

Extent of the public sector not fully known - Klaus Schade

Health Minister, Hon. Bernhard Haufiku, introduced amendments to the health professions laws in Parliament in order to reduce the number of council members. The announcement has shed light on an area of the public sector that is often overlooked, when talking about a leaner public service. There are not only five different health profession councils with currently 15 member each, but for each council exists an appeal committee. These councils and committees are part of more than 130 statutory institutions created through an Act of Parliament. New acts usually imply the creation of new committees, additional commissioners, review panels or tribunals etc. For instance, the draft Rents Bill 2017 stipulates the establishment of rent tribunals in each region that consist of a judge and an additional up to four members, an appeal board of three members as well as inspectors. The Whistleblower Protection Act No. 10 of 2017 will lead to the establishment of a Whistleblower Protection Advisory Committee, a Whistleblower Protection Review Tribunal and an office with staff, a commissioner and perhaps a deputy commission. Members of these entities who are not public servants are paid sitting allowances, retainer fees etc. for the time they spend on the councils, boards, committees or tribunals.

Besides these statutory bodies, the offices, ministries and agencies (O/M/As) and the Public Enterprises, there are about 40 extra-budgetary funds. Eleven financial institutions and extra-budgetary funds will fall under the Ministry of Finance based on the new Hybrid Governance Model for Public Enterprises, while the remaining extra-budgetary funds will continue to resort under the line ministry. Furthermore, there are special purpose entities such as the Agro Marketing and Trade Agency, the Financial Literacy Initiative, the Walvis Bay Corridor Group etc. Including regional councils, local authorities, traditional authorities, conservancies and a range of other entities it is estimated that there are more than 600 public sector entities.

Only few of these entities are self-sustaining and pay dividends to Government. Most entities rely on public resources – financial, human etc. While they all serve specific purposes, there is certainly room for consolidation and for a leaner public sector. For instance we have five health profession councils, three agricultural boards and so on. A comprehensive overview of all these entities including part-time and full-time employment, assets and liabilities as well as budgetary allocation will not only form the basis for a review of the public sector, but would also shed more light on the overall impact of the public sector on the economy.

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