Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Division for Public Economics
and Public Administration

Redesigning Methods and Procedures for the Delivery of Local Services in Small Island Countries

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Notes

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The term "dollar" normally refers to the United States dollar ($).

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Foreword

Recently, in many developing countries, a variety of administrative reform efforts have been initiated as a means to promote sound development under the concept of promoting "good governance." One important consequence is that the improvement of government performance has been examined from various aspects. So far, these studies have shed light on several important elements of public organizational change including decentralization, privatization, new forms of financial management and so on. In line with this trend, great attention has been paid to efficient management of government activities with discussions on this especially focused on the role of effective government in terms of encouraging sustainable development.

However, issues regarding public service delivery, especially in developing countries—and particularly as regards appropriate management systems, effective methods and procedures of government and the use of partnerships with other service providing bodies—has not received adequate attention. This is especially so as regards small island countries, which frequently face common problems for providing public services to their citizens—which, in turn, are complicated by both their geographical characteristics as well as their limited resources.

The Symposium on Local Government and Civil Society in Small States, which was organized jointly by the United Nations and the Commonwealth Local Government Forum in Malta from 17-19 March 1999, gathered local government practitioners (elected councillors and senior officials, including mayors), central government officials and representatives of the private and the non-governmental sectors, from Caribbean, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and Pacific small states to review the current practices of and methods and procedures for social service delivery and propose how to develop partnerships between local government and non-government sectors to improve service delivery. During the Symposium, staff from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs gathered information on social service delivery from among the participants in order to solicit practical examples of new and successful innovations. Some of the information obtained will be found in this report.

This publication is based on the presentation made in the Symposium by Ms. Itoko Suzuki and Ms. Mariko Nishizawa of the Governance and Public Administration Branch (GPAB) of the Division for Public Economics and Public Administration (DPEPA) on the subject of reforms of social service delivery in small island countries. The United Nations appreciates the contributions provided by Professor A. T. Rafiqur Rahman of City University of New York, Professor Mark M. Turner of Canberra University and Professor Allan Rosenbaum of Florida International University.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The past decade has witnessed the gaining of independence by a number of small island countries. Many of these small island countries have a special nature. Most are former colonial territories and many are still attached by some formal ties to their former colonial overseer.

"Smallness" and "islandness" can be both an advantage and a disadvantage for the sustainable development of countries, new and old alike. For example, small island countries are vulnerableC perhaps much more than non-small or non-island countriesCto natural disasters as well as to man-made disasters (e.g., chemicals dumped into the sea near them by other, larger countries).

On the other hand, many such countries have demonstrated considerable ability to secure financial and other support from the international community and especially from countries which may at one time have experienced colonial responsibility for them. In some cases, these and other circumstances—such as population migration, lack of private sector employment opportunity and reliance on the financial contributions of other countries—have combined to create a high level of external dependence.

In general, small island states both need, and often attract, relatively high per capita foreign aid allocations, unless, of course, they are wealthy countries, such as Brunei and Nauru. Thus, when structural adjustment loans requiring cut-backs in government spending were being implemented during the 1980s, the majority of small island states escaped the impact of this new instrument of foreign aid. Small island states were perceived as special cases, in part because the financial assistance they required was very small in the overall context of aid flows. Interestingly, this is even seen in the funding of United States "island territories" (Puerto Rico, Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, United States Virgin Islands, American Samoa and the Federated States of Micronesia). Kent (1997) observes that their "problems receive little attention, partly because

they represent a very small percentage of the federal budget." The United States Department of the Interior accounts for less than one per cent of the federal budget and direct appropriations to the territories are about one per cent of its budget.

With varying degrees of success, governments attempt to secure a balanced fit between the scope of their public sectors, their local societies and the international political economy. Some analysts who specialize in the study of small states have suggested that such fit is best achieved through enhanced environmental awareness and the utilization of a distinctive set of public sector design principles. However, such principles are necessarily broad because other than the commonalties of being small and being islands, most such nations are quite diverse in many of their characteristics.

Wettenhall (1992) has suggested that the major problems such nations face reflect the restrictions of smallness, including limited natural resources, diseconomies of scale and susceptibility to natural disasters. Other problems include inappropriate models of public administration, often inherited from colonial experience, and widening gaps between public expectations and administrative capacity. However, these are also characteristics of larger countries.

"Islandness" obviously can have a significant impact upon transportation and communication. Since service delivery usually requires both transportation and communication, sea-locked countries can be at a definite disadvantage as a result of limited or unusually demanding transportation and communication resource requirements.

Oftentimes island countries find it especially difficult to provide effective delivery of needed goods and services to a population dispersed across several islands. However, the enormous development of infrastructure and information technologies (IT) has eased the communication problems of island countries. Helicopters and airplanes have become ordinary means of trans-

portation. IT and network communication have drastically increased the interaction between population dispersed among multiple islands. Even bridges and tunnels between small islands are increasingly a possibility.

The future survival and success of small island states will depend on their capacity to negotiate their environments and to satisfy the non-rational elements in their citizens' minds (Turner, 1999). This undoubtedly entails major challenges for government officials. These challenges are increased as the current international donor-sponsored drives for "good governance" lead to changes in the nature of the state and state-society relations.

At least in part, the survival and success of island states will also depend on how government officials can take the lead in improving that service

delivery which is basic to their citizens. These various challenges may find one fundamental common response, i.e., how effectively government and civil society can work together to create "good governance".

This paper will look into the general trends in public sector reforms in small island countries, especially as they pertain to social service delivery. First, certain basic principles, methods and procedures of service delivery in such states will be clarified. Then the current status of public service delivery in small island states, as well as efforts for improvement, will be reviewed. Finally, the possible gaps that need to be narrowed between best principles and current practices—with special attention given to examining the drive for increased cooperation between government and civil society—will be identified.

