



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

BUILDING A CULTURE OF RESULTS: INSTITUTIONALIZING RAPID RESULTS INITIATIVES IN KENYA, 2005 – 2009

SYNOPSIS

In 2004, Permanent Secretary Joyce Nyamweya faced a daunting task when she took over Kenya's Public Service Reform and Development Secretariat. President Mwai Kibaki had charged Nyamweya with building both capacity and a results-oriented culture in ministries and other government institutions unaccustomed to providing quality public services or delivering on medium- and long-term targets. With the help of Stanley Murage, special adviser to the president, Nyamweya focused on ministries that provided key public services and pushed them to apply Rapid Results, a management technique that breaks long-term plans into 100-day projects. In 2008, after Nyamweya's departure, a competent team trained in the Rapid Results methodology continued to advance its use in government institutions. By 2012, Rapid Results initiatives had helped improve services in more than 25 ministries and had boosted the government's capacity to implement projects. The technique also helped improve the performance of 175 local authorities, 45 state corporations, and three public universities. This case documents Kenya's success in applying Rapid Results across the public sector and looks at how this management technique proved to be an alternative to traditional methods of building capacity.

Rushda Majeed drafted this case study based on interviews conducted in Nairobi, Kenya, in June and July 2012. Case published October 2012.

INTRODUCTION

In the 2002 Kenyan presidential election, Mwai Kibaki campaigned as a candidate who would repair failing infrastructure, expand access to education and health care, and promote economic growth. In his first year on the job, Kenya eliminated school fees and made primary education free for Kenyan children. The government also introduced the Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation (2003–07), which was a medium-term plan to revive the economy and create jobs. The

plan targeted a growth rate of 7% by 2006 and proposed to add 500,000 jobs annually.¹ But reform faltered as illness sapped the president's energy, and the coalition that had helped Kibaki win his election victory collapsed. Public anger began to grow as the government failed to make good on a campaign platform that had promised a break with the past.

Behind the scenes, Stanley Murage, special adviser to Kibaki, worked quietly to change the way government operated. A surveyor by profession, Murage had served as a permanent

secretary in the Ministries of Labor, Transport and Communications, and Roads and Works from 1994 to 2000 under the government of President Daniel arap Moi. Murage was familiar with the challenges of making government work. In attempts to overhaul the civil service, President Moi had created a Civil Service Reform Program in 1993; the Moi government had slashed the size of the civil service by about 30%, reducing it to 193,000 by 2002²; and it had expanded training. However, improved performance remained elusive.

In his search for ideas, Murage turned to Kenyan colleague Joyce Nyamweya—then working at the United Nations—who was an expert on performance management. In 2004, after consulting with Nyamweya and others, Murage proposed to create a new cabinet office unit modeled on so-called delivery units—cabinet-level offices created to boost a government’s capacity to deliver on key reform priorities—in the United Kingdom, Canada, and Malaysia. The unit’s name, the Public Service Reform and Development Secretariat, explicitly linked reform to outcomes, and its mandate was to develop performance contracts with ministers, monitor results, and coordinate across government. Each ministry would have a parallel reform office to coordinate its efforts with the center. The president asked Nyamweya to leave the UN and become permanent secretary in charge of developing the initiative.

Nyamweya brought considerable experience to the job. With degrees in international relations and business administration from the United States and the United Kingdom, Nyamweya had worked in both the private and public sectors. Prior to joining the Kenyan government, she had developed and implemented performance management systems at global humanitarian organization CARE and at the UN (1995–2004).

Murage and Nyamweya knew that past reforms had failed to generate real change,

especially in service delivery. They suspected that ministers would struggle to implement projects and deliver services. Murage said he had tried to find a solution when he worked in the previous government: “As early as 1999, a colleague and I had started looking at results-based management for reforms in the public sector in order to get targeted results in a sustainable manner.” Under a results-based strategy, managers created strategic goals for their organizations and defined results that would align with the goals. Systematic planning and monitoring and evaluation prompted managers to meet the goals.

Before joining the government, Nyamweya studied the Results for Canadians program, a management framework used by the Canadian government. In June 2004, she told the president about the Canadian experience, and in September, with the president’s backing, the cabinet approved the application of a similar program in Kenya’s public sector.

When Nyamweya joined the government in November 2004, she started designing a Results for Kenyans program, which focused public management reform on achieving results, training civil servants, ensuring that civil servants shared information for better decision making, involving citizens in government, managing performance, and creating a comprehensive public service reform strategy. Nyamweya’s program emphasized the strengthening of civil servants’ skills and the leadership of key ministries, and it introduced strategic plans and performance contracts. Every ministry would develop an annual work plan with clear indicators in line with Kenya’s economic recovery strategy, performance contracts, and a staff performance appraisal system. The program’s motto, “Quality service is your right, and you do not need to bribe for it,” informed citizens about their right to services.

But Nyamweya still had to find a way to boost civil servants’ capacity—and inclination—to implement projects. “There had to be a major

shift in paradigm, culture, and how the public sector worked,” she said.

THE CHALLENGE

The inability of civil servants to execute projects had contributed to Kenya’s poor economic growth, which hovered at 0.8% in 2002. The country’s economic recovery strategy noted, “The Government is aware of the weak implementation record that has in the past characterized its economic management.”³ Murage observed, “It was very clear what we should achieve, but it was not clear how we would do it.” He added, “Here were managers of very important ministries who had the will and the wish. They knew the targets they should achieve, but they did not know how to achieve them.” Project implementation issues stemmed in part from a lack of skills among top- and mid-level managers within the civil service, but the problems had other roots as well.

