education metrics. For instance, the literacy rate has climbed to 97%, (from 92% at the inception of LEP). In the years since LEP started, the Singapore education system has been rated as the education system most equipped to meet the needs of a competitive economy.<sup>11</sup> The programme itself has been well received by education leaders across the country, and has won a number of international awards.

<sup>10</sup> Jayapragas, P (2019) Leaders in Education Program: The Singapore Model for Developing Effective Principal-ship Capability Current Issues in Comparative Education (CICE) Volume 19, Issue 1, Fall 2016. Accessed online at <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1128409.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> OECD (2010) Singapore: Rapid Improvement Followed by Strong Performance. Accessed online at <https://www.oecd.org/countries/singapore/46581101.pdf>

## ENVIRONMENT: FIJI<sup>12</sup>

**Situation:** Fiji's goals to fight climate change via carbon reduction had stalled due to a lack of local capacity and an absence of systems or tools to effectively prioritise and execute sustainable development priorities related to the environment.

**Solution:** The UN Environment Programme partnered with the Technical University of Denmark to deliver capacity building workshops to local environmental ministry representatives in Fiji as well as associated figures in the banking and private sectors. The workshops focused on creating supporting tools and providing training for project management, as well as creating a culture that enabled multilateral cooperation and more efficient ways of working.

**Outcome:** Several development priorities were successfully selected and executed, with a forward-looking pipeline developed for future opportunities. It is estimated that these projects led to an annual reduction of ~170,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> in Fiji.

## HEALTH: RWANDA<sup>13,14</sup>

**Situation:** In the wake of the Rwandan genocide, the country's health systems were insufficient and unable to effectively administer the country's healthcare needs.

**Solution:** The Rwandan government launched "Vision 2020", which focused on improving governance, upskilling human capital within multiple development sectors, and coordinating more effectively with the donor community to help achieve its development goals. Their efforts emphasised the decentralisation of health administration with a view to building local capacity and creating cultures of leadership and ownership at the district level, while also encouraging effective cross-sector collaboration.

**Outcome:** Rwanda's health system has been recognised as a regional model for effective healthcare, and it is the only sub-Saharan country on track to meet their health-related SDGs. They have seen substantial improvements in a variety of metrics, including maternal deaths down by 60%, malaria deaths down by 80%, and health coverage extended to 90% of the population.

<sup>12</sup> United Nations Environmental Programme (2017) Environmental change through capacity building: Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific – capacity building related to multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. Accessed online at <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/20477/environmental-change-capacity-building-2017.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Quick, J.D. (2013) Leadership at All Levels: The Backbone of Rwanda's Health System Successes. Accessed online at <https://www.msh.org/blog/2013/03/27/leadership-at-all-levels-the-backbone-of-rwandas-health-system-successes>

<sup>14</sup> Emery, N. (2013) Rwanda's Historic Health Recovery: What the U.S. Might Learn in The Atlantic, 20 February 2013. Accessed online at <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2013/02/rwandas-historic-health-recovery-what-the-us-might-learn/273226/>

## A call to action for investing in public sector leadership and management

To achieve the SDGs and individual country development goals, we need to act now to enable and empower public institutions to tackle the complex challenges they face. Investment in leadership and management capabilities is essential, and we will also need commitment and input from a broad selection of stakeholders, including governments, the private sector, academia, NGOs, multi-lateral institutions, funders, implementing agencies, and wider society.

In each instance, the best local option to build the necessary leadership and management capacity will depend on the context, available resources, and the specific needs of each institution. There are, however, a number of factors that increase the likelihood of success, regardless of approach or location.

**Increased multi-sectoral collaboration:** Developing better leaders and managers needs to be a collective priority across the public sector, one that all parts of the government embrace and invest in. Working in silos is limiting, especially as some of the most valuable learning and best practice sharing come from peers facing similar challenges in other sectors and geographies.

**Cooperation with private sector:** Operating alone, the public sector does not have the necessary skills or resources to overcome the obstacles (or to seize important opportunities) to achieving the SDGs. Partnerships with the private sector are needed to mobilise the necessary technical skills, innovation, and funding. The private sector can also play a significant role in supporting the development of leadership and management skills in the public sector. Well-structured public-private partnerships can be used to deliver public goods in a mutually beneficial way. Focusing on the concept of public service – as a way of delivering public goods – may help break down the currently unhelpful divide between public and private sectors.