Chapter 2
Definitional Issues of "Methods and Procedures"and "Delivery"

For our purpose, the term "methods" refers broadly to the ways of doing something, a system of procedures or conscious regularity. In turn, the term "procedures" refers to the mode of conducting business, as occur in a meeting, a firm or an organization. In the context of this paper, "methods and procedures" will refer to the ways, processes, and systems through which public services are delivered. This will include the identification of the individuals and groups who participate in such processes, the technology and mechanism they use to deliver services and the system and process they use in assessing the effectiveness of their service delivery, reviewing necessary feedback and providing accountability for the effectiveness.

"Delivery" usually refers to the transferring or giving of something—whether it be a letter by a post office or goods by a firm. In a business setting, the concept usually refers to the simple, and normally straightforward, process of transferring or handing over some finished product from somebody through some means or system to some other persons (Rahman, 1999).

In the case of "public service delivery", there are various issues of institutional dependencies and the complex involvement and interaction of actors and processes in all phases of such activities. This is so even in the simplest and seemingly most straightforward delivery. For example, post office or postal carriers have no say in the content of letters or packages that they carry, nor have they any control over the persons or offices who will receive these letters and packages. But the public agencies, policy-makers, planners and designers that develop these services must take into account the needs and desires of the people who will receive them and the public officials or the assigned agencies that will carry out such service delivery. Also, the public officials initiating such services and the relevant delivery agencies and recipients are constantly involved in developing, reviewing and evaluating these services.

It may be noted that while the concept of public service delivery focuses on the implementation of public policies and programmes, it sometimes conceals more differences than it reveals. The mechanisms and the process of delivery, as well as the competence of those involved, are intricately related to the content and quality of public services (for example, when primary education is delivered by untrained teachers or protection services provided by corrupt and ill-trained police officials, the results, or lack there of, will be obvious). This dependency is especially significant in the case of public service delivery as the recipients who receive these services usually have no other alternative except to try to improve them, whereas in case of firms, or even mail delivery, recipients who can afford it have the choice of rejecting poor services and seeking better ones (for example, the mail delivery in the United States).

Finally, the concept of "public service" requires some clarification as regards to what it refers and how it will be used here. In this paper, the term "public services" refers to the variety of services that public agencies provide to the people. This is often a vast array of services—sometimes very different in scope and nature. While public services can be categorized in many ways, usually they comprise protection and justice services (for example: defense, police, judiciary); infrastructure and utility services (for example: roads, highways and waterways; water supply, electricity, gas and other utilities; housing and public buildings); economic development and fiscal regulatory services (for example: banking, finance and investment; exchange rate, interest rate and monetary supply; financial protection for the poor); and social services (for example: education, health, social insurance; protection

against unemployment; support for aging population groups, orphans, the destitute; and other services for the poor).

The methods and procedures for the delivery of these various categories of services will differ significantly based on the nature of services and the immediate recipient (for example: education and health services focus principally on individuals and their personal needs, while water supply and electricity also focus on such non-human elements as space and their supply to needed places).

The methods and procedures for the delivery of services will also differ in terms of the technology developed and the type of agencies used to deliver the services (for example: the need for formal and rigid rules and procedures and hierarchical command used by the police in delivering protection services as compared to the need for a more flexible approach with greater professional autonomy in the delivery of social services). Other areas of difference involve the extent of monopoly and competition that exists in various categories of public services (for example: defense, police and judicial services are mostly government monopolies, whereas in the social services, government is only one provider among a vast array of private and non-profit agencies). In this paper the discussion of methods and procedures will focus on social services, principally education and health.

Chapter 3

Principles of Service Delivery Methods and Procedures

There are several general principles that frequently guide the methods and procedures used in the delivery of public services. Among the most notable are the following:

Equality and equity

Public services must be delivered in such a way as to maintain equality of treatment and opportunity in order to ensure that citizens do not feel discriminated against or feel that public services are being dispensed unfairly and unequally. For example, citizens must have equal access to police, judiciary, postal, health and education services irrespective of where they may live or their status or class. Indeed, the state must treat them equitably so that they feel the same loyalty and sense of belonging.

Efficiency and effectiveness

It is of utmost importance that government avoids waste and seeks to attain maximum efficiency in the use of public revenue for developing and delivering public services. Probity and economy in the use of public funds should guide those responsible for dealing with public money. Moreover, it is increasingly necessary to explore the possibility of economic, in kind and other types of support from private sector individuals and groups in order to maximize the use of public money in delivery of those public services that are amenable to joint public-private collaboration, such as education, health and infrastructure services.

Transparency and accountability

Public services must be delivered in an open and transparent way in order that all citizens know what is delivered to whom and at what cost. Access to such information is one way of ensuring the accountability of those public officials and agencies involved in the delivery of public services.

Public involvement in setting priorities and financing

In most developed countries, general understanding of the need for, and the seeking of, consensus on the priority and resources to be given to various public services is usually arrived at through election campaigns and subsequent legislative deliberation. In many developing countries, debate, public knowledge of and agreement upon the priority for and assignment of resources to public services is minimal or almost non-existent. Promises are often made by politicians about optimal targets—like universal primary education and primary care medical treatment for everyone—without any consideration as to how these will be financed and managed. Because of the voters' lack of information on government resources and expenditure, and the disinclination of politicians and bureaucrats to educate and inform voters on these issues, the question of financing public services and the way these services will be delivered and managed often is not raised and debated, either during or after elections.

Voter-education on public resources (including revenue, external aid and the way these resources are being used for various public services) is possibly the most critical function that a government can perform in order to secure responsible public participation and to link the political process with public decision-making. The issue of how a public service will be financed and how it will be delivered is too critical to be left only to public officials. Raising the consciousness and the participation of citizens often has worked as an effective mechanism to provide a base of support to formal government institutions.

Measuring the quality of public services

Recently, many analysts have suggested that there has been a global trend towards the deterioration

of public services, especially in developing countries, as a result of pressures to expand various services too rapidly. Police services are poor and courts are overburdened with too many cases. Likewise, schools are overcrowded as greater numbers of students have been admitted, while the proportion of students passing has declined. Even where the number of passing students has remained the same or increased, the quality of their learning as measured by earlier standards appears to have fallen significantly. While literacy levels and the number of school and college pupils have increased, it is not clear how much knowledge and skills the current generation of students are acquiring as compared to their predecessors.

