

# The Raffles Review

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## The Unacknowledged Crisis facing the SDGs



### SOURCE

OECD, (2015), 'The Impact of Budgetary Constraints on HRM - Report on Survey Results,' OECD doc GOV/PGC/PEM(2015)11/REV1.

### KEY POINT

- The problem, of low Public service morale and weak intrinsic motivation undermining the delivery of the SDGs, needs to be acknowledged – and addressed.

### BIG IDEAS

- Austerity measures lower job satisfaction. 83 per cent of OECD 'austerity' countries confront *lower job satisfaction* among public officials, and 84 per cent are witnessing increasing distrust in leadership.
- Stress is on the rise where budgetary cuts are reducing salaries and promotion opportunities.
- Perceptions exist of increasing organisational and procedural injustice, such as unprofessional performance assessments and unfair recruitment decisions.
- But austerity is not the only cause of malaise: even 36 per cent of the non-austerity countries are witnessing a *decrease in workplace commitment* in public service (58 per cent for the austerity countries). 21 per cent of the non-austerity countries observe a *decrease of trust* (73 per cent of the austerity countries); and a *decrease of loyalty to the public service* in 14 per cent of the non-austerity countries (58 per cent of all austerity countries).
- Theft, fraud and corruption are creeping back, and again not just in the austerity countries of the OECD's member states.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

- The evidence points to declining commitment in public service almost everywhere.
- Public service morale and motivation profoundly affect outcomes. This will adversely affect the achievement of SDGs too.
- It also suggests that more complex strains on public service than simply the result of austerity.
  - Singapore, exceptionally, pays its officials well and retains high intrinsic motivation too. Yet in one of Europe's most prosperous countries, Switzerland, its public service is, surprisingly, amongst those most affected by negative workplace behaviour and a general collapse in morale.
  - An efficient and effective public service depends on the skills, integrity, values and capability of its employees. As recent reform efforts demonstrate, successful public sector transformation can begin with empowering individuals - citizens, public officers and senior managers - with 'decision rights' on service delivery, opportunities to deepen cross-agency collaboration, and direct accountability.

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*aims to ruffle your thinking!*

*This weekly offering  
summarises insights on public  
service matters to challenge  
assumptions and question  
the status quo.*