

Cultivating Efficiency in Government Steps to improve performance



Introduction

If there is one issue that is likely to dominate Tanzania over the next decade, it is the desire to accelerate the rate of development through increased economic growth and productivity. As the Government is faced with driving this change, its own citizens expect more in term of service delivery and optimal use of the country's resources. MKUKUTA and the recently launched "Big Results Now" (BRN) set the stage for a major transformation in how government delivers services to citizens and lays the foundation for the country's path to becoming a middle income country by 2025. This initiative has led to higher expectations of what the government will deliver.

Increased focus on the priority areas of the BRN initiative has raised people's hopes of what the government will deliver in a bid to improve the Tanzanian living standards

There is an expected to be targeted investment in education, water, transportation, energy, resource mobilization, agriculture, health and improving the business environment have the potential to increase economic productivity, encourage private investment, decrease poverty and improve the quality of life for a large number of Tanzanians.

In this context, how can the Government of Tanzania take steps to maximize the chance of achieving success and meeting expectations of the citizens? The approach proposed in this paper provides a framework that can help the government increase the impact of programs, especially in a resource-constrained environment. This approach has helped a number of government organizations around the world in setting priorities, managing constraints on resources, and creating efficiencies through data analysis that is designed to yield insight, accuracy, and clarity in the decision making process. The approach sets out five key steps as outlined in the following pages of this whitepaper.

The steps are as follows: first, have a clear vision of what you are trying to achieve and set clear goals focused on real world outcomes; second, develop a strategy that includes approaches that are most likely to work on the basis of the best available evidence; third, build the foundations for implementation with effective data collection systems and an accountability framework that is focused on maximizing impact; fourth, adopt an innovative dynamic implementation approach with an eye to constant improvement; and finally, step back and reflect on how to improve strategy for the next phase.

While the steps outlined in this paper are relatively simple and intuitive, they could amount to a significant change in the way things are done in many Tanzanian Government Ministries

What has been seen in the past is that Ministerial strategic plans are documents summarizing what is already planned and being done and tend to not contain clear goals setting out the real-world results to be achieved. The primary focus of implementation of those strategies is often on ensuring that milestones are met and activities performed as planned without checking whether they are working. Further, data about the actual impact of programs is scarce or not analyzed effectively, making it difficult to assess which interventions are most effective. And while Ministries and donors often commission program evaluations, it is unclear to what extent these evaluations impact on future strategy.

For example, between 1991 and 1999, the Government implemented the Civil Service Reform Programme (CSRP) with the objective of cost containment and the restructuring of Government. This was succeeded by the Public Service Reform Programme (PSRP) which was

implemented in two phases. The first phase spanning 2000 to 2007 adapted the theme “Instituting Performance Management Systems”. This was specifically aimed at building an integrated system for creating a shared vision, understanding and agreement about the results to be achieved, and the operational framework for continuous performance improvement in standards and quality of public service delivery in Tanzania. The second phase focused on “Enhanced performance and Accountability”, which aimed to further develop and operationalize many of the strategies and processes that had been identified in Phase 1. While most would acknowledge that the Programme achieved a limited number of its intended results, many public institutions still require significant resources and organizational strengthening in order to carry out their mandates effectively.

However, given the renewed focus on impact and doing things “business unusual”, the Government of Tanzania has a perfect opportunity to better plan and implement its new programming efforts.

By establishing the President’s Delivery Bureau and Ministerial Delivery Units for implementation of the BRN initiative, the Government has demonstrated an appetite for change

This is an ideal time to instill a results-oriented culture within the halls of Government that will be long lasting and create real changes for the country’s citizens.

It is clear from the amount of buy-in at the political level that public officials involved in BRN are highly committed to their work. Major international development Agencies such as DFID and the World Bank are also supporting these efforts.

Accordingly, all involved will want to demonstrate the impact of the work they are doing and find ways to increase the effectiveness over time of every dollar they invest. By applying the 5-step approach introduced above, the Government should be in a position to enhance service delivery and accelerate economic growth.