A similar situation has occurred in the area of health services. Many developed countries, including the United States, are taking significant steps to revitalize their methods and procedures for the delivery of these services. But in many developing countries, because of populist concern by politicians, and donors' preoccupation with numbers, the concern for quality has not received the attention that it deserves in either the national or the global context.

Appropriateness of methods and procedures

There is a strong tendency on the part of many governments to follow uniform methods and procedures in the delivery of all public services, creating rigidity, inefficiency and limited effectiveness. Each group of services (for example, social, protection and judicial, infrastructure and utility) has its peculiar objectives and needs and different requirements, in terms of methods and technology, in order to best achieve its objectives. To use the techniques, orientation and methods of the policeman to teach school children ultimately would be a waste of time and resources. Similarly, to use the orientation and methods of engineering, as used in the building and maintenance of roads and waterways, for treating individual ailments would be highly inappropriate.

However, the need for developing methods appropriate to each service, or group of services, does not mean that there is no connection among these services or that the experience in one service is irrelevant to others. In fact, the contrary is true in public services as all of them are related in varying proportions (for example, the people are the ultimate focus of such services) and the experience in one can be relevant to the others in various degrees. Schools and hospitals need buildings, water supply, and utilities—as well as engineers and designers to build and maintain these facilities. But the methods and procedures that doctors, nurses, technicians and hospital management will use in treating individual patients will be different from those used in constructing and maintaining buildings and utility services.

Flexibility in the policy and implementation process

In some areas of public service (such as protection, judicial, infrastructure), policies and programmes can be prepared in more detail and their delivery can be made uniformly and mostly in accordance with such plans and programmes. However, this is often not the case for the effective delivery of social services—where policies and programmes need to be broadly defined to allow public officials from different levels of government and from private and non-profit agencies to develop specific programmes and projects of varying sizes to deliver these services to disparate groups of clientele. The needs in social and other related services are diverse. For example, in education there are schooling needs for all children; vocational needs for school dropouts and other high school students; college education and different kinds of technical education; adult education; continuing education for updating skills; the need to balance science and technical education with general liberal education; and the establishment of training facilities for various professions like physicians and engineers.

Similar distinctions can be made in the areas of

health and other social services, such as those focused on social insurance for the poor, the elderly, orphans, the destitute and the unemployed. As government resources are limited, there is an increasing need for public agencies to seek the collaboration of private agencies and individuals (including the beneficiaries) to define services and obtain resources and other support to develop, deliver and maintain these services. Without considerable discretion and flexibility, public officials will not be able to effectively develop and deliver such locally-oriented services.

Decentralization of delivery mechanisms

As a corollary to flexibility in policy development, implementation and administrative processes, it is also necessary that decisions regarding the development and delivery of specific social services be brought as close as feasible to the area and the people who will benefit from them. This is needed to ensure effective participation of the people and their locally elected representatives in decisions on service delivery. Such collaboration helps in monitoring the impact of delivery and offers opportunity for adjustments on the basis of feedback. Various models of involving local governments, from minimal to maximal—depending on the type and specific social service—are available.

In many countries, responsibility for financing and managing schools has been transferred to relevant local bodies (for example, primary schools run by the lowest level local body; secondary schools by a higher but still local body). In other countries, such as Nigeria, although responsibility for schools has been formally transferred to local bodies, in reality all operating decisions continue to be made in a top-down fashion. Teachers have no say in where they are assigned to teach and are frequently transferred. No effort has been made to involve parents and other citizens, who are seen only as beneficiaries of public spending (Ostrom, 1996). In the context of small and/or island states, this principle of decentralization does need some modification.

Certainly, the situation in Australia will be much different from that of Singapore in terms of the size of the State and the density and dispersion of population, not to mention topography and infrastructure of the country.

Active involvement of community groups, non-governmental organizations and civil society

The generosity of individuals, groups and organizations, whether as a result of religious, humanist or philanthropic considerations, can be seen in many social services in many parts of the world. This propensity of people to give can be best utilized if public policies and programmes provide the flexibility needed to use such participation in various forms in developing and delivering specific social services. The need for such collaboration is all the more urgent as many developing countries have limited financial and managerial resources to deal with vast challenges which they routinely face in the delivery of social services. Involvement of civil society in the delivery of social services is widespread in developed countries. In many developing countries, such involvement is minimal, mostly *ad hoc* and personalized—although non-governmental organizations (NGOs), both local and international, with donor support, have sprung up in recent years. Some of these NGOs have developed extensive networks to advance informal and formal primary education and health care and increasingly are cooperating with public agencies.

In Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) has organized about 28,000 schools for about a million students in cooperation with public agencies (BRAC, 1994). Another NGO, Gonoshahajjo Sangstha (GSS) organized about 550 primary schools in rural areas of Bangladesh for about 800,000 students (GSS, 1997). In both these cases, appropriate methods are used to strengthen the relevance, continuity and sustainability of these services and institutions. Teachers are hired from local areas and given training. School calendars and teaching programmes are developed through experimenta-

tion in order to best suit the needs of parents for help from their children and to encourage a better understanding of necessary concepts by reference

to relevant aspects of their daily lives. Parents, teachers and other interested persons, as well as

public officials, are organized as local groups to work with these schools. However, there is no doubt that opportunities to involve various elements of civil society, especially private businesses, individual philanthropic groups and religious groups are not fully utilized in many cases because of rigidity in public policies, bureaucratic orientation and an unfamiliarity with the means for organizing and supporting such collaboration.

Professionalization of social services and the training of social managers

It is important that not only physicians and teachers but also all social service providers be given professional training and guidance. In

addition, those responsible for the management of social services, including education and health institutions, should be given appropriate management training. It needs to be emphasized that in the context of the principles cited above, the management of social services will present complex problems. In some cases, these problems may be resolved satisfactorily through the use of knowledge and insights from management sciences being strategically applied to social services. Such training and professionalization raises the level and dignity of social services vis-à-vis other services provided by government and may also serve to attract better qualified and more motivated young people to join the field of social services.

