Relationship between Records Management, Public Service Delivery and the Attainment of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals in Kenya

Current recordkeeping practices in the public service of Kenya are not effective and this could hamper the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

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INTRODUCTION

There is a link between effective records management and enhanced public service delivery. Records management is a key component of any public sector reform programme, the efficiency of which includes enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the public service (Thurston 1996: 2). Wamukoya and Mutula (2005:3) emphasized the link between record keeping and attainment of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) objectives, by pointing out that good record keeping practices would be the key to enhanced public service delivery and attainment of NEPAD's objectives. NEPAD was spearheaded by Presidents Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Olusegon Obasanjo of Nigeria and Abdelasiz Bouteflika of Algeria, to combat poverty and social development in Africa (Okumu 2002:227). One of the key aspects of NEPAD was the African peer review mechanism, in which member states evaluated each other on their commitment to promote democracy and human rights. NEPAD was one of the avenues which Africa hoped to use to attain the United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as noted by Ilorah (2004:223–224). The author stressed that NEPAD recognizes the need to meet the Millennium Development Goals and targets adopted by the United Nations in September 2000.

The United Nations Development Programme (2006) noted that the MDGs are drawn from the actions and targets contained in the *Millennium Declaration* that was adopted by 189 nations and signed by 147 heads of state and government during the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000. The eight MDGs are:

- eradicating extreme poverty and hunger
- achieving universal primary education
- promoting gender equality and empowering women
- reducing child mortality
- improving maternal health
- combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- ensuring environmental sustainability
- developing a global partnership for development.

Todaro and Smith (2006:20–22) linked the attainment of the MDGs with economic development. The three core values of development are:

1. Sustenance: the ability to meet life-sustaining basic needs such as food, shelter, health and protection.
2. Self-esteem: a sense of worth and self-respect, of not being used as a tool by others for their own ends.
3. Freedom from servitude: the sense of emancipation from alienating material conditions of life and from social servitude to nature, ignorance, other people, misery, institutions, dogmatic beliefs, especially the belief that poverty is predestined.

The authors further posited that the MDGs are the strongest statement yet of the international commitment to ending global poverty and acknowledge the multi-dimensional nature of development and poverty alleviation. Although some observers suspect that the MDGs will amount to no more than just another UN proclamation of worthy goals, by the first five-year review in 2005, these goals had become central to governments, international development agencies, and non-governmental organizations' agendas.

OVERVIEW OF KENYA'S SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION

Kenya faces various socio-political and economic challenges in relation to public service delivery and

the attainment of the UN MDGs. A NEPAD *African Peer Review Mechanism Self Assessment Report Kenya* (New Partnership for Africa's Development 2005) pointed out that although Kenya had made progress in various aspects of national development, the country faced challenges that relate to democracy and political governance, economic governance and management, corporate governance, socio-economic development and other overarching issues. An eighteen-member NEPAD Country Review Team (CRT) led by Dr. Grace Machel visited Kenya from 3–14 October 2005 and noted that the major outstanding democracy and political governance challenges include inability to address the colonial legacy and set a political agenda for real and strong unity, pervasive corruption, high incidence of poverty and lack of confidence and trust in public institutions.

The country also faced economic governance and management challenges such as implementing strong and effective anti-corruption policies, enacting anti-terrorism and money laundering laws, restructuring government expenditure and reducing the government wage bill, delays in project implementation and extra-budgetary expenditures. With regard to corporate governance, the key challenges related to improvements in public service delivery in the areas of business registration and licensing, commercial dispute resolution, access to land and customs and trade facilitation. Others include the cost of doing business, which is high due to security problems, and inadequate infrastructure, that is, lack of power, water and sewage facilities.

Other overarching challenges that cut across the NEPAD *African Peer Review Mechanism Self Assessment Report Kenya* relate to managing diversity in nation building, poor implementation of government policies and programmes, corruption, the constitution and consensus building, poverty and wealth distribution, development ownership, gender equality, youth unemployment and transformative leadership at all levels, including parliament, executive, judiciary, business, political parties and religious organizations.

