

Peter Malinga, Information, Education and Communication Specialist, Human Resources and Institutional Capacity Development Agency (HIDA), Rwanda.

Moderator: Caby Verzosa, The World Bank

Caby: How do we gain the support of middle managers in the public sector when we try to get governance reform going in a particular country?

Peter: Thank you for that question. Middle-level managers are normally referred to as the technocrats or technicians. In my country we consider them to be directors of the departments, heads of section or director generals of public sector agencies. These are specific groups that have to be brought on board in any reform or change agenda.

Caby: Are they opponents of change or are they supporters of change?

Peter: First of all we have to look at the purpose of change. When you know the purpose, you can know whether they are opposing or resisting. Back home in my country, we are a fast-reforming country and most of the reforms require the support of the public sector managers, but some of the reforms that are not well packaged receive resistance or I prefer to use "mixed results". And in most cases, these reforms come from top-down.

Caby: Is this particularly important in the implementation phase of reforms as against when you are trying to get the law passed? Can you talk about the difference in those two phases?

Peter: It is very important in the implementation phase, in the sense that the policy direction of the government is set up by the cabinet, set up by certain structures, but when it comes to the actual implementation, it goes down to these middle-level managers who have to interpret policy into implementation and in most cases they even go further to disseminate and ensure awareness among the various stakeholders. Because the impact of these policies that are going to effect either public sector or the private sector, or the civil society, the people who play the spokesman role or who even draft the press releases are middle-level managers.

Caby: What motivates these middle-managers? Why should they support reform?

Peter: What will motivate them is when they are involved. When they are not involved, be sure you will have mixed results. What motivates them is when they are involved, when their ideas are used as resource input for the policy and when they have been involved in the drafting, in the review, in the validation, in the dissemination and in the packaging of messages, they will get motivated.

Caby: How do you make this happen in the developing country like Rwanda? There must be a lot of things going on. How do you ensure that there is all this high-level involvement by middle managers?

Peter: Yes, you can test it. You can test it through a process right from the initiation stage. The concept first of all, the initiation, then you go the consultative process, and then finally the review and the validation. That can be tested, once the middle-level managers are used. Back home, we have in any reform something called a concept note or some philosophical thinking behind any reform.

Caby: So you share the concept note at an early stage with the middle-managers?

Peter: Very, very necessary!

Caby: What kind of process? Do you just send it out? Is there a discussion, a dialogue, an open forum?

Peter: Normally the concept note is a drafting phase and this drafting phase has various structures. Either you have a national focal point, which has all these middle-level managers, or you have a technical committee. By then you will get a national steering committee, which has a political leadership so there will be report arrangement back and forth during the development of the concept, and then as you go each phase has to have that type of back and forth, so you have top-down and bottom-up.