Chapter 4

Current Trends in Social Service Delivery

The current global movement to reform or "reinvent" government focuses primarily on providing public services more efficiently and effectively. A survey on service delivery made for the 1997 World Development Report by the World Bank shows that "only 6 percent of domestic business people surveyed in fifty-eight developing economies rated government service delivery as efficient, while 36 percent rated it very inefficient. Mail delivery fared reasonably well, followed by customs, services and roads; health services scored the worst" (World Bank, 1997b: 86).

Various reforms in the methods and procedures of service delivery have recently been introduced in many countries. Some of them include:

- Streamlining and right-sizing government ministries and public administration systems;

- Decentralizing government machinery and strengthening local government agencies;

- Creating performance-focused organizations and training public servants for performance-oriented service delivery;

- Using non-public agencies under well-defined guidelines to organize service delivery;

- Creating and empowering community-based or clientele-centered groups to participate in and monitor the delivery of public services;

- Establishment of citizens charters and other mechanisms (such as relaxing official secrets acts) to strengthen people's capacity to demand services from public officials and to monitor their performance;

- Providing more coordination among government agencies, particularly those involved in social and economic decision-making; and

- Linking performance to salary increases, bonuses, promotions and other non-monetary rewards and similar other changes.

One consequence of these reforms is that there is tremendous diversity in terms of experimentation with approaches, organization and methods and procedures for the delivery of public services that are carried out at all government levels—national, provincial and municipalCand nowhere is such diversity more visible than in the social services. One example is the recent creation of Charter Schools in the United States, which combine public and private funds in various manifestations. In other countries, delivery systems are being managed by autonomous organizations, usually on performance contracts, which operate like business organizations using many of the management methods and procedures from the private sector in delivering public services.

While the trends of change in the delivery of public services noted above are global, most of them are occurring in highly developed countries. A number of the less economically developed countries are still in the midst of civil wars or are in recovery from extensive periods of political instability. Yet others, where stability prevails, are struggling with various crises (for example, the recent financial crises in Asia and Latin America or rampant corruption), making it hard for most of them to improve their methods and procedures for public service delivery. In addition, many of these countries are struggling to expand various public services to meet rising needs, while they are simultaneously facing difficulty and constraints in providing quality services in a timely manner.

Among the small island states, one typical example is the case of St. Lucia. As in many small island countries, it is not always easy for the government to adequately fulfill the needs of the citizens in terms of social service demands. There always exists a vacuum for assistance, especially in financial and technical areas. One case in point is much needed assistance to the mentally disabled for proper housing facilities as well as

therapeutic programmes. Funding for current services is

primarily from government resources and from some grants through NGOs funded by international donors.

As one looks more closely at social service delivery in small island states, the following problems are often observed:

Low priority assigned to social services

Governments of many developing countries have not been able to assign high priority to social services (for example, to education and health), despite pressures from inside and outside. Beset with crises within the country and pressures arising from globalization, many countries have had to concentrate on economic, financial and infrastructure problems while focusing upon the expansion of industry and trade, especially exportable goods and services. The case of Fiji is typical in this regard. In Fiji, engineering services, i.e. construction, maintenance and upkeep of roads, is the heaviest cost component in the operations of all municipal councils. Funds for this purpose are inadequate and government at the central level provides grants to councils with poor financial positions. Otherwise, councils must raise loans with lending institutions to fund needed engineering services.

Even though the package of social services in developing countries may seem small (comprised mostly of education and health) as compared to that in more developed countries (where besides education and health, it also includes unemployment insurance, social and health insurance for the poor, the elderly, orphans and the destitute), there are diverse socio-economic programmes of varying size and intensity to deal with poverty alleviation/elimination that can be added to social services.

It cannot be said that these services routinely draw high priority and attention in many developing countries in terms of resource allocation, status or the power and prestige of the ministry, ministers and senior civil servants

involved or the ability to attract highly qualified personnel and various similar criteria. All too often, the social sector does not generally have the decision-making capacity necessary to influence in any significant way the fundamental processes that would lead to the effective and widespread fulfillment of its objectives. Very frequently, it is left out of decisions on "high-profile" issues such as the negotiation of the external debt trade policy and wage and price policies (Kliksberg, 1995:5).

Inflexible rule-oriented methods and procedures

There are two main methods for delivering social services: basic services (such as health and education) provided free of charge and other services which depend on a "means test" (e.g., children's allowance, social assistance).All too often, the systems and rules of management, inspection and control used by the central government in agencies like the ministry of interior to deal with police services are used without much modification by ministries such as education and health to organize and manage the services they deliver. In many countries, policy and administrative personnel are frequently interchangeable among these ministries, making the use of flexible professional approaches more difficult in the social services (A.T.R. Rahman, 1999).

Even in a relatively progressive environment like Malta, social services are mainly provided by the central government through the Department for Social Security and some other government departments. Thus, the advantages of greater flexibility that would come with decentralized delivery through local government is not available.

Ineffective decentralization

There is an increasingly widespread realization that decentralization and the creativity of strong local governments can improve the delivery of social services. If done properly and carefully, these efforts serve to empower and motivate people in government at all levels and in the com-

munity as well. The Tokyo Declaration of the World Conference on Metropolitan Governance stated, "decentralization should strengthen local government and administration. To make metropolitan governance autonomous, responsibility and authority should be reassessed and reallocated between central and local governments or administrations, and coordination mechanisms among different administrative levels should be improved" (United Nations, 1993:33).

With mixed results, almost all developing countries are involved in varying degrees of effort at decentralization and strengthening their local governments. In some cases, these efforts are made in a rush, without realizing that in order to be successful they must be participative in character and require involvement over the long term by all stakeholders. Sometimes, decentralization is put at odds with the central government without fully realizing that an effective central government is an essential precondition for successful decentralization and a clear coordinating structure should be in place as decentralization and the strengthening of local bodies takes place. In several countries, these efforts are, at best, highly rhetorical and do not provide the local level with either the authority for decisions and action or the resources necessary to support such efforts.