One of the major challenges facing Kenya in the revival of the economy is the elimination of corruption in the public service, an issue which donors have raised with the government. Transparency International (2005) defined corruption as an abuse of entrusted power for personal gain. Chetwynd, Chetwynd and Spector (2003) pointed out that the effects of corruption included disruption of governance practices, destabilizing governance institutions, reducing the provision of services by government, reducing respect for the rule of law and reducing public trust in government and its institutions.

Records management can play a role in addressing the political, economic and social challenges that Kenya is facing. These challenges include implementing structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), reviving the economy, reducing corruption and enhancing transparency and accountability in the public sector. The discussion that follows presents the statement of the problem, methodology and study significance. It defines the concepts of records management and public service delivery. Other issues presented include the UN MDGs, including MDGs status report for Kenya and records management, public service delivery and the attainment of the UN MDGs in Kenya.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Kenya underwent a political transition in December 2002, when it held general elections, resulting in the loss of power by the then ruling party, the Kenya African National Union (KANU), to a combined force of opposition parties, known as the National Rainbow Alliance Coalition (NARC). Inadequate recordkeeping practices were likely to hamper the new NARC administration's campaign manifesto pledges, such as economic recovery, restoration of good governance, provision of basic services and ensuring the rule of law (National Rainbow Alliance Coalition 2002:vii). As the new NARC government attempted to eliminate corruption in government, officials were turning to records to extract relevant information. According to a report by Namunane (2003), efforts by the Ministry of Local Government to repossess plots and commercial properties illegally allocated to many influential government individuals and organizations under the KANU regime were frustrated by poor recordkeeping. Property files or deeds at the Lands' Office relating to controversial plot allocations were not properly maintained and titles and plot files for council properties were removed from the registry strong room without any records being kept, making it difficult to trace their movement. Government attempts to recover all the properties were made more difficult because proper records were not maintained.

The inadequate state of recordkeeping in the Kenyan public sector has been highlighted by records and archives management scholars and practitioners as well as senior government officials (Mnjama 2003;

Musembi 2004; Kemoni 2007). At the behest of the Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service (KNADS), accounting officers in the Office of the President and Directorate of Personnel Management issued records management circulars (Office of the President 1985; 1999; 2003a; 2003b) which decried the state of recordkeeping and its impact on public service delivery. Public officers were encouraged to work in consultation with the KNADS to improve their recordkeeping practices.

To emphasize the importance of these circulars, a press release on the same subject was issued by Terer (2000:1), then Permanent Secretary, Office of the Vice-President and Ministry of Home Affairs. It pointed out that missing and lost files and documents resulted in delayed service to citizens and in a poor image of the public service. The press release invited members of the public, including public servants, to make formal complaints in writing to the Director, KNADS, whenever services they required were unduly delayed as a result of missing or lost files and documents. Furthermore, the Director of KNADS was required to submit quarterly reports of such cases for further action.

The Government of Kenya appointed a Task Force in the year 2003 to investigate the causes of poor recordkeeping in government ministries. According to a draft Directorate of Personnel Management document (Office of the President 2003c:2), the Task Force was to report to the Programme Director, Civil Service Reform Secretariat. It was formed after the government realized that poor records and information management undermined efficiency and effectiveness in the public service. Records management in the public sector was in a very poor state, from the registries, where current records were found, to the records rooms, where semi-current and non-current records were stored.

A review of the records and archives management scenario in Kenya by Mnjama (2003:91–101) established that recordkeeping in the Kenyan public sector was not satisfactory. Musembi (2004:12) pointed out that poor records management had devastating consequences. For example, delayed and poor service delivery and frustrations on the part of the public created opportunities for corruption.

The United Nations Development Programme Kenya (2006) MDGs status report for Kenya in 2005 noted that a major problem hindering a detailed assessment of the progress of MDGs in Kenya was paucity of data, and existing data indicated that achieving the MDGs would be an uphill task, notwithstanding the fact that there was significant progress recorded towards realizing some of the goals, for example, achieving universal primary education and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. The report further noted that, overall, the performance of the country towards realizing the eight MDGs goals was still low. For example, the challenges the country faced in eradicating extreme poverty included limited access to productive resources and fulfillment of basic needs such as education, nutrition, health, water and sanitation. Other challenges include reversing degradation of environment, the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and its toll on agricultural labor and improving governance. Kenya is not the only country in Africa which is likely not to achieve the MDGs by 2015. A recent study by Kemoni (2007) in Kenya established that existing policies and practices for managing records in government ministries were not effective and that this negatively affects public service delivery and may hamper the attainment of UN MDGs.

