Workshop on Management of Human Resources in Africa
Challenges for the Third Millennium

General Report

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Introduction

The Second Pan African Conference of Ministers of Civil Service, held in Rabat (Morocco), from 13-15 December 1998, recognized that, given the political and economic changes of recent years, new responsibilities have been placed on the public administration of African countries. To meet the challenge of creating conditions for sustainable economic and social development on the eve of the 21st century, the Conference maintained that governments must be backed by a responsive, effective, and efficient Civil Services.

Among the various recommendations made by the Conference, CAFRAD was requested to organize regular sub-regional meetings to examine the issues of human resources management, knowing that Ministers attached special importance to investment in human resources, as a basis for the consolidation of administrative reforms.

CAFRAD organized in Tangier (Morocco), from 23-27 October, 2000, a Workshop on Management of Human Resources in Africa: Challenges for the Third Millennium.

The main objectives of the Workshop were to:

- Take stock of the most recent experiences in the field of HRM;
- Update and upgrade knowledge and capacity in HRM through new methods;
- Enhance the Human Resource Management systems;
- Facilitate co-operation in HRM among African countries and external partners; and;
- Develop appropriate strategies and new orientations to cope with challenges of HRM in the Third Millennium.

The Workshop was bilingual (English/French) and was attended by 41 high level officials from: Algeria, Angola, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Eritrea, Guinea Bissau, Libya, Madagascar, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Seychelles, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Four Resource Persons coming from the United Nations DESA/DPEPA (New York), International Institute of Public Administration (IIAP- Paris), New York (USA) and Tangier (Morocco) facilitated the Workshop. The Opening Ceremony was attended by important personalities, namely the Representative of the Wali of Tangier, the Nigerian Ambassador to the Kingdom of Morocco and the UNDP Resident Representative and Coordinator of the United Nations system in Morocco, who also gave an important speech which underlined the importance of human resource development for the continent.

To meet its objectives, the Workshop had addressed the following:

1. Challenges for the new Millennium: new role of the State and new tasks for the Civil Servant;
2. Performance and productivity appraisal in the public sector;
3. Information technology and human resources management;
4. Financial aspects of human resources management;
5. Legal aspects of human resources management.

The workshop was conducted in plenary as well as in group sessions. In the following sections are summarized the main issues and conclusions.

I. Challenges for the Third Millennium: new role of the State and new tasks of the Civil Servant.

Every nation is living in a period of rapid and profound change. Citizens as well as governments are sometimes caught off their guard because of the rapidity of some of these changes. What are then the major challenges facing African countries and how can government and other actors in these countries be better prepared to benefit, rather than lose out, from this reality?

1. Challenges and Trends

There are four main challenges and trends characterizing the new millennium which affect the role of the state and, following that, the responsibility of the civil servants.

The discussion was undertaken against the background that given pancyty of financial and technological resources individual African countries stood to lose both relatively and absolutely, if no concerned common actions are taken by them.

a. Globalisation/Regionalization

The questions that were considered in the Workshop were: what is globalisation? what is the impact on the African countries and on the civil service in particular? How can African countries benefit from its effects? After a lively discussion and exchange of point of views on globalisation, the Workshop came out with the following considerations, agreeing substantially with Dr. Richard Jolly as cited in the recent issue of “Commonwealth current” No 3, 1999, that “globalisation is the process of integrating economy, culture, technology and governance across national borders… The challenge is to improve governance nationally and internationally, so that the power and potential of globalisation works for people, not just for profits or capital”. Globalisation is therefore joining energy in undertaking actions concurring to the satisfaction of common and individual needs.

