



# Public Administration Reform

## Practice Note

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADB	-	Asian Development Bank
BDP	-	Bureau for Development Policy
CIS	-	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSO	-	Civil Society Organization
CSM	-	Civil Service Management
CSR	-	Civil Service Reform
DfID	-	Department for International Development (U.K.)
DGG	-	Democratic Governance Group
DLGUD	-	Decentralization, Local Governance and Urban Development
HDI	-	Human Development Index
ICT	-	Information and Communication Technology
ICTD	-	Information and Communications Technology for Development
IFI	-	International Financial Institutions
KISS	-	Keep It Simple, Short
MDGs	-	Millennium Development Goals
NHDR	-	National Human Development Report
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organization
NHRP	-	National Human Rights Programme
NPM	-	New Public Management
OECD	-	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAR	-	Public Administration Reform
PEM	-	Public Expenditure Management
PETS	-	Public Expenditure Tracking Systems
PRSP	-	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PSC	-	Public Service Commissions
RBAS	-	Regional Bureau for Arab States (UNDP)
SAP	-	Structural Adjustment Programme
SMART	-	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-limited
TRAC	-	Target from Resource Assignment from Core
UN	-	United Nations
UNCDF	-	United Nations Capital Development Fund

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Public Administration Reform (PAR) has historically been a core area for UNDP support. Today, UNDP supports 380 projects in 112 countries, covering various aspects of PAR. Paradoxically, it is also very difficult to define a UNDP role compatible with its resources. Moreover, a number of other players have increased their role in this field. This has led UNDP to question and reorient its strategic position.

This policy note takes the view that democratic governance is a key component in achieving the MDGs. An efficient, responsive, transparent and accountable public administration is a central part of democratic governance; it is also the basic means through which government strategies to achieve the MDGs can be implemented. In the LDCs and post conflict countries in particular, underdeveloped private sectors require the public administration to play a major role in the delivery of services and the provision of much needed economic infrastructure. But, most important of all, an established non-partisan civil service is vital to democracy as it makes peaceful and orderly political succession possible, and thus genuine pluralism.

In the area of PAR, UNDP's mandate to reduce poverty and foster respect for human rights implies designing programmes that will have the highest long-term impact on the poor and disadvantaged (especially women and marginalized groups). This means that UNDP must be especially concerned with ensuring participation of these groups in the design and implementation of PAR programmes. Taking appropriate account of the political and cultural context is axiomatic. In addition, UNDP's focus on PAR is not only informed by, but also derives from its commitment to a rights based approach to development. First, a cardinal concept of the Millennium Declaration is the right to development, for which good governance is a guarantee. Second, key components of a human rights based approach can only be achieved with the aid of an effective public administration. The Practice Note identifies a niche for UNDP in PAR in which comprises, in summary, of a focus on open government and decentralization as the twin pillars of UNDP's pro-poor and human rights-based approach to.

The Note focuses on the executive branch of government. It takes an approach that is informed by recent thinking in the realm of public management, which borrows from a number of other areas of research as well as from the private sector to find new solutions, places the public sector in its cultural and political environment, and sees the role of public manager as an active and motivating agent. Nevertheless, it also recognizes that many of the more radical reforms attempted in countries such as New Zealand and the United Kingdom are too ambitious and present real dangers for most developing countries; simply getting the public administration to execute the will of its political masters is often a challenge in itself.

The policy note is divided into two parts. The first part provides the conceptual framework for PAR, sets out UNDP's mandate, and summarizes the issues around PAR. The second part points to UNDP's comparative advantages and provides practical guidance and tools for PAR programming. Lessons experienced by UNDP, based on its review of current PAR initiatives and evaluations of past projects, provide practitioners with insights on how to approach PAR.

This note is a product of a wide participatory process, under the guidance of the Public Administration Reform Policy Adviser in New York, and in conjunction with the PAR policy adviser in the Bangkok SURF. It benefited from extensive discussions in the Democratic Governance Practice Network, inputs from BDP DGG policy advisers at headquarters and in the SURFs, and from the involvement of the Democratic Governance Practice Team.

## PART ONE: UNDP AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM

### 1. Introduction

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At the [United Nations Millennium Summit](#), world leaders put development at the heart of the global agenda by adopting the [Millennium Development Goals \(MDGs\)](#). On the ground in 166 countries, UNDP uses its global network to help the UN system and its partners to raise awareness and track progress, while connecting countries to the knowledge and resources needed to achieve these goals. The Millennium Declaration, upon which the MDGs are based, recognizes democratic governance, of which public administration is a key component, as central to the achievement of these goals.

An efficient, responsive, transparent and accountable public administration is not only of paramount importance for the proper functioning of a nation; it is also the basic means through which government strategies to achieve the MDGs can be implemented. Also, because the public administration is one of the main vehicles through which the relationship between the state and civil society and the private sector is realised, supporting PAR is a means towards achieving higher-order development goals – particularly equitable growth, poverty reduction, peace and stability.

The importance of a well-performing public administration was reiterated in Resolution 57/277 of the General Assembly on Public Administration and Development which states that “an efficient, accountable, effective and transparent public administration, at both the national and international levels, has a key role to play in the implementation of internationally agreed goals, including the MDGs”. In that context, the Resolution stresses the need “to strengthen public sector administrative and managerial capacity-building, in particular in developing countries and countries in economic transition”.

This practice note establishes a strategic framework for the support of public administration for democratic governance. Based on lessons learned, it synthesises practical thinking and approach on the issue, highlights principal areas of support, and provides practical guidance and recommendations for public administration programming, as well as signposts to relevant operational tools and references. It is composed of two main parts. The first part provides the conceptual framework for PAR, while the second part points to UNDP’s comparative advantages and provides practical guidance and tools for PAR programming.

### 2. The Role of Public Administration Reform in Poverty Reduction: A Conceptual Framework

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#### 2.1 *What do we mean by Public Administration Reform (PAR)?*

Public administration refers to:

1. The *aggregate machinery* (policies, rules, procedures, systems, organizational structures, personnel, etc.) funded by the state budget and in charge of the management and direction of the affairs of the executive government, and its interaction with other stakeholders in the state, society and external environment.

2. The *management* and implementation of the whole set of government activities dealing with the implementation of laws, regulations and decisions of the government and the management related to the provision of public services.

Public Administration Reform can be very comprehensive and include process changes in areas such as organisational structures, decentralisation, personnel management, public finance, results-based management, regulatory reforms etc. It can also refer to targeted reforms such as the revision of the civil service statute.

The Note focuses on the executive branch of government. It does not include the administration of the other branches of government, including the legislative and the judicial branches, which share some of the issues of the executive branch, but are nevertheless distinguished in their particulars. It takes an approach that is informed by recent thinking in the realm of public management, which borrows from a number of other areas of research as well as from the private sector to find new solutions, places the public sector in its cultural and political environment, and sees the role of public manager as an active and motivating agent. Nevertheless, it also recognizes that many of the more radical reforms attempted in countries such as New Zealand and the United Kingdom are too ambitious and present real dangers for most developing countries; simply getting the public administration to execute the will of its political masters is often a challenge in itself.

Obviously, a practice note on PAR cannot tackle all these issues. In line with UNDP's approach to Democratic Governance, some of these very complex elements of PAR (decentralisation, anti-corruption, E-governance and access to information) will be treated in separate Practice Notes, or are indeed considered separate sub-practices. Other important issues will be addressed in Primers (e.g. Public Administration in Crisis Countries, the Impact of HIV/AIDS on Public Administration in Worst Affected Countries, Gender Mainstreaming in Public Administration Reform and others).

## **2.2 Evolution of Public Administration Reform**

Increasing concern for PAR in developing countries derives from three main intellectual threads.

- A. New public management -- a number of Anglo-Saxon countries (the UK, New Zealand, Australia, the United States and Canada) starting in the early 1980s, began implementing wide ranging reform programmes that provided both the model and the experience that could be applied in developing countries. NPM seeks to roll back the role of the state by applying private sector management principles to government organisations. The enthusiastic dissemination of this model to developing countries was seen by some as a new attempt to colonize development administration with a standardised, western approach to PAR. Nevertheless, the language of NPM, and the principles of client focus, decentralization, the separation of policy making from implementation, and the use of private partners for service delivery continues to inform current thinking about PAR.
- B. Structural adjustment reforms -- in the mid 1980s, efforts at reforming the public administration in developing countries, supported by the IFIs, focussed on reducing overall costs of the government, mainly through privatisation of state owned enterprises and reduction of the wage bill to bring government spending down to sustainable levels and free resources for other uses more beneficial to the overall economy. However, most of the public sector reforms supported through the SAPs have met with considerable resistance (not least because in many countries the public sector is the principal source of formal employment), and their implementation has rarely been successful

- C. Transition from central planning to market economy, and from single party systems to multi-party democracies -- The fall of the Soviet Union has persuaded governments of previously socialist countries to transform their economies to adhere more to market principles often linked to political reforms. In the 1990s, a large number of economies, especially in Central and Eastern Europe (but also in countries in South-East Asia) began this transition. This implied the reorientation of the system of public administration.