Likewise, there is not adequate and unbiased debate on how the government should move from conventional administrative structures, where roles are monopolized, to new pluralistic administrative systems where roles are shared through devolution and delegation. For example, policy formulation, coordination and co-financing work with ease if centralized, while budgeting, personnel decisions and operations and delivery of service should work more effectively when decentralized (United Nations General Assembly, 1996). The task entrusted to each country is to develop workable strategies for introducing change within existing administrative systems that combine different design guidelines, yet change outcomes and behaviors (United Nations, 1999).

Limited participation and lack of clear guidelines on procedures

Even in the absence of a fully developed local government system, any attempt to use a local body or a local administration to deliver specific services, say water supply, will be more effective if real participation from local people and users is ensured. A recent study of 121 rural water supply projects in 49 developing countries tested the relationship between participation and project performance. Participation was measured on a scale of:

(1) Simple information (transparency);

(2) In-depth consultation with beneficiaries;

(3) Shared decision-making; and

(4) Full beneficiary control over decision-making.

A strong correlation was found between the level of participation and project success. Of the 49 projects with low participation only 8 percent were successful, but of the 42 projects with high participation, 64 percent were successful (World Bank 1997b: 119).

This kind of user-participation as a method in project design and implementation is most necessary where an alternative source of a specific service is not an option. For instance, in urban water supply and other non-contestable markets, it is particularly necessary. But where there is competition, as in city transport, users may reject a mode of service and choose another alternative rather than press for participation in policy decision-making.

Adequate attention is still not given to the development of clear guidelines on operational procedures and the participation of relevant groups in the implementation of social programmes. Although there are trends in many developing countries to use NGOs supported by donors in organizing and running social services (like schools, health centers, vocational training centers and banks for the poor), this has not yet become the main channel for the delivery of such services. This does not mean that social services should be delivered mainly by NGOs. All too often, however, social services organized by

public agencies do not involve active participation of community groups and various stakeholders. But many developing countries have taken the initiative, often prodded by local pressures and sometimes as part of donors' conditions, to begin to involve non-governmental groups and agencies in the delivery of social services.

There is a growing realization in many countries that the participation of relevant players (such as regional and local level administrators, members of the targeted community, non-governmental organizations and other elements of civil society) is necessary, not only in the implementation process but also in the planning and design of specific activities. Such participation, with a focus on methods and guidelines, will create a sense of ownership for the programme and more likely lead to the development of flexible, adaptive and transparent procedures to suit the needs of targeted groups. Guidelines may clarify the respective roles in social services among all the key players.

Weaknesses in management systems, capacity and orientation

In the context of methods and procedures, frequently there are severe inadequacies in the management capacity, style and systems in many social development programmes—including heath care, education and social security. There are not enough trained social workers and managers and, often, even those who are trained may lack the appropriate orientation, such as a spirit of openness, a commitment to learn and a customer-orientation.

Management procedures are often complex and not readily adaptable to meet the needs or capacities of target groups or of local managers. In most cases they are not performance-oriented or responsive to feedback from clients and other stakeholders in social development. Internally, the management still adheres to a bureaucratic mode of hierarchy in decision-making, providing little scope for much needed participatory and flexible processes of decision-making in which all members of the organization can provide inputs and

teams of workers can contribute to the enhanced delivery of all programmes.

Limited use of innovative methods and procedures for financing social services

One critical area which gets little attention even at the national level is the financing of social development. The trend in many developing countries is to make loud pronouncements about the need to get an allocation in the national budget of at least five percent of the GDP for social services, but not much is said about how financial resources can be raised from various private and non-governmental sources and how the efficient use of existing resources can be enhanced. The usual promoters of social services use poverty as a blanket cover to suggest full dependency on government for expansion of social services. They have not sufficiently explored the use of user fees, co-financing or financial incentives to business and wealthy individuals to assist in the support of social services. Enough attention is not paid to cost reduction and good financial management practices in the organization and management of social services. Innovative practices need to be more vigorously explored.

One small island state looking toward innovation and improving the management of its social services is the Solomon Islands. There the government is at present undergoing a major reform of the public sector. This has meant much retrenchment, including the reduction of 550 public officers. The savings from this exercise is intended by the government to be redirected to other sectors, such as social services. The government is also reviewing the provincial government system to make it more efficient and effective in delivering services to the people. In this reform, health and education services will be looked at carefully so that some functions may be corporatized, e.g., charging fees to the users. At the moment, medical service is free and education is compulsory.

Weak monitoring and system of accountability and decline in quality

One final issue that needs to be underlined is the inadequate attention to monitoring, evaluation and accountability and the maintenance of quality in the delivery of public services. There are many countries where programmes of social development use systematic monitoring and evaluation procedures to oversee the quality as well as quantity of services delivered. There are other countries, including many developing ones, where the methods and procedures of monitoring, evaluation and accountability are not sufficiently enforced and the deterioration of the quality of social services, particularly in health and education areas, continues unabated. In many of these countries, even the development of detailed and appropriate procedures to meet the peculiar characteristics of the situation and clientele were not developed.

There is an urgent need to enforce systems of accountability—starting from the national level in the executive and legislative branches and going to the level of managers responsible for the delivery of specific social programmes in a locality. Systems of local accountability, monitoring and evaluation, involving both technical and supervisory staff, as well as relevant stakeholders, should be used systematically, hopefully leading to the arrest of the decline in quality of social services. Frequently, however, this does not happen. In the case of Malta, local municipalities are not responsible for social services; consequently, it is only through public scrutiny of central government agencies, which focuses upon issues of accountability and transparency, that any degree of accountability can be maintained. This is done through the Ombudsman, the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Representatives and the Auditor General.

representatives with traditional elders and, sometimes, even replacing the former with the latter.

Despite their legitimacy, traditional institutions and local governments have not always been successful in delivering the benefits associated with development. They are too small for some services and lack the technical expertise for others. Central government is a more appropriate deliverer of services which could affect neighbouring local government areas if not undertaken properly, e.g. immunization. In a number of small island states, central governments are the same size as local governments in larger countries. With the fiscal crisis experienced by many Pacific Island states, the consequent thrust for small governments and the growing disillusionment with the capacity of local governments to deliver services, there has been a general swing towards central provision of services. The efficiencies that theoretically derive from devolution are not necessarily found in the Pacific where smallness, remoteness, resource constraints and other country-specific factors militate against local government as a provider of services.

