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Development Management Workshop Series
No. 17

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Public Administration, Human Resources
and Social Development Division

REPORT ON

REGIONAL MEETING ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DEVELOPMENT: FROM STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT TO IMPROVED EFFICIENCY IN GOVERNMENT

25-27 March 1996, Windhoek, Namibia

Organized by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in collaboration with the the Department for Development Support and Management Services (UNDDSMS), Government of the Republic of Namibia, UNDP's Special Unit for TCDC, Commonwealth Secretariat and Ministére Francais de la Cooperation.

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April 1996

Public Administration and Development
Regional Perspective in Africa
From Structural Adjustment to Improved Efficiency in Government

1.0 INTRODUCTION

By Resolution, 49/136 of 19 December 1994 the General Assembly of the United Nations decided to resume its fiftieth session in March-April 1996 in order to examine the question of Public Administration and Development, "exchange important experiences, review the activities of the United Nations in this field, and make recommendations as appropriate". Operative paragraph 8 of the Resolution invited the "Regional Commissions to consider in 1995 the role of Public Administration in Development and to report, through the Economic & Social Council to the General Assembly at its resumed session". DDSMS, which is responsible for the preparation of the 50th Resumed Session on Public Administration and Development, established, a Technical Committee in which it associated ECA. The Technical Committee is composed in addition to DDSMS and ECA, the World Bank, UNDP, ILO, IIAS and Harvard University. ECA also participated in the inter-agency meeting which was convened in New York on 28 July 1995 and in the Twelfth Meeting of Experts on the United Nations Program on Public Administration and Finance, which was held in New York from 29 July to 11 August 1995. During these meetings, consultations were held between DDSMS and ECA on the organization of a possible joint seminar in Africa on the subject of Structural Adjustment and Improved Efficiency in Government. The (Commonwealth Secretariat) SU/TCDC expressed/rephrase interest to participate in the Seminar.

1.1 Background

Preamble paragraph 6 of Resolution 49/136 considered that "some initiatives to reform public administration taken by some countries in the context of structural adjustment programmes have not always been based on a policy conceived and defined for the long term". Structural adjustment is part of a process of global restructuring which may be defined simply as increased reliance on market forces and wrongly as a reduced role of the state in economic management.

The debt and economic crises which intensified in a number of countries from the mid 70s resulted in macro-economic imbalances which were viewed by the IMF and the World Bank as unsustainable and led them to offer structural adjustment programmes. Between 1979 and 1988 most African countries undertook structural Adjustment Programmes. These structural Adjustment Programmes have 2 stages: Stabilization aimed at cost containment and thus at deficit reduction and structural adjustment which reforms economic policies and institutions in order to make more efficient use of resources and counteract the loss of growth caused by stabilization. Most structural Adjustment Programmes have directly or indirectly led to public service restructuring, because the size and wage bill have normally been targets for reduction. The structural Adjustment basic-cost containment measures had mixed results. In few countries numbers declined dramatically, but in others it took longer than expected to achieve reductions or early reductions were offset by subsequent expansion. By the early 1990s however "downsizing" was becoming more widespread and more substantial. On the qualitative side both fiscal and efficiency impacts were less than had been expected and overall, despite some success, movement on institutional reforms has been halting for several reasons namely weaker management capacity than expected, rapid turnover of management

and political leaders, poorly executed development programmes and failure to install systems to monitor, supervise and evaluate reform programmes.

For these reasons governments and donor partners are now looking beyond structural adjustment to improved governance. Within this context, ECA organized in 1993 a major Regional Conference on Development Management in Africa and recommended a Strategic Agenda for Development Management in Africa in the 1990s. Along these lines, the World Bank articulated a governance approach to Civil Service Reform in Sub-Saharan Africa and convened a meeting on the Subject in the Gambia in 1994 and DDSMS organized in 1994 a Pan-African Conference of Ministers of Civil Service which adopted the "Tangier Declaration" that resulted in a decision of the UN General Assembly to resume its 50th Session in April 1996 and discuss the question of "Public Administration and Development".

1.2 The Meeting

The seminar was officially opened by the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister, Rev. Hendrik Witbooi, with opening remarks from representatives of the sponsoring organizations.

The seminar participants heard and discussed the following presentations:

(1) The African Public Administration and Development: From Firefighting to prevention

(2) Promotion and Management of Productivity of Public Institutions in Africa

(3) Accountability in Public Service

(4) Responsiveness in the Public Service

(5) African Public Services in the Twenty-first Century: Creating and enabling environment.