Frequent transfers of key personnel had added to the challenge of getting things done within the civil service. Although civil servants were supposed to rotate positions every three years, many found themselves in new posts every six months. In addition, civil servants sometimes found themselves in jobs for which they had no technical expertise. Aware of the unpredictable nature of appointments and transfers, many government workers focused on short-term activities that earned them greater visibility. The head of governance at the Ministry of Finance in 2012, Anne Waiguru, summarized the problems the Kenyan government faced: “The government had written fantastic strategy and planning documents, but hardly any were implemented. The government was also fluid. People could be appointed, transferred, or dropped anytime. There was hardly any motivation therefore to initiate or sustain reform programs, and so, civil servants would focus on things that were easily realizable.”

Civil servants also were accustomed to working independently and rarely shared information or coordinated across programs. The slow performance of one office often impeded the work of others. And with no incentive to work in teams, civil servants made little attempt to coordinate or resolve issues.

Further, for many staff members, giving service to citizens took a backseat to personal priorities. Emmanuel Kisombe, permanent secretary at the Ministry of State for Immigration and Registration of Persons, said of the culture at his ministry: “Civil servants would come to work late and sometimes leave before the official time. Service delivery was at its lowest level.”

The country’s budgeting system encumbered rather than fostered sustained efforts to achieve long-term goals. George Krhoda, former permanent secretary at the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, explained: “In government, the financial year starts at the end of June, and the ministries are allocated resources. From June to September, the public sector creates work plans and budgets. The new budget comes in September, and we have to start implementing then—and in October and November. December is a holiday. By January, we are revising the budget again for changes; and in February, we do the midterm financial expenditure review. We start the new budgeting planning at the end of March. So basically, in a budget year, we have only 100 days to implement anything.”

FRAMING A RESPONSE

In November 2004, with those challenges in mind and armed with the cabinet’s approval, Nyamweya assembled a team and created a budget to help run the Public Service Reform and Development Secretariat. She requested that the World Bank loan Waiguru, an expert in governance, leadership, and reforms in the public sector—to the secretariat. Emmanuel Lubembe, a

career civil servant with degrees in human resource management and business administration, served as program director of public service reforms. Rose Akinyi Okoth came with experience in the coordination of reforms in Kenya's local government. Sylvester Obong'o, a civil servant, had left the public sector for a position at PricewaterhouseCoopers Ltd. but returned in 2005, and joined the secretariat. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, the UK Department for International Development, the Canadian International Development Agency, and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency contributed US\$1.5 million for the new secretariat's activities.

Seeking to boost ministries' performance, Nyamweya identified a particular approach that could add to the elements of results-based management. At the secretariat's monthly meetings for permanent secretaries, David Nalo, permanent secretary at the Ministry of Planning and National Development, spoke of the success of pilot projects that had worked because of a certain new management approach. Eager for other ministries to try the strategy, he urged Nyamweya to take a closer look.

Schaffer Consulting (formerly Robert H. Schaffer and Associates), a US-based management consulting firm, had originally designed and applied the project management approach—known as Rapid Results—in the private sector. The World Bank had helped introduce the methodology in Nicaragua (2000), Uganda (2001), Eritrea (2003), Sierra Leone (2004), and Madagascar (2004). Independently developed variants were in use in Bangladesh and other countries.

Rapid Results offered a way to change behaviors and boost civil service capacity quickly. The technique worked by breaking long-term plans into 100-day projects with clear and measurable goals. A team of 8 to 12 civil servants

implemented each project. Team members discussed and assigned each other responsibilities in advance. And trained coaches helped teams achieve their goals. Regular reporting built accountability and linked civil servants at the lower levels to the organization's top leadership. Rapid Results encouraged teamwork, collaboration between groups, and leadership.

The Ministry of Planning and National Development helped pilot Rapid Results initiatives in Kenya in 2004–05. In 2002, the Kenyan government passed a complex water law that required the creation of independent water boards—semiautonomous bodies that would manage the delivery of water. But the Ministry of Water and Irrigation did not know how to go about implementing the changes, said Krhoda, who was then permanent secretary at the ministry. Krhoda then heard of Rapid Results through the planning ministry, which had convened a number of permanent secretaries to attend a Schaffer-led and World Bank-funded training on the technique. Realizing that Rapid Results' emphasis on 100-day projects fit into the ministry's yearly budgeting cycle, Krhoda invited senior ministry staff to attend a subsequent workshop. For ministry leaders, an important selling point was that the proposal required no extra resources—except for the cost of the coaches, which could range from US\$150 to US\$300 per day per coach depending on a coach's prior work experience.

With support from Nadim Matta of Schaffer Consulting and eight locally hired and Schaffer-trained coaches, the ministry started pilots in three policy areas: water services, land reclamation, and irrigation. (Matta had selected coaches from a group of about a hundred applicants through a competitive process.) Krhoda picked projects that were measurable in terms of progress and that would show immediate results. To help carry out the water act, the ministry launched nineteen 100-day Rapid Results projects. For instance, civil servants worked in

teams to create water boards, streamline payment collection, reduce leakage caused by aging pipes, and curb theft. Teams also helped rehabilitate semiarid and gully areas and built small-scale community irrigation projects. The pilots took place in three cities: Nairobi, Nakuru, and Eldoret.

Although Rapid Results had many advantages, Krhoda knew the process was not easy. “The fact that it had a start date and a launch was a motivation,” he said. “But Rapid Results required a lot of supervision by phone or in person. Team leaders had to travel back to report on progress. Every month, we had a whole day of assessing results. We had continuous meetings and consultations to remove bottlenecks in staff, procurement, or money—or even something as simple as a broken vehicle.”

The projects started showing substantial results by early 2005. A team at the Athi Water Service Board increased monthly revenues by 160%, and the Nakuru Water Service Company increased the number of accounts with functional meters by 56%. At the ministry office in Nairobi, another team reduced the average time it took to process smaller procurement orders (less than 500,000 Kenyan shillings, or US\$6,250) by 50%. Under the Nkando Irrigation Project, a team increased the number of farmers with access to irrigation canals to 186 from 117 within 100 days. In Eldoret, the water service company lost 40% of the water supply to leakage or theft. A Rapid Results team managed to get the loss to 32% in 100 days, although it did not meet its original goal of bringing leakage or theft down to 25% from 40%.