**Shift towards local, on-the-job models of leadership and management development:** Resources for one-off training events (or for select individuals to travel to short-term training interventions) could be redirected to provide more inclusive, local, on-the-job training. Programmes that allow staff to develop their leadership and management skills on-the-job allow for more contextualised, relevant, and timely learnings that can then be directly applied to opportunities arising and challenges being faced. This allows for more sustainable skill building and durable behaviour change.

**Leadership opportunities at all levels:** Because good leadership and management is needed throughout the public sector, training programmes and ongoing support should be offered at all levels, including national, peripheral, and community. Particular attention should be given to individuals and groups that are typically overlooked for such development opportunities, including women, girls, youth, the disabled, indigenous communities, cultural and linguistic minorities, as well as those living in remote and underdeveloped regions. Attempts should also be made to distribute opportunity fairly across civil and public servants, and to avoid training opportunities being repeatedly offered to the same group of individuals.

**A supportive culture:** For this effort to be sustainable, leaders themselves will need to champion and demonstrate the importance of leadership and management capability building. A culture of leadership requires senior leaders to step up as coaches, role models, and advocates, supporting those around them in this endeavour. It is crucial that we enable leaders and managers in government ministries not only to do, but to teach, and to make the case that this is taken up and institutionalised at all levels.

**Transparency and accountability:** There must be local (country driven) oversight and measurement of progress towards leadership and management goals to keep teams accountable and aware of where they stand in their journey. This will also help governments themselves and other funding partners understand how their investment is making a difference and should promote sustainability in leadership and management capability building efforts.

Delivering on the promise of a skilled civil service requires commitment and investment in both leadership and management capability building. This is how we promote quality public service that meets the societal ambitions across all sectors, and that attracts top talent into the sector.

We propose, therefore, that governments consider committing to spending US\$500 per public sector employee per year, in line with private sector benchmarks, on leadership and management capability building initiatives in order to realise institutional level changes. In most countries where there is significant room for improvement in public sector leadership and management capability, this would translate into spending approximately 0.4% of Gross National Income (GNI) annually on such efforts. Countries that are already within the top quartile of the Human Capital Index as defined by the World Bank<sup>15</sup> (e.g., United Kingdom, New Zealand) should consider spending 0.1% of GNI to maintain the public sector leadership and management capacity that has been built over time.<sup>16</sup>

It is important to clarify that we are not calling for countries to invest a prescribed amount in each individual, but that the aggregate of US\$500 per person is a reasonable target to deliver on a stable and high-functioning public sector. We also recognise that there are many initiatives calling for increased government spending in specific sectors. However, we are not calling for governments to shift spending patterns *among* sectors, but to increase the proportion of spending dedicated to leadership and management *across* sectors as a means of increasing spending efficiency, and ultimately creating greater fiscal space for meeting societal objectives.