(6) Use of TCDC modality in enhancing improvement of efficiency in government.

2.0 ISSUES ADDRESSED

One obvious lesson learnt from the recent assessment of administrative reform efforts in Africa is that while a careful analysis of the size and cost of the public sector may indicate areas where resource use could be streamlined, it is necessary to go beyond the narrow monetary consideration to a comprehensive review of the productive capacity of the sector. There is an emerging consensus that public sector management reform should enhance productivity, accountability and responsiveness in public sector institutions. In the Seminar, participants discussed the following four issues:

2.1 Major Constraints to Civil Service Reform

There are many constraints and impediments to effective and sustainable implementation of civil service reform in particular, and public sector reform in general. Most of these are related

not only to a general lack of commitment and support from key stakeholders, but, perhaps more important, from a generalized lack of capacity - technical, operational, managerial, administrative, institutional -- to conceptualize, analyze, formulate, implement, monitor, evaluate, and learn from the lessons of experience resulting from the individual and collective program experiences.

In a recent review of lessons learned from one of the participating countries the following key impediments were identified:

1. Dysfunctional Civil Service organization
2. Inadequate personnel management and training
3. Insufficient management and supervisory skill
4. Inadequate facilities, assets, and maintenance culture
5. Inadequate pay and benefits
6. Lack of transparency and accountability
7. Pervasive corruption
8. Politicization of the civil service (e.g. staffing, decision-making) and threats to employment stability and security).

2.2 Productivity of Public Institutions

The impetus for reform stemmed from the realization that in many African countries, the Civil Service had become a brake rather than a catalyst to development. Reference was usually made to its bloated size, inefficiency and poor performance. However, the elaboration of a coherent policy of civil service reform in Africa involves going well beyond structural adjustment programmes to addressing the question of how to build a highly efficient civil service to meet the challenge of political and economic development in a globalized world economy. Therefore, the major challenge of public sector management in contemporary Africa will be to enhance the sector's goal attainment and resource optimization capacity.

Productivity is often hindered by the following seven factors:

1. Underfunding a ministry or a public enterprise.
2. Undermanning and overstaffing departments.
3. Misallocation of human and financial resources.
4. Absence of financial discipline.
5. Absence of regular monitoring of performance.

6. Poor leadership, management and supervision.

7. Low employee morale and poor attitudes towards work.

2.3 Accountability in Public Service

Accountability is central to efficiency in government. Accountability means holding public officials responsible for their actions. Legislatures in Africa are generally weak and the traditional role of legislatures in the budgeting process is not widely practiced in Africa. African legislatures all too often lack much of the critical information essential to the exercise of legislative oversight. While there has been increased respect for the rule of law in many countries in recent years, there is still urgent need to strengthen the legal institutions throughout the continent. There are several countries now with Ombudsman offices but these need to be strengthened.

There was general consensus among participants of the existence of serious problems of corruption both within the political and civil leadership as well as in the rank and file. This is detrimental to economic development, good government, and civil service efficiency as well as political and civil stability.

2.4 Responsiveness of the Public Service

The desired outcome of public service action is expressed in terms of meeting the public's needs and its satisfaction. This action is facilitated if the provision of services is as close to the public as possible and therefore, if the delivery of services is decentralized. Decentralization can take many forms but it is often constrained by lack of adequate human and financial resources. The participation of the public through NGOs and community-based organizations can help in making the public service more responsive.

2.5 African Public Service in the Twenty-first Century

African public administration has suffered from the persistent effects of the continent's development crisis, creating an environment characterized by over-centralization, ethnic and religious conflicts. In order to meet the challenges of the Twenty-first century, it will be necessary to create conditions for the development of a sustainable enabling environment which includes elements of good governance: the restoration and consolidation of peace, rule of law, a functioning multi-party system, free and fair elections, a responsive, responsible, and decentralized administration, a dynamic private sector and free mass media. External assistance from bilateral and multilateral partners will continue to be needed for these and related priority areas.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Following lengthy, and at times controversial discussions, participants reached the following conclusions on the four issues discussed:

3.1 Constraints to Civil Service Reform

Participants recognized the inter-relatedness among social and economic development, good governance, citizen participation, and public sector reform, including civil service productivity, accountability and responsiveness. In opening the Seminar, the Deputy Prime Minister, Honourable Rev. Hendrik Witbooi, put it in proper context when he said:

> "Our respective governments on the continent have been haunted by ... lack of capacity to formulate and implement appropriate policies and programmes; improper allocation and utilization of resources; wastage of scarce natural and human resources and the inevitable decrease in morale and motivation which are all significant contributions to the poor performance of our national economies. This situation is exarcebated when structural adjustment programmes are prescribed ... as a cure to such weaknesses. The question that faces all of us at this regional meeting is **what is to be done in the face of such challenges."**

Furthermore, the following lessons of experiences from various countries' civil service reforms were discussed:

Summary CSR Lessons of Experience

1. High level political commitment needs to support the reform process.

2. Need to broaden the process and involve the participation of clients and stakeholders outside the public sector. Local commitment and ownership is key to success.