While there is a trend toward globalisation, it was recognized that there is also a tendency toward rationalization, meaning creation of great regional unions or associations. This is in reaction to the realization that certain actions and processes stood better chances of success if undertaken at those levels.
b. **New Technology for Information and Communication (NTIC)**

Globalisation is being amplified by the NTIC, which has increased the capacity, speed and efficiency of almost all human undertakings. Hardly any activity of importance has escaped the ambit of NTIC. Administrators are well advised master them, if they are to guide policy-makers.

c. **Decentralization/Participation/Partnership with the private sector, civil society and NGOs.**

The size of the public sector has shrunk in most countries, due to increased recognition of the value of partnership with the private sector and non-governmental organizations in the provision of services. These services range then transportation to health to education. How to share such responsibilities and protect the public interest is a major challenge recognized by the participants. Public sector is now required to share responsibilities and resources as well as empower local level services and organizations.

d. **Population/Urbanization/Poverty/Environment.**

The growth of population and the rapid urbanization constitute a great challenge to most countries, faced also with the poverty and environmental degradation. Creative means of controlling population growth, fighting poverty and protecting the environment are called for. Public administrators need new framework and new skills to deal with thee major societal issues.

2. **New role of the State: new governance**

In the past, the state attempted to ensure the welfare of all, and serve as entrepreneur and the main employer. The system was centralized, with little scope for partnership with other entities. There was general failure in the provision of quality services, as individual and local initiatives were stifled. With the new governance, the State has become a partner, regulator and facilitator. The trend is now for deconcentration and decentralization, recognizing the role of local authorities and entities.

3. **New role and expectations of the citizens.**

Concurrent with the changing role of the state are new expectations of citizens vis à vis the state. Citizens expect the State to ensure peace, security and justice. They demand that it respects human rights and guarantees participation of all citizens in their own governance. In addition, citizens expect improved and accessible services for all, and a safer environment. Citizens do not wish to be mere spectators; they seek to be active participants in the development process.
4. **New role/Expectations of the civil servant.**

The civil servant of today has a new conception of the role of the state and his own role in keeping government discharge its responsibility when fulfilling his or her tasks. The civil servant expects to have a better career, with regular promotion, adequate salary and incentives, mobility, protection and participation in management. Furthermore, the new civil servant wants to perform in a framework of opportunities, with mission assignments, in addition to upgrading his/her skills and capacity. Above all, the new civil servant has high regards for integrity, professionalism, ethics and diversity.

5. **New learning/Training system for the civil servant.**

The new civil servant, in order to effectively perform in the new governance, needs a new perspectives and skills. The new system has not only to provide not only skills and knowledge, but also develop competencies. It has to upgrade and diversify capacities for more effective performance in a fast-changing environment.

To attain these objectives, a thorough review of the objectives, structures, methodologies and programmes of training is required. A more relevant system, which better addresses these is required. This is not only expected by civil servants, they have made numerous demands for these.

While participants acknowledged the reality of globalisation, many were sensitive to its destabilising effects and its tendency to increase inequities in the global political economy. Pooling of resources and careful planning were some means identified by the group for dealing with globalisation.

In light of the challenges of the new millennium, participants were requested to break in groups and examine the kind of training suitable to the new role of the civil servant. Emphasis was made on new objectives, new programmes and new training methods fitting to the new challenges.

**II. Performance and productivity appraisal in the public sector.**

The major goal of the public sector is to offer services to citizens. The civil service exists for citizen. It is the instrument for the realization of the programmes of the government. Public servants are accountable to both the public and to governing authorities.

In appraising performance and productivity in the public sector, the main questions that were considered in the Workshop were: (i) what is performance appraisal? (ii) what are the objectives of appraising? (iii) what has to be appraised? and (iv) how?
1. What is performance and productivity appraisal?

Within the context of the Workshop, participants agreed that, terms such as performance appraisal, performance measurement, performance evaluation are used interchangeably. Performance appraisal was understood “as the observation and assessment of employee performance against pre-determined job-related standards, for the purposes delineated by the organization” Schick (1980), cited by Eichel and Bender in “Performance appraisal: A study of Current Techniques 1984”.

In other words, performance appraisal means comparing the productivity of employees against the pre-established and pre-agreed activities and standards. Performance appraisal then necessitates, beforehand, a precise determination of activities or work to be accomplished by the employee. These activities must be targeted towards the accomplishment of the objectives of the organization. An agreement is needed between employee and employer on what to do and how. This is contained in the contract or the job description, signed by both parties.