Step 1: Goal setting

While adopting a goal-driven culture in governments is not easy, goal setting is highly critical as it helps to create focus on important things and prioritize initiatives. All too often, Governments concentrate on administering programs rather than ensuring that they achieve tangible outcomes. Put simply, they are asking “Are we doing things right?” instead of “Are we doing the right things?” However, when Government Ministries organize their work around goals rather than activities, they are incentivized to think hard about how best to accomplish these goals, as well as constantly review progress toward them.

When coming up with goals, Government must ask itself what it wants to maintain, improve and change – what are the desired outcomes for the country? In choosing goals, it will also want to examine which tools and levers it has to bring about these changes, as well as the timeframes that are required to achieve each goal. While leaders often may hesitate to set goals based on real-world results because they are reluctant to be held accountable for an outcome they cannot directly control, setting aspirational goals can push governments to achieving greater results. Goals that would be achieved anyway are tempting for those worried about being held to account, but do little to incentivize better performance for staff or programs. Overall, goals should be challenging and articulated in a way that can be measured over time in order to

determine what progress is being made towards their achievement.

When a Government is able to adopt a challenging goal and then focus its energy toward achieving it, the impact can be enormous

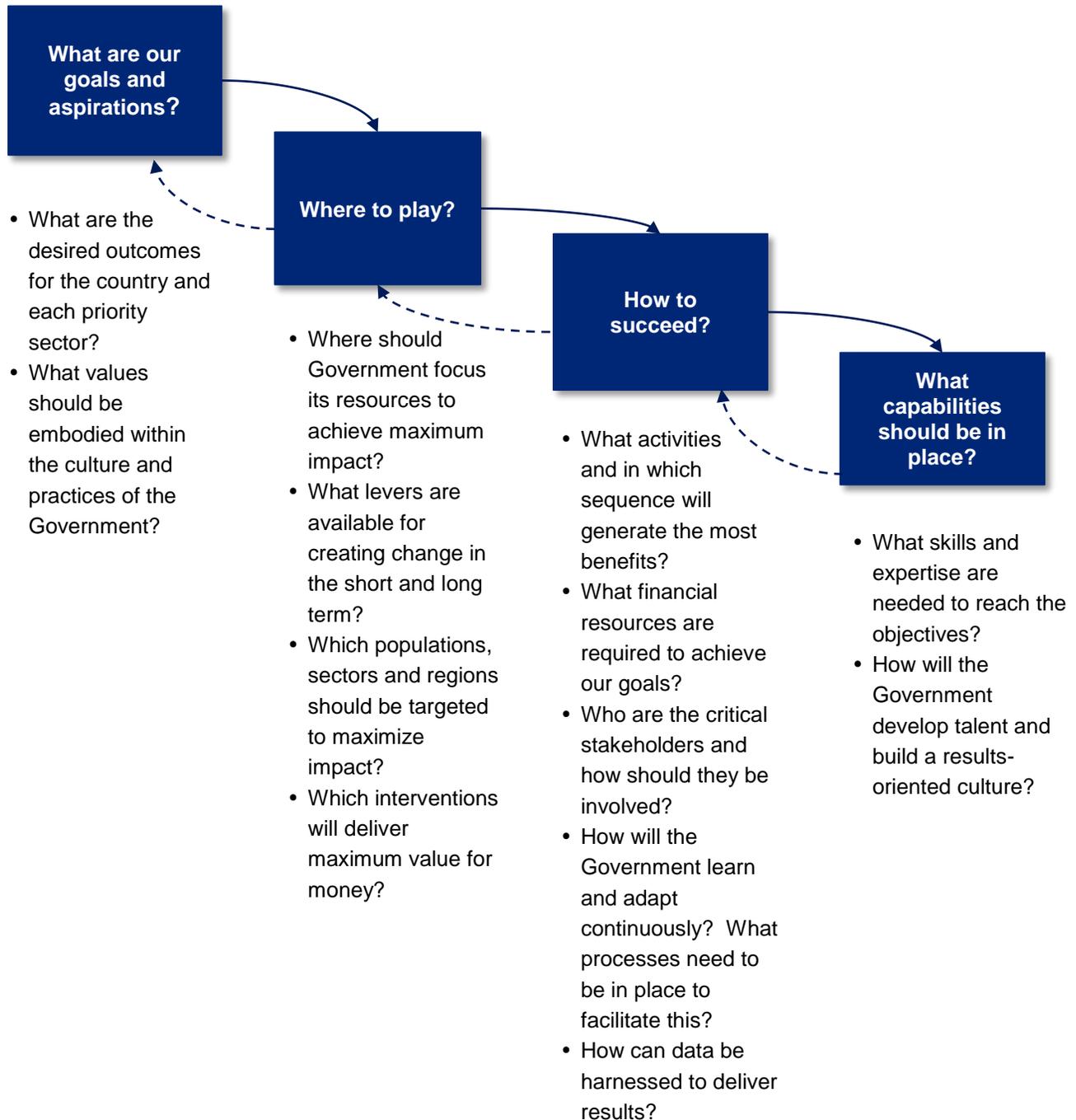
In 2009, the Unique Identification Authority of India became responsible for implementing an ambitious program to register and assign a one-of-a-kind ID number to every Indian resident by 2020. The program involves linking a 12-digit number to a person's biometric data, a photograph, as well as to demographic information such as name, address, date of birth, and gender. The purpose of the program is to give an identity to hundreds of millions of Indians who don't have one, enabling them to access public goods and services, as well as reduce criminal diversion of government subsidies. Within three months of the initial rollout of the 100,000 people were enrolled; two years later, about 200 million people were registered.