### **2.3 Recent trends in Public Administration Reform**

In spite of the influential neo-liberal arguments of the 1980s and 1990s which sought to roll back the state, recent surveys find that citizens want state institutions that are democratic, efficient in the use of public resources, effective in delivering public goods, but also strong and capable of standing up to powerful global forces. People want the state and its public administration to act as a social and economic promoter, capable of ensuring equitable distribution of opportunities, sustainable management of resources and equitable access to opportunities (political, economic, social and cultural). An established public administration has been, arguably, far more vital to economic development in historical fact than either free elections or parliaments. In the LDCs and post conflict countries in particular, underdeveloped private sectors require the public administration to play a major role in the delivery of services and the provision of much needed economic infrastructure. But, most important of all, an established non-partisan civil service is vital to democracy as it makes it possible to have a peaceful and orderly political succession, and thus genuine pluralism.

In recent years public sector management is increasingly seen as more than just modernising state institutions and reducing civil service costs. It is also about fostering dynamic partnerships with the civil society and the private sector, to improve the quality of service delivery, enhance social responsibilities and ensure the broad participation of citizens in decision-making and feedback on public service performance.

#### *2.3.1 Public Administration Reform and the MDGs.*

The Millennium Declaration recognises good governance, of which public administration is a central part, as the means for achieving the goals of the Declaration. Support to modernizing state institutions is linked to achieving the MDGs in several ways. First, more resources in poor countries are freed to be used in pursuit of MDG goals if the efficiency of the public administration is increased. Second, by increasing transparency and eradicating corruption, fewer scarce resources in poor countries will be misdirected away from achieving MDGs. Third, a public administration that responds to the needs of citizens, especially women and marginalized people, is critical to ensuring the sustainability of the achievements within the rubric of the MDGs. Finally, increasing the accountability of state institutions is an essential feature of governments' strategies to close the democratic deficit, which is key to achieving the MDGs within the context of the broader Millennium Declaration.

#### *2.3.2 The rights-based approach to development*

More recently, as the concept of governance has evolved, and as the exercise of democratic freedoms has become associated with sustainable human development, so the role of state institutions in providing services and protecting rights and freedoms has become more prominent in development thinking. The added emphasis during the last decade on anti-corruption and transparency draws from this thread.

UNDP's focus on public administration is not only informed by, but also derives from its commitment to a rights based approach to development. First, a cardinal concept of the

Millennium Declaration is the right to development, for which good governance is an essential guarantee. Second, key components of a human rights based approach can only be achieved with the aid, *inter alia*, of an effective public administration. These are:

- Participation and transparency in decision-making -- participation throughout the development process is a right, and obliges the state and other actors to create an enabling environment for the participation of all stakeholders.
- Non-discrimination – equity and equality cut across all rights and are the key ingredients for development and poverty reduction.
- Empowerment – people should be enabled to exercise their human rights through the use of tools such as legal and political action.
- Accountability of actors -- public and private institutions and actors should be accountable to the public, especially to poor people, to promote, protect and fulfil human rights and to be held responsible if these are not enforced.

Finally, since the rights-based approach seeks to develop not only the capacities of rights holders to claim and exercise their rights, but also of duty bearers to fulfil human rights obligations, it increases the pressure on the public administration to put the poor and marginalized groups at the core of policy and of development strategies.

### 2.3.3 Globalisation

The pressures of globalisation have focused more attention onto the public sector. While globalisation could serve to integrate people, it has demonstrated a capacity to marginalize many. To combat this requires governance approaches that embrace transparency, accountability and stakeholder participation in policy debates, as well as a government that uses its resources efficiently to allow its citizens to compete in a global market, and to reduce the gap between the poorest and richest inhabitants of the world. Globalisation not only increases the need for strong international and regional venues for dialogue, global policy-making and enforcement of international agreements and regulations, but also enhances the pressures for strong national governments, competent to integrate and negotiate in a global environment, and capable to stand up to global forces that neglect the particular claims and challenges of developing countries, in particular the Least Developed ones.

### 2.3.4 Decentralization

In many countries, decentralisation provides the context in which PAR Interventions are taken up. A major drawback with many decentralisation initiatives is the lack of administrative capacity of the public administration at the local levels and the absence of accountability lines of this administration to the local people. For decentralized government to succeed there needs to be a centre to enable it; thus attention must focus on, for example, fiscal transfer mechanisms; mechanisms for ensuring local level planning and budgeting is informed by and integrated in national planning and budgeting; systems for monitoring and oversight linked to the budget; and appropriate human resource régimes.

## **3. UNDP's Mandate and Current Portfolio**

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### **3.1 UNDP's Mandate**

In the area of PAR, UNDP's mandate implies designing programmes that will have the highest long-term impact on the poor and disadvantaged (especially women and marginalized groups). This means that UNDP must be especially concerned with ensuring participation of these groups in the design and implementation of PAR programmes. It also means avoiding



wherever possible solutions that risk impoverishing people, even when such action seems to promise benefits for the country as a whole in the long term. In UNDP's experience this promise is rarely satisfied. Such reform is dependent on continuing support and ownership by people and their political representatives that is undermined if it appears to be affecting them adversely. Additionally, taking appropriate account of the political and cultural context is axiomatic. Beyond the moral reasons for taking this perspective, there are practical arguments – programmes have rarely succeeded when faced with political or cultural opposition.

### 3.2 UNDP's current portfolio

UNDP has recently examined its experience in PAR as part of the background work to this Note (see [A Review of Current and Recent Public Administration Reform Interventions by UNDP \[1999-2003\]](#) that can be found at the PAR sub-practice website accessible from <http://www.ecissurf.org/index.cfm?module=Custom&mode=Gov19042004>). The study includes a review of existing projects, evaluations of past projects, and internal reviews of past experience. It found that, in 2003, UNDP was supporting 380 projects in 112 countries and 3 regions. The majority of projects (240 projects or 63% of all projects) were within countries of Medium Human Development. Most projects were in Europe and the CIS with 118 projects in 27 countries (31% of all projects). Forty-eight projects (or 13%) were in Africa. The following table provides a breakdown by region and by type of intervention according to the typology in the Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund document.

<b>Region</b>	<b>Percent of Projects</b>
Asia and the Pacific	21.32%
Arab States	17.37%
Africa	12.63%
Latin America and the Caribbean	17.63%
Europe and the CIS	31.05%
<b>Type of Project</b>	<b>Percent of Projects</b>
Those that aim to promote a professional civil service through retrenchment, wage and benefit reform, position placement, performance management systems and creating opportunities for women in the civil service	7.14%
Those concerned with training civil servants through generalized training and capacity building, and specialized and technical training programmes	63.27%
Those concerned with functional reviews aimed at improving policy and reform choices, reorganizing administrative structures and creating coherent legal frameworks to govern the public service	16.73%
Those that aim to promote the use of ICT to enhance public services through the development of e-governance strategies and Management Information Systems	12.86%

Lessons derived from the analysis of these projects as well as evaluations of past projects are used to inform the practice guidance in this Note. In addition, UNDP's own recent reforms, particularly in the areas of Results Based Management, are piloting innovations from which lessons can be learnt.

## 4. Principal Issues and Areas for Support

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Capacity development in the public administration needs to be addressed at three levels: the individual level, the institutional level, and the societal level. At the individual level it involves

establishing the conditions under which civil servants are able to embark on a continuous process of learning and adapting to change – building on existing knowledge and skills and enhancing and using them in new directions. This requires a new approach to human resource management and also points to the importance of knowledge management, as the new vehicle for increased learning. At the institutional level, a similar approach needs to be applied. Rather than creating new institutions, often based on foreign blueprints, support should focus on the modernisation of their machinery, with a priority on systems and processes. Key in this process are capacity development for policy support, for organisational effectiveness and for revenue and expenditure management. Finally capacity development at the societal level is required to support the paradigm of a more interactive public administration that equally learns from its actions and from the feedback it receives from the population. For people to view the public administration as a responsive and accountable service provider, whose performance needs to be monitored, societal change is required.

Based on this, Public Administration Reform can be divided into four main areas:

- (i) Civil service reform, which is concerned with human resources in the public sector such as capacity, wages and conditions.
- (ii) Increasing the efficiency and responsiveness of the policy-making system.
- (iii) Reforming the machinery of government, which is concerned with the rules, institutions, and structure of the administration necessary to carry out government policy, including new tools for public administration, notably e-governance and e-government.
- (iv) Reforming the public sector revenue and expenditure management system.

#### **4.1 Civil service reform**

Civil service reform (CSR), which implies developing the capacity of the civil service to fulfil its mandate, defined to include issues of recruitment and promotion, pay, number of employees, performance appraisal and related matters, still constitutes the main part of countries' PAR programmes (although it is not as often funded through UNDP). CSR has historically focused on the need to contain the costs of public sector employment through retrenchment and restructuring, but has broadened towards focusing on the longer-term goal of creating a government workforce of the right size and skills-mix, and with the right motivation, professional ethos, client focus, and accountability.