2. Objectives of appraising employees.

The objective of appraising on employees is to match the achievement of the employee with the expected results. As well stated by Halachmi (2000: 387-391), in his article: Value for money, best value and measuring government performance…. “Performance measures are meant to align organizational behaviour with the organization’s set of formal goals”. The main purpose of performance evaluation is therefore to measure, evaluate or to appraise the work accomplished in relation to the goals and objectives of the organization. This means that, when making appraisal, the concern must be on whether activities accomplished have contributed to the progress or total performance of the organization.

3. What has to be appraised?

In light of the preceding explanation, performance appraisal provides indications on what has been accomplished to achieve the objectives of the organization. What to measure includes every aspect involved in the management of the organization: financial, material, legal and human.

What then do we appraise in the framework of human resources management? The appraisal is made in accordance with the pre-determined and agreed activities. It is to evaluate or appraise what the employee has accomplished in a given period of time: that may be six months, one year, or more. Where these activities have been determined by both parties (employer and employee) at a certain time, the evaluation is easier. However, to be complete, the evaluation must concern many aspects, particularly the following:

a) appraisal of the work accomplished, in relation to the job description or the contract. 

The concern here are the results achieved;
b) appraisal of the competence or the capacity to accomplish the work. The concern here is whether the employee has the capability and the skills to perform his or her duties; whether he or she needs more responsibilities or less;

c) appraisal of behaviour, conduct and personality.
At this stage, the employee is appraised in his or her totality as human being; character, relationship with other employees, involvement in the organization, and sense of responsibility; and

d) appraisal of the organizational environment.
Working conditions are crucial to the achievement of objectives. Here, appraisal consists of examining communication channels, hierarchy, structure, social ambiance, financial and material conditions, incentive and career development.

Performance appraisal, as it can be seen, is a process that includes not only the employee but also the organization and the total working conditions. Appraisal helps manager as well as employee to work together for the accomplishment of the objectives of the organization.

4. How to appraise?

The criteria of appraisal are determined when working on activities and standards to be achieved. These criteria are known and also accepted by both employer and employee. In addition to the criteria, the tools to be used in appraising are also to be designed from the beginning. The tools have to reflect what to be measured or appraised. They reflect the expectations regarding what is to be attained. To be complete, the appraisal tool or form has to include all the aspects of appraisal, particularly: results or level of activities undertaken; competence and capability of the employee to perform his responsibilities; relationships, conduct and behaviour of the employee as well as the working conditions of the organization.

The other question that was considered was who evaluates whom? Generally speaking, the evaluation or appraisal is made by the person who has been involved in the work of the employee or the person who knows best the performance of the employee. The person immediately superior in the hierarchy or the one who supervises the work of the employee is responsible for the appraisal. However, in many cases and to be complete, appraisal involves also peers and subordinates of the employee, as well as the users of the services. External appraisers can also be called to ensure the neutrality of the process.

In an organization, be it public or private, the appraisal process concerns all the staff, from the head to the lowest level. All are appraised. Performance appraisal is seen as being part of performance management in the sense that, as recognises Jones (1998: 54-61), “it is an approach to creating a shared vision of the purpose and aims of the organization, helping each individual employee to understand and recognise their part in contributions to a clearly defined process or set of policies, and in so doing, manage and enhance the performance of both individuals and the organization”.

Considering the above statement, performance appraisal concerns not only the past, or what has been accomplished, but also the future. It is a mechanism that involves every body in
the organization. It creates harmony and trust. In addition, performance appraisal is also designed to prepare the future of the employee and of the organization.

A successful performance appraisal system must have follow-up measures. The results or conclusions of the appraisal have to be exploited and used either for reward or for sanction. This can lead to promotion or increased responsibilities, or to disciplinary or administrative sanction. The results can also serve as a basis for developing competence or elaborating training programmes for staff, or in expanding the activities of the organization.