In an earlier study, Larmour and Qalo (1985) described the typical local government of a Pacific island state as an administrative body that carried out public works, education and a few other functions. Funds were obtained from central grants and some local fees and charges, although the latter could prove difficult to collect. Three types of local government arrangements were identified. First, was the "minimal" type, where the local government did little beyond minor works, maintaining tidiness and contributing to the law and order system. Employees numbered no more than two. The second was the "weak developmental" type, which had multiple functions with development responsibilities. Lack of resources meant that they often were not carried out and that even the coordination of centrally provided services was problematic. The third type was the "decentralized" approach, which involved the transfer of central government functions to local levels. Funding was through central government grants and staff were employed by the subnational government, although some central technical staff were seconded.

Some changes have occurred since then (Larmour 1999). The "minimal" group has stayed constant—American Samoa, Niue and Tonga. There have been capacity-building efforts to strengthen the "weak developmental" states—Fijian Administration, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. The two "decentralized" casesCPapua New Guinea and Solomon IslandsChave reduced provincial autonomy. The Solomon Islands is currently considering whether it actually needs to have two layers of subnational government. In Papua New Guinea there is the promise that substantial resources will be placed at the local government level (below the province), but technical and management capacity at this level is in extremely short supply, while the politics of resource distribution is keenly fought over by the fragmented communities which inhabit local government territories.

Turner (1999) asserts that there are several lessons which can be drawn from the South Pacific experience which have a wider relevance for small island states:

- First, smallness does not diminish the desire for decentralization;

- Second, the assertion of identity is often the major purpose of local government from the perspective of local actors;

- Third, the state may well be weak and both local and central government may have limited control over the routines of everyday life;

- Fourth, tradition has not necessarily been obliterated by colonialism but can flourish to either join or challenge imported modes of government;

- Fifth, local governments are often poor at delivering services for a variety of reasons and may well be more usefully engaged in functions such as law and order, cultural construction, land tenure regulation and the articulation of interests. Basic services such

as health, transport and education can often be more efficiently provided by central governments, although the political acceptability of this may vary across countries.

Downsizing

The fiscal imperative of reducing the cost of government has been a leading theme in public sector reform generally and for many small islands as well. It is related to the concern with efficiency in government and to the promotion of an increased role for the private sector. Typical policy initiatives include downsizing government employment; restructuring departments and agencies; improving budgeting and financial control; and privatization.

A few examples will illustrate current cost-cutting actions. Tiny Niue's public service was slashed by almost 50 per cent in 1995; while in 1996 Vanuatu's government eliminated 550 jobs, approximately 10 per cent of its public sector workforce (Ray 1998). Vanuatu's Comprehensive Reform Programme (CRP) has identified a further 400 jobs for elimination and a continuation of the corporatization of government agencies such as postal services (*Pacific Report* 1998, 11, 21 and 1999, 12, 1). To obtain a balanced budget in the Solomon Islands for 1999, there have been drastic cuts to the funding of some ministries (*Pacific Report* 1998, 11, 24).

In Nauru, the 1998-99 budget contains fund reductions of 60 per cent from the previous year due to the decline in its once lucrative phosphate earnings (*Pacific Report* 1998, 11, 20). Cost-cutting measures include the elimination of 258 public positions, the reduction of working hours and lowering the age for voluntary retirement from 60 to 55 years and for mandatory retirement from 65 to 60 years. In Western Samoa there have been moves to introduce output-based budgeting and other "structural reforms aimed at improving the efficiency of resource allocation within the public sector" (MacPherson and MacPherson 1998).

The Cook Islands has "staggered from one

financial crisis to the next" (MacDonald 1998). Between 1989 and 1996, its public service grew by 1,000 filled positions to a total of 3,100 public employees. A donor-driven financial bail-out package has involved reducing government departments from 50 to 20, cutting the civil service by 60 per cent and halving the salaries of the remaining public employees (Ray 1998).

Generally speaking, small island countries which have experienced sustained economic growth and/or demonstrate financial strength have much less concern with cost-cutting. These countries or dependencies may run public sectors which are judged to be large by conventional standards (e.g. number of public servants per 1,000 population or percentage of GDP accounted for by the government), but their secure financial position enables them to avoid drastic cost-cutting strategies and instead opt for politically easier reforms from the ample governance menu.

Private sector promotion

Privatization is not a new phenomenon for small island states. However, the vigour with which these pro-private sector policies have been pursued in the 1990s is novel. The enthusiasm derives from strong beliefs in the efficacy of the market for organizing the production of goods and services, the undoubted inefficiency of many state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and the fiscal imperative to reduce the cost of government.

Jamaica was one of the earliest and most radical examples of a small island state experimenting with privatization. During the decade from mid-1981 to mid-1991, 90 per cent of its SOEs were divested, generating US$2.5 billion while also accounting for a marginal increase in total employment (Gayle 1994). A variety of privatization methods were employed across a range of sectors from hotels to banking, cement production and swamp draining. Gayle's analysis emphasizes the importance of "complementary attention to the improvement of both public and private-sector productivity" (*ibid*. 89). He also notes that there was "no decisive evidence that a specific private enterprise will necessarily perform either better or

worse than its public sector analog, in terms of productivity, efficiency, output sales or net profit" (*ibid*.).

Caribbean neighbours have followed Jamaica's lead in privatization. For example, Trinidad and Tobago divested 21 of its 87 SOEs between 1992 and 1994. In addition, the national airline was privatized, electricity generation was partially divested and private interests were brought in to manage the water authority (World Bank home-page). There is no report on the privatization of social services, but this is the area which attracted the least efforts at new privatization due to the nature of its "non-profitness".