In view of the socio-economic and political challenges Kenya faces and the inadequate state of recordkeeping in the Kenyan public sector, this paper seeks to demonstrate the linkage between records management, enhanced public service delivery and the attainment of the UN MDGs in Kenya. It is hoped that the paper will stir further debate and encourage more research in other African countries regarding the link between records management, public service delivery and the attainment of the UN MDGs.

METHODOLOGY

The paper is based on an extensive review of published and unpublished works by records and archives management scholars, practitioners and consultants, political scientists and policy makers and United Nations agencies. Recent empirical findings by Kemoni (2007) regarding the current recordkeeping situation in government ministries' headquarters and its effect on public service delivery are reported. Eighteen of the total of 24 ministries were surveyed, namely:

- Office of the President
- Office of the Vice-President and Ministry of Home Affairs
- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs

- Ministry of Roads and Public Works
- Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries Development
- Ministry of Local Government
- Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services
- Ministry of Water and Irrigation
- Ministry of Energy
- Ministry of Trade and Industry
- Ministry of Lands and Housing
- Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources
- Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Development
- Ministry of Cooperative Development and Marketing
- Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs

Data was derived through questionnaires administered to registry personnel and interviews with senior ministerial officers and Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service (KNADS) archives personnel. An observation checklist was used to verify data obtained from registry personnel and senior ministerial officers in the ministries surveyed. One hundred and fifty seven (75 percent) of the 210 registry personnel employed in these ministries completed and returned self-administered questionnaires. Ten (53 percent) senior ministerial officers in these ministries were interviewed, while all six (100 percent) archives personnel from the Nairobi Records Centre and the KNADS headquarters were also interviewed. The observation checklist was applied in 12 (63 percent) of the 18 ministries surveyed.

Registry personnel are involved in the day-to-day management of records in ministries and were therefore in a position to provide relevant data relating to how records were managed throughout their continuum. Senior ministerial officers provided data relating to policy issues that affected recordkeeping practices in government. Archives personnel from the Nairobi Provincial Records Centre and the KNADS Headquarters provided data on the extent to which the KNADS had assisted registry personnel in managing their records.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PAPER

The study is of a pioneering nature, it is the first major attempt to link records management with public service delivery, the attainment of the UN MDGs in Kenya and economic development. The study will extend the frontiers of knowledge regarding the recordkeeping situation in the Kenyan public sector, by linking recordkeeping with the concept of public service delivery and attainment of the UN Millennium Development Goals. The study will contribute to the literature in the field of records and archives management and, overall, contribute towards the improvement of records management theory, practice, methodology and policy formulation in Kenya.

The paper may be of interest to development partners and other stakeholders involved in various efforts to ensure the attainment of MDGs in Africa, and Kenya in particular. These include Kenya's development partners such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, the European Union and the Paris Club. It is hoped that the paper will stir debate and lead to further research in other African countries regarding the link between records management, public service delivery, the attainment of the UN MDGs and economic development.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

There is no universally accepted definition of the term "records management". This is an indication that the discipline of records management is dynamic (Yusof and Chell 1999:9).

Records management is the discipline and organizational function of managing records to meet operational business needs, accountability requirements and community expectations (Taylor 1996:11). The *ISO 15489 Standard on Records Management* (International Organization for Standardization 2001) defines records management as the field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposition of records, including the processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records.

The benefits of effective records management, as listed by Blake (2005), include supporting efficient joint working and information exchange, facilitating evidence-based policy making and supporting the administration of data protection principles and effective implementation of Freedom of Information and other legislation through good organization of records. Other benefits include supporting accountability by

providing reliable records of actions and decisions and knowledge management across sectors of government by making reliable information available for sharing, extraction and summarization.