Among the various questions raised were, how these methods and new trends can benefit African public administration. After exchanging experiences and points of view, it was admitted that these methods, when well mastered and well implemented, can improve the performance evaluation systems in the African public service. These methods are already in use, or in experimentation, in some countries, particularly those implementing the merit system. However, it was realized by participants that for these methods and techniques to be used efficiently, they need to be included in a general programme of reform of human resource management system, focusing on results, productivity and end-service, instead of the observance of procedures and regulations.

It was noted that all countries represented in the Workshop had a system of evaluation of personnel, but not exactly as presented by the Workshop. The question raised was how to implement this new system and how to overcome the obstacles of subjectivity, impartiality, favouritism and lack of incentive or reward after evaluation. The conclusion reached, after was that, (i) efforts must be made to sensitiswe personnel on the new methods; (ii) if possible or required, conduct training on the new methods; (iii) prepare a plan for the implementation of the new methods; and (iv) align the new methods with the budget.

In short, the new method was found very relevant, but calls for preparation, planning and financial motivation.

III. Information Technology and Human Resources Management.

All African countries use information technology in the public sector. The extent of use of information technology in African countries varies from one country to another, and from one sector to another. In the same country, in many cases, the difference between Ministries or Agencies can be significant. The discussions focused on the following main issues: (i) What is information technology? (ii) Why is information technology used? (iii) How is it being used? and (iv) What are the conditions for its successful utilization?

1. What is Information Technology?

The workshop used the terms information technology, information and communication technology or new information and communication technology, interchangeably. The Workshop
concentrated reflection on its use in the public sector, particularly in the management of human resources.

Information technology or information and communication technology was conceived as a combination of knowledge and techniques, hardware and software for creating, processing, manipulating, sharing and distributing data and information by means of computers and telecommunications. (UNEP/IETC Report, 1998:4)

Information technology encompasses the use of human knowledge to process and communicate information through machines and devices (computers, telecommunication materials, etc.). A successful information technology system requires skilled and competent personnel, reliable and well-organized data and information, appropriate equipment and facilities and, above all an enabling environment.

2. What is the purpose of information technology?

In managing governmental programmes and operations, particularly in planning, financial management and accounting, commercial and production transactions, and in human resources management, the use of information technology has become indispensable. The management of human resources is a huge and complex mechanism that involves several related services such as finance, planning, training, social affairs, etc. The situation is more difficult when the human resources management system is centralized, for example where a national bureau or a ministry is in charge of the management of all the state personnel.

When the management of the state personnel is centralized, the use of information technology at the central level can have also positive effects in the performance of the services in the departments and in the civil service systems as a whole. In this connection, information technology is used to improve the performance of the services at the central and departmental levels in terms of speed of action and decisions, increased quantity and quality of work, reliable and accurate data, etc. Information technology can, therefore, help to compute, sort out and calculate great volumes of data, accelerate the communication and dissemination of information, store and process various kinds of data and improve the quality of work.

3. How information technology used?

Information technology has to be seen as a tool or a means of achieving a precise objective. In an organization (public or private), information technology is a supplement created to accelerate, fortify and empower human activities. It is part of the organization and contributes in the improvement of the performance of the organization.

In human resources management, in particular, information technology is mainly used in the basic operations of selection, testing, recruitment, career management, pay administration and control, personnel redeployment and mobility, post management and planning, personnel development and planning, training activities, etc..
Information technology can also be used not only to create data bases and compile statistics, but also in planning, monitoring, and supervising human resources. Many institutions have also introduced the use of tele-working, tele-interview, tele-conferencing, tele-contracting and tele-payment.

The manager of human resources is now in possession of a variety of tools to check the veracity of information and data as well as to control and evaluate the performance of personnel. Networking has also facilitated the sharing and communication of information. With information technology, the information has become decentralized, speed up its access and use.