The fiscal crisis of South Pacific island states has also catapulted privatization into policy promi-nence, alongside the more traditional prescriptions and donor urgings to boost the private sector. Ray (1998, 11) advises a cautious approach to Pacific island privatization in case it leads to "monopolistic or oligopolistic arrangements which, in small economies, can encourage rent-seeking behavior." He cites the case of the Seychelles Marketing Board (Gabbay and Ghosh 1992) to demonstrate that where effective market competition cannot be achieved, "carefully constructed and administered public undertakings may be the second best alternative" (Ray 1998, 11).

In Fiji there are plans to sell an estimated US$50 million of government-owned houses occupied by senior officials (*South Sea Digest* 18, 22, 1998). Forty-nine per cent of Fiji Telecommunications have been sold to the Fiji National Provident Fund, while another 20 per cent have been sold through the Suva stock exchange and the govern-ment retains 31 per cent (*Pacific Report* 12, 2, 1999).

In Tuvalu, the banking sector has been restructured by merging the operations of the Development Bank of Tuvalu with the National Bank of Tuvalu to create a single multipurpose bank (*Pacific Report* 12, 1, 1999).

In Samoa, the government proposes to corporatize the Posts and Telecommunications Department

and views strengthening its partnership with the private sector as a priority (*Pacific Report* 11, 24, 1998).

Vanuatu has also demonstrated a preference for corporatization (Bolenga 1997; *Pacific Report* 12, 1, 1999).

In budget-slashing Nauru, security and cleaning services will be outsourced in 1999 to achieve an estimated saving of US$600,000.

Privatization can lead to unwanted foreign domi-nation or domestic monopoly contributing to increased inequality and political tension. Inno-vation, however, offers one way forward. For example, countries such as the Comoros and Jamaica are experimenting with social funds to boost the private sector while also generating income, increasing skill levels, boosting employ-ment, reducing poverty and increasing self-reliance (van der Gaag 1995).

Delegating services to civil society organizations

Among South Pacific islands, civil society has enjoyed a growing role and is viewed as an inte-gral part of the good governance agenda. Some of the formal organizations found in larger countries (e.g. trade unions, professional associations) are not present in the smallest states, but the church has played a significant role in welfare provision for many years while more recently NGOs have been increasing in number. There are now esti-mated to be over 1,000 NGOs in the Pacific islands. Taylor (1997, 23) advises that "countries throughout the South Pacific have become increasingly reliant on NGOs for the provision of basic services" and points to growing activity in fields such as education, health, social welfare, water and sanitation, community development and natural resources management.

Some NGOs have strong advocacy roles, such as in the Solomon Islands, where the Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT) has worked to combat forest destruction and to pioneer sustain-able forestry since 1982 (Roughan 1997). Not surprisingly, in some situations, these activities

can bring NGOs into conflict with government. For example, the government's recent budget speech in Vanuatu contained criticism of foreign-funded NGOs as agents for foreign opposition (*Pacific Report*, 12, 1, 1999).

The role of NGOs is unlikely to diminish in the short term—especially as long as funding from official development assistance and from northern NGOs and churches is maintained. Despite this, it is still not clear as to whether NGOs are as efficient and effective as their adherents claim and whether their work does lead to sustainable development. The NGOs themselves appreciate that internal capacity-building is necessary. Fragility is evident. For example, several South Pacific NGOs which were engaged in appropriate technology research and dissemination have had to close as a result of lack of support (Marjoram 1994).

Accountability

Anti-corruption movements have come to play an increasingly important role in public sector reform in small island countries. For example, in examining the Mauritius success story, Carroll and Carroll (1997, 469) claim that accountability is the "key" to its successful model of good governance and is a "necessary if not sufficient condition for good governance."

Since independence in 1968, "Mauritius has relied on merit as the primary criterion for recruitment and promotion" (*ibid*. 475). It has also made considerable use of in-service training to avoid the feeling of exclusion engendered by high entry qualifications. This has contributed to the high degree of representation of ethnic communities in its public service. In so doing, this has eliminated the possible perception of the public service as an elite group distinct from the mass of the population.

The use of an in-service diploma (now a degree) from the University of Mauritius was made a prerequisite for advancement and has "fostered a common set of values within the civil service" (*ibid*.). These values are tied to national values. Non-partisanship has been a tradition of the

public service, thus giving the bureaucracy a strong legitimacy. The movement of civil servants between agencies has assisted in building an overarching loyalty to the public interest rather than to specific agencies or ministers. Senior Mauritian public servants spend time interacting with interest groups but do not act as their agents. They also see themselves as subordinate to the policy direction given by political leaders. As a result, when they retire at 60 years, few, if any, senior bureaucrats enter politics.

A second example of promoting accountability has been demonstrated by the Vanuatu Ombudsman. The country's 1980 Constitution provides for an Ombudsman "to investigate complaints and other evidence of government wrongdoings, publish reports on findings and recommend follow-up actions by other government departments" (GSHDP homepage). The first Ombudsman was not appointed until 1995, but by October 1997 the office had a staff of seventeen and an annual budget of US$250,000. The institution has gained such widespread popularity that church prayers are sometimes said for the Ombudsman. The Pacific Island News Association awarded its Freedom of Information prize to the Vanuatu Ombudsman in July 1997, recognizing her as "the best investigative reporter in the Pacific islands today." The Ombudsman has distributed free reports throughout the archipelago, has had stories published in the local press and has run radio campaigns.

The concept of the Ombudsman has not been without controversy in Vanuatu. Despite donor-funded institutional strengthening, which has helped to build its institutional capacity, only 10 per cent of its recommendations have been acted upon by the relevant government departments. The Ombudsman also has had to fight off attacks from powerful interests, including the High Court. Moreover, in November 1997, the Parliament repealed the Ombudsman Act. A change in government, however, saw renewed emphasis on accountability with the introduction of the Leadership Code Act and a new Ombudsman Act (Crossland 1998).

The promotion of government accountability, which has been dealt with through a variety of efforts in governance for capacity-building, has particularly focused upon the development of improved financial management and information systems. Good performance management requires transparency that goes beyond the more traditional focus on stamping out corruption, which in small island states can be highly problematic. Smallness means that there is greater importance attached to personal face-to-face relations. Such closeness can make it both easier and more difficult for government officials to engage in the abuse of public office for private gain.