INTRODUCING THE CONCEPT OF 'PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY' AND ITS APPLICATION IN KENYA

The role of public service delivery in achieving development goals was highlighted when the government of Kenya set aside a day to showcase its performance to the public. According to Chesos (2006), the head of the Public Service and Secretary to the Cabinet, Francis Muthaura, directed ministries and their departments to report to Kenyans the progress made in meeting performance targets. This coincided with the United Nations Public Day on 23 June 2006, earmarked by the UN in 2003 for special events to highlight the contributions of the public service to national development.

But what is public service delivery? The concept of public service delivery is associated with the discipline of political science, and more specifically, the public administration component. The concept of public service delivery is associated with the new public management (NPM) paradigm (Lane 2005:5). The term NPM appeared in the early 1990s, and designated the ongoing public sector reforms in Anglo-Saxon countries. The language of NPM is different from that of traditional public administration, as well as that of public policy and the keywords listed under NPM include: service to customers, the efficient provision of services to citizens, leadership or entrepreneurship, empowering public employees responsible with the provision of services, contracting, governance and re-engineering government.

Lane's (2005) thesis on the concept of public service delivery, with regard to its evolution in Kenya, indicates that it is associated with the introduction of structural adjustment programmes in the public sector, at the behest of bilateral and multilateral donors, in the early 1990s. The concept is associated with the struggle for multi-party democracy and the clamor for transparency and accountability in the public sector. With the introduction of public sector reform programmes, as required by donors, public sector organizations in Kenya developed strategic plans (2004–2009) in order to meet their mission and vision and improve service delivery in all government ministries.

Public administration is the key to the delivery of public service. Public administrators comprise the bulk of government employment and activity (Peters and Pierre 2003:1–2). These authors pointed out that many public administrators in central governments were responsible for providing services and the principal activity of public administration was implementing laws and influencing policy by advising the politicians responsible for making laws. Anangwe (1994:71) stressed that the functions of the public service include maintenance of law and order, aggregation and articulation of development problems, mobilization of resources, policymaking, implementation of policies, programmes and projects, and mobilization of demand for public goods and services.

To be an effective instrument of development, the public service needs to be guided by certain principles and values (Brereton and Temple 1999:457). These authors pointed out that the set of core values which informed the behavior of bureaucrats in the United Kingdom included accountability, honesty, impartiality, serving the community, altruistic motivation, quality of service and a sense of loyalty to the community, profession and organization.

A synthesis of Brereton and Temple's core values and principles indicated that, in the context of Kenya, public servants lacked the attributes of accountability, honesty, impartiality, quality of service, professionalism and motivation. Chesos (2006) reported that the head of the Public Service and Secretary to the Cabinet, Ambassador Francis Muthaura, had lamented that, in the recent past, the public service had been perceived as an obstacle to development and yet was central in meeting various needs. These needs included security, formulation and implementation of policies, disaster management, dispensing justice, regulation of social and commercial activities and facilitating development.

Mule (2001:72) stressed that a sound state can only be brought about by good governance that results from the capacity of public organizations to provide service to citizens in an effective, efficient and accountable manner, under the rule of law and individual liberties. The performance of the public service as an instrument of development in Africa has been and continues to be a subject of debate among political science scholars. Anangwe (1994:75) opined that the dysfunctional attributes of the public service in East Africa include: ineffective systems of control and discipline, disruption of organizational processes, poor work ethics, ethnicity and patronage in recruitment, promotion and personal advancement and breakdown of administrative hierarchies.

Oluwu (2002:1–4) further stressed hat the public service in Africa faced multiple crises relating to mission, performance and internal management as well as reform direction. He called for a new public management direction whose components would include: hands on professional management, explicit standards and measures of performance, competition in the public service, adopting private sector styles of management practice and greater stress on discipline and parsimony. Public sector reform programmes in Africa focused on reforming the public service, by making it an effective tool for national development (Mutahaba and Kiragu 2002:48). The authors pointed out that examples of African countries where public sector reform programmes concentrated on reforming the public service include Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. The reform programmes emphasized public service capacity building, planning, budgeting, performance improvement and human resource management.