“The beauty of it was that Rapid Results brought some sense of competition,” Krhoda said. “It created competition between the teams and departments. We also gave out token gifts. They went back saying that they were the champions. That was the main motivation.” Impressed by the progress of the pilots in the water ministry, other

ministries solicited the help of the planning and water ministries to launch their own 100-day projects.

Nyamweya initially focused only on results-based management, but she quickly saw that Rapid Results could speed up the implementation of projects—based on Kenya’s economic recovery strategy—and could improve the performance of civil servants. She and her team further recognized that the methodology could be pitched as a results-based management tool to help ministries meet their performance targets and improve service delivery. Nyamweya asked the planning ministry to transfer management of Rapid Results to the secretariat, which was responsible for leading the civil service reform agenda. The World Bank, which provided initial support for the Rapid Results pilot projects, reallocated the remaining program funding to the secretariat, and Nyamweya finally moved forward with the program in October 2005.

Persuading the president and the president’s advisers did not take long. Murage said: “I used to have a committee of heads of departments and I would sit with them, and we would plan what we were going to do, but at times it was like we were speaking to ourselves. When we came to Rapid Results, it was a chain involvement, from the top to the bottom in terms of tasks, in terms of service, in terms of quick wins, in terms of time for delivery, and it made all the difference.”

Nyamweya absorbed into the secretariat six of the eight Schaffer-trained coaches, most of them from the private sector. Rapid Results Coaches Dennis Mutuku, Soraiya Shariff, Elizabeth Obiero, Salima Madhany, Peter Kibiriti, and Wambui Njoroge became secretariat staff. (George Khasiani and John Juma did not join the government but became Rapid Results consultants.) They were technically UN employees, hired on contracts through the United Nations Development Programme and seconded to the secretariat. Their salaries were nearly

double those of regular civil servants at the same level. The coaches received additional training in results-based management. They took charge of Rapid Results implementation in ministries, provided support and monitored progress.

Obong’o was responsible for managing the team of coaches. Later on, his role expanded to include introducing results-based management and Rapid Results in ministries, securing buy-in from managers and civil servants, and helping launch the 100-day projects.

GETTING DOWN TO WORK

In October 2005, Nyamweya began to encourage ministries to adopt Rapid Results, hoping that the technique would help them achieve the targets set forth in their strategic plans and performance contracts. “Once we had agreed that a particular ministry had to accomplish certain targets in the financial year,” Nyamweya recalled, “we found that Rapid Results initiatives created the mechanism [to move] from inertia to a plan that actually got implemented.”

Modifying Rapid Results for the Kenyan context

Eager to showcase quick wins, Nyamweya started looking for champions who would agree to lead the next wave of Rapid Results initiatives after the water ministry pilots. Her secretariat identified five ministries critical to the success of the economic recovery strategy—Agriculture, Finance, Local Government, Planning and National Development, and Trade—and began working to persuade those ministries’ top officials that Rapid Results offered solutions to their problems.

Obong’o said: “Joyce [Nyamweya] would book an appointment with a permanent secretary, and we would go: Joyce, Rose [Akinyi Okoth], Anne [Waiguru], and I. We would introduce the secretaries to the new thinking on reforms and results-based management and how they could use Rapid Results.” The team met with the

permanent secretary, heads of departments, and other senior managers to try persuading them to utilize Rapid Results to achieve the goals laid out in their strategic plans and performance contracts.

Nyamweya’s team felt the need to add elements to the Rapid Results methodology to make it relevant to Kenya’s civil service. Obong’o helped modify Rapid Results’ traditional leadership structure to reflect the hierarchy of the host institution. The original methodology provided for a political leader, a strategic leader, and a sponsor to help implement projects. Under the new structure, the head of a ministry—usually the minister—became the political leader, responsible for providing top-level support. Next in the hierarchy was the sponsor, a high-level manager responsible for creating Rapid Results teams. Sponsors were usually permanent secretaries of ministries.

A results leader was in charge of all of the Rapid Results teams within each ministry. Results leaders usually held executive positions such as director of administration or planning or chief economist of a ministry. The teams reported to the results leader. Other managers became strategic leaders, responsible for resolving



Figure 1: Temporary Governance Structure, Rapid Results, Kenya

bottlenecks. A ministry or department could have more than one strategic leader. A team leader led a team of 8 to 12 civil servants. The results leader held weekly meetings with the strategic leaders, and strategic leaders met with team leaders regularly.

In keeping with the original methodology, before carrying out a Rapid Results initiative the reform secretariat’s team held a leadership orientation to ensure buy-in from senior managers. The orientation also served as a venue for the participants to discuss governance and reporting structures and speak about the challenges the ministry faced.

The secretariat team pushed for a ministry’s top leadership to attend the meetings and take ownership of the process. Obong’o said: “When we were implementing Rapid Results in the ministries, we noted that if the permanent secretary agreed to implement Rapid Results initiatives but didn’t actually sit in on the first meeting, we would go around in circles. On the other hand, when the secretary sat in on the initial briefing and instructed the heads of departments, we saw a very different type of Rapid Results and support.”

The team then held an introductory workshop. During the water ministry pilots, such workshops lasted for half a day. But the team extended the duration to two days. The first day included an introduction to results-based management, with sessions on transformative leadership, change management, and strategic planning. On the second day, the team introduced Rapid Results and administered a questionnaire designed to

identify problem areas. Participants completed the questionnaire anonymously, and the coaches collated the information to extract common themes. By the end of the two-day workshop, participants had identified main problems and selected a team leader, a results leader, and strategic leaders. They had also agreed on a launch date.