With regards to Tanzania, the Government has already identified priority sectors within the frameworks of MKUKUTA and BRN. The BRN sets specific goals in the areas of resource mobilization, agriculture, education, energy, water and transport, and more recently, health, and improving the business environment. These goals and priorities were selected based on discussions held during six Cabinet retreats. This is a promising start; however, one year into implementation, the Government of Tanzania will need to continue to focus on developing strategies and roadmaps for each sector and then take action on those strategies in a timely manner.

Step 2: Creating a strategy

Once Government has defined goals focused on outcomes, it should create a clear strategy and implementation roadmap to guide implementation. Strategy involves defining an integrated and iterative set of choices. Often, multiple approaches look like they might help to achieve the goal, but with limited resources and time, decisions must be made on which

strategies and tactics will be most valuable. In this case, a set of actions that are likely to have the most impact in the necessary timeframe at the least cost should be adopted. As Figure 1 below illustrates, it is critical to keep in mind that strategy development and integration happens across four sets of choices – goals, target sectors, positioning and capabilities.



When developing strategies, Governments need to figure out what real choices are available to them and where action is most valuable

Sometimes it will make sense to target resources on particular geographical locations, sometimes it will be best to focus on certain types of individuals as their needs will be greatest or their propensity to respond to government interventions will be highest. Making these choices is part of strategy development, but can be difficult in politically charged environments where there can be pressure to distribute resources evenly. For example, although all regions across Tanzania are affected by the HIV epidemic, the majority of HIV program funding is concentrated in those areas with the highest prevalence rates and is now also being channeled to populations most at risk of contracting the disease. While this strategy of focusing on certain regions and populations may be interpreted by some as leaving out citizens that should also receive services related to the disease, the approach has been implemented in order to minimize its spread, as there is more likelihood that more people will contract HIV from those key populations in the high prevalence regions.

Solid research is also critical in helping determine which strategies are likely to create real results for citizens. In cases where the evidence remains limited; for example, when the issue is relatively new, governments should remain aware of the assumptions they make about the interventions they choose to employ and constantly check to see if they remain valid. They should also use available evidence to try to predict the extent to which each component of their strategy will 'move the needle' towards accomplishing the goal. These estimations are not easy, but Tanzania can gain valuable

insights into the likely impact of their choices by examining evidence of where similar approaches have been tried before. Pilots can also be adopted to establish the likely impact of an intervention before moving ahead on a large scale as long as they collect useful data about what works.