According to Schacter (2000), much of the public sector reform activity supported by donors fits into the following areas: administrative capacity building; strengthening policy capacity; institutional reform; and civil service downsizing. The author further pointed out that public sector reform is about strengthening the way the public sector is managed; the public sector may be overextended – attempting to do too much with too few resources; it may be poorly organized; its decision making processes may be irrational; staff may be mismanaged; accountability may be weak; public programs may be poorly designed and public services poorly delivered. Thus, public sector reform is an attempt to fix these problems.

To ensure that the public service in Kenya was responsive to the needs of the public, the government took various measures to reform the public service. It was pointed out by Ongombe (2004a:2–3, 2004b) that the Kenyan public sector is characterized by mismanagement, wastage of resources and delays, resulting in poor public service delivery. To reverse the situation, the government created the Public Sector Reform Secretariat (PSRS), under the Permanent Secretary/Director, Directorate of Personnel Management, and Office of the President. Chief executives of state corporations were to be placed on performance contracts (Kibaki 2004:5). The next phase of performance contracts would include permanent secretaries and heads of departments.

The *Kenya National Development Plan 2002–2008* (Ministry of Planning and National Development 2002:114) pointed out that the government of Kenya also introduced e-government as a way of improving the performance of the public service. The move towards e-governance promised greater opportunities for increased transparency and accountability of government services and, in the longer term, would give people a greater role in government. E-government would lead to better delivery of government services, improved interactions with business and industry and citizen empowerment through access to information (Mnjama and Wamukoya 2004:5).

RECORDS MANAGEMENT, PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY AND THE ATTAINMENT OF THE UN MDGs

A properly functioning public service is necessary for the economic and social wellbeing of any nation. This status can only be met if there is integrity and accountability in the public service (Muthaura 2003:27). Integrity and accountability refer to the removal of negative traits, within the public service, which may hinder the provision of efficient and effective services. These include breakdown of discipline, ineffective supervision, weak management structures, corruption and non-delivery of services. Hurley (2005:224) pointed out that recordkeepers and accountability advocates seem to agree that, in support of accountability, good record systems must exist which are complete, authentic and reliable (dependable), accessible and usable. The public service is seen as a critical tool in the development process of Third World countries.

Records management is key to public sector management. According to Schellenberg (1956: 38), a renowned American archival theorist, scholar and practitioner, the most important aspect of records management is the use of records for the conduct of government operations. Records constitute the basic administrative tools by means of which the work of a government is accomplished. Although Schellenberg's view was expressed more than 50 years ago, recordkeeping scholars, practitioners and consultants, globally, have vindicated his thesis regarding the link between records management and public service delivery. Poor records management undermines civil service reform programmes, since the ability to retrieve information about government

services was a major criterion of successful public sector management (Maranga 1999:13).

It was noted by Ngulube (2003: 136) that without proper records management, accountability, transparency and efficiency in public service would be heavily compromised, leading to corruption and loss of confidence in the civil service. In Ghana, Akotia (2003:108; 2005:5) argued that the provision for records management improvement marked a shift in the development management strategies of Ghana, since effective management of public sector financial information was a crucial factor in providing capacity for public sector efficiency and governance. Many countries in Africa, including Kenya, are implementing structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) as part of public sector reforms advocated by donors such as the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The *Kenya National Development Plan 2002– 2008* (Ministry of Planning and National Development 2002: 93) stated that the aim of the public sector reforms in Kenya was to reverse the poor performance record of the public sector, as well as bad governance and corruption in management. Efficient records management is key to the implementation of structural adjustment programmes (Mazikana 1996:9). The author felt that the implementation of donor conditionalities in Africa had been unsuccessful because of the poor state of information and records management infrastructure.

Poor records management has hindered the implementation of public sector reforms in Africa (Thurston and Cain 1996:11–12). These authors further noted that in developing countries, poor records management has also hampered the ability of governments to manage resources and effectively comply with international agreements and donor conditions and fulfill their responsibilities. Lipchack (2002:5) stressed that studies dealing with recordkeeping and good governance in Sub-Saharan Africa concluded that governments were unable to implement effective public sector reforms in part because of the following:

- not having information to develop and support reform policies and processes
- not knowing what information was needed to undertake various government functions
- not being able to rely on available information
- not using available information in decision-making or analysis.