Not surprisingly, many civil servants were skeptical about the usefulness of Rapid Results, viewing it as a donor-driven initiative similar to ones that had not worked in the past. Obong’o said, “They looked at previous reforms imposed by donors and asked me repeatedly if it was a World Bank tool.” A civil servant himself with similar past experiences, Obong’o said he was able to win acceptance from civil servant colleagues when he showed enthusiasm for the approach and explained how Rapid Results had succeeded in other areas of Kenya. “Previously, consultants introduced a strange concept,” he said. “But I was one of them, using a new concept but adapting it to local influences. I could also relate it to our previous reform initiatives.”

In another departure from the pattern Schaffer Consulting offered, the secretariat team helped ministries host not one but two launch events, one for technical matters and the other for political purposes. At the technical launch, teams set short, measurable goals. Rapid Results coach Shariff said that the coaches encouraged teams to use action verbs such as *implement* and *reduce* in stating their goals. An example of a measurable goal within the Ministry of Health could be “to increase the number of HIV/AIDS patients on



Figure 2: Rapid Results Process, Kenya⁴

antiretroviral drugs from 1,500 to 2,400 within 100 days” in a particular region.

After a team set goals, it would prepare a 100-day work plan. The team also prepared another plan detailing how often members would meet and the roles and responsibilities of each member. Within each team, one team member served as secretary to keep track of meeting minutes; another member took charge of monitoring progress in line with the work plan.

During the launch, small measures such as asking participants to communicate on a first-name basis helped break down barriers and build camaraderie and a sense of shared purpose. Simple group exercises highlighted the importance of teamwork. Mutuku, a Rapid Results coach, said, “During the launch, you have teams that have not worked together, and you don’t have the right dynamics.” The coaches ran exercises that forced groups to work and achieve results as a team. “Team members, who are both senior and junior staff, communicate and work together,” Mutuku said. “They get excited when they see the results. During the review, they share their observations. We tell them that, as a team, they can achieve goals in a limited amount of time. Then they begin to understand the value of Rapid Results.” After the technical launch, a political launch took place a day or two later with the minister and media present. Ministry officials were responsible for inviting participants from other ministries, the private sector, donor and nongovernmental organizations, and the media. Each team shared its goals at the event. Teams also developed newspaper supplements or press releases that they shared with reporters present at the launch.

The secretariat team enlisted high-level support to help deal with civil servants who continued to show skepticism. Obong’o said, “[There was] resistance during the implementation period, even from the leadership. But when we did the whole workshop and then returned after two weeks, they had had time to

think about the approach. We didn’t deal with much resistance later. . . . But there were a number of people who were still skeptical. What was critical was that we had to get key people there for the launch. For instance, we invited the head of the public service for the launch in the Ministry of Health.”

Each team started working toward its 100-day goal after the launch. Members met regularly and reported on the progress of activities outlined in the team’s work plan. Coaches supported the teams by attending meetings and helping solve problems. Team leaders consulted the strategic leader when bottlenecks prevented them from completing activities. In some departments, the teams and the coaches prominently displayed progress charts. Publicly tracking the process helped create social pressure and keep team members on track.

Ministries implementing Rapid Results also held midterm review and wrap-up sessions. At the 50-day mark, teams met to report on progress and share the challenges they had faced and the solutions they had found. Teams facing similar problems learned from others’ experiences.

At the final review, teams shared achievements and lessons learned and discussed the next round of Rapid Results initiatives. Obong’o said: “Usually, the first cycle was like a pilot, but after that, they would think of expanding. It would mean expanding the same goal or expanding to other areas. Some ministries also wanted to take a break before the next cycle. Others would give us a date to start the scale-up phase.”

In many instances, a second wave meant having to reintroduce Rapid Results concepts to new teams. Obong’o added, “Sometimes a number of transfers had taken place by the time we did the first wave, so we had to redo [Rapid Results] with new staff.”

Staffing changes required team leaders and members to be flexible. “It was rare that all key

personnel were intact within a team,” Obong’o said. “There was discontinuity. There were a number of ministries where we went, and as we launched the teams, the core members were transferred.” Coaches helped the team recruit others to fill vacancies. They insisted that new additions did not have to conform to the

organizational hierarchy and could include civil servants of any rank as long as they had the skills to carry out activities.

Although the transfer of key personnel created difficulties for implementation, such staffing changes also had a favorable effect. Obong’o said, “Transferred personnel sometimes

Box 1: Rapid Results at the City Council of Nairobi

The City Council of Nairobi was one of the first Kenyan local authorities to try Rapid Results. In December 2005, with the help of coaches from the reform secretariat, a team of civil servants launched an initiative to solicit the World Bank for a loan toward the Kenya Municipal Program, a program to strengthen service delivery in select municipalities. A Rapid Results team set a goal of writing the project proposal in 100 days but completed the task within 22 days. (The council eventually received the funding as well.)

In early 2006, Daniel Masetu, assistant town clerk and head of the council’s reform office, invited the coaches to build capacity within the council and train civil servants as coaches. The council launched a second wave of initiatives with a Rapid Results project and team in each of its 12 departments. The initiatives aligned with the council’s performance contract and strategic plan. Hundred-day projects included enforcement of city council bylaws, monitoring of cars or pedestrians at traffic lights, reduction of road congestion, collection of garbage on a timely basis in municipalities, cleaning of the city mortuary, rehabilitation of roads, correct numbering of city buildings, and formalization of plots for squatters. Coaches from the Public Service Reform and Development Secretariat helped the council implement projects. In one example, the city transport office set a goal of reducing traffic congestion on six roads in the Central Business District of Nairobi by 30%. To accomplish the goal, Rapid Results teams focused on adjusting street parking to create more space for vehicles. They marked pedestrian crossings clearly and installed guardrails to prevent pedestrians from crossing roads anywhere but at crosswalks. Teams tested traffic lights and replaced some of them with solar-powered versions. They also worked with the municipal police to fine drivers or pedestrians who did not obey traffic signals. And they carried out community awareness campaigns to achieve the 30% target.