The overall cost of the civil service remains a valid concern, of course. Addressing the causes of and reversing the spiralling civil service wage bill experienced by many countries in the 1970s and 1980s remains a primary concern. More recently, added to these problems, a number of others have been better understood that relate more to the quality of the civil service and their motivation, such as:

1. Poor performance management, leading to inadequate incentives to perform well.
2. Recruitment and promotion systems that poorly reflect the realities of the country, are often overly concerned with formal education, and fail to attract or promote qualified staff.
3. Politicization of the civil service.
4. Lack of a mission or the respect of the public.

Following are the main issues that commonly face governments when designing CSR programmes.

#### 4.1.1 Mission

Too often development partners have undervalued the considerable stores of national pride and social responsibility that persist in many developing countries. While by no means anything more than a first step, having a mission orientation can help establish a clear sense of direction and commitment within the organization, either for the organization as a whole and for different departments and units by:

- Establishing a shared vision for public administration
- Helping managers clarify in their own minds what the business of the organization is
- Providing the focus for managers and other staff in meeting organizational goals
- Stimulating among the staff a sense of membership of the organization
- Providing a framework within which to determine targets and more precise objectives
- Providing a clear articulation for the public of the organization's reason for being.

The central feature of mission orientation is a mission statement. The elaboration of the statement itself is part of the process, as is the dissemination and articulation of the mission internally and externally. (See Singapore example.)

#### 4.1.2 Training

Under-qualified and insufficiently experienced personnel, sometimes promoted too quickly to senior positions, is an universal problem in developing country civil services, and training is a central feature of almost all PAR programmes. Interventions range from specialist technical training to general educational and management skills. The last decade has seen greater emphasis on training more broadly, including encouraging sensitisation of public sector employees to the greater developmental aims of their mandates, and cross cutting issues such as gender, HIV/AIDS and environmental protection. More recently still, some countries are focusing on training in leadership and change management (see the Lesotho case.) The big issues in training are: a) the appropriateness of the training; b) selecting the candidates for training; and

#### **Singapore Public Service Mission Statement**

##### OUR MISSION

We work with the elected Government to shape Singapore's future, forge a common vision among Singaporeans and transform the vision into a reality.

We safeguard the independence, sovereignty, security and prosperity of Singapore.

We uphold justice and equality, guided by the principles of incorruptibility, meritocracy and impartiality.

##### OUR GOALS

We build a dynamic, successful and vibrant nation of excellence, with a safe, secure and stable environment.

We create the best conditions for Singapore to succeed and for Singaporeans to attain high standards of living.

We foster a cohesive and harmonious society, based on respect, care and concern for fellow citizens.

##### OUR CUSTOMERS

We provide quality service - responsive, efficient and courteous.

We treat our customers fairly and honestly, holding to high standards of professionalism, integrity and conduct.

We do our best to help our customers and meet their needs.

##### OUR STAFF

We value our staff. We maximise their potential through continuing training and development. We encourage them to continuously improve their knowledge, skills and capabilities.

We offer our staff challenging and worthwhile responsibilities. We expect them to show commitment, resourcefulness and enterprise. We provide them with the tools, resources and environment to do a good job.

We require our staff to work well with others. We can develop sound plans and implement them effectively only when people at different levels with diverse abilities work closely together.

##### OUR BELIEFS

Respect for individual staff members is the first prerequisite for outstanding service and wholehearted commitment.

Change is essential for continuously maintaining and improving Singapore's international competitiveness in the global economy.

Excellence drives us to be the best that we can be in all that we do.

Learning from others, from feedback, and from mistakes is the best way to benefit from experience.

Leadership, which is bold, discerning and open to new ideas and insights, is crucial for steady progress and superior achievement.

c) retaining trained employees once they have been trained. While there are a number of types of training that could be chosen, in-service training remains the most common. For more junior personnel these could include training at a local training college, or secondments, while for mid-level and senior personnel, specialized training has proven helpful. Study trips abroad are generally popular, and can bring benefits, but are expensive and can easily be abused. All training provides a form of perk, and scrupulous transparency is required in the selection of candidates. However, it is rarely cost effective to invest in training civil servants unless there is a programme to improve employment conditions. The fear that newly trained civil servants will be wooed away to the private sector is often overblown (since civil servants rarely choose to relinquish their benefits), but the danger of moonlighting and low motivation increases. A national policy on training is important in securing the sustainability of training programmes. Finally, training is generally confined to central government employees. With decentralization, including local officials within national training programmes is increasingly important.

#### **Training in Slovenia**

There is a wide diversity of education and training institutions in Slovenia, but in service training for the public servants is coordinated by the Administrative Academy, based in the Ministry of Interior. Most trainers are contracted, and the academy's main role is the organization rather than delivery of training courses. The new Civil Service Law includes a whole chapter on training and introduces a competitive element into training process. Recent emphasis has moved towards a more user friendly, accessible public administration serving the interests of all citizens. Improvements in efficiency and responsiveness, and the long-term introduction of performance measures, are being supported through the development of an intensive and continuing programme of in-service training for the new civil service.

#### **4.1.3 Establishment control**

Establishment control is the foundation for all other Civil Service Management functions. The first step in a reform programme is to establish who is employed by the public sector, to perform which tasks, and how much they are being paid. However, such a census is often surprisingly difficult to do, and can take an extended period of time. While they have some visibility and short-term benefits in terms of shedding 'ghost' workers, these benefits are not as large as hoped and the census is rarely useful in the long term unless it is linked to some form of permanent payroll and personnel system reform. Adequate training for those responsible for data collection and compilation is essential as are effective mechanisms for resolving disputes. Traditional forms of establishment control consist of staffing tables approved by the central personnel office or Ministry of Finance or both, containing all positions for a given structure. This structure forms the basis for budgeting as well as recruitment and promotion. In many developing countries, non-established positions represent a significant part of the overall payroll, and 'temporary' workers are often permanent in fact. While the state usually has limited legal responsibility towards these workers, they nevertheless present a political liability. The traditional establishment model has been challenged for being inherently incrementalist (managers fight for each new position one at a time) and because it discourages the holistic approach to staffing and budgeting that would give managers greater

#### **Piloting managerial approaches in Vietnam.**

The Government of Viet Nam launched a public administration programme in 1995 a key component of which tested giving 10 districts and city departments in Ho Chi Minh City temporary autonomy in using their payroll and administrative cost budget. Stakeholders agreed upon principles to be observed including no increase in the size of the workforce or in administrative costs and transparency in management. The pilot project resulted in a reduction of more than 13% in staff numbers and savings of more than 18%. These savings were used to raise staff salaries and other benefits, contingency funds and support for redundant staff. Units used their autonomy to reorganize their apparatus and streamline their staff, by reallocating them according to their expertise and qualifications and removing overlaps within the organization. City managers and central Government officials reported improvements in budget management, and efficiency and effectiveness of services. Administrative units learnt that savings were possible and that routine request for budgetary increases were not necessary.

discretion over resources, both human and financial. Innovative approaches, although still few, now promote a more managerial approach to establishment control, focusing more on achieving results within agreed 'running costs' (see the Vietnam case.)

#### *4.1.4 Career vs. position system*

Merit based public employment systems can be broadly divided into career systems and position-based systems. A career system is 'closed' in the sense that entry is usually to the lower ranks and more senior positions are filled from within the ranks. In position-based systems (also called job-in-rank systems), on the other hand, the emphasis is placed on selecting the right candidate for the position to be filled. The career system is most often associated with civil code traditions and the position-based system with Anglo-Saxon traditions. Choosing the appropriate system is the responsibility of the government and must result from consultation and deliberation among the technical staff involved and relevant policy makers. Because so many of the recent advances in thinking in public administration have taken place within the Anglo-Saxon tradition, there is a tendency to favour features of the position system. Each system has its merits and disadvantages. Where the position-based system can bring new talent into the civil service where it is needed, and tends to free managers to focus on results, a career system is better at providing incentives for good performance and at ensuring that investments in training remain within the civil service. When grafting mechanisms from one system onto another governments should ensure that the new mechanisms are developed to be compatible with the existing system, and are properly understood in the context of the existing traditions. Almost all developed country systems are increasingly hybridising and adopting aspects of both a position and a career system. Thus, countries with a civil code tradition can find useful examples of a position structure in developments in the French model over the last decades, for example, without having to rely simply on variations of the Anglo-Saxon tradition.

#### *4.1.5 Civil service management arrangements.*

There are usually two main types of management arrangements for the personnel function: the Anglo-Saxon type Public (or Civil) Service Commission (PSC) and its executive office, and the Personnel Department or an Inter-ministerial committee with an executive office under the Prime Minister or a Cabinet Minister in charge of the Civil Service which is usually found in the countries under civil law. In addition to these there is usually also a financial control organ in the Ministry of Finance, in charge of payroll management and budgetary control. Consultants versed in the Anglo-Saxon tradition usually promote the Public Service Commission approach while others will promote the civil law type solution. While PSCs have the reputation of being more neutral and independent and therefore more conducive to creating a merit-based and professional civil service, they are alien to many countries' administrative traditions.

The second choice that needs to be made is between a centralised and decentralised personnel management system. A centralized personnel management system retains close supervision of the personnel management functions at central level. The decentralised model increases the decision-making autonomy of the line managers on most personnel management functions (such as recruitment, promotion, and training) leaving the centre with the responsibility of defining broad policy guidelines, issuing regulations, and monitoring the performance of the decentralised personnel management units. In a number of countries however, appointments to the senior executive positions are kept under direct control of the central agency.

