

REPORT
AFRICA PUBLIC SERVICE DAY CELEBRATIONS
23 JUNE 2006

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REPORT AFRICA PUBLIC SERVICE DAY CELEBRATIONS 23 JUNE 2006

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the report is:

- To provide feedback on the outcome of the Africa Public Service Day Celebrations held on the 23rd of June 2006; and
- Share lessons learned and suggest areas for improvement in preparation for the 2007 celebrations.
- Highlight success stories and identify key challenges for focused intervention in future celebration.

2. BACKGROUND

Africa Public Service Day (APSD) is now an entrenched strategic event on the African Union calendar. Emanating from the declaration of the first Pan-African Conference of Ministers of Public/Civil Service held in Tangier, Morocco in 1994 the ministers agreed that the 23rd of June every year should be celebrated as Africa Public Service Day to “recognize the value and virtue of service to the community”. This ministerial decision was reaffirmed in the Stellenbosch Declaration adopted at the 4th Pan-African Ministers’ conference held in Stellenbosch, South Africa. The meeting acknowledged the importance of the APSD initiative as part of the Continental strategy to boost Public Administration programmes, public sector performance, regional integration and governance.

The fundamental objective enshrined in the APSD is the provision and delivery of value and quality public service to Africa’s citizens. This day gives due recognition to the working conditions and the quality of men and women who devote their lives to diligently serve populations around the continent. The other

equally important consideration is the facilitation of positive interest of citizens from all walks of life in the work of African public administration. Africa Public Service Day serves as a platform for Public/Civil Servants to showcase and reward good initiatives and achievements in the public sector, and equally provides an invaluable opportunity for public servants to promote values such as professionalism, accountability, responsiveness, ethics and performance in their delivery of public services.

3. THE CONTEXT OF 2006 APSD CELEBRATIONS

The Chairperson of the 5th Pan-African Ministers' Conference, Hon, Minister Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi was entrusted with the important responsibility of overseeing the celebrations of the APSD activities across the Continent. At the 5th Pan-African Ministers' Conference held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in December 2006 and in pursuit of the above objective, a Ministerial sub-committee Chaired by Sudan was established under the 5th Pan-African Ministers' Conference to co-ordinate the celebration of the APSD activities across the continent. The Ministerial Conference committed to the development an overall APSD theme which would be communicated to all Member States for adoption. As part of the Pan-African Ministers' commitment to boost the quality of service delivery performance across Africa, the APSD sub-committee was mandated to ensure that the 2006 APSD programme is properly focused, collated and shared across the Continent. The Deputy Prime Minister of Namibia was tasked to coordinate SADC APSD while Sudan was tasked to co-ordinate continental APSD activities.

The Deputy Prime Minister of Namibia, with assistance of Minister Fraser-Moleketi as the Chairperson of the 5th Pan-African Ministers' Conference, facilitated the formulation of the 2006 APSD theme and sub-themes which were presented to the first Ministerial Bureau meeting held in April 2006 in Abuja Nigeria. The Ministerial Bureau meeting adapted the theme and sub-themes and the African Union was tasked to communicate the main theme and sub-themes to member states for concurrence and adaptation. The main theme for the APSD

2006 celebration was ***'Building an ethical Public Service for improved service delivery in Africa'***.

The sub-themes agreed upon were:

- (1) Promote Governance, with emphasis on anti-corruption and ethics;
- (2) Empower the citizenry, especially rural communities to enhance accessibility to services;
- (3) Access to information;
- (4) Capacitate the public service to meet the expectations of the people;
and
- (5) Restructuring the public sector in line with Africa's unique challenges.

In the South African case the 2006 APSD celebration were three dimensional. The first dimension involved various APSD events mainly by provinces and a few national departments during the week (19 to 23) building to the main event (23 June 2006). Provinces that participated during the afore-mentioned week are: Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape, Free State, Northern Cape, and Gauteng including the Ethekewini Municipality. Separate reports in respect of all these provinces (and the municipality) will be posted on the Batho Pele Website and can be made available on request. The North-West Province celebrated APSD during Africa Day week on 25 May 2006.