At the end of each wave of successful projects, the council’s reform team held a public award ceremony and identified the top-performing departments and teams. The teams and departments received certificates of recognition in front of civil society organizations, the media, citizens, and heads of departments. Of groups that did not do well, Masetu said, “We read the entire list of all the departments and teams, and we gave a letter of sanction to the department and team, [saying] that their team was the last because of focusing on process. They should focus on results and do better in the next wave that would start soon.”

By 2012, the council had run nine Rapid Results cycles and trained one to three internal coaches in each of its 12 departments. It budgeted for Rapid Results projects each year and involved citizens and the media in monitoring the results.

requested that the secretariat launch Rapid Results initiatives in their new workplace, helping spread the methodology.”

A number of institutions adopted Rapid Results to implement projects linked directly to their performance contracts and strategic plans. In October 2005, Zachary Ogongo, permanent secretary of the Ministry of Health, launched Rapid Results projects to prevent malaria, reduce the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, improve maternal and child health, and improve sanitation and food safety. For example, the ministry focused on increasing the adoption of family-planning practices in six districts by 5% in 100 days. The team reported that the rate increased by 14.6%. Health ministry teams also worked to increase the number of patients on antiretroviral drugs to 3,780 from 2,580 in the Western Province in 100 days. They reported placing more than 5,000 patients on the drugs and surpassing their goal.

Similarly, in December 2005, the Ministry of Local Government started Rapid Results initiatives to enhance its capacity to absorb donor funds, provide training for local authorities, improve performance appraisal mechanisms, and create a service charter. For example, the ministry successfully implemented a new performance appraisal system and increased staff appraisal to 61% from 30% within 100 days. By June 2006, ministries and some local governments had implemented more than 60 Rapid Results initiatives (see Box 1).

Pressure from outside groups, especially the media, helped keep Rapid Results teams on track. Nyamweya said: “For every initiative we worked on, we involved the stakeholders and the public as well as the media so that people understood what was going on and could hold the department accountable. We did the technical launch, articulated the Rapid Results goals in the media, held a midterm celebration, and then held a major celebration with all the stakeholders at the end. Media was a critical part of the transformation.”

Implementing Rapid Results in the president’s office

Initiatives within the Office of the President followed those early successes. In June 2005, the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission conducted a National Corruption Perception Survey to gauge citizens’ views of corruption in government and identify ministries and departments that citizens perceived to be particularly corrupt. The commission reported: “Kenyans perceive Office of the President and, in particular, Provincial Administration and Internal Security as the most corrupt ministry followed by Ministry of Health, Local Government and Lands and Housing. Institutions and departments perceived as the most corrupt are police, local authorities, provincial administration, government health facilities, and lands offices.”⁵

The survey revealed other bad news: About 46% of citizens surveyed reported dissatisfaction with the quality of service delivery. One out of three had bribed for services. Of the respondents who said they had offered bribes, 56% reported they were not satisfied with the services offered.⁶ For instance, at the immigration ministry, citizens waited for months, sometimes years, to obtain passports. Birth and death certificates and national identity cards—critical for opening bank accounts, registering businesses, securing employment, and obtaining driver’s licenses—were difficult to obtain as well. At the internal security and provincial administration ministry, citizens complained of delays in filing reports at police stations and reported police misbehavior.

In September 2006, the Office of the President initiated a number of Rapid Results projects to improve the quality and efficiency of services. The projects targeted all ministries and departments under the president’s office, including Provincial Administration and Internal Security, Immigration and Registration of Persons, Defense, Public Service, and Special Programs.⁷ Lubembe, director at the secretariat, coordinated an inter-ministerial task force that

Box 2: Rapid Results at the Ministry of Immigration and Registration of Persons

Rapid Results initiatives were especially successful in the Ministry of State for Immigration and Registration. In 2006, Emmanuel Kisombe took over as permanent secretary of the ministry and started initiating reforms. He said that inefficient processing meant that citizens could wait for as long as two years to get a passport, “and it was not a guarantee that they would get it.” Kisombe decided to introduce Rapid Results at the ministry after hearing of the success of the approach in other ministries.

The Public Service Reform and Development Secretariat offered support in implementing 100-day projects to improve services, especially in the issuing of passports, citizen identity cards, and birth and death certificates. Dennis Mutuku, a Rapid Results coach who worked on the project, recalled: “When we came in for the launch workshop, we saw that people were seated away from each other. They blamed each other for the bad service. The certificate people blamed the passport people and so on.”

The coaches helped divide ministry staff into teams, which decided to reduce the processing time for passports from 60 days to 20 days. Teams included members from the accounts and procurement departments, where a number of the delays had originated. To achieve the goals, groups created work plans that specified the responsibilities of passport officers and support staff. Each passport officer received a greater workload than before and a shorter time frame within which to complete the workload. Team leaders were responsible for checking the quality of the work. The ministry extended the working hours of the staff members issuing passports and introduced two shifts. One group of passport officers worked from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m., and a second group took over from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. The public could pick up passports until 8 p.m.

Within 100 days, the ministry had cleared backlogs and reduced passport-processing time to less than the 20-day goal. Mutuku said that the success amazed observers both within and outside the government. “It was shocking to the ministry and the country,” he said. “It made Rapid Results a household name.”

In 2007, in a second wave of Rapid Results initiatives, teams carried out an assessment of the infrastructure and tools needed to further reduce passport-processing time. The ministry bought new equipment and put a new processing system in place to reduce the turnaround time and process passports in larger numbers. During a third wave in 2009, the department reduced the waiting time of first-time applicants to 10 days by expediting security and background checks.

In 2009, in addition to passport centers in Nairobi, Kisumu, and Mombasa, the department opened centers in Garissa and Eldoret. Nakuru and Embu opened regional branches soon after. Kenyan nationals could also renew their passports in London and Washington, whereas in the past they had had to send their passports back to Nairobi.