#### 4.1.6 Pay and compensation.

Poor pay and compensation regimes due, among other things, to overstaffing lead to low motivation, corruption, loss of qualified staff, poor services in remote areas, and undermine investments in training<sup>1</sup>. There are four main issues with pay and compensation, all of which derive in large part from efforts to contain the overall wage bill while at the same time implementing reform programmes:

- i. Wages are too low – public sector staff in developing countries often face pay scales that at best are barely sufficient to live off; are not competitive with the private sector; or do not compensate for postings to remote locations.
- ii. Wages are compressed – wages of senior personnel do not reflect their skills, training, and seniority. In Zambia, for example, permanent secretaries were paid only 5 or 6 times the lowest employee wage.
- iii. Non-monetary compensation and allowances play a major role in total compensation – benefits such as housing allowances, official cars, pensions, and other retirement benefits often form a large part of total compensation. In some developing countries systems of monetary pay have collapsed and alternative rewards systems taken over, but these create opaque and arbitrary systems of compensation that make wage bills difficult to monitor, manage and contain.
- iv. Distortions created by varying donor practices on salary supplements.

Tackling pay regimes presents numerous challenges. However, an iterative process, applied with considerable flexibility and pragmatism, with particular attention to sequencing, is more likely to bear positive results. Thus, for example, a staggered decompression over a number of years, combined with the promise of an overall pay rise and the introduction of a new career system which promises previously unavailable opportunities for advancement, can blunt opposition to a programme of sequenced lay-offs and build support for reform.

A further issue is that donors often seek to solve the short-term question of poor motivation by selectively raising some civil servants' salaries ('topping-up'.) This practice is distortionary, unsustainable and is generally frowned upon at donor headquarters, but in the field is often claimed to be the only way to achieve results. In practice, in the most capacity constrained countries, it is very difficult to avoid some sort of 'topping-up'. Various attempts have been made to find less distortionary and more

#### **Priority Mission Groups in Cambodia**

The issue of salary supplements is a vital one in Cambodia. The overall amount spent on incentives paid by different donors is estimated at not less than USD 3 million per annum from multi - and bilateral donors. Recently, the Cambodian Government designed an approach to accelerate reform and provide performance-based rewards to "Priority Mission Groups" in key ministries, aiming to seek out and reward motivated civil servants with appropriate knowledge and experience, enabling them to work in groups or teams that can successfully deliver priority missions of change in their respective organisations, in a transparent and efficient manner. Cost-effective performance is the chief criterion for earning an allowance. While initially limited to 1000 civil servants, the programme will gradually be rolled out as more ministries and agencies are ready to move to a result-based performance approach. The Government is to bear the direct performance costs (i.e. the allowances) of these groups, but financial and technical co-operation will be required to assist the Government operationalising them. UNDP is providing support to the Royal Government of Cambodia to operationalise as well as better articulate and advocate for the PMG initiative. Initially, projects underway with the support of external partners could be turned into PMGs to enhance ownership and sustainability

In the meantime, since 1996, the UN agencies in Cambodia have pursued common policies, procedures and rates for supplementary payments to government personnel. AusAid decided to "shadow" the UN system's transparent and coordinated approach to project-related salary supplements.

1 The seed for overstaffing in the public sector was often planted with the pressure to reward the members of independence movements in the 1960s.

sustainable solutions, by bringing 'top-ups' formally within the pay regime. In some cases, temporary reform teams are offered exceptionally high wages for a limited engagement in order to implement a reform programme (for example, in Kenya). In others, selected civil servants considered especially critical to the reform programme are given in advance the higher salaries projected to be available to them once the reform programme is complete, (usually in between five and ten years time,) as in Tanzania where the government is testing a Selective Accelerated Salary Enhancement (SASE) scheme. The SASE, in particular, points in the right direction, but it is too early to say how successful these approaches are. Where UNDP encounters this issue, it should seek to discourage donors from using top-ups and, where this is unsuccessful, urge transparency in selecting who receives them, wherever possible integrate them within the formal salary framework, and link the additional compensation to the task or post rather than the individual.

#### 4.1.7 Gender equity and affirmative action

Women are rarely well represented in middle and senior management in public administrations in developing countries (or in many developed countries), even where some senior politicians are women. In addition, where women have begun to acquire a foothold in the civil service, experience with privatization in Eastern and even Western Europe has shown that managers often will retrench women because they are not perceived as the major breadwinners and because male civil servants are better able to develop social ties with their managers (usually men). Many developing country governments at least pay lip service to an ideal of greater gender equality, but few reform programmes include serious efforts to increase the presence of women in senior positions, including, for example, training for women, workplace rules that are 'family friendly', and gender sensitisation. Achieving gender equity involves overcoming cultural prejudice and longstanding life- and work-habits, and will only take place over the long term. However, it is part of most countries' commitment under international conventions, both from a poverty reduction and a human rights perspective, to seek progress on this issue.

#### **Fostering gender equality in public administration employment in Azerbaijan and Belarus.**

In the course of implementing the National Capacity Building project within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Azerbaijan has established a Policy Planning and Strategic Research Centre. Experts conducted research that offered recommendations to the government on gender policies; "Woman in Diplomacy" was launched as a result. This project aims to support the career development of Azerbaijani female diplomats. In Belarus, "Support to Expanding Public Space for Women" funds educational programs, including Master's Degree Program in Women's Leadership and 2-weeks' programs for women public administration officials and teachers, as well as research projects investigating the factors that promote or hinder women's participation in political and public life.

#### 4.1.8 Performance management: merit, promotion, and tenure

A central part of merit-based systems is a framework of performance evaluation, and rewards for good performers. In practice, almost all performance management systems are costly to administer. Traditional appraisals have tended to be closed to the employee in question, and feed-back is limited, with a negative effect on motivation. More recent approaches have stressed focusing on results rather than personal traits, on viewing appraisals as a developmental tool, and on participative appraisals. There are many examples of such systems, such as in Malta, Mauritius, and Zambia. Open performance appraisal systems relate individual performance to organizational goals, test competence, and contribute towards a climate of open discussion within the public service. A neutral oversight body, such as a Public Service Commission or a Department of Public Service, with appropriate appeal mechanisms, is a precondition for any performance management system. However, caution should be exercised when linking appraisals to pay and promotion. The benefits of performance pay remain to be demonstrated, and management requirements and costs of

installing such systems can be considerable. Experience also shows that performance pay is likely to be resisted and should be a low priority to start off with. Managers prefer not to differentiate among their subordinates, and performance-based bonuses tend to be too small to be an incentive. In addition, performance appraisal should be only one element in establishing suitability for promotion, others being aptitude tests, structured interviews, etc. In general, in developing pay and performance systems, the focus should be on senior officials who can be singled out for greater scrutiny and where the likely impacts can be much greater.

#### *4.1.9 Politicisation and patronage*

Civil service reform efforts around the world, to various extents, have all stressed the need for increased depoliticisation of the civil service, promoting the ideal of a neutral and merit-based civil service. Evidence shows however that pure merit-based systems are the exception and that political appointments are common in most civil services. Those in favour of a patronage system argue that it allows for the establishment of a cadre of loyal and efficient civil servants. It also enhances democracy, as it enables the regular rotation of senior staff in accordance with the will of the people. Those in favour of the merit system argue that it complies better with a rights-based approach to civil service management (non-discrimination and equality of access to public office) and that it allows for continuity and neutrality in the public administration. A more realistic policy line takes into consideration the pros and cons of both the merit system and the patronage system, in a given political and socio-economic context. In general, patronage should be exceptional and restricted by means of efficient checks and balances that limit the discretionary powers of politicians over recruitments and promotions. Therefore, patronage in the civil service should be linked to merit selections, embedded in a strong ethical framework and counterbalanced by an effective system of checks and balances. The following elements ensure that this is achieved:

- Identification and publication of the complete list of positions that are considered political in nature.
- Clear procedures for recruitment and promotion, ensuring transparency in the selection process and inclusion of formal checks and balances and appeals in the case of arbitrary action.
- Restricted discretionary powers of politicians over selection processes (short-listing of candidates should be the sole responsibility of a pluralistic selection panel)
- A code of conduct that stresses the political neutrality and loyalty of the civil servants (i.e. they commit to execute and support the policies of the government in place).
- Constitutional and legal guarantees (Civil Service Act) stressing the right of candidates for (non political) public employment, not to be discriminated against because of their sex, ethnic origin, political, economic, religious, philosophical, cultural or social opinions or conditions.

#### **4.2 Improving the Policy-Making System**

Because of the politically sensitive nature of the issue, few donors have had much involvement in this area until recently. UNDP, however, has been able to provide advice in the past, through support to the legislative drafting process, among other things. Traditionally, the policy-making process has been opaque, and in many donor dependent countries the priorities of policy-making bodies (cabinet or council of ministers, presidential office, ministerial cabinets, etc.) have been ad hoc and set through donor pressure. In recent years, however, some donors, notably in the context of the PRSP process, have focussed on improving the efficiency of the policy making process. This has meant strengthening the cabinet secretariat or equivalent, creating mechanisms for horizontal coordination around policy-making and implementation, developing a process for setting the policy-making



organ's agenda, designing a system of ensuring that draft policies are based on the appropriate analysis, and creating systems to disseminate policy decisions and monitor implementation. Often, discussion of improving the policy-making process arises once the government begins discussing a reform of the public administration, not least because decisions about the role of the state, the vision of a reformed public administration, and a strategy to realize the vision need to be elaborated and a broad consensus within government built around it.