The second APSD dimension relates to the national interdepartmental celebration on 17 June 2006, while the third was the main international event on 23 June which was achieved through satellite connectivity among the following countries: Lesotho, Swaziland, Mauritius, Namibia and South Africa (main hub). The connectivity was done with the assistance of the State Information Technology Agency (SITA) at the University of Pretoria's Senate Chamber.

4. DISCUSSIONS

This part explains the three dimensions alluded to earlier in this report. The focus of the report will mainly be around provincial and national celebrations. The report on international celebrations will be written by Namibia as the regional APSD coordinator.

Two presentations were made on 04 May 2006 in Pretoria and on 01 June 2006 in Cape Town respectively. The aim was to give cluster members feedback on the visits to SADC and update them on the progress of APSD as well as get buy-in and to request them to get involved in shaping the activities leading to the 23rd of June. Cluster members were also asked to assist in the establishment of the format for the main event. Presentations were made based on the recognition that APSD was coordinated by Batho Pele Coordinators from various departments. This arrangement posed problems in that junior staff members attended APSD meetings without decision making powers from their relevant offices. Lessons learnt from other African States, and given the magnitude of the 2006 APSD, are that departments had to involve senior officials to drive the APSD, hence the decision to make representations to the G&A Cluster.

4.1 Provincial celebrations

After the 5th Pan-African Ministerial Bureau meeting approved the theme and sub-themes, the project manager visited provinces to make presentations about how the 2006 APSD would be celebrated within the selected theme and sub-themes. Provinces were also given guidance on how they could enhance the 2006 APSD celebrations. Provinces started celebrating from 19 till 23 June 2006 and most of them joined the satellite link-up through DSTV channel 58 where large screens were organised in various places to be viewed by as many public servants and the general public as possible.

A synopsis of provincial celebrations is given hereunder:

4.1.1 Eastern Cape

Although the province has celebrated APSD since 2002, the 2006 celebrations were guided by DPSA in line with the AU requirements. The highlight in this year's APSD celebrations was that all departments across the entire province participated for the first time. The build up of activities started on Monday 19 June and continued for the whole week, till 23 June when the main event was viewed by various districts through installed big screens. APSD awareness was raised through banners in all regions, media communications (six radio slots over five days) and two local Newspapers (*Herald, Die Burger*) and a local radio station (*UMhlobo Wenene*) played a role in getting the message through to people.

By 14 June, all departments had been reached through emails, circulars and letters. This information was also distributed to the districts and to local government. The Premier and top officials were interviewed by various radio stations like *Lesedi Community Radio*. Topics covered included Anti-Corruption and whistle blowing. The Premier launched a website during the APSD week called "The Discussion Forum" where public officials at both provincial and local government levels can raise their concerns or input on how service delivery can be improved flowing from the APSD deliberations.

The Eastern Cape APSD build up of activities included an Senior Management Service (SMS) survey on Effective Leadership. To that effect, 89 SMS members were interviewed. This information will be used to make inputs into the provincial strategy for attracting and retaining the SMS cadre.

Some of the Multi-purpose Community Centres like Mbizana were used to amplify APSD activities. Exhibitions were displayed in other MPCCs (in full) where services rendered by departments like Agriculture, Office of the Premier, Education, Roads and Transport, Public Works, SASSA, SAPS Health, etc. were extended to the public during the APSD by deploying public officials.

The celebrations in the Eastern Cape were pleasantly characterised by inclusivity, namely, the involvement of Executive Mayors, Council members, NGOs, Labour movement, and Heads of Department.

4.1.2 Northern Cape

As was the case with the Eastern Cape, the Northern Cape used local radio stations to make people aware of APSD. The Province embarked upon a series of unannounced visits. Politicians and Senior Management Service members were deployed to various service points, departments and institutions. A total of nine (9) Members of the Provincial Executive Council and twenty (20) SMS members visited these sites. All public servants attended the function at Galeshewe Stadium, where they were addressed by the Premier of the Province and the Chairperson of the Public Service Commission on values and ethics in the Public Service and effective service delivery through implementation of the Batho Pele Revitalization Programme. At the end of the ceremony, all Public Servants including the Premier, MECs and HODs signed a pledge committing them to the ethos of quality service delivery.