4. Conditions for successful use of information technology

As indicated above, information technology has to be taken as a tool to achieve a precise objective. The first condition is that, before acquiring the equipment or the facilities, serious preparation has to be made about activities to be undertaken and the objectives to be attained.

The second requirement is that the use of information technology has to be a component of the programme of reforming the management system of human resources. The information technology will help to implement the changes; or will be used in line with the changes to be introduced. The use of information technology necessitates the adoption of new methods of management, new channels of communication, new relationships among personnel and new procedures. The new system breaks barriers and hierarchy, as well as enhance transparency and accountability.

The third condition is the presence of a skilled, competent and motivated personnel. Without adequate and appropriate personnel to create, manage and develop the system, as well as to ensure maintenance, no positive results can be expected.

Sensitization and training have to be part of the system. The training to be organized is not only for personnel working in the service but also for the users or clients of the services offered.

The virtual management of human resources aims at the improvement of the performance of the entire service. When connected with other services, such as finance, planning and social affairs, automatic management of human resources can serve as a support to a general programme of administrative reform.

The main problems found in the use of information technology are: (i) diversity of make and origin of equipment used in the same country or the same department; (ii) lack or insufficient qualified personnel to effectively run and maintain the equipment; (iii) files or data not complete or accurate. However, it was recommended that present efforts in training of personnel updating files and establishing network will solve the problems. Participants pointed to inadequacy of funds for acquisition of up to date computers, training and re-training. Discussants agreed that efforts were made to acquire computers. The problems have to do with obtaining good machines
that are inexpensive, so that larger numbers can have access. Systematic improved training is called for, in addition to donor assistance. Some participants called for short training programmes targeted to particular applications – for example, using computers for payment of salaries, etc.

IV. Financial aspects of Human Resources Management.

The manager of human resources is not only concerned with the recruitment, career development and retirement, but also with work conditions and compensation. Because of this, he or she gets involved, directly or indirectly, in activities such as training; programmes design; and testing and implementation; working space design; equipment and facility allocation; motivation and support of personnel; compensation after retirement or death and so on.

In addition to these activities, the manager of human resources is particularly concerned with the financial management system of the organization; and tries to see that it is rational. Whatever the system, human resources management is essentially related to the financial management of the organization.

In this particular aspect, the Workshop emphasised the following main issues:

• The manager of human resources is similar to all others who serve a managerial function; be it of production, equipment or funds. The manager deals with the present as well as the future of the organization. This involves personnel, plans activities designed to meet objectives;
• Improvement in the human resources management has to be done in line with a general programme of reform involving the whole organization. Reforms in human resources management have to be part of a larger programme of administrative reform, including all the aspects of public sector;
• Human resources constitute an important cost for the organization. The traditional conception is that the cost of human resources is a burden for the entity. But, an evolving and dynamic organization considers the cost of human resources as a capital or an investment. That investment is basic to the growth and development of the organization;
• The cost of human resources has to be inclusive. When calculating the cost, particularly when planning for human resources, many elements have to be taken into account, namely: salaries, allowances and other entitlements; equipment and other facilities; space and maintenance; training and social development; etc. All the costs related to the performance of the work of the personnel have to be taken into account and evaluated;
• In the public sector, the scale of salaries, the budget and the legal texts are so rigid that opportunities for rewarding outstanding performance are very limited. There is, therefore, a need for change and review of salaries systems, in order to provide appropriate incentive for outstanding performance. The budget as well as the texts should be flexible to allow discretion, leading to supporting and encouraging the performance of personnel;
• The level of salaries in the civil service should be reviewed and up-dated in order to compensate properly performance and retain outstanding personnel. A flexible system of
salaries is also to be introduced, where additional financial advantages can be provided to stimulate initiative, creativity and innovation in the public sector;

- The manager of human resources has to map out all the posts of the organization, especially the key posts. This map has to include not only the present posts but also the future posts in order to plan for mobility and recruitment. This will also indicate the costs of all the present and planned posts. This management tool is useful not only to human resources manager, but also to financial manager and the head of the organization;
- In addition to the map of posts, the manager of human resources is also requested to prepare a map of competences. This instrument illustrates the present competences in the organization and the needed competences to acquire;
- The cartographies of posts and competence are done also against space, equipment and funds. The background of available (or future) space, equipment and funds;
- The head of human resources has to work as a manager, utilising new management methods based on motivation and incentive; rational efficient use of financial resources, for better results, are main guides for the manager of human resources.