In 2012, the Nairobi passport office issued passports for first-time applicants within 10 days and renewed them within 3 days. Regional centers did even better because they had fewer applicants. Mombasa and Kisumu issued new passports within eight days and renewed them in one day. In 2012, the department was working on initiating an online passport application system.

oversaw the planning and implementation of Rapid Results projects. Permanent secretaries of ministries nominated high-level officers to the task force. The officers worked closely with the reform secretariat and the coaches to implement Rapid Results projects within their ministries.

Despite the president's support, the secretariat team faced resistance from some ministries. Obong'o said, "[Although] Rapid Results initiatives were generally accepted in all six ministries under the Office of the President, there were pockets of resistance where some ministries were keen on going through the motions without being subjected to the rigors of the Rapid Results methodology." Still, a number of departments showed impressive results. For instance, the Provincial Administration and Internal Security ministry established customer desks in all provinces and districts. The ministry also worked to reduce overcrowding at prisons, and it cut wait times to file reports. The immigration ministry reduced the time required to issue a passport in the cities of Nairobi, Kisumu, and Mombasa to just 20 days from more than six months (see Box 2); slashed the backlog of applications for identity cards by nearly half to 100,368 from 195,479 in eight districts with provincial headquarters; and shortened the time required to process birth and death certificates to 5 working days from 14.

The improvement in services and the subsequent publicity in the media raised the profile of Rapid Results initiatives. By 2007, Rapid Results had gained greater visibility, and public-sector institutions had starting using the initiatives widely, especially in areas where civil servants catered to citizens directly.

Scaling up and institutionalizing

In June 2007, at the request of the permanent secretaries who had implemented Rapid Results, the head of the public service ordered all ministries, departments, and municipal authorities

to use the approach as part of their performance contracts. Because of the resulting heavy demand from ministries, the reform secretariat had to develop orientations and workshops to disseminate knowledge about Rapid Results and to provide coaching support for projects.

Nyamweya's team identified four civil servants who had performed exceptionally well in implementing Rapid Results and recruited them as coaches. (Two of the Schaffer-trained coaches had left the secretariat by that time.) With rising demand, the secretariat started carrying out three or four launches per week. The more experienced coaches managed the launch events as the newly hired ones learned on the job. Each coach handled a larger number of teams than before. And to preserve the quality of support, each coach kept in touch with teams through phone calls and e-mails when they could not attend meetings in person.

The secretariat also took steps to train additional coaches. Nyamweya decided to collaborate with the Kenya Institute of Administration (later known as the Kenya School of Government) to develop a curriculum for training Rapid Results coaches. With support from the institute, Obong'o, Madhany, and Shariff helped develop a concept note and a curriculum outline. A change of government in 2007–08, however, prevented the secretariat and the institute from putting the curriculum into use and conducting the training.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

In December 2007, supporters of both Kibaki and opposition presidential candidate Raila Odinga clashed after Odinga questioned Kibaki's victory and alleged electoral fraud. As Kenya erupted in ethnic violence and widespread protests, 1,200 people died and 500,000 fled from their homes.⁸ The cost in human lives and the risk of spreading strife triggered international action to try to bring the parties together. Kibaki and Odinga warily agreed to form a unity government

in which Odinga would assume the role of prime minister, a new post, and Kibaki would remain president.

The fallout from the election dealt a blow to the Rapid Results program. In February 2008, Kibaki and Odinga signed a power-sharing agreement to end the violence and created a coalition government with representatives from both sides. The momentum of civil service reforms slowed as priorities shifted.

The new government replaced personnel and restructured ministries and departments. In 2008, the Public Service Reform and Development Secretariat merged with the Performance Contracting Secretariat under the jurisdiction of the Office of the Prime Minister. Nyamweya's contract expired in April 2008, and she left the government. The permanent secretary of the Performance Contracting Secretariat took over the new Public Sector Reform and Performance Contracting Secretariat and decided to place greater emphasis on performance contracts—another results-based management tool.

The application of Rapid Results initiatives in public sector institutions slowed down. Rapid Results coaches who had been hired through the UN did not get their contracts renewed, and the two consultant coaches also stopped working with the secretariat. But Obong'o and the four new civil service coaches stayed on.

Murage said political entanglements presented a major problem during that time. "The program operated less efficiently and less effectively because of lack of adequate political steering, because of different political thinking," he said. "It is really anywhere you have a coalition. . . . The same people in the same government, but they have different political manifestos, different political styles, and maybe even objectives."

During 2008 and part of 2009, the implementation of Rapid Results initiatives across the government weakened in the absence of effective leadership and institutional structures.

Rapid Results coach Mutuku said: "In 2007, Rapid Results was at its peak. The political will was there. A strong permanent secretary was pushing it. The circular set the government policy. The coaching team was in place. Sylvester [Obong'o] was leading the team. But then the elections came, and the permanent secretary was dropped. A new permanent secretary, who had different ideas on reform, was appointed; and he was not convinced that consultants were required and believed that the government could do the work. Our contracts were stopped. There was a lull without any Rapid Results activity. The new coalition government was trying to find its feet. All this complicated the reform drive and slowed down the momentum."

In 2009, Rapid Results regained popularity as state corporations and local authorities began to adopt the technique in order to boost weak annual performance-contracting rankings. Eighty-one of Kenya's 175 local authorities had ranked poor or below target. Responsible for local authorities nationwide, the Ministry of Local Government had implemented and benefited from Rapid Results projects in the past, as had the City Council of Nairobi. The ministry staff deemed that the management technique could serve as a useful tool in improving the performance of local authorities. While the new cabinet restructured the reform secretariat, a number of local authorities requested Rapid Results coaching support from staff members.

Obong'o and the remaining coaches assisted the local authorities in launching Rapid Results initiatives and helped them monitor progress. To boost capacity, they trained managers and civil servants in local authorities' reform secretariats. "At that time, the new boss did not renew the contracts of all the coaches through the UNDP and the two external consultants," Obong'o recalled. "So, to support the local authorities, I conducted an induction for 130 to 140 employees. The Nairobi City Council helped us."