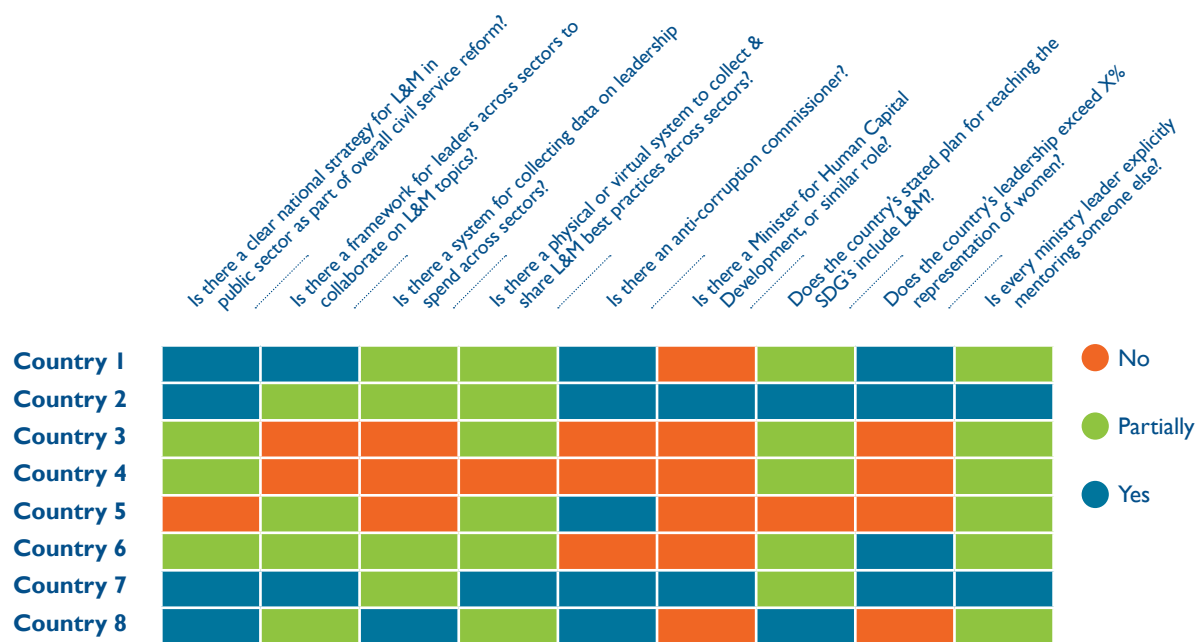
Although we appreciate this financial commitment may be daunting, our analyses suggest that this level of investment would rapidly pay for itself if improved civil service capabilities lead to increased programmatic effectiveness and spend efficiency across the government. If we look at the health sector in Ghana as an example, the annual spend (as of 2016) was about US\$1.9 billion. Investing an additional US\$21 million per year in leadership and management training (which is approximately US\$500 per person for all public sector health employees) would pay for itself if there were an efficiency gain in spending of as little as 1.2%. In practice, we expect that this return on investment could be greater, and that the results could lead to significant cost savings for many, if not most, governments.

<sup>15</sup> The World Bank Group Human Capital Project [www.worldbank.org/en/publication/human-capital](http://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/human-capital)

<sup>16</sup> Based on the identification of private sector annual per-employee spend in the US and UK, extrapolated to 10 benchmark countries, and triangulated using public sector workforce size and GNIs to identify reasonable ranges

A scorecard could also be a helpful tool, not only for countries to ensure they are on track towards their goals, but also to measure the impact of their investment efforts. An example of an effective scorecard is the African Leaders Malaria Alliance’s (ALMA) Scorecard for Accountability and Action.

The specific metrics or questions may differ by country, but could potentially include:



We also need to reframe how we think about development efforts, to think more boldly and in longer terms. Development efforts cannot be treated as discrete projects any longer, and the development of leadership and management skills are not merely “nice to have”. Multiple stakeholders in the development ecosystem will need to be involved in addressing these complex challenges, and in championing the cause to achieve its full potential. Their efforts may include:

### Governments

- Assess the current leadership and management competencies and gaps among civil servants.
- Highlight and build on previous leadership and management programmes that have yielded tangible positive results.
- Overcome gender inequality in the public sector by providing executive coaching, mentoring, and career development opportunities to attract, recruit, train, retain, and promote women leaders.
- Strengthen local institutions so that they can better drive research, teaching, and public discourse around leadership and management.

- Collect ongoing metrics and make data-driven decisions on where and how to invest in leadership and management capability-building efforts, to ensure investment is directed at interventions that have the most impact.
- Commit a percentage of GNI towards leadership and management capability building in the public sector, and work with external funding partners (including the private sector) to address any funding gaps.
- Convene communities of practice on leadership and management that bring together private and public organisations with a common interest in public service. Identify local talent and institutions that can contribute to the design and implementation of leadership and management capacity building initiatives for public sector employees.

### Development assistance partners

- In close collaboration with governments, integrate leadership and management capability building assistance into all ongoing and future development projects.
- Prioritise long-term efforts over discrete projects to promote behaviour change and a more sustainable mindset within government partners. Additionally, allocate dedicated funding and resources to such efforts.
- Track and report spending and impact of leadership and management initiatives to build a better understanding of the spend required to drive long-term results.
- Engage and convene other members of the development assistance community on this topic.

### Private sector

- Provide resources and support (including mentoring and coaching) to organisations that demonstrate a commitment to leadership and management capability building and to government civil service teams.
- Identify ways that leadership and management capability building expertise and infrastructure from the private sector can be adapted to the public sector context.
- Participate in leadership and management communities of practice that bring together public and private sectors.