### **4.3 Restructuring the machinery of government**

The expression 'machinery of government' refers to the allocation and reallocation of functions between departments and includes changes in the internal structure of departments, the allocation of functions within departments, and increasingly, the allocation of functions to bodies other than ministerial departments, with the creation of executive agencies and privatisation of government bodies. Structural reform of the machinery of government has its origins in the technical assistance to the public administration offered in the early 1960s but has re-emerged in recent years as a key element in the reform of governance systems. Decentralization is, of course, the most commonly referred to reform to the structure of government, and is treated in a separate Practice Note. In addition, new tools, notably those based on Information Communication Technology, have opened up new possibilities for coordinating the different branches of government better, and for forging a more direct link between the citizen and government.

#### *4.3.1 Functional reviews*

Until the mid-1990s, structural reforms had often been ad hoc, focussed on specific sectors, and consisted of little more than legislative changes, superimposed on outdated organizational structures rather than based on an in-depth analysis of structural problems themselves. Since then, particularly in the Eastern Europe, Asia and Pacific and Latin America regions practitioners have taken a more holistic approach to reform and have sought to balance a focus on internal reform with a concern for the changing relations between public administrations and society. Functional reviews, the main tool of structural reform, have become more common to provide the analytical basis and guide for reform. They have the following primary functions:

- Redefinition of roles, missions and tasks of the different levels of administration.
- Establishing the appropriate role for government in any particular sector or function, at different levels, that includes identifying: a) redundant functions; b) duplication between and within institutions at various levels; c) missing functions; and d) functions that could be rationalized from numerous units to a single unit.
- Identification of inconsistencies and omissions in the legal framework that hinder units from performing their functions.
- Review of the match between the function and the staff engaged in performing it.

#### **Functional reviews in Kyrgyzstan**

In Kyrgyzstan, UNDP has been playing a leading role supporting pilot functional reviews in the Ministries of Education and Health in 2001. These initiatives led to a revised Ministry of Education regulation that sets out a more clearly defined mission, reduces ministry functions from 66 to 20 and resolves inconsistencies within the legal frameworks governing the Ministry's powers. The Ministry of Health is exploring reforms aimed at ensuring more effective service delivery and more efficient use of reduced resources. UNDP also developed a special format for the implementation plan of functional review recommendations applicable for any Ministry or state agency. At present, UNDP, in cooperation with DfID, supports the government to conduct functional review in seven ministries and state committees, and started local level functional reviews.

- Proposing areas for improving horizontal coordination between units with complimentary or dependent functions.

This functional review analysis provides the basis for exploring higher-level policy options, such as:

- Areas for decentralization
- Areas for efficiency gains through a reduced role of the state or opportunities for staff reductions
- Gains that could be realized through introducing elements of competition and performance management in service delivery, such as through establishing alternative service delivery mechanisms (e.g. subvented agencies or NGOs) (see case of Brazil.)
- Opportunities for improving the policy making process and separating policy making from implementation.

#### 4.3.2 *Information and Communication Technologies and e-governance*

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) provides increasingly powerful process tools that can be deployed to address traditional development problems in innovative ways. ICT does not consist solely of electronic- and micro-chip-based e-governance solutions, but these predominate in most discussions of ICT in the context of PAR. Such information technologies as Wide Area Networks and the Internet, can transform government interactions with citizens, businesses, and other parts of government. However, the focus needs to be less on the technology *per se* and more on the transformation and reorganization of functions and interactions that it permits. By locating service centres closer to clients, customers and partners, e-governance can facilitate better, user-friendly service delivery, improved and economical links with business, and more efficient and rigorous management of government business. Innovative examples, even in otherwise technologically under-developed areas, have proven successful. For example, community-based as well as computerized kiosks in India provide the basic information, documentation and forms needed for citizens in rural villages, saving people time and money and extending the range of services available locally.

##### **Innovative ways to improve services in Brazil and the Philippines**

In Brazil, citizens' assistance centres provide a "one-stop-shop" for services that people most need to use; and in the Philippines the customs bureau has developed an on-line system to reduce costs to businesses, reduce the opportunity for fraud, and help increase revenue collection. The Brazil case, however, provides an important cautionary tale. Whereas in Brazil, the use of citizens' assistance centres was one element of a more far-reaching reform, including bureaucratic simplification, this was not the case in some other countries that adopted a similar service delivery mechanism. Where such 'one-stop-shops' were not accompanied by measures to simplify the administrative processes, there was no change in the fundamental nature of the public administration, which remained highly centralised, bureaucratic, and inward oriented.

In addition to enhancing relations with the public, e-government can also improve the internal working of an administration. Introducing Management Information Systems within government departments, for example, can result in improved personnel management, cost reductions and improvements in service delivery and government procurement, better management of technical assistance funds and projects, and increased revenue collection. However, e-government in so far as it is conceived of largely in terms of IT systems, tools and infrastructure does not automatically result in the streamlining and re-organization of government functions and transformation of roles and responsibilities which need to be part of a larger transformation process.

#### 4.3.3 *Democracy Enhancing Public Institutions*

Increasingly, governments are creating new institutions, in some cases with a clear separation from the formal public administration but with some oversight function, in others an integral part of it, whose function is to further democratic governance. All these institutions provide new spaces for political inclusion, for both civil society and the opposition, and arenas in which democratic political culture can be nurtured and promoted. For example, National Human Rights Strategies usually call for the establishment of independent institutions such as human rights commissions, ombudsmen, and outreach and advocacy groups. The independence, transparency, effectiveness and accessibility of these institutions is important if they are to successfully fulfil their mandates in states where governance is weak and the interest of the few dominate the balance of power and resources. Such institutions need to be legally secure and institutionally linked to other national and international organizations in order to protect, and promote human rights. In countries such as Moldova and Mongolia, the government is preparing National Human Rights Action Plans, including the introduction of systems to monitor human rights programme implementation in key responsible state agencies. Other examples are ethics or anti-corruption commissions, electoral commissions, and, in post conflict countries, truth and reconciliation commissions. They form part of the rubric of PAR because they are an increasingly important part of many public administrations, and because they enhance the public administration by making it more transparent, accountable, open to greater public participation, subject to checks on abuses, and less prone to conflicts. (See box on South Africa.)

**Formalizing the link between public administration and human rights in South Africa;**

South Africa has embedded an institutionally strong National Human Rights Commission in its Constitution. As a consequence, the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) has acquired a special place within the administration of South Africa. It is not only known for its work on the promotion and protection of civil liberties, but also for its innovative work on economic and social rights flowing from section 184 (3) of the Constitution which reads:

*“Each year, the Human rights Commission must require relevant organs of State to provide the Commission with information on the measures that they have taken towards the realisation of the rights in the Bill of Rights concerning housing, health care, food, water, social security, education and the environment”.*

The SAHRC publishes a semi-annual report on “Economic and Social Rights in South Africa” that provides information on policy, legislative, budgetary and other matters, vulnerable groups, problems experienced by organs of the State and measures taken to address these, indicators, links to the South African National Human Rights Action Plan and budget allocations. If organs of the State do not respond they may be taken to court by the SAHRC.

**Reforming the Revenue and Expenditure Management System**

The total amount of money a government spends should be closely aligned to what is affordable over the medium term and, in turn, with the annual budget; such spending should be appropriately allocated to match policy priorities; and the spending should produce its intended results at least cost. At central level, this sub-sector is traditionally the preserve of the IFIs. However, one area in which a human rights approach has been successful is in Public Expenditure Management. This has often been approached from a purely technocratic perspective that emphasises moderation and control of finances. However, a ‘rights’ perspective, which focuses on an individual's claim on the state, can advance pro-poor and gender-equitable outcomes in the budget process and support accountability to the citizen. Thus, for example, UNDP has been involved in the budgeting process in three critical areas. First is the area of budgetary oversight, through building the capacity of governance institutions, notably parliaments, to perform. Further information on this may be acquired from the Practice Note on Parliamentary Reform which will be found at <http://www.undp.org/governance/legislatures.htm> as well as from the Budget Handbook For Parliamentarians that will also be available on this website. Second in support for local level

planning and budgeting, for example through those programmes jointly supported with UNCDF. Finally, as a major promoter of gender sensitive budgeting (further information can be found, *inter alia*, in the [Budget Handbook](#) above.)

