Strengthening Public Sector Human Resource Management Capacities in Africa

Capacity Building Workshop on
“Promoting Professionalism in the Public Service:
Strengthening the Role of Human Resource Managers in the Public Sector for the effective implementation of the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Service and the Administration”

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Collaborations, Partnerships and Networking to Promote Professionalism in the Public Sector and the Implementation of the African Charter Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration

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Abstract
We currently live in a world that is undergoing major economic, social, scientific and technological changes. This is the research and performance conducted around the world to explain these revolutions. So the world ahead of us is a world of challenges, opportunities and complexities.

In the momentum of rapid and profound changes, Africa has not remained on an island. African countries are involved and undergo positive and negative consequences of global changes. It is within this context that the problem of being able to participate actively and effectively in this new world emerges. In the case of the public sector, the ability to seize opportunities lies in professionalization. Professionalization of the public sector is reflected in the quality and excellence of services, competence of staff providing these services, organization and management structures as well as the general working environment and services. Hence the place and role of the African Charter and principles of public service and administration must regulate the behaviors of the professionalization and serve as a guide, reference and code of conduct.

To make an impact, professionalism and the Charter must become a priority for the African countries. It is work that requires collaboration, partnership and networking in terms of energy and resources. National, sub regional, regional and international institutions should work together to achieve common strategic actions, such as holding conferences, exhibitions, publication of brochures, use of media etc. It is also essential for the African Union to form Regional committees and in each country, come up with a structure to coordinate and promote activities related to professionalization and the implementation of the Charter. Immediately after the Heads of State have adopted the Charter, these structures must work together to develop a continental program that shall be used in all countries. Promoting professionalism such as implementation of the Charter must be in form of networks, collaboration and partnership with all the relevant institutions, while conducting joint and concerted actions. By strengthening the professionalism and application of the Charter, African countries shall be able to breast themselves to meet the great challenges facing the world, which will also help them to improve performance of their departments.
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Introduction

Africa in the 21st century is different from that experienced hitherto. In the 21st century, Africa lives in competition and complementarity with other continents. The Africa of this era participates in major events that shake the world and seize opportunities for economic, social, scientific and technological development. The African continent is no longer isolated or marginalized, but it is part of the global network.

Regarding the public sector in Africa in the 21st century, significant changes occur in the modernization of services, structures and institutions. However, at the same time, new challenges and opportunities emerge and thus determine the performance of departments and institutions.

I. Some challenges and opportunities of public services and state institutions in Africa in the 21st century

This period of great change is characterized by certain characteristics, among which are the following:

1. The populations to be served are literate and their needs are diversifying increasingly. The public sector has before it men and women who are well educated, and whose needs must be met. This population is becoming increasingly demanding in terms of the quality of service
rendered. Meeting the needs of this population is a major challenge in the public sector, because this population has expertise in various files and requires accountability.

2. Need for partnership in the public / private / civil society

The fact that the state is not able to meet the needs of development by itself, naturally it is forced to share responsibilities. The state is no longer the sole development agent nor the employer. It has become the promoter and support for the private sector and civil society. It is these sectors which are bearing the burden of economic and social development. By sharing development responsibilities with its new partners, the State retained or is responsible for its core missions, including ensuring security and peace, equity and justice, as well as promoting a balanced development. However, sharing of responsibilities and the effective involvement of each of these development partners is still a challenge for the public sector.

3. Developing leadership skills and governance

Skills, competences and qualities are the sources of success and development in the 21st century. With the globalization of challenges and opportunities, the importance of skills and competences will be increasingly felt. Only those who manage to cope with competition will survive. Special skills in the areas of management, leadership, governance and public policies are required to meet the challenges and complexities in times we live today. These skills and competences can and must be acquired through various means of training and improvement that are available. The public sector therefore needs the services of institutions and competent staff to promote and develop the private sector, support the efforts of the civil society and as well as meeting the countless needs of the people. This is a great challenge for the public sector.