On 24 June, a family day was arranged where all public servants and their families were invited to spend the day at a sports facility at Diskobolos Military Base. Various sports and social events were organized. Guest speakers were invited to cover the following topics: Employee Health and Wellness Program and the importance of family structures.

4.1.3. Mpumalanga

All but four Departments (Finance, Roads and Transport, Economic Development & Planning and Public Works) celebrated the APSD. The celebration took the form of self-introspection by various departments, e.g. the Premier's Office conducted its internal Imbizo to assess service delivery bottlenecks while the Department of Health looked at challenges pertaining to procurement processes, HIV/AIDS issues, good

governance with the emphasis on anti-corruption, Effective Leadership and Management, and Rights and responsibilities of employees.

The Department of Education invited Principals, Educators, Public Service Staff, personnel, union representatives, community based centers, and schools with special needs to share information on a range of educational service delivery issues. The Department of Local Government and Housing arranged three successful departmental Izimbizos to interact with Service Providers in three regions. The first and second Izimbizos were held in Nelspruit and Msukaligwa. Up to 46 and 25 Service Providers attended the workshop respectively. The importance of Public Finance Management Act (PFMA), the Treasury regulations and the Supply Chain Management Policy were outlined and discussed. The third and last successful Imbizo was held at Emalahleni and was graced by the Mayor who delivered a keynote address.

The Department of Home Affairs displayed exhibitions and the general public came to access them in a mobile office; Home Affairs also helped communities with applications of ID books and birth certificates, and the issuing of Death Certificates while the Office of the Premier displayed among other things Service Delivery (Batho Pele) materials.

4.1.4 Gauteng

In Gauteng a live broadcast was done simultaneously with the broadcast of the Gauteng Premier's budget vote speech for the Office of the Premier. All departments participated in the celebration. The Gauteng Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Environment for instance, hosted an APSD event on 24 June which took the form of an information day. The department displayed some of the projects and programmes they undertake to improve the lives of communities.

5. INTERDEPARTMENTAL CELEBRATION

With the exception of the Departments of Education and Science & Technology, national departments unlike the provinces, did not have APSD week activities building to the main event. The reason cited was that their budgets were only going to cater for the preparation of the interdepartmental celebration scheduled for 17 June.

It has become a tradition since 2001 for national departments to celebrate APSD on weekends in June on a day that is characterized by fun, a variety of sporting activities and exhibitions by different departments on a range of issues like HIV/AIDS awareness, safety and security, and defence. June is also Youth Month in South Africa, therefore, the celebration on 17 June occurred a day after the Youth Day. A minute of silence was observed to acknowledge the youth's contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle that helped make South Africa what it is today.

Building up to the main event on 23 June, South Africa had to align all APSD activities with the theme and sub-themes in line with other African countries. On 17 June, national departments and some provincial officials held a family day where family members, friends and children were invited to join public servants to observe Africa Public Service Day.

In his speech on that day, the Director-General of the Department of Public Service and Administration, Professor Richard Levin challenged public officials to reflect on the need for professionalism and ethics in the public service, and the duty of every public servant to ensure that his or her colleagues uphold these standards as well. He emphasised that corruption robs the poor of essential services and further robs the country of its good name and standing. He indicated that corruption may be on a small or a grand scale, but it is a betrayal of the trust of the citizens who are our employers and our benefactors. The DG further stated that, as public servants, we must be guided by the Code of Conduct, which is not an inspirational exposition of our values; rather it is part of the body of public service law. In his conclusion, Professor Levin alluded to the

fact that service delivery challenges require public servants who recognize that they belong to the process of nation building.