## PART TWO: PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR PROGRAMMING

### 5. UNDP's Niche

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Public Administration Reform is an area in which it is exceptionally difficult to define a UNDP role compatible with its resources. While UNDP has been, over the last decade or so, a leading provider of technical advice in PAR, a number of other players have increased their role in this field. The IFIs, especially the World Bank, have long been engaged in PAR, initially inspired by the need to increase the efficiency of government spending and, more recently, as a means of improving governments' ability to implement the PRSPs. In addition, a number of major bi-lateral development agencies, and regional development banks (notably the Asian Development Bank) have become very active in the field. Surveys of UNDP activities in Africa and Asia, for example, have shown that while decentralization has become a core area of support, there has been a shift in focus away from reform of the central government. Increased donor emphasis on PAR is a positive trend, as it brings to bear many additional and much-needed resources to the issues. Many countries have benefited substantially from some very effective partnerships between UNDP and the World Bank, for example. But it has led UNDP to question and reorient its strategic position, based on its comparative advantage.

UNDP remains well placed to support governments in the often-sensitive and inherently political area of governance. This derives from:

- UN Identity: UNDP is trusted by a broad range of groups in society, including governments, non-governmental organizations, business communities, labour organizations among others.
- Neutrality: UNDP promotes and plays a neutral broker role.
- Universality: UNDP is present in 166 developing countries.
- Convening power and familiarity with all development actors
- Knowledge of communities and local development concerns as well as corporate social responsibility issues (Environment, HIV/AIDS, Human Rights).

These characteristics allow UNDP to engage governments in questions that could have significant political impacts, and to mediate between governments, the IFI's and bilateral donors. In almost all cases, governments value UNDP's role as honest broker and provider of an alternative perspective. However, the more limited resources at UNDP's disposal than, for example, the World Bank, leaves UNDP in a challenging position. To be able to engage the government on these issues means finding strategic opportunities for funding or dialogue. Moreover, UNDP's potential role in supporting governments implement PAR programmes will be different by country and region, depending on the presence and capacities of others in the field. Thus, **UNDP programme staff should be prepared to engage in a dialogue on all aspects of PAR, both because UNDP has a particular perspective that the international community has endorsed and mandated it to promote, and because there will be cases in which, because of UNDP's presence, its particular relationship with government, or for some other reason, it is the best suited to lead in supporting a PAR programme.** Moreover, most important reforms only come about through the collective efforts of many players, including governments, donors agencies, the private sector, NGOs, among others. In

each reform situation, UNDP must seek a well-defined role for which it has expertise and financial resources, and that complements the work of the other actors. The following elements comprise a niche for UNDP.

- 1. Building on UNDP's distinct make-up and mandate to engage governments in politically sensitive issues of governance, UNDP is best placed to assist them in navigating the nexus between building support for reform at the political level and implementing reform at the technical level. This also means ensuring that public administration reforms are pro-poor, advance the democratic process, and protect human rights.**
- 2. Given UNDP's central mandate to reduce poverty and promote human rights, it has a particular role to play in promoting a participatory process in elaborating the reform policy and designing reform programmes; and in ensuring that the reforms adopted are fully owned by the government and the people they will affect. This role also provides UNDP with the responsibility of assisting government in coordinating donor support for the reform programme.**
- 3. UNDP focuses on ensuring that reform of the public administration begins with using and developing existing capacity. UNDP's impartial, pragmatic stance enables it to do this especially effectively. Only through mobilizing existing capacity will it be possible to put in place long-term sustainable solutions.**
- 4. Following from this, the areas that UNDP is, and should be, especially concerned with are those that promote 'open government', that is accessible, transparent, and accountable, where public participation in decision-making is encouraged, and where government-held information is accessible to the public.**
- 5. Building on UNDP's partnerships in the field, its focus on poverty reduction, on marginalized people, and on women; its commitment to public participation in government decision-making; and its experience, UNDP has a singular role to play in assisting government in creating the enabling legal and institutional environment for decentralization, which has become a core strategic aim for UNDP.**
- 6. In areas of post conflict, because of UNDP's role as the UN's primary agency for governance reform, it is taking an increasing part in re-establishing the basic institutions of government. This usually means bridging the gap between humanitarian assistance and a long-term development programme.**

UNDP is mandated, within the context of development programming, to further the protection of human rights. While the issue of human rights is sometimes difficult to raise, the approach it implies can greatly enhance the quality of governments' PAR programmes. Some aspects of the Human Rights approach as they relate directly to PAR are addressed below, but further information is available in the Poverty Reduction and Human Rights Practice Note found at <http://www.undp.org/poverty/practicenotes.htm>

Complementing UNDP's work in promoting an open government through reform of the public administration is work in three additional areas. The first, directly connected to reforms in public administration, is in the area of anti-corruption, transparency, and accountability. The Practice Note on this subject can be found at the sub-practice web-site, <http://www.undp.org/governance/account.htm> . Second, guidance from experience of UNDP's work in engaging and developing the capacity of civil society organizations can be found in the policy note found at <http://www.undp.org/poverty/practicenotes.htm> . Finally, the increasingly important work in UNDP in the area of Access to Information and Communication can be found in the homonymous Practice Note at <http://www.undp.org/governance/account.htm> .

While this Note does not address decentralization itself (please refer to the Practice Note on Decentralization, Local Governance and Urban Development at, available from the DLGUD sub-practice website at <http://www.undp.org/governance/decentralization.htm>) there are dimensions of the central government that must be in place in order for any form of decentralization to be effective. Thus, focus on an appropriate staffing regime (e.g. establishing the legal status of local employees), on an effective fiscal transfer mechanism, on an improved principal-agent management system between central government and local government, and a greater capacity to support decentralization through facilitating the delivery of services and performance monitoring linked to the fiscal transfer mechanism, for example, could all be key areas for UNDP involvement in PAR.

Finally, in post-conflict situations, such as in Sierra Leone or Somalia, establishing some form of credibly representative government that can provide essential services is increasingly seen as an essential part of the first stages of post-conflict reconstruction. In Afghanistan, quickly developing a system to pay civil servants (that included establishing who these were) so that they could take up performing their old functions, including delivering services and regulating, at least minimally, the immediate post-war situation, was a first element in the post-conflict governance programme. Linked with this is bound to be a review, however preliminary, of the role of the state that lays the foundation for reform into the future. This issue will be covered in greater detail in a Primer to accompany this Note.

## **6. Enhancing Public Administration Programming**

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### **6.1 Approaches**

Four constants should guide approaches to PAR:

1. **Public administration reform is as infrequently entirely successful as it is vitally important.** While parts of programmes have achieved what they set out to achieve, there are very few examples, in developing countries, where the ultimate objectives of reform have been achieved in a sustainable manner. Far from deterring, this fact should strengthen UNDP's determination to find solutions.
2. In this sector at least, as much as in others, it is always best to **apply the Keep it Short and Simple (KISS) principle.**
3. **It is too simple, and leads to failure, to just copy from famous models without due regard for environmental differences.**
4. **PAR is a slow process.** Trying to increase the speed of reforms risks jeopardizing national ownership and long-term sustainability.

In addition, the Policy Note [Taking a Default Position for Capacity Development](#) provides essential guidance, and can be found at <http://intra.undp.org/bdp/policy/policy.htm> for those in UNDP, and will be available externally at <http://www.undp.org/policy/>. Bearing these in mind, following are a series of points to consider when approaching the issue of PAR.

#### *6.1.1 Entry points and sequencing*

As with many interventions in governance, there are manifold entry-points to PAR. Clearly, the most common is a desire to reduce costs, normally spurred by budgetary imperatives and the IFI-supported reforms. In other cases, increasing democratisation and the emergence of credible opposition parties, with the promise of future contested elections, has spurred governments to find new ways to provide services to the electorate. In yet other cases, overall

reform is not for discussion, but less direct approaches are possible, through sectoral programmes, for example, or by tackling particular issues that are, for some reason, acceptable, such as anti-corruption or civil service pay regimes. Whatever the original stimulus, in most cases it provides an opportunity to launch a wider discussion on the functions a government should perform, ways in which these functions can be performed better, and the role of the state. UNDP's role is to ensure that these discussions are extended as broadly as possible and are focussed on improving governments' abilities to reduce poverty and protect human rights. In addition, seeing the public administration as a whole, whose various parts are inevitably interdependent, is unavoidable.

Once the question of reform has been raised, however, the needs for reform are both bewilderingly numerous and urgent. In developing countries, especially the poorer ones that typically have both low motivation for reform and have very low capacity, taking a holistic approach to reform presents a particular challenge – the enormous commitment of time, resources, and political will required can be overwhelming. UNDP's role is to assist the government in undertaking an initial review of the public administration sector that can provide a basis for decisions about strategy and implementation, and develop a plan for implementation that is sequenced in such a way that it is consistent with that country's actual implementation capacity. In some cases, reforming local level service delivery can test approaches, build up trust, experience and national capacity, and help create the motivation to reform at the central level. When local initiatives are linked to a central level programme, this may form the basis for the next steps of a broader reform. For example, UNCDF in Senegal and Mozambique has supported local level planning and investment projects in pilot areas. These have been adopted as the national model, and replicated throughout the country. They have also influenced the design of overall PAR projects. Related to this approach, an emerging area for UNDP to engage in is the creation of "voice mechanisms" or forums for dialogue and consultations between line ministries, and its offices at the sub-national level, provincial and district offices of ministries, and citizens groups or civil society organisations, to identify problems and ways to improve public service delivery. This could not only lead to improvements in the delivery of services, but also foster a demand driven orientation and address the gap between the top down reform process and bottom up demand management.