During the session, Obong'o and his team chose local-authority employees who could monitor progress and champion the Rapid Results way of doing things. Champions included deputy clerks, treasurers, and other mid- to top-level civil servants who could serve as strategic or results leaders. The champions were trained in the basic concepts of Rapid Results—with more tools than an average team member but not at the level of a coach. The newly trained personnel were equipped to monitor progress, convene meetings, and guide other team members. The secretariat staff provided support over the phone if needed.

Obong'o and the four remaining coaches carried out regional launches, whereby two or three local authorities of the region would come together to set goals and create work plans. Champions were responsible for monitoring work plans. They reported to Obong'o through the Ministry of Local Government, which had created a Rapid Results secretariat for incoming requests and reports. Obong'o advised teams regularly and helped them resolve issues. The four coaches also made occasional trips to field offices to monitor progress. The secretariat team attended the midterm and final review sessions. Despite obstacles, the team eventually succeeded in launching Rapid Results in all of the 175 local authorities.

Continued demand from government institutions ensured that Rapid Results remained relevant in the public sector. Mutuku recalled: “Luckily, at that time, we had a lot of demand. Ministries and local authorities were saying, ‘We want Rapid Results.’ Eventually, changes were made in the leadership, and the coaches came back; and we proceeded from late 2009.”

In late 2009, the merged secretariat split into a Performance Contracting Department and a Public Service Transformation Department. The Office of the Prime Minister took over the management of the two departments. Career civil servant Lubembe, part of the original secretariat

team, headed the new transformation department. He incorporated Rapid Results into the transformation department's reform program and took over its management. Shariff, Obiero, and Madhany took the lead in helping ministries design and implement Rapid Results projects and improve service delivery.

The transformation department continued to expand the Rapid Results program and increase the number of civil servants who understood the method and might become coaches. In early 2012 alone, Lubembe's office introduced the Rapid Results methodology to 240 civil servants, with the expectation that it would later select a smaller subgroup from those participants to train as coaches.

ASSESSING RESULTS

One measure of the impact of Rapid Results was the breadth of its application in Kenya's public sector. By 2008, the secretariat had helped launch Rapid Results in 25 of 30 government ministries, 10 local authorities, 20 state corporations, and three public universities. About 580 Rapid Results teams worked in public-sector organizations. By 2012, teams had implemented Rapid Results in more than half of 42 government ministries, all of the 175 local authorities, 45 state corporations, and three of six public universities.

The success of Rapid Results could be measured by the specific results achieved. In 2008, as part of its Doing Business report, the World Bank ranked Kenya as one of the top 10 performers in simplifying business start-ups. Because of Rapid Results, business registrations took one day rather than three weeks, Nyamweya said. (In addition, Kenya moved up 10 points in the Doing Business report, thanks to gains in obtaining licenses, starting businesses, getting credit, and registering property, among others.)

In measuring success, Obong'o said: “I would say confidently that of all the Rapid Results initiatives in ministries, none collapsed midway.

All of them progressed after launch. Maybe some teams did not celebrate the 100 days, but they did submit reports.” He stressed that an important measure of success was that a large number of civil servants started focusing on achieving results. Lubembe highlighted a similar measure of success: “Ministries talk about breaking down silos, and that is success. Just the discussion on results has been a success.”

Positive results had been evident soon after the application of results-based management and Rapid Results in Kenya’s public sector, and accolades followed for the people behind the efforts. In December 2006, in recognition of Nyamweya’s reform efforts the president awarded Nyamweya the Chief of the Burning Spear, the highest national commendation that the president could give a public servant. Nyamweya said: “Of all the medium-term plans that Kenya has had from the mid-1990s to date, the economic-recovery strategy of 2003–07 was the best implemented. It was not just because of the Rapid Results approach, but it was a critical tool for institutionalizing results-based management in the public sector. It was critical for building teams between ministries and departments. It also provided us with a structured methodology for practicing all the elements of the results-based management cycle in an organization.” Stronger project implementation was one of many factors that had contributed to driving Kenya’s economic growth rate to 7% by 2007.

In 2007, Kenya won the United Nations Public Service Award—one of the most prestigious international awards for excellence in public service—in the category (one of three) of improved transparency, accountability, and responsiveness in service delivery. The award committee recognized Kenya’s efforts toward civil service reforms by saying, “In Kenya, an extensive system of performance-based contracting has been put in place to ensure a style of public sector management that emphasizes results over process

compliance fostering greater responsiveness and accountability of the civil service.”⁹ Although the award specifically recognized performance contracting, it was an acknowledgment of Kenya’s overall success in improving public service delivery.

In 2011, Obong’o received the Inter-American Development Bank’s Managing for Development Results Award—granted to public officials for outstanding work in promoting capacity building and sharing best practices—for helping adapt Rapid Results to Kenya’s public sector.

Kenya’s 2010 constitution and Vision 2030, a blueprint for transforming Kenya into a middle-income country, helped further Rapid Results in the country’s public sector. In November 2010, the head of the public service advised ministries to use Rapid Results initiatives to fast track key provisions of the new constitution. He also recommended that the Office of the Prime Minister explore ways to incorporate Rapid Results in Vision 2030 projects. The Public Service Transformation Department took charge of working with ministries to implement such projects using Rapid Results.

Rapid Results initiatives were not always complete success stories, however. Projects were sometimes unsuccessful if accurate measurements were unfeasible. Murage said: “I think Rapid Results initiatives worked very well in sectors that had easily measurable targets. They did not work where the targets were not easily measurable—for example, in foreign affairs or commerce and industry or where some targets were measurable—but others were more difficult to measure.”

Not all ministries or departments embraced Rapid Results easily. Resistance came from both the top and the lower ranks of civil servants. Murage recalled: “We actually faced very substantial resistance in very high places. Among some of the permanent secretaries there were centers of [resistance]. Our soft skills of dealing

with people helped, but I think the major impact was the political steering. The political leadership stated that this was the way we were to go as a country—not as a government but as a country. In his political speeches, President Kibaki made it very clear that this was the way the country would go, and to serve this country, they had to put citizens at the center of reform. . . . We knew it was a question of time before those opposed were either removed or changed to align themselves with the times.”