4. Professionalisation of services and institutions in the public sector

Public services are used to implement the government development policy, facilitate development and work of the private sector and civil society as well as meeting the demands of the people. It is in this context that public services are considered as the pillars of development. Their role is crucial in the success of the government action and the development of the country as a whole. To do this, public services need institutions, for services and staff capable of effectively executing the roles and missions assigned to them. The quality of work product or service provided is used to judge the performance of public services.

Professionalism in the public sector is measured, first by the productivity and excellent delivery, and on the other hand through integrity in conduct and accomplishment of tasks, achievement of results, that which goes beyond personal interest, the continuous search for perfection, self-development in terms of general interest. It is mostly people, services and institutions that fulfil their responsibility effectively and produce results that impact the
completion of the national vision of development. In this document, professionalism is concerned, therefore with all categories of public employees in the public sector, all public services and all government institutions. It is they who must have the mastery and culture of results, evaluation and impact of their services. Professionalism in the public sector is a set of values, knowledge and skills acquired and demonstrated during service delivery.

In the first version of the Public Service Charter in Africa, now called since January 2011: the "Charter of values and principles of public service and administration", the Ministers in Public Service defined professionalism as follows: "Professionalism lies in the mastery and successful accomplishment of duties and tasks by the civil servant. Professionalism is manifested in the official’s conduct at work and through the constant effort to improve, enhance and update their knowledge, refine the skills necessary to perform their tasks and improve its performance and productivity."

In a report published by the OECD entitled, Promoting efficiency and professionalism in public service, SIGMA Papers, No. 21, professionalism is defined as "Public efficient professional administration requires competent civil servants, motivated and neutral in a whole system geared at satisfying public interest. Professionalism and efficiency in administration depend not only on the quality of recruitment, but also on how organised the career are."

Public service or a professional public service implies, therefore the quality of those who work there, the general organization of services and leadership that coordinates them towards common goals. However as noticed, the professionalization of public sector institutions or the civil service remains a big challenge.

II. Performance and result oriented administrations and professional institutions

The challenges and opportunities of Africa in the 21st century are many and complex. But at the same time, the possibility of government intervention is limited. Governments just as
public sector organizations, as they stand today will not cope with the various demands of their countries and those of globalization. Special effort is required in order to adapt or adjust service provision to the various demands. In this context, it is imperative that the public sector operates bursts and transformations to introduce reform mechanisms, modernization and reinvention of services, procedures, structures and institutions so that they meet the new aspirations of the people, they support development programs in the private and civil society, and they should back up the governments to implement their development policies. To be professional, public sector organizations need to become work instruments and partners that make it possible to achieve common goals and results. In such circumstances, public services shall be able fulfill their missions of serving the country for development.

The establishment of motivating, innovative and attracting working conditions challenging, innovative and attractive is a necessity which makes it possible to recruit and retain of competent staff. In this perspective, there is need for high quality public services that enhance the best service delivery corresponding to the needs of customers. It is still services that offer opportunities to their employees, by ensuring their intellectual and professional development.

The professionalization of public services will be possible when these services are able to meet the aspirations of their employees, people, private services, civil society organizations and governments. It's a total transformation and re-invention of new approaches to serve and work.

Professional services are services where the employees assume their responsibilities and provide services that are considered professional. The constant reinforcement and renewal of capabilities, skills and knowledge will enable them to remain professional. It is a condition sine qua non of professionalism. Updating professional knowledge and acquiring new skills help to keep up to the level and grow more. However, this continued effort to renew and improve oneself accompanied by motivation, incentive and reward. A professional is an agent who excels and who often goes beyond his capabilities. In these circumstances it is essential for them to have a professional environment that supports their efforts and that drive them to success and individual satisfaction. Professionalism must adapt to the realities and demands of users. Public services exist to render services. Professionalization should not be limit itself to serving a particular group of people. Professionalization should be used to satisfy the needs of everyone. A service is considered professional depending on its quality. The service is professional because it is of good quality, effective and meets a specific need for the party in need of it.