**UNDP assistance on the development of the draft Civil Service Act in Timor Leste**

The Civil Service Act is part of the Government of Timor-Leste legislative agenda to ensure that transparency, accountability and fairness are pillars of a lean and effective civil service. In June 2001 UNDP initiated a policy paper on civil service as part of the Capacity Development Program for Public Sector Reform. Following this report, UNDP provided assistance to the Public Service Commission to develop a draft of the new Civil Service Act. In the process of developing the Act, the Public Service Commission and the Ministry of State Administration held four consultative seminars with representatives from all districts in three districts and the capital to discuss key policy decisions related to the preparation of the Act. Three overseas comparative study missions were also organized, and a peer review of the initial draft was undertaken by an expert panel, coming from both civil law and common law backgrounds. The draft Act was finalized in February 2003 with UNDP support and is now being discussed, together with the reports of the consultative seminars in the four districts.

*6.1.2 Winners and losers*

While one hopes that reforms will benefit the country as a whole, all reforms create losers. Even the most technocratic of reforms can shift the influence of one group over another in a fragile political environment. Conversely, the resistance of powerful groups and interests can delay or derail a reform process entirely. Civil servants are in general understandably mistrustful of reforms that threaten their jobs and the benefits and perks that may have been a

deciding factor in remaining in poorly paid employment. Politically influential public sector unions might fear losing their power through loss of membership, and oppose changes to pay structures that they have negotiated. Wider PAR processes therefore require an understanding of the links of patronage, familial ties and the cleavages of ethnicity, religion and clan within all branches of government. In addition, it is also important to understand the historical and social contexts. Over-employment and compressed salaries may in part reflect the pressure new countries were often under to realize the hopes of their citizens for material improvements. This may come from a strong sense of nationality derived from the shared experience of an independence struggle that looks askance at wide differences in official salaries, or derives from a desire to live up to socialist ideals. Addressing these problems successfully means bearing in mind not only the fact that there will be losers, but also to understand sources of resistance to reform even among those not directly affected (e.g. journalists, the intelligentsia, and academia) (see box on East Timor).

People are much keener to implement ideas that are the products of their personal involvement. Hence, wide consultation and involvement of individual stakeholders and affected institutions can reveal sources of concern, identify means of offsetting losses that affect poor people, provide reassurance and garner support for reform. Moreover, reform as far reaching as typical PAR reforms can take a very long time. In Mozambique, a CSR programme that involved developing a database of civil servants, introducing a new career and remuneration system that included salary decompression, and establishing training needs for civil servants took 10 years. While development partners can help speed up change, forcing the pace of change beyond what is tolerable to the process can cause resistance to solidify and real reform to be delayed. UNDP can use its comparative strength as an honest and impartial broker to ensure that reforms are adapted to local circumstances, and should include a mixture of measures that push forward the reform, provide adequate incentives to garner necessary support, and ensure that the reform does not inadvertently worsen the condition of poor people.

### *6.1.3 Gaining support and fostering leadership*

In addition to taking into consideration the political and social environment in the country it is necessary to build strong support for reform. Reforms carried out by senior civil servants who remain unconvinced of the need for a cultural change are unlikely to succeed. The bottom line, however, is that PARs can only succeed if the political conditions are propitious.

It is critical to identify a champion for reform at a high level in government. There are three reasons for this.

1. It helps to overcome resistance to change if the main champion of reform is the Prime Minister or President, for example
2. It can provide the authority to managers to bypass the conventional or bureaucratically acceptable way of doing things where necessary
3. It helps force the cooperation between different parts of the administration.

UNDP's impartiality gives it a particular advantage in gauging the political will for reform through its dialogue with government, building the will for reform where it does not exist, and identifying the most promising 'champion' of reform inside government.



Focusing on the people who must effect the change, rather than the institutions, is both consistent with the approach of using existing capacity and gets away from simply bringing in solutions from outside. Supporting training programmes that focus on change management and transformational leadership form a key part of this approach (see box on Lesotho).

Establishing a unit in charge of the overall reform programme, under the leadership or closely associated to the champion of reform, has proven a successful model in many countries. For example, a sub-committee of cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister and co-chaired by the Minister for State Administration, and supported by a technical secretariat, now leads the wider reform process in Mozambique. This arrangement responded to the weakness of the Ministry of State Administration compared to the sectoral ministries typical of cross-sectoral ministries. It also gives the reform programme a high profile within the civil service itself and with the public. Similarly, in Guinea, an evaluation of UNDP's support to the PAR programme found that a supra-ministerial political organ to coordinate and push through reforms developed at the technical level was especially important. In particular, steering committees help to create a nexus of project champions, and facilitate coordination and communication. The continuity of incumbent counterparts supports sustainability and transfer of know-how. Building a broad and active constituency, including wherever possible the political opposition ensures that the reform programme can weather changes in government leadership (as part of the electoral cycle), which tends to shift the momentum of reforms. The cultivation of a network of long-term career government officials and key staff members as strategic champions and advocates can ensure higher probability of programme success.

#### **Transformational change in Lesotho**

The HIV/AIDS infection rate of over 30% of the adult population in Lesotho has brought the realization that profound "organizational change that combines inner shifts in people's values, aspirations and behaviours with outer shifts in process" (Senge. Peter [1990] The Fifth Discipline : the Art and Practice of Learning Organisations) is necessary. The new approach focuses on the person, leveraging existing capacity to build a learning, results-oriented public service. UNDP supported a training programme for the most senior civil servants, focusing on their qualities of leadership and abilities to learn and forge real change, as a first step in enabling staff to be the agents of transforming the public administration to cope with the pandemic.

Finally, UNDP has a critical role to play in aid coordination. It can assist the government in developing its own reform agenda, becoming a champion of that agenda, and assisting the government in coordinating donor support behind the agenda.

#### *6.1.4 Accounting for different administrative traditions*

Understanding the role of the state, its component parts, and the meanings of reform, are all subtly dependent on the national administrative tradition. These may affect PAR programmes in several ways. For example, pay for performance may be compatible with North American entrepreneurial and individualistic values, but may not in countries such as Germany

#### **New Public Management imported in the South Pacific**

In several island states in the South Pacific the PAR process, mainly driven by external consultants, did not sufficiently take into account local traditions, constraints and capacities. Most of the reforms that were implemented mirrored the New Zealand model, featuring extensive privatization and outsourcing, output based budgeting and the introduction of private sector management approaches. Given the weakness of local capacities, the appropriateness of these reforms have been questioned, even by the Asian development Bank which funded their implementation. Output-based budgeting seems to have been implemented without adequate diagnosis of the existing situation in public financial management. Moreover, the cost of introducing the new system has not been explicitly weighed against the purported benefits. An ADB report noted that : "To attempt output based budgeting was to strain administrative and technical capacities further... Introducing these new and over-ambitious systems may have been counterproductive ... and may even have crowded out existing good practice".

and the Scandinavian countries. Or structures that are familiar to one tradition could be completely alien, and thus poorly understood in another. The Public Service Commissions are an example. Or, the rationale for undertaking the same reform may be different, so that decentralization in one country might aim to reduce the power and potential for corruption at the centre, while in another the aim is more directly to improve service delivery. UNDP's role is to draw from its wide practical experience throughout the world of the full range of different administrative traditions, and encourage the government and its donor partners to design reforms that reflect the realities of the country. (See box on the South Pacific nations.)

#### *6.1.5 Enshrining the Human Rights Approach*

UNDP has a key role in integrating a human rights approach in reform programmes. The central element of such an approach is to develop national strategies and action plans that enshrine and protect human rights. National human rights strategies need to also focus on *strengthening human rights capacities in the civil service* and in human rights institutions to create the conditions that help protect human rights and rectify their abuses. The main human rights abuse in this context is the humiliation that individuals, particularly the poor, the vulnerable, women and children are exposed to at the hands of public officials. Addressing this includes training, and instituting mechanisms so that the public can report abuses and appeal decisions that may violate human rights. In Mongolia, the NHRP is strengthening capacity for complaints handling, monitoring, and documentation within a National Human Rights Commission. In Kazakhstan, the government is building capacity in the Ombudsman's office through training on international experience and upgrading of professional skills, including training on reporting requirements under international human rights treaties.

In addition, the concept of human rights has gone beyond the 'traditional' concerns of political and civil liberties, to include such necessities to life as an adequate standard of living, employment, nutrition, shelter, health care, a healthy environment, and education. For example, in some developing countries, civil society has helped to broaden the debate on PEM from a technocratic one to a rights based one. Countries where this has been successful, such as India at the state level, have incorporated a strong social vision in their constitutions, sufficient fiscal resources for delivery of basic services, and an active civil society.