The approach described above is very similar to what was implemented during the BRN "lab" process, where groups of sector experts and stakeholders were brought together to develop goals, strategies and performance targets for each of the six priority sectors. During the labs, cross-organizational teams worked intensively to identify problems, analyze them, and then ultimately develop solutions to them. The lab involved intense problem-solving, supported by research, identifying best practices, data and cost analysis, stakeholder mapping, and brainstorming for solutions. In some cases, there was considerable evidence about what works, and thus, it was more obvious which approaches could be employed in order to tackle a certain problem. Some of these interventions were tailored from the Malaysian experience or through working with donors and private sector partners that were able to provide suggestions based on what has worked in other countries. In other instances, the evidence was limited, and strategies were based on the best information available.

While there is certainly a risk that the BRN strategies will not translate into results, the lab process that was used in the development of them will contribute towards improving the chances for real success.



Specifically, the fact that the labs brought together a wide variety of stakeholders and experts in each of the sectors to help establish goals and strategies helps ensure that different perspectives have been taken into consideration and that actors that will help implement them have a vested interest in achieving results.

Step 3: Building a foundation for implementation

The most challenging part of any plan or strategy is implementing it. Similar to many countries, Tanzania has in the past faced major difficulties in translating its best intentions and strategies into results and transformation for its citizens. In order for strategies to translate into change, solid foundations must be laid. In this approach, we suggest that the best way to build this foundation is to engage and work collaboratively with other organizations that are participating in execution, focus on monitoring and adjusting the strategy as necessary, and establish a strong accountability framework.

In order to implement the strategies developed through BRN, the Central Government and the six lead Ministries will have to rely on others to implement the approaches that form part of their strategy, including other public sector organizations and donors, as well as those in the private and nonprofit sectors. While many of these actors were involved in the development of each strategy, the Government will have to continue to work closely with those responsible for implementation and ensure that the strategy is well communicated, takes their views into account and identify constraints that might get in the way of achievement.

It is also important to recognize that strategies will inevitably need to be adjusted over time as things evolve. In an environment where so much energy has been devoted to the development of the plan, governments often feel that once they have published an action plan, they need to stick to everything in it. Organizations fear that if they

fall behind on implementing their action plans, they may lose support, or even worse, funding. As a result, instead of monitoring whether the plan is working, they check whether everything in the plan is being implemented in the way that was originally intended. Rather than treating strategy as static, this approach advocates for continuous adjustment of the strategy over time. This way, the Government and implementing organizations develop a better appreciation of which approaches are more effective at driving change and which ones face the greatest barriers to having an impact.

To ensure that the right adjustments are made, the Government of Tanzania will need to consider how it will collect data that allows them to monitor progress and judge which approaches are most effective

The first step is deciding what data to collect and how often it needs to be collected. This is not a simple task, and, in Tanzania, it requires the President's Delivery Bureau, Ministries and its Ministerial Delivery units to carefully think through what information is genuinely useful to inform decision-making.

Instead of simply collecting large amounts of data from several sources, this approach calls for the Government to be strategic and collect only data that is useful. Organizations also need to ensure that data is available at a timely enough frequency to inform decision-making and that the lag between data collection and availability is not too long.

This is a challenge in Tanzania considering how isolated certain important regions are, as well as the lack of human resources, physical and IT infrastructure required to collect useful data. Over time, the Government of Tanzania may wish to consider the adoption of common IT systems and data standards, which can help build confidence that each data item is consistently defined, and that those responsible for implementing government programs are providing the right data in the most efficient manner.

The Government also needs to build a strong accountability framework in order to implement its plans, accomplish goals, and promote accountability

In the context of BRN, there are several levels of review that occur in order to hold leaders accountable for the results they are intended to achieve. For example, there are monthly meetings held with the President, the CEO of the PDB and the six Heads of each Ministerial Delivery Unit in addition to weekly meetings to review implementation status within each priority Ministry. These processes are critical to ensuring that plans are carried out in a timely manner.