One of the objectives of the day was to create awareness among public servants and the general public that on the 23 June 2006, South Africa would join other African countries in celebrating Africa Public Service Day. It was also a platform where people were made aware that 23 June 2006 coincided with United Nations' Public Service Day, therefore Africa would be linked live through New York with other countries like Italy and India via satellite connectivity to share service delivery challenges that face public servants across the world. This initiative will present public servants with a platform to share common service delivery challenges with a view to learning from one another.

Departments that were awarded gold medals and floating trophies in different sporting codes are:

- Department of Home Affairs (Ladies soccer);
- Department of Home Affairs (Men Soccer);
- Department of Correctional (Services Netball);
- Department of Correctional (Services Tennis); and
- Department of Public Works (Volleyball).

6. CHALLENGES

The 2006 APSD preparations started early in March but most departments started attending preparatory meetings only in May. Other challenges include but are not limited to the following:

- Not all national departments participated in the APSD celebrations because there is lack of buy-in from some departments;
- Departments respond late in sending their representatives to the National Task Team (NTT) meetings;
- Lack of APSD budget allocation;
- APSD is still perceived as a DPSA function;

- Some departments register for sporting activities but do not honour their commitment even if the fixture has been sent to them; and
- Most staff in DPSA do not attend APSD celebrations.

7. LESSONS

- APSD only comes alive towards the actual day of celebrations;
- The suggested National Public Service League could not function properly due to lack of a formalized committee to oversee its establishment;
- Those countries in SADC that have successfully celebrated APSD have Heads of Departments driving the APSD meetings agenda through interdepartmental APSD steering committees;
- The tradition of having interdepartmental public servants, family and friends only having fun during APSD could be escalated to add real service delivery value through connectivity debates that seek to address delivery challenges.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS AND WAY FORWARD

It is proposed that lessons learned during the visits by DPSA officials to the SADC countries during March 2006 should be followed up to enhance future APSD celebrations. Example of Lesotho where APSD's technical team comprises of Permanent Secretaries (equivalent of Directors-General) should be implemented in South Africa. The challenges that are identified above are a symptomatic of lack of high level involvement and buy-in into the APSD programme and this should be avoided in future.

Other African countries have public service sporting teams, so is South Africa. It is therefore proposed that such countries should challenge and play with each other during APSD to enhance interaction and promote regional integration. This

applies mostly to countries bordering South Africa like Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique, Botswana and Namibia.

APSD should form part of the G&A Program of Action (POA) to ensure that interdepartmental planning does not only start late in the year. Interdepartmental roles and responsibilities have to be coordinated at the G&A level.

Service delivery issues that are brought to bear as a result of APSD provincial, national and international events should be monitored and evaluated to enhance delivery of services.

The issue of apathy towards APSD activities by public servants needs to be addressed urgently. DPSA employees should set an example by attending this continental event in big numbers. As for the dpsa participation is crucial. This should be mobilised in structures like MINEXCO, EXCO and MANCO. There should be a buy-in from senior management who should be held responsible for attendance from their respective components.

Co-operation with the UNDP attended to the success of the continental event especially the satellite interconnectivity. This co-operation should be deepened for future celebrations. It is important to approach the donor community to get involved and sponsor especially the least developed countries to participate in this continental event. Preparations for next years' celebrations should start early so as to create space to engage and bring on board as many African countries as possible.

8. CONCLUSION

APSD celebrations have escalated since 2005 going beyond the fun-filled family day to factual debates by academics, students, public officials, NGOs, organised Labour, and many more entities on the role of public servants in the country's development. This has created an opportunity to maximise the use of information

technology in partnership with private service providers to enhance the course of service delivery.

Thanks to Minister Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi who has leveraged on her influence as the Chairperson of the 5th Pan-African Conference of Ministers of Public/Civil Service to mobilise the whole Continent towards a common approach for the 2006 APSD Celebrations. The 2006 APSD activities were celebrated within the spirit of the Declaration of the first Pan-African Conference of Ministers of Public/Civil Service held in Tangier, Morocco in 1994. At that time, all ministers present agreed that 23 June of every year should be celebrated as Africa Public Service Day to “recognize the value and virtue of service to the community”.