Top managers sometimes questioned the relevance of Rapid Results to their ministries’ strategic plans. For example, civil servants involved in planning or coordination activities contended that their mandate was to coordinate policy, not deliver results. In other cases, some ministries agreed to implement Rapid Results but repeatedly postponed launch dates.

Many civil servants considered Rapid Results a job burden rather than a vehicle for institutional success and effective public service. Obong’o said, “Even civil servants who had successfully carried out Rapid Results initiatives in the past asked when it would end.” He said the secretariat team often reminded civil servants that Rapid Results initiatives aligned with the institution’s strategic plans and individual performance contracts and that they should not view the projects as extra work.

Others close to the reform efforts argued that Rapid Results did not always lead to behavioral changes. Madhany, a Rapid Results coach at the transformation department, noted: “I do not think Rapid Results initiatives have succeeded in embedding a culture of results yet, because sustainable change takes time. Trying to change civil servants who have worked for 35 or 40 years is hard. Some people also feel they need incentive to do Rapid Results. But this is against the tenets of Rapid Results, as the only incentive is providing public value.”

Lubembe reiterated the need for further efforts to embed a culture of results in Kenya’s civil service: “Rapid Results has not been accepted 100%. [The technique requires] more of a change of behavior. [But] there are people who are in their comfort zone and find it difficult to be accountable. We have to continue to make them understand that the initiatives are not a separate exercise and do not require additional resources outside the normal budget. We have to make sure that there are successive waves of Rapid Results initiatives for continuity and sustainability.”

In 2012, the Public Service Transformation Department faced continuing problems in monitoring the progression of Rapid Results initiatives in government institutions, many of which did not report progress on a timely basis. Rapid Results coach Shariff said, “Statistics are very difficult to get. The projects are being sustained, but the reporting is poor. It is not that the project is not going on. Once a ministry does a Rapid Results initiative, it makes it part of its normal projects in the second round. But communication within government is a challenge.”

REFLECTIONS

Former permanent secretary Joyce Nyamweya reflected on the reasons Rapid Results had a significant impact in Kenya. “The ministries that adopted Rapid Results better achieved their performance contracts and targets,” she said. “The number one reason for the success of the Rapid Results approach is that the cabinet decided to institutionalize results-based management. Then each ministry set plans and targets for the medium term and put in place performance targets so that they could deliver. In this context, we had Rapid Results initiatives that empowered leaders to do things within 100 days for results. The institutional arrangements were in place, as was a medium-term plan for the government. Each ministry had a strategic plan, an annual plan lined

up to the budget, and there was a performance contract framework linked to an individual. The lines of reporting were in place. You will get results in such an environment, and Rapid Results will work.”

The early successes of Rapid Results set the stage for its institutionalization later on. The pilot projects in the Ministry of Water and Irrigation served as examples for other government institutions. The availability of Schaffer-trained local coaches, who had done the work in the water ministry, helped replicate the technique in other places. Elizabeth Obeiro, Soraiya Shariff, Salima Madhany, Dennis Mutuku continued to provide support for Rapid Results work in the civil service and local authorities.

Nyamweya credited top leaders in government for providing strong support that gave credibility to the Rapid Results technique and enabled teams to overcome opposition: “Many of the Rapid Results coaches who helped implement Rapid Results initiatives do not realize how much space the president and the head of the public service created for them or the amount of time I spent with the permanent secretaries to convince them. Because of those efforts, when the coaches walked into a room, they had a room with the permanent secretary waiting for them.”

Nyamweya added, “People who want to learn from the Kenyan model must remember there have to be political steering and high-level leadership support. We did it with the president’s help, with the permanent secretaries in the cabinet standing committee, and with the help of the head of the public service.”

A broader government reform agenda contributed to Rapid Results’ dispersal across Kenya’s public sector. Stanley Murage, former adviser to President Mwai Kibaki, said, “Rapid Results cannot stand on its own without broader reforms under an integrated performance management framework, which improves goal setting, performance measurement, monitoring

and evaluation, communication, and a framework for choosing strategies.”

Sylvester Obong’o, instrumental in adapting Rapid Results to Kenya’s public sector, stressed the importance of tailoring programs like Rapid Results to particular situations and ensuring that such programs are perceived as homegrown. “In an environment like Kenya, we have to guard against Rapid Results’ being seen as a foreign practice. It must be packaged as part of the government’s reform agenda,” he said. “The person leading the initiatives needs to be an insider with sound knowledge of reforms. Unless you know the history of reforms in that country, it is difficult to adapt it to the context.” Rapid Results succeeded in Kenya because civil servants from the secretariat helped modify it to the local context. Obong’o said, “Rapid Results will not take off if you don’t know the bureaucratic structure [of a ministry] and if you don’t align the Rapid Results structure [with it].”

The active involvement of ministry leaders was also critical, Obong’o said. “Looking back, I would say that Rapid Results initiatives had difficulties in places where the [permanent secretaries] took a backseat [during the reforms]. When he or she took the lead and sat through the leadership orientation, it took off. When he or she attended briefly and then left, the other heads also left one by one.”

Emmanuel Lubembe, head of the Public Service Transformation Department, also attributed success to top-level political support: “I would not change the aspect of support from the top leadership. We have had the continued support of the president, the prime minister, and the head of the civil service.”

Eight years after it was first introduced, Rapid Results remained relevant in Kenya. The critical ingredients of political support, a champion, and a competent team helped facilitate the technique. A government circular making it mandatory for the civil service to use the approach

helped institutionalize it. Demand from local authorities contributed to reviving it during a time of crisis. And in 2012, under the leadership of Emmanuel Lubembe and with the help of the

coaches in government, the Public Service Transformation Department continued to expand the use of Rapid Results in Kenya's government.

Endnotes

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