

Public Sector Reform

Antigua & Barbuda

Presented by the Hon. Gaston Brow

The Government of Antigua & Barbuda has recently accelerated its Public Sector reform initiative. The public sector reform initiative was set in motion back in 1994 as a result of pressures from the multi-national financial institutions as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Government at the time appointed a Chief of Staff who was entrusted with responsibility of conducting an Organization and Methods (O&M) study from which it was expected to evolve.

Between 1994 and 1995 a number of initiatives were set in motion. Ministries were encouraged to develop Mission StateInents, organigrammal charts were developed, as well as job descriptions. In addition, a Permanent Secretaries Board was established) chaired by the then Chief of Staff. The Public Sector initiative was complimented with a home grown structural adjustment program in 1995 in which the government agreed to:

- curtail employment
- terminate temporary employment
- reduce the amount of substitutes and acting appointments

Unfortunately, the momentum dissipated and for a number reasons over the years these initiatives were with limited success.

In March 1999, driven by certain exogenous and endogenous factors including growing frustration in conducting business efficiently, increased awareness of the application of technology in enhancing service delivery and continued pressure from multinational financial institutions including the World Bank and International Monetary Fund a new way of Planning with responsibility for Public Sector Reform was created and a number of initiatives have since been undertaken. The Government of Antigua & Barbuda recognizes that Public Sector Reform is an imperative and it is totally committed to the reform process.

With a renewed vigor the Government~ concluded a loan and grant agreement last year with the Caribbean Development Bank to fund a study of the Public Sector and a firm of consultants was recently selected to perform a diagnostic study of it with a view of making certain recommendations for implementation. The Government of Antigua & Barbuda however, in its t

Coordinating Unit and a Public Sector Reform Advisory Committee comprising members of the public and private actors and civil society to advise the Government on issues relating to improving efficiency and productivity within the Public Sector.

The major areas that will be targeted for Reform include: Administrative Sector, Financial sector, Customs, Health Service Sector and Educational Sector.

Public Sector Reform Strategy

The public sector Reform strategy as articulated by the Government of Antigua & Barbuda would be an Integrated Approach to Public Sector Reform, cross cutting

To Economic Reform with Social Development & the Strategic Planning Process.

Peculiarities

The reform process would take into consideration certain peculiar issues namely

- i. An oversized public sector with approximately 10,500 workers comprising approximately 2500 established 6000 non-established and 2000 employees with statutory corporations servicing a population of 66,000 individuals.
- ii. Government's objective of optimizing employment despite having an oversized Public Sector workforce.
- iii. The existing bifurcated system of Public Sector workers governed by different unions and regulations, which has created significant anomalies in remunerations and terms of employment which impacted negatively on: ~
 - Unity of direction
 - Trust & loyalty
 - Effective implementation of policy decisions. v

Programmes would be linked to the budgetary process to ensure prioritisation and rationanzat1on in the use of scarce financial resources. The redesigning of the organisational structure would create an efficient infrastructure to facilitate the smooth implementation of the various strategies emanating from the national strategic development plan.

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ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM & NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLANNING DEVELOPMENT PLANNING PROCESSES

Cabinet

Minister

Public Sector Reform Process - Strategic Planning Process

Public Sector Co-or Unit - Sectoral Planning Committee

Public Sector Modernisation Plan - Nat'l Strategic Devel'p PlaD

Strategies - Strategies

Efficient and responsive public sector - Programme Plans. Budget

Vision

The Vision of the Government of Antigua & Barbuda was to create a new responsive and efficient and competitive Public Sector.

Mission

The mission is a renewed service delivery oriented Public Sector that is efficient, competitive and responsive while serving as a catalyst in facilitating full participation of stakeholders in national development and one that encourages responsibility, creativity, mutual respect, cooperation and coordination.

Components of the reform Process are as follows:

- Human Resource Development (skills development, attitudinal & motivational, training, entrepreneurial development) to facilitate the development of a more people centered approach to government.
- Financial Management Reform (programme budgeting, cash to accrual system of accounting, activity based costing) to create provide a meaningful approach to accounting and auditing within the Public Sector
- Computerization of all Government's Ministries and Departments, and introduction of Management Information Systems(MIS) for effective decision making
- Devolution of managerial authority to improve the speed of decision making
- Service quality, alternate service delivery options
- Legislative reform to support organizational and process redesign
- Process Redesign, Organizational structure redesign including organizational values and culture, additional shift
- Governance (transparency, accountability)
- Performance based Employment as an incentive to increase productivity

REFORM STRATEGY

The most serious problem facing the Government of Antigua & Barbuda is the size of its Public Sector. In reality the Government needs less than 60% of the present public sector work force to carry out the present level of operations. One of the obvious strategies would be to downsize. However, the Government has decided against a strategy of massive offs and redundancies as there is little absorptive capacity within the private sector any massive layoffs or would result in serious unemployment and potentially costly social consequences. The Government's intention is to trade out of its present problem of an oversized public sector utilizing a Revenue Growth Strategy complemented with alternate service delivery options. Government has agreed in principle to a general wage freeze and a ban on employment, therefore, future employment will be through attrition and via the Private Sector. The Government hopes to develop a stronger alliance with the Private Sector to facilitate growth and stimulate productivity through skills-development of public sector employees with redeploying to appropriate areas within the public *sector*. With training, we anticipate an improvement both in the quality and quantity of the service offered, resulting in productivity gains and ultimately an improvement in the Government's revenue base.

The alternate service delivery options will provide guaranteed contract employment with severance backed small Business Development Loans for public sector workers who would be encouraged to become employers. Public Works and Health are two key ministries in which we will be outsourced to Pub& Sector employment burden in the long run.

Change Management

The Government of Antigua & Barbuda recognizes that the culture change and significant transitions may take in excess of a decade to complete. The rate of change within the public sector will be incremental for the most part. However, certain divisions within Government including Customs and the Statistical Divisions and the Land Registry have all been earmarked for fundamental changes. The change strategy would involve a number of retreats involving Public Sector workers; at all levels supported by counseling facilities, motivational programmes, establishment of impletion teams in the various Ministries at the diagnostic stage, as well as, public awareness programmes to inform the public and to obtain its commitment.

END RESULT

The Government of Antigua & Barbuda hopes to achieve a responsive, efficient and competitive public sector with shared values and beliefs among all stakeholders. A public sector that will encourage responsibility, team effort integrity self-actualization; and empowerment of its members.