Strengthening of the public service and public service delivery programmes is essential for the development process and attainment of the MDGs (International Monetary Fund 2003:44–45). It can therefore be argued that records management is vital for enhanced public service delivery and the attainment of UN MDGs in various sectors of national development in Kenya.

As noted in Presidential Circular No.1/2005, Organization of the Government of the Republic of Kenya (Office of the President 2005a), these include:

- maintenance of law and order
- management and rehabilitation of social deviants
- financial management and accountability
- planning and national development issues
- foreign policy and regional cooperation
- maintenance and management of roads and public works
- education, science and technology
- management of agricultural resources
- health matters such as HIV/AIDS and other diseases, and infant mortality
- managing local authorities
- addressing matters of gender and equality, including empowerment of women
- provision of adequate water, housing and energy
- addressing issues of trade and development of industry
- environmental management and sustainability
- respect for and protection of democracy, human rights and other citizen's entitlements.

The achievement of MDGs can be hampered by limited access to government records. To achieve these goals, there is a need to have in place good record keeping systems, which include the presence of legislation, properly classified records with appropriate access and file tracking tools, recruitment of trained staff, including measures to update their skills, and timely appraisal and disposal of records.

RECORDKEEPING IN THE KENYAN PUBLIC SECTOR AND ITS EFFECT ON PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY AND THE ATTAINMENT OF MDGs: RECENT RESEARCH FINDINGS

A recent study was carried out by Kemoni (2007) to establish existing recordkeeping practices in government ministries and departments and their effect on public service delivery. As earlier noted, eighteen (18)

ministries were surveyed and study respondents included registry staff, senior ministerial officers and archives personnel. The study established that the KNADS provided records management advice to government ministries, departments and departments. Overall, the nature of the advice provided included review of records classification and index systems, records survey and appraisal, records disposition, developing records management policy, and training registry personnel. However, most government ministries did not implement the records management advice provided.

Other findings were that the Public Archives and Documentation Service Act Cap 19 had strengths as well as weaknesses in relation to the management of public records. For instance, it lacked clear-cut responsibilities for creators of public records. Archives personnel felt that Cap 19 had facilitated the management of public sector records. For example, survey and appraisal visits had been facilitated in government ministries, some ministries had prepared records retention and disposal schedules, ministries had been sensitized on the need to manage records properly, the profile of records management had been raised in the public service, and valuable records had been transferred to KNADS, while valueless ones had been destroyed. The study further established that government ministries faced various problems in managing their records.

Some of the factors contributing to the current state of recordkeeping in government ministries included:

- registries were neglected units in the ministries
- lack of support from senior officers
- absence of records management committees
- registry staff had few opportunities for training
- records management was a neglected area in the ministries and registries were viewed as dumping grounds for unproductive and indisciplined officers
- inadequate record storage space
- health and safety of registry staff was not taken into account.

The Government of Kenya had taken measures to enhance the management of public sector records. Through the initiatives of the KNADS, the Office of the President (OP) and the Directorate of Personnel Management (DPM) issued records management circulars, which contained various proposals to enhance recordkeeping in government ministries and departments.

These circulars were issued by the OP and DPM and deal with Destruction of Non-current Government Records (Office of the President 1985), Cases of Missing and Lost Files and Documents in the Public Service (Office of the President 1999), Improvement of Records Management for Good Governance (Office of the President 2003a) and Streamlining the Performance of Registries in Government Ministries, Departments, Local Authorities, Provinces and Districts (Office of the President 2003b).