Also important in this regard is the recent focus on Public Expenditure Tracking Systems (PETS), which aim to create the link between public expenditure and development outcomes. PETS are considered a useful tool for diagnosing problems associated with budget execution and service delivery, including corruption. Similarly, the International Budget Project studies the impact of budget expenditures on low income people and provides support to civil society organizations around the world that want to improve their understanding of public expenditure issues. (More info on this project can be found on: <http://www.internationalbudget.org> )

#### *6.1.6 Measuring progress*

Measuring progress is, of course, critical to evaluating the success of any programme. Performance management is becoming a core facet of many donor-sponsored programmes. In developing public administration programmes, as with all programmes, establishing the base line is essential for defining project objectives against which relevant indicators can be set to monitor progress and measure impact. There are two main steps involved in establishing a baseline: (i) understanding the national context and (ii) completing a more detailed situational analysis. Once these have been completed, indicators can be established. To be effective, these must be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-limited (SMART). However, many national level and even programme level indicators do not

adequately measure impacts on the well-being of the poor, marginalized people, and women. The challenge and value added for UNDP is to introduce these perspectives. The Oslo Governance Centre is developing indicators in the governance area.

## **7. Some broad lessons from implementation**

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Most reforms in government are only partially successful not because, once implemented, they yield unsatisfactory outcomes but because they never get past the implementation stage at all. Learning lessons from experience, and applying them, is therefore especially important. In addition to the approaches recommended above, the following are some broad lessons from UNDP's experience, as they emerge from evaluations of past UNDP to PAR (for those within UNDP please see <http://stone.undp.org/undpweb/eo/cedab/eotextform.cfm> )

**Keep the scope of change well-focussed and set realistic and well-defined targets.** Avoid the temptation to address too many reform objectives simultaneously; an incremental approach to reform, if sustained for long enough, also brings about radical transformations.

**Recognize that Public Administration Reform takes time.** This point has been addressed, but, given the pressure of needs that encourages both UNDP and donors to seek solutions that can be realized in the shortest possible time, it is worth reiterating. Governments need to be assured of UNDP's long-term partnership to garner commitment, and to be assisted in developing a long-term vision.

**Make sure there is full understanding of the reforms, and support for them, not only at the level of leadership, but also at the level of line management and civil servants as a whole, and the public.** It is critical that programme designers generate genuine commitment or ownership of a project from its inception, and ensure that there is a diffuse the sense of ownership within the different levels of government. Linked to this, it is important to **show and publicize "good results" and provide incentives for continued support and achievements.** Publicizing good results and providing incentives and awards to successful implementers and users of the new systems, will encourage others to join in, forge change in attitudes towards reform, and ease the fear of change.

**Make sure there is continued political will and support throughout all phases of public administration reform.** Reform requires firm leadership. Reform efforts are long-term processes and require commitment throughout the process. Linked to this, it is important to ensure that accountability mechanisms are in place before thinking about mobilising pressure from below.

**Remember that donor support, (including UNDP's,) despite its good intentions, can have a perverse effect on the political economy by generating greater resistance to change in all areas of public management.** Donor pressure to reform can free governments from the need to consult with and obtain policy support from their own citizens. In addition, donors tend to favour comprehensive reform programmes even where more limited, incremental, approaches are advisable.

## **8. Links to Resources**

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### ***UNDP Resources and Web Links:***

UNDP Public Administration Reform website <http://www.undp.org/governance/public.htm>

United Nations Development Programme <http://www.undp.org/>

United Nations Development Programme Bureau for Development Policy Democratic Governance Group <http://www.undp.org/governance/index.htm>

United Nations Oslo Governance Centre <http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/>

United Nations Development Programme Sub-Regional Resource Facilities Fact Sheet  
[http://www.surf-as.org/about/SURFfactsheet\\_Nov02.doc](http://www.surf-as.org/about/SURFfactsheet_Nov02.doc)

United Nations Development Programme Sub-Regional Resource Facility for Arab States  
<http://www.surf-as.org/>

United Nations Development Programme Eastern Europe and CIS Sub-Regional Resource Facility  
<http://www.ecissurf.org/>

United Nations Development Programme Sub-Regional Resource Facility Central & Eastern Africa  
<http://www.ceasurf.org/>

United Nations Development Programme South and West Asia Sub-Regional Resource Facility  
<http://www.undp.org/surf-kathmandu/>

United Nations Development Programme Sub-Regional Resource Facility - Southern Africa  
Resource Corner Public Sector Management <http://www.sasurfs.undp.co.zw/RC/index.html>

United Nations Development Programme Latin America and Caribbean Regional Resource Facility  
<http://www.undp.org/surf-panama/>

United Nations Development Programme Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund  
<http://www.undp.org/governance/docs/TTF-Democratic-Governance.pdf>

### ***Other Useful Web Links***

ABA-UNDP International Legal Resource Centre <http://www.abanet.org/intlaw/ilrc>

Asian Development Bank: Working Group on Public Sector Reform  
<http://www.adb.org/wgpsr/default.html>

Birmingham International Development Department <http://www.idd.bham.ac.uk/>

Canada Institute of Public Administration <http://www.ipaciapc.ca/english/menu.htm>

Canadian Centre For Management Development <http://ccmd-ccg.gc.ca>

Caribbean Centre for Development Administration <http://caricad.org/>

Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management  
<http://www.capam.comnet.mt/>

Commonwealth Secretariat <http://www.thecommonwealth.org/>

Governance Resource Centre Exchange: Public Sector Reform [http://www.grc-exchange.org/g\\_themes/cc\\_csr.html](http://www.grc-exchange.org/g_themes/cc_csr.html)

Institute for Development Policy and Management, University of Manchester  
<http://idpm.man.ac.uk/>

Institute of Development Studies, Sussex: Governance <http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/govern/>

International Institute of Administrative Sciences <http://www.iiasiisa.be/iiias/aiacc.htm>

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: Public Governance and Management [http://www.oecd.org/topic/0,2686,en\\_2649\\_37405\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_37405,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/topic/0,2686,en_2649_37405_1_1_1_1_37405,00.html)

United Nations Capital Development Fund <http://www.uncdf.org/>

United Nations Online Network in Public Administration and Finance <http://www.unpan.org/>

United Nations Research Institute for Social Development  
[http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BB128/\(httpHomepages\)/\\$first?OpenDocument](http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BB128/(httpHomepages)/$first?OpenDocument)

World Bank: Public Sector Governance <http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/index.cfm>

World Bank: PETS <http://www.publicspending.org>

**Printed Documents available from UNDP Headquarters or Online:**

UN (2000) *United Nations Millennium Declaration*, United Nations General Assembly Fifty-fifth Session Agenda item 60 (b), 8th plenary meeting, 8 September 2000. Available online at <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.pdf>

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UNDP (2001). *Rebuilding State Structures: Methods and Approaches*. New York: UNDP/RBEC

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Working Group on E-Government in the Developing World, Pacific Council on International Policy, The Western Partner of the Council on Foreign Relations (2002) *Roadmap for E-government in the Developing World: 10 Questions E-Government Leaders Should Ask Themselves*. Los Angeles: Pacific Council on International Policy. Available online at <http://www.pacificcouncil.org/pdfs/e-gov.paper.f.pdf>

Heeks, Richard (2001). Understanding e-Governance for Development, i-Government Working Paper Series, Paper No. 11, University of Manchester. Available online at [http://idpm.man.ac.uk/publications/wp/igov/igov\\_wp11.shtml](http://idpm.man.ac.uk/publications/wp/igov/igov_wp11.shtml)

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Katarobo, James (2002). Public Service Reforms: A Comparative Survey Perspective, London: Workshop paper.

Mukherjee, Ranjana, and Manning, Nick (2003). PowerPoint Presentation, Seminar: Below the Surface of the Civil Service Wage Bill, May 29 2003, Washington D.C.: The World Bank. Available online at <http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/civilservice/Mayseminar/MukherjeeManning.ppt>

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<http://www.worldbank.org/html/dec/Publications/Workpapers/WPS1700series/wps1771/wps1771.pdf>

**Other Resources:**

UNDP is equipped to advise programme countries on issues relating to PAR through the Bureau for Development Policy, Democratic Governance Group, Lead Adviser for PAR: (Mr.) Jocelyn Mason. He can be contacted at [jocelyn.mason@undp.org](mailto:jocelyn.mason@undp.org)

The Democratic Governance Practice Network electronically links UNDP practitioners working on, or interested in, governance issues. The Network enables practitioners to share insights and advice on matters of interest and importance to their work. There are currently over 450 members covering all continents. To subscribe to the Network, please contact the Knowledge Network Facilitator, (Ms.) Kim Henderson, at [Kim.Henderson@undp.org](mailto:Kim.Henderson@undp.org) or send a message to [surf-gov@groups.undp.org](mailto:surf-gov@groups.undp.org) with "subscribe" as the subject heading.

UNDP is currently developing 50 Policy Notes on priority development issues. These Position Papers are aimed primarily at CO staff and are backed by UNDP experience on the ground. A number of Policy Position Papers may be of interest to the reader, in particular:

- Taking a Default position for Capacity Development
- A Neutral Civil Service
- Public Money Put to Public Good: Procurement Norms
- Watchdogs are Useful: Oversight Institutions for Good Governance
- Gender Blindness Brings About Poverty
- Defying Distance: Localisation of Public Services
- Official Information Belongs to the People

UNDP Position Papers will be available online from the UNDP policy website at <http://www.undp.org/policy/>

Finally, the full list of UNDP's Practice Notes can be accessed online at <http://www.undp.org/policy/practicenotes.htm>