### Academia

- Review existing leadership and management development programmes to ensure they address the needs of the public sector and the increasingly complex challenges they face.
- Collaborate with other stakeholders to bring the learnings and insights from non-academic programmes and development efforts into existing and new academic offerings (for continuous improvement and relevance).

- Incorporate the latest thinking on best-practice adult learning into programme design to create more practical, accessible, and applied programmes that focus on behaviour change while still being grounded in academic rigour.
- Collaborate in creating and reviewing evidence on what leadership and management capacity building approaches are most effective and sound in the local context.
- Contribute to addressing gender inequality by collecting and analysing gender disaggregated data regarding public sector leadership and management efforts.

## Local communities

- Identify opportunities at the community level where leadership and management capability building are needed.
- Advocate for increased leadership and management investment by supporting candidates who endorse the principles of leadership and management capability building.
- Share learnings from capability building programmes with others in the community, instilling a culture of meta-leadership.
- Hold governments accountable for making high-quality services available to all, which will drive the need to invest in the leadership and management capabilities of public sector teams.

## Conclusion

We believe that a better world is possible. A world with universal access to essential healthcare, reduced inequality, increased rights for workers, more sustainable food supplies, transformed educational systems, and a greater emphasis on the long-term health of our planet. To achieve this, we need visionary and effective teams to guide government institutions and their partners as they navigate constant change.

We have argued for a new approach to investing in leadership and management: one that addresses gender inequality; prioritises coaching; experiential learning; contextualised (*in situ* and personalised) learning; and peer learning over traditional approaches that focus on knowledge transfer through lectures. We also believe that a more inclusive approach that aims to affect change at the institutional level should be prioritised over approaches that focus on individuals appointed to positions of authority. In addition, building local and regional institutions to drive conversations about leadership and management should take priority over importing short-term interventions from international organisations.

We believe that investing in the development of the next generation of public sector leaders and managers will pay tremendous dividends as teams of civil servants become more effective and efficient, which in turn will attract new talent to public service. With the right investment and the right partners, we can develop the civil service teams that can help us to navigate today's challenges, seize new opportunities, and build a better tomorrow.



## About the Council

The High-Level Council on Leadership & Management for Development convenes prominent individuals from diverse geographies across public and private sectors in order to catalyse collective efforts to change the conversation about development to focus more on people, in addition to commodities and financing. The High-Level Council aims to set a visionary course for investing in human capital for development.



### Barbara Bush

Barbara Bush is Co-Founder and Board Chair of Global Health Corps, an organization that mobilises a global community of young leaders to build a movement for health equity. Barbara recently completed her Master's degree in Public Administration at the Harvard Kennedy School. She is currently Executive-In-Residence at Schmidt Futures.

### Helen Clark

Helen Clark is a former New Zealand Prime Minister and a former UNDP Administrator. She currently chairs the Boards of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health



### Jamie Cooper

Jamie Cooper is founding Chair and President of Big Win Philanthropy. She has more than 20 years' experience in bringing private sector, government, and non-profit leaders together to pursue innovative policy on economic and social issues. She previously co-founded the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) and served as its president and CEO.

### Julio Frenk

Since 2015, Julio Frenk has been president of the University of Miami. Prior to joining the University of Miami, he was the dean of the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and the T&G Angelopoulos Professor of Public Health and International Development. He served as the Minister of Health of Mexico from 2000 to 2006. He was the founding director-general of the National Institute of Public Health in Mexico, one of the leading institutions of its kind in the developing world.





### Dan Glickman

Dan Glickman is a senior counsellor and chair of the International Advisory Board at APCO Worldwide, board member and now a lead director of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, and senior advisor to the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition. He was formerly the Vice President of the Aspen Institute and Executive Director of The Aspen Institute Congressional Program. Prior to joining the Aspen Institute, he served as U.S. Secretary of Agriculture in the Clinton Administration. He previously represented the 4th Congressional district of Kansas for 18 years in the U.S. House of Representatives.

### Wendy Kopp

Wendy Kopp is CEO and Co-founder of Teach For All, a global network of independent organisations that are developing collective leadership to ensure all children fulfil their potential. Wendy founded Teach For America in 1989 to marshal the energy of her generation towards expanding educational opportunity in the United States. Since 2007, Wendy has led the development of Teach For All to be responsive to the initiative of social entrepreneurs around the world who were determined to adapt this approach in their own countries.



### Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala serves on the Council in her personal capacity. She is currently the Director-General of the World Trade Organization. She has twice served as Nigeria's Finance Minister, most recently between 2011 and 2015 – a role that encompassed the expanded portfolio of the Coordinating Minister for the Economy. She previously served as Board Chair of GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance.

### Muhammad Ali Pate

Muhammad Ali Pate is Julio Frenk Professor of the Practice of Public Health Leadership in the department of Global Health and Population at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. He was formerly Global Director, Health, Nutrition and Population (HNP) at the World Bank and the Director of Global Financing Facility for Women, Children and Adolescents (GFF). Dr Pate, a US and Nigerian national, is also the former Minister of State for Health in the Federal Republic of Nigeria.





### Joy Phumaphi

Joy Phumaphi is the Executive Secretary of the African Leaders Malaria Alliance. She is the former Minister of Health of Botswana. Prior to serving as the Minister of Health, she began public service in Botswana as a local government auditor and went on to serve in Parliament and as a representative to the Southern African Development Community. Ms. Phumaphi was formerly Assistant Director-General for Family and Community Health at the World Health Organization, and also served as Vice President for Human Development at the World Bank.

### Manuel Pulgar Vidal

Manuel Pulgar Vidal is the Climate & Energy Global Practice Leader at WWF. He served as Minister of the Environment of Peru (2011 to 2016) and President of the Twentieth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2014. He sits on the Boards of F20, Forest Trends, Amazon Conservation Association and Peruvian Society of Environmental Law. Manuel is the chair of the evaluation council of the French sovereign Green Bonds and is a member of both the Advisory Group of the Center for Multilateral Negotiations and the Assembly of WWF - Columbia. He was recently appointed as Senior Ambassador of the Coalition for Urban Transitions and a member of the Aspen Institute Management and Leadership Advisory Group.



### Jaime Saavedra

Jaime Saavedra leads the Education Global Practice at the World Bank Group. He re-joined the World Bank Group from the Government of Peru, where he served as Minister of Education from 2013 through 2016. Prior to assuming his role as Minister for Education of Peru, he had a ten-year career at the World Bank where, most recently, he served as Director for Poverty Reduction and Equity as well as Acting Vice President, Poverty Reduction & Economic Management Network.

### **Ellen Johnson Sirleaf**

Nobel Laureate Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is a leading promoter of freedom, peace, justice, and democratic rule. Africa's first democratically elected female head of state, she led Liberia through reconciliation and recovery following the nation's decade-long civil war and the Ebola Crisis. President Sirleaf was awarded the prestigious Nobel Prize for Peace in 2011. She is the recipient of The Presidential Medal of Freedom - the United States' highest civilian award - for her personal courage and unwavering commitment to freedom for Africans.



### **Ernesto Zedillo**

Ernesto Zedillo is the Director of the Yale Center for the Study of Globalization. After almost a decade with the Central Bank of Mexico he served as Undersecretary of the Budget, Secretary of Economic Programming and the Budget, and Secretary of Education before serving as President of Mexico from 1994-2000. He is a member of The Elders, and Chairman of the Board of the Natural Resource Governance Institute and the Rockefeller Foundation Economic Council on Planetary Health.

## **Council Secretary**

### **Robert Newman**

Robert Newman is a paediatrician with more than 30 years of experience in global health and development as a leader, manager, policy maker, epidemiologist, program implementer, researcher, and clinician. He is currently Director of AMP Health. Prior to that, he held roles as the Country Director for U.S. CDC in Cambodia, Managing Director for Policy and Performance at Gavi, Director of the Global Malaria Programme at the World Health Organization, CDC team lead for the President's Malaria Initiative, and Country Coordinator for Health Alliance International in Mozambique.



## Acknowledgements

The High-Level Council would like to thank Peggy Clark for her role in helping to set up the council and in serving as its co-secretariat until September 2021. Peggy is currently the CEO of the International Center for Research on Women. She was formerly Vice President of Policy Programs and Executive Director of the Aspen Global Innovators Group. Previously, she served as the Executive Vice President of the Aspen Institute, co-founder and Managing Director of Realizing Rights, Chair of the Women's Program Forum at the Ford Foundation, and as the first Director of Small-Scale Enterprise and Credit at Save the Children Federation.

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