

## CONCLUSION

Public service reforms have been driven by economic pressures and by increasing expectations from consumers, and have been enabled by the renewed sense of managerial possibility which has emerged internationally. Although all governments have sought to reduce the size and cost of their operations, while improving performance, individual governments have adopted a discriminating approach in seeking to enhance public service performance. Despite the common elements, frequently imposed on rather than chosen by government, reform programmes have shown a distinctive variety.

While there is global concern about the performance of the public service, there is no unique solution or approach. There are as many lessons to be learned from the successful experiences of the developing countries, as from the developed countries. Each country needs to identify its priorities according to the local circumstances, drawing upon the mix of other experiences from both developed and developing countries. In short, countries have to develop local solutions to global challenges. Moreover success depends as much on an incremental approach to implementing change – a step by step process, within the framework of a clear long-term vision – as it does to a single big push.

In setting out the new outlook on the public service which has underpinned reform movements, in identifying the framework for reform strategies apparent from Commonwealth experience, and in considering the detailed reform strategies which fall within that framework, this publication has sought to expose what is happening in order to emphasise choice. Politicians and managers may have no choice but to succeed, but they do have many choices in designing their strategy for success.

In making those choices, there must be a recognition that people are at the heart of the public service and therefore managing human resources must be at the centre of public service reform programmes – not technology or market forces. While people are at the heart of change and its architects and beneficiaries, they can also be the losers and therefore the opponents of change. It is important that individuals who understand and support change are involved in the reform process. Governments need to empower those who are working for change.

Above all, the public service as the protector and provider of essential services, and as the symbol of an accountable government in action, must recover and retain its pride. The service must escape from the role of passive victim, overwhelmed by larger economic and social developments. The public service must not only be a part of the national and international changes taking place, it should be at the forefront of the process – guiding, initiating, innovating and managing.