A main of the concern of the participants was how to motivate civil servants at this time of budgetary constraints and economic crisis in most African countries. Participants highlighted the fact that, even if salaries are low and financial motivation can not be provided, other opportunities can be used, such as training possibility, granting more responsibility and providing social rewards.

V. Legal Aspects of Human Resources Management.

To properly manage human resources, the efficient manager has to be acquainted with the objectives and the general policy of his or her organization. He or she has to use the new methods of performance appraisal, new information technology and financial management. In addition, the manager must also know the legal aspects of human resources management.

In all African countries, there are various legal and administrative texts pertaining to human resources management, especially the statutes of civil servants, code of conduct, charter of civil servants, regulations, procedures, etc.

The aim of these texts is to harmonize relationships between employer and employee and also to provide acceptable and fair working conditions.

The Workshop recognized however that:

- The management of human resources necessitates fair and up to date texts. Without appropriate texts, the manager of human resources is limited in his or her decisions and actions;
- Administrative reform programmes have to include a component on reforming laws, codes, regulations and procedures pertaining to human resources management. This
reform should consist of reviewing existing texts and procedures and adjusting them to the present conditions and requirements;

- Associations or representatives of personnel have to take active part in reviewing and updating them. Texts concerning human resources and financial management have to reflect the will and concern of all the stakeholders, that is employer, personnel, users of the services and other partners;
- Texts concerning human resources are to be applied integrally to all the categories of personnel of the organization. Regulations and all the texts are to ensure harmonious working conditions and should provide a positive environment to personnel;
- The manager of human resources is responsible for the application of the texts and ensures accountability and compliance;
- All African countries are presently working on reforming and adjusting their various texts. But, to succeed, these actions have to be supported by the exchange of experiences;
- Professionalism and ethics, as well as accountability, have to be enhanced in African public service. The manager of human resources has to promote and support their effective implementation.

The concern of participants was how to implement legal texts, noting that in many countries, corruption, fraud and mismanagement are widely found. After discussion, it was maintained that efforts have to be made so that texts, statutes and rules be implemented and enforced without exception.

**VI. Recommendations of the Workshop.**

Several recommendations were made by the Workshop including the following:

1. Human resources constitute a capital or an investment. African governments need to consider human resources as an important component in national development. They should devote requisite resources in training of personnel;
2. Modernization of human resources management has to be part of the national administrative reform programmes. No administrative reform programmes can succeed without reforming the management system of human resources;
3. Improvement in the management of human resources is presently a great challenge to all African countries. There is a need continuation of training and exchange of experiences in this area. Therefore, CAFRAD was requested to undertake the following activities, in collaboration with international, regional, sub-regional and national partners;
4. Organize a regional Workshop in the management of human resources every two years. This Workshop will serve as a forum for African heads of human resources management to exchange experiences and upgrade their knowledge in the field;
5. Organize regional, sub-regional and national workshops in the sub-themes of the workshop, namely challenges for the new millennium: the new role of the State, the new role of the civil servant and the new expectations of citizens; performance and productivity appraisal in the public sector; Information technology and human resources
management; financial aspects of human resources management; legal aspects of human resources management; and

6. Serve as a clearing house or network, consisting in taking stock and exchanging information on successful cases of human resources management in Africa. This aspect will be taken into account in the framework of the UN on-line Network on Public Administration and Finance (UNPAN).

In response to these recommendations, CAFRAD is designing appropriate programmes to address these expressed needs.

The general evaluation of participants concerning the Workshop was that, the Workshop was successfully organized and largely met their expectations.