Because of the complexity added by the dimension of smallness, it is all the more important to put in place policies and procedures that ensure transparency through the use of effective programme evaluation and performance measurement which will generate the kind of information that guarantees transparency. In Fiji, as part of the process of evaluating the capacity-building programme for social service delivery, key data which also encourages transparency is collected. This includes:

- Analysis of annual financial statements;

- Comparison of income/expenditure statements;

- Assessment of annual reports on activities;

- Reports of the Auditor General's office;

- Reports of consultants on operations of Councils; and

- Investigation reports and reports of the Committee of Enquiries commissioned by the Minister for Local Government.

Capacity-building, training and performance improvement

Small island states have frequently been identified as lacking institutional capacity. Capacity-building is often seen as the answer. This involves traditional measures such as improved staff train-ing, institutional restructuring and streamlining of work processes. More recent additions to the arsenal of capacity-building are such techniques as performance management (manifested in performance indicators and benchmarking) and regulatory reforms.

In reality, all small island states, whether encouraged by external donors or not, are engaged in capacity-building. Even a wealthy state such as Brunei "is committed to bringing about a paradigm shift in the system of management and work culture in the civil service" through a programme of capacity-building reforms (Brunei). Likewise, oil and gas-dependent Trinidad and Tobago is "committed to strengthening the core public sector by introducing incentive-based systems of public management, improving levels of professional skills, delegating authority, and improving client orientation and accountability for performance" (World Bank homepage). Similarly, the last fifteen years have witnessed a continuous succession of public sector reforms in countries like Jamaica (e.g. Gayle 1994; Davis 1995).

That small island states are engaged in such activities is at least in part due to external encouragement. For example, the latest World Bank-funded initiative, the Public Sector Modernization Project, promises a range of capacity-building strategies for the strengthening of the Jamaican public sector. These include improving service quality; enhancing policy formulation capability; improved monitoring and evaluation; more efficient performance of corporate functions; greater efficiency in government procurement and contracting; and enhanced public financial and personnel management (World Bank homepage). In Cape Verde, these capacity-building approaches are embedded in all six World Bank-funded activities (*ibid.*). Similarly, in the Maldives, "building government capacity" has been a permanent feature of World Bank projects there since such assistance began in 1979.

Schoeffel (1997a) notes that human resource development (i.e., education and training) is frequently identified as a means to overcoming

management deficiencies in Pacific island states. For example, the Simons Report on Australian Aid (AusAID 1997) recommends that Australia develop and make available specific short-term administrative courses through regional and national training institutions. Schoeffel (1997) believes that a more hands-on approach is often the most appropriate method of providing needed skills and knowledge for small Pacific island states. Such activities, however, have not always been supported.

The largest Pacific island public sector training organization, the Institute of Administration (formerly Administrative College) in Papua New Guinea has just lost its government budget after almost 30 years of operation. While this organization has had the potential to provide appropriate regional training services, this has not seemed to occur and both the relevance of its training activity and the efficiency of its operation have been questioned (Turner 1985 and 1989).

In contrast, it was Papua New Guinea's Personnel Department which organized new programmes, such as strategic planning workshops for senior officials, when the Department embraced new personnel management projects (PERMIT and PIMS projects) in the early 1990s. These workshops helped senior managers to gain a common understanding of the needed reforms in public human resources management.

Chapter 6
Conclusion and Recommendations

In small island countries, public service reforms have frequently focused upon the downsizing of government and, to some extent, decentralization. However, there generally are still not strong responses to the growing need for improving social service delivery. This is especially so since frequently decentralization was advocated not out of consideration of efficiency or responsiveness, but as a result of the assertion of political or communal interests. The reality is that due to lack of capacity and resources, local governments often cannot be the promoters of social services in the typical small island state. Outsourcing, when experimented with, has not proven effective. Privatization has been undertaken, but not very much in the social services. The growing attention of international donors to issues of good governance has recently served to encourage and motivate the use and growth of NGOs in social service delivery. However, even with this, participative approaches have not been vigorously adopted. Increased capacity-building is, without doubt, desired by all providers of social services—both civil servants and NGO personnel.

The systematic preparation of personnel to work in social services in small island states requires training beyond traditional management skills and is certainly long overdue. The delivery of social services requires skills that go beyond the scope of orthodox textbooks, which often offer only very rudimentary instruction on the techniques of planning, coordination, organization, direction and control. In fact, the most valuable skills needed in managing social services are the ability to innovate, experiment, modify, improvise and lead.

Social service managers conduct highly sensitive programmes that can affect the daily lives of thousands of people. They are also vulnerable to influences and pressures from the vagaries of working with clients who are afflicted by many complex problems. Thus, stress and burnout are quite common difficulties facing those who administer social services. Purely technical approaches and attitudes must be replaced by a firm commitment to the ideals of social service combined with realistic expectations and a willingness to assist communities in finding effective solutions to their problems. With such a commitment, social service managers will be able to transcend the current limitations found within the organization, methods and procedures of social service delivery.

However, it is both unfair and counterproductive to leave issues of efficiency and quality of social services in the hands of only a few individuals. Systemwide capacity-building programmes should be built to enhance the delivery of social services. This would not only help individual managers in both the civil service and NGOs, but also promote social services as a whole.

National or local systemwide capacity-building programmes may be strengthened by emphasizing the following points:

- If the social services are to gain more resources, policy-makers, programme managers and citizens must be sensitized to the important role they play in sustaining the social order. Public awareness of the necessity of social services is especially crucial in small island countries.

- It is necessary to have flexible guidelines for the improvement of methods and procedures of public and/or social service delivery. Such methods and procedures must be based on an accurate assessment of the particular situation in each country.

- It is important not only for civil servants, but also NGOs and other service providers involved in social services, to be provided with appropriate professional training.

Good governance initiatives can be used to promote such capacity-building programmes. International donors and technical cooperation agencies should assist small island countries to organize their capacity-building programmes.

The agenda for the next decade must include guidance on how to promote effective cooperation among all of the stakeholders of an effective social service delivery system.

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Annex 2

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