Another key records management initiative by the government of Kenya to reverse the current state of recordkeeping in the public sector is the Public Sector Reform and Development Secretariat and the Kaizen Institute Project (Office of the President 2005b:2). The government embraced the project as a means of implementing the recommendations contained in the Directorate of Personnel Management circular on Streamlining the Performance of Registries in Government Ministries, Departments, Local Authorities, Provinces and Districts (Office of the President 2003b). The programme focused on eliminating wasteful or non-value-adding activities at the workplace, as wasteful activities created obstacles that hindered the smooth flow of services to citizens. According to the Kaizen (Japanese word meaning continual improvement) philosophy, improvement in the public sector is driven by focusing on the following three Ps:

- Processes – improving internal work/office processes through elimination of wasteful components or any obstacle to the smooth flow of an activity/process
- Physical environment – improving the physical environment where these processes happened or were delivered
- People – involving people at the workplace and empowering them to do the above-mentioned two Ps (processes and physical environment).

KNADS archives personnel were incorporated in the project since, in the cleaning exercise, officers were likely to encounter old records and the expertise of archivists was required in advising how to dispose of valueless records (Ochieng 2005).

The overall study conclusion was that current recordkeeping practices in the ministries surveyed were not effective and therefore negatively affect public service delivery and further hamper attainment of the MDGs. The key recommendations of Kemoni's (2007) study were:

- KNADS should lobby for the appointment of ministerial records officers who could work closely with archives personnel to restructure recordkeeping systems:
- Revise existing legislation to provide record creators with more clearly defined recordkeeping responsibilities
- Introduce computerization in registry management in line with Government of Kenya e-government initiatives
- Accounting officers should facilitate the training of registry personnel to provide them with the relevant knowledge, skills, principles and concepts, methodologies and attitudes, which are vital in managing records throughout the continuum for improved public service delivery
- Further research should be conducted to establish the state of recordkeeping in other sectors of the public service and its effect on public service delivery. These include local authorities, the Teachers' Service Commission, the State Law Office, the armed forces and the Parliamentary Service Commission.

CONCLUSION

The paper set out to discuss the relationship between records management, public service delivery and the attainment of the UN MDGs in Kenya. It presented an overview of Kenya's socio-political and economic situation, attempted to define the terms records management and public service delivery and listed the eight UN MDGs. The paper highlighted the methodology used and its significance. It presented recent research findings from Kenya which indicated that current recordkeeping practices are not effective and this negatively affects public service delivery and could hamper the attainment of UN MDGs. The paper stressed that records are key tools for allocating resources and decision making and facilitating economic development. Consequently, government ministries and departments need to adopt efficient and effective records management practices.

Poor records management practices have adverse consequences for public service delivery. For example, officials are forced to take decisions on an ad hoc basis, without the benefit of precedence or historical memory. Resources are wasted, as unwarranted records continue to be stored. Fraud cannot be proven and meaningful reporting and audits cannot be carried out, government actions are not transparent and citizens cannot claim or protect their rights, nor can they be required to fulfill their duties and obligations, and citizens cannot make an informed contribution to the governance process (Roper and Williams 1999:95).

The service provided by records management is vital to any enterprise and to every information-using employee in it. Its primary function is to facilitate the free flow of information, to ensure that information is available rapidly where and when it is needed. Carrying out this function needs an efficient, effective records management programme (De Wet and Du Toit 2000:75). Akotia (2003:3) pointed out that the effective management of public sector financial records was a crucial factor in providing capacity for public sector efficiency and governance in Ghana. Wamukoya and Mutula (2005) observed that chronic weaknesses in government recordkeeping would adversely affect private sector investment and, more specifically, poor recordkeeping would contribute to a lowering of the general standard of service offered to business.

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Abstract

The paper discusses the relationship between records management, public service delivery and the attainment of the United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Kenya. It defines the concept of records management and provides an overview of the current socio-political and economic environment in Kenya. The concept of public service delivery is defined, including the application of the concept in Kenya. The link between records management, public service delivery and the attainment of UN MDGs is explored. Recent research findings regarding current recordkeeping practices in the Kenyan public sector and their effect on service delivery and attainment of UN MDGs are presented. The paper concludes by positing that poor records management practices would have adverse consequences for public service delivery in Kenya and hamper the attainment of the UN MDGs. Thus, to achieve economic development in line with the UN MDGs, public offices need to have in place good recordkeeping systems.

Keywords: Millennium Development Goals; records management; public service delivery; United Nations; Kenya

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