3. Reforms take time.

4. Must take a broader strategic and integrated approach that includes governance and improved service delivery.

5. Technical capacity development, and institutional development must be enhanced.

6. It is important to take an experimental learning approach, record, document and share experiences, results, lessons, etc. so as to enhance public sector institutional learning.

7. Need for systematic inter-country sharing of CSR experiences.

8. It is important to spell out in detail the specific tactical interventions by which the overall CSR strategic goals will be achieved.

3.2 Accountability in Public Service

Participants concluded that while some bold mechanisms have been put in place to enforce accountability there is still a need to strengthen most of them, especially electoral systems, anti-corruption measures, citizen participation, codes of ethics, citizen charters or consumer councils, education, and skills training.

Realizing the limitations of the inherited public administrative system to address the emerging dynamic needs and expectations of the majority of the people, it would be necessary to strengthen the following:

(a) Research and Monitoring Units
(b) Public Accounts Committees
(c) Administrative Courts
(d) Anti-corruption bodies.

Given a conducive environment with political commitment, appropriate legal framework with clearly established guarantees and responsibilities for civil servants, as well as adequate resources, the public administration system should adopt and maintain the culture, norms and values of professionalism characterized by:

1. Neutrality and impartiality
2. Performance, efficiency and productivity
3. Continuous education, training and upgrading of skills

3.3 Responsiveness of the Public Service

A public agency's responsiveness to the public can be rated in terms of the response to user complaints: changes in volume of complaints, time taken to deal with complaints, and public satisfaction with the response or solution.

It was noted that the following factors would facilitate public sector responsiveness:

1. The capacity and willingness to provide prompt, courteous and timely services.

2. The willingness to provide information on policies, programmes, procedures, etc. in clear and simple languages.

3. The willingness to receive and solicit feedback from the citizens.

3.4 Preparing for the 21st Century

It was also concluded that sustainable improvements in African public administration for the Twenty-first Century require the creation of an enabling environment. The enabling environment would include functioning systems relating to the rule of law and constitutionalism, separation of powers, independent judiciary, democratization, decentralization, free media, and citizen education and active participation.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 CIVIL SERVICE REFORM

1. African public administration should focus on both economic and social development. Specifically, it was recommended that future initiatives should be locally owned and contextualized and draw on local knowledge and institutions.

2. It should also broadly focus on long-term governance issues rather than only the short-run narrow aspects of cost and size; emphasize the development of human capital, including staff training and citizen awareness and education; democratization and protection of civil liberties. Participation efforts, aimed at improving public administration systems, should involve trade unions, chambers of commerce, NGOs and other civil society associations in both policy formulation and execution.

3. Recruitment to positions in public administration should, in as much as possible, be based on merit, but where political, social and cultural realities dictate accommodating disadvantaged groups, governments are encouraged to take appropriate measures to rectify any inequities.

4.2 PRODUCTIVITY

1. Government organizations should be required to develop objectives, targets and performance indicators for monitoring the achievement of productivity goals. To the extent possible, employees should be involved in the determination of objectives and in setting performance targets.

2. To enhance productivity in the civil service, officials should be provided with adequate pay and appropriate infrastructural facilities, information technology, equipment and supplies.

3. Management development institutes should be strengthened as instruments for promoting productivity through the expansion and diversification of competency training and retraining programmes. They would also benefit from sub-regional and regional networking and selective twining arrangements with appropriate institutions.

4.3 ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS

1. Civic education should be conducted to create citizen awareness of political rights and duties as well as the political potency of the election box. Training programmes for public officials should highlight accountability issues as much as possible.

2. Methods of enforcing accountability such as parliamentary control, legislative accountability, ombudsman, etc. should be strengthened and external assistance should be mobilized, where appropriate.

3. To enhance accountable behaviour on the part of public servants, greater attention should be paid to inculcating professional ethics and standards, including those adopted by professional associations (doctors, lawyers, accountants,).