Step 4: Dynamic Implementation

Once the foundations have been laid, the Government is ready for dynamic implementation, which involves constantly examining how you are doing against your goals by assessing each strategy, developing an understanding of what is driving success and what needs to be done to increase impact. In short, this stage is about using data to refresh strategies in real time. Dynamic implementation is not a linear process but a constantly repeated cycle of implementing interventions, analyzing data, reviewing performance, and refining strategy. The first stage in dynamic implementation is setting the strategy in motion.



In the case of Tanzania, implementers should execute planned activities based on the strategy and collect the data required to evaluate performance. It is inevitable that some aspects of the strategy will be easier to implement than others — for example, when a Ministry can implement the changes itself, they should happen relatively fast. However, when others are required to implement, which is the case for many BRN initiatives, those approaches will likely take longer. It should be noted that while implementation may feel like the endgame, launching a program is only the first stage and it will likely be necessary to adjust the program as it evolves.

Analyzing data is the second stage of dynamic implementation

It will be critical to understanding what aspects of BRN work and which do not, and more importantly, the reasons behind these differences.

At the most basic level, the Government should be able to compare overall actual performance with expected performance. A more sophisticated analysis could also look at performance broken down by distinct interventions or regions. A key priority should be to build a detailed understanding of what makes some approaches successful and others less so in order to maximize results and reduce waste in programs.

Following detailed data analysis, progress must be reviewed by decision makers in order for them to determine whether course corrections are required to achieve each goal. Accordingly, the Government of Tanzania should undertake periodic review meetings that bring together those who are accountable for achieving results with others in order to analyze whether the goals are on track. This could involve organizing quarterly review meetings between the PDB, all MDUs, the President's Office, PMO RALG, development partners, donor organizations and others involved in implementation.

Successful review meetings should bring together key decision-makers and present them with useful information that helps them to understand the drivers of performance. Participants should be empowered to ask probing questions that allow them to form a view on the best way to improve the chances of the goal being achieved. Reviews should deliver a clear direction on how strategies will be refined and then put into action.

The benefits from dynamic implementation can be enormous.

Organizations that understand the drivers of performance in real time and use that information to refine their strategies as they go along should be able to create significantly more impact for the Tanzanian people

Step 5: Step back and reflect

Dynamic implementation is about rapidly learning from experience and using that information to refine strategy. It is an active phase where monitoring tools are used to make quick and impactful decisions about the direction of programs. However, over the course of the implementation of BRN, the Government of Tanzania will also need to step back and reflect on a bigger set of questions than is possible during the dynamic implementation phase.

In order to facilitate this reflection, which involves taking stock of programs at a deeper level, it will be necessary to undertake longer, scientifically rigorous evaluations.

Using evaluative techniques can provide powerful insights into what works and why and can help to answer the critical question “Are we doing the right thing?”

This will assist the government in determining whether the original goals continue to be the right ones and whether the data being collected is relevant and reliable.

After this, in effect the process starts again — with a revised set of goals and a strategy that reflects choices about the best way to accomplish them based on the latest available evidence.

Conclusion

The approach described in this paper sets forth a series of simple steps which can assist the Government of Tanzania improve its performance management systems and contribute towards better development outcomes for its citizens. This approach is particularly relevant given the establishment and implementation of the Big Results Now initiative. In this context, the Government has begun its journey towards greater effectiveness and efficiency by determining what it is trying to achieve, developing strategies that includes approaches that it believes are the most likely to work, and building the foundations for implementation. The Government, with the continued support and insights of key stakeholders, must now implement with an eye to constant improvement and refinement of those strategies; and reflect before starting the cycle again.

Tanzania has undoubtedly made progress towards achieving its goal of becoming a middle-income earning country by 2025 through the first stages of BRN implementation, however, the execution of plans and strategies has historically been challenging for the country. While the establishment of the PDB and MDUs to drive the initiative have created the necessary organizational structures to support the achievement of goals, implementation will be difficult, as it requires considerable focus and a commitment to constant learning that is hard in any organization. For Government, which operates in a politically charged environment, it can be even harder to implement these strategies. Nevertheless, the rewards of applying them are potentially enormous.

If the Government of Tanzania is able to genuinely manage programs in an efficient and effective way, they will have a tremendously positive impact on the country and the quality of life of its citizens

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