4. (i) Countries should adopt stringent anti-corruption measures including the adoption of a code of ethics, the obligation on public officials to declare assets and the provision of adequate resources to ensure effective enforcement as a way of curbing harmful effects of corrupt practices on development.

(ii) Participants also called on northern countries to join hands with African and Southern Countries in combating corrupt practices associated with international trade (so-called "trade bribes").

5. Government should provide protection for whistleblowers who expose corrupt behaviours both in the public and private sectors.

6. Decentralization requires a strong state that provides a deconcentrated context for meaningful devolution. If there is no strong deconcentrated state, devolution could lead to the collapse of the state. To effectively decentralize, African governments are encouraged to devolve power to local levels as a way of deconcentrating the center and enhancing participation and accountability. Decentralization efforts, however, should be accompanied by adequate provision of financial and human resources.

4.4 PREPARING FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

1. In view of the persistent weaknesses of African public services, it is recommended that national governments, with donor assistance, should mobilize resources for retaining, attracting and effective utilizing qualified human resource, reversing the brain-drain and developing positive enabling environment which prepares African public administration for the local, regional and global challenges of the Twenty-first Century.

2. In order to ensure that African civil services are able to cope with the challenges of the next century, it is recommended that they adjust to the challenges and opportunities of the evolving information technology revolution: acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, tools, software and equipment. It is particularly recommended that adequate arrangements for in-house maintenance be made with a view to developing a culture of maintenance. It is important that attention be paid to the type, quality and quantity of data, information, and knowledge which will impact on decision-making at all levels of public administration.

3. It is recommended that the redefinition of the role of the state for the 21st Century should emphasize its responsibility for guaranteeing the freedom and fundamental rights of citizens in the political sphere while assuming the role of "etat regulateur" (the enabling state) in the economic and social spheres.

4. Administrative reform measures required for meeting the challenges of the 21st century should include:

- involvement of trade unions, chamber of commerce, NGOs and other civil society groups in both policy formulation and execution;
- attention to relevant aspects of the traditional values and practices in each country
- rationalization and coordination of the activities of governments.

4.5 USE OF TCDC MODALITY IN ENHANCING IMPROVEMENT OF EFFICIENCY IN GOVERNMENT

1. General Information

It was noted that the moment was propitious for developing countries to consider South-South cooperation, in particular TCDC, in developing concrete exchanges of experiences, capacities and ideas in the areas of accountability, productivity and responsiveness of the public sector.

While noting that technical cooperation on a TCDC basis does not preclude the use of traditional North-South cooperation, where appropriate, it was however necessary for Governments to consider TCDC as a viable option given its advantages for sustainability and cost effectiveness, at a time when overseas development assistance funds were on the decline. Particular mention was made of the new directions for TCDC emphasizing the role of pivotal developing countries in providing their capacities in priority areas. Furthermore, emphasis was put on the enhanced multi-dimensional information system i.e. TCDC-INRES which provides valuable information on institutional capacities of developing countries which is critical to overcome lack of awareness of such capacities.

It was recalled that among the recommendations by the UN Secretary-General in his report on Public Administration and Development to the resumed 50th session of the General Assembly, South-South cooperation, TCDC in particular, was included as a viable modality for the exchange of experiences among developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

2. Recommendations

In the ensuing discussions, the main interventions were centered on the role TCDC should play in helping to identify needs and capacities that took into consideration the socio-cultural context of the region. The following recommendations were made for implementation, utilizing the TCDC and South-South Cooperation modality:

1. Publications on public administration and development, exchanges on information technologies and best practice cases in public administrationshould be encouraged, vigorously pursued and widely disseminated.

2. Resources should be mobilized for training and exchanges on short-term basis among developing countries.

3. International organizations, the UN in particular, and donor countries should assist the African region in utilizing its own capacities to provide training in the modernization of the national schools of public administration.

ANNEX 1

REGIONAL MEETING ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DEVELOPMENT: FROM STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT TO IMPROVED EFFICIENCY IN GOVERNMENT/ RÉUNION RÉGIONALE POUR L'AFRIQUE: ADMINISTRATION PUBLIQUE ET DÉVELOPPEMENT: DE L'ADJUSTEMENT STRUCTUREL À L'AMÉLIORATION DE L'EFFACITÉ DU GOUVERNEMENT

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REGIONAL MEETING ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DEVELOPMENT: FROM STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT TO IMPROVED EFFICIENCY IN GOVERNMENT
Windhoek, 25 - 27 March 1996
PROGRAMME

Sunday, 24 March 1996

19:00 Reception hosted by Office of the Prime Minister and United Nations in the Omatako Room

Monday, 25 March 1996

08:30 Registration

09:25 Arrival of Honourable Deputy Prime Minister, Rev Hendrik Witbooi

09:35 National Anthem

09:40 Comments by the UNDP Resident Representative
Mr Steve Adei

09:55 Opening Speech by the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister,
Rev. Hendrik Witbooi

10:10 Vote of thanks by representative of UNDDSMS

10:15 Coffee

10:45 Opening remarks:

- United Nations Development Programme, Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (UNDP/TCDC)
- Economic Comission for Africa (ECA)
- Commonwealth Secretariat
- Organization of Work

11:45 **Improvement of efficiency of the Civil Service**

- General presentation by Prof. Moses Kiggundu, resource person
- General discussion

13:00 Lunch

Wednesday, 27 March 1996

9:00 **African Public Services in the 21st Century: Creating an Enabling Political and Administrative Environment**

- Presentation by: Mr. Ismail Ali Ismail
  Resource Person from the Economic Commission for Africa
- Panel: Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Guinea Bissau, Sao Tomé, and Sudan
- Open discussion by all participants

10:30 Coffee

11:00 **Use of TCDC Modality in Enhancing Improvement of Efficiency in Government**

- Presentation by: Mrs. Joan Archer
  Regional Officer for Africa, UNDP Special Unit for TCDC, New Yor
- Open Discussion

12:30 Lunch

14:30 **Presentation and adoption of the report and recommendations**

17:00 **Closing of the Meeting**

REGIONAL MEETING ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DEVELOPMENT: FROM STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT TO IMPROVED EFFICIENCY IN GOVERNMENT
Windhoek, 25 - 27 March 1996
PROGRAMME

REVISION

Sunday, 24 March 1996

19:00 Reception hosted by Office of the Prime Minister and United Nations in the Omatako Room

Monday, 25 March 1996

08:30 Registration

09:25 Arrival of Honourable Deputy Prime Minister, Rev Hendrik Witbooi

09:35 National Anthem

09:40 Comments by the UNDP Resident Representative Mr Steve Adei

09:55 Opening Speech by the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister, Rev. Hendrik Witbooi

10:10 Vote of thanks by representative of UNDDSMS

10:15 Coffee

10:45 Opening remarks:

- United Nations Department of Development Support and Management Services (UN/DDSMS) - MR R MURAPA
- French Ministry of Cooperation - Mme N BELLOUBET-FRIER
- Economic Comission for Africa (ECA) - MR ISMAIL ALI
- Commonwealth Secretariat - MR SAM T AGERE
- Organization of Work - MR R MURAPA

11:45 **Improvement of efficiency of the Civil Service**

- General presentation by Prof. Moses Kiggundu, resource person
- General discussion

13:00 Lunch

14:30 **Productivity of the Public Service**

- Presentation by: Dr. Sam Agere, Resource Person and Advisor, Commonwealth Secretariat
- Panel: Mauritania, Mauritius, Namibia, Rwanda and Senegal
  Moderator: Morocco
- Open discussion by all participants

15:45 Coffee

16:00 **Productivity of the Public Service (cont'd)**

Tuesday 26 March 1996

08:30 African Public Services in the 21st Century: Creating an Enabling Political and Administrative Environment
Moderator: Cote d'Ivoire
Speaker: Mr Ismail Ali Ismail
General Discussion

10:00 Use of TCDC Modality in Enhancing Improvement of Efficiency in Government
Moderator: Soa Tome et Principe
Speaker: Ms Joan Archer

10:30 - 10:45 Coffee

10:45 - 11:30 General Discussion

14:30 Presentation and adoption of the report and recommendation

15:30 Closing of Meeting

Wednesday, 27 March 1996

09:00 **African Public Services in the 21st Century: Creating an Enabling Political and Administrative Environment**

- Presentation: Mr Ismail Ali Ismail
  Resource Person from the Economic Commission for Africa

- Panel: Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mozambique and Seychelles
  Moderator: Cote d'Ivoire

- Open discussion by all participants

10:30 Coffee

11:00 **Use of TCDC Modality in Enhancing Improvement of Efficiency in Government**

- Presentation by: Mrs Joan Archer
  Regional Officer for Africa, UNDP Special Unit for TCDC, New York

- Open discussion

12:30 Lunch

14:30 **Presentation and adoption of the report and recommendations**

17:00 **Closing of the Meeting**