The professionalization of public administration or the public sector should be done with the aim of providing quality service to people. These services should target all social levels and should be adapted to the real development needs. It is these conditions that services are considered to be professional, accessible and of high quality. To become professional, the public
must be backed up and supported by public policies, strategies and visionary work instruments that are appropriate and efficient. Among the instruments that render the civil service, professional is the Charter of Public Service in Africa.

III. Place and role of the Charter values and principles in public service and administration

The Public Service Charter in Africa was adopted by the Third Pan African Biennial Conference of Ministers of Civil Service in Windhoek (Namibia) on February 5th, 2001. Since then, the Charter has been revised, modified and adapted to current contexts of public services in Africa. The Charter has already been implemented in various African countries. However, considering the importance of this achievement, the Ministers of Public Service, at their various meetings decided to submit the Charter to the Summit of Heads of State for consideration and adoption. It was adopted in January 2011 under the new name of "Charter of values and principles of public service and administration." As such, after its adoption, the Charter is no longer only a reference or work document but also a legal instrument with the same weight as other instruments adopted by the African Union.

In this context, the Charter is an instrument which should guide the African public services in their search for perfection, performance and results. This is a guide that should inspire all Africans, regardless of occupations or level of responsibility.

IV. Collaboration and partnership geared at promoting professionalism in the public sector and implementation of the Charter

It is imperative to establish collaborative relationships between partners to successfully promote professionalism as well as implementing the Charter. No nation and no institution will manage to do this work alone. This collaboration can be realised at the level of services and institutions within a country or between institutions in various countries. The collaboration and linkages should seek to promote professionalism and the implementation of the Public Service Charter of the in Africa.

The need for collaboration and partnership

The Africa of the 21st century is facing various phenomena, for example, population growth, massive education, food and health problems, etc.. In the public sector, Africa is expected to formulate new development policies and new strategies. All these cases require pooling of
knowledge, energy and resources. Work groups and networking have become a necessity for optimal results. Collaboration, partnership and networking are the current trends in the public sector, requiring a change in attitudes and values.

In the same vein, promoting professionalism in the public sector is a huge task that cannot be accomplished by a single service or a single country. All departments of various countries will form a joint force in form of partnership. It is through collective momentum and team work that public services shall be able to promote professionalism in public services. The same applies to the Charter which right from the beginning is a collective, concerted and African piece of work. Its implementation should also be participatory and collective. Inculcating professional values can not be done by one person or one department. Values are the social gains that also occur in society. The values, principles and rules contained in the Charter are to be assessed and implemented collectively. Hence the need and importance to promote and encourage collaboration and partnership in order to develop behaviors exhibiting ethics, integrity, transparency and professionalism.

Partnering Services and Institutions

Partnership is only possible when there are people, services or institutions who want to forget themselves and perform a joint action with others. To promote professionalism in the public sector and to strengthen the implementation of the Charter, it is essential that several state structures, private sector and civil society resolve to work together to achieve common results. Each entity, retaining its own identity, sharing his own knowledge, time and resources to achieve the collective work. In this perspective, several entities are involved in promoting professionalism and the Charter, including the Ministries of Public Service, who are the basis of this Charter and must advocate for its implementation, other ministries of various sectors countries, in their respective thematic areas; Parliaments and Senates who must adapt the Charter and to comply with national laws, Justice, who must not only master the content of the Charter but also ensure its implementation: education institutions at all levels, which may use the Charter for reference or as an integral part of the curriculum, culminating into an examination or test at the end, the organizations of the civil society, which may own it and turn it into an instrument for mass education and social transformation; trade unions in their effort to inculcate morals and watching over them, the private sector, which must implement it and which may use it as an inspiration to write other charters or similar documents for their businesses, the media, who are the mouthpiece who can play a role in the disclosure of the Charter and the population as a whole must understand the professional values and behaviors of officials and the entire civil service, professional associations, organizations fighting against corruption, etc.. A group of national
institutions, plus the sub-regional organizations and regional authorities which must take part in the promotion of professionalism and the implementation of the Charter, the development partners at sub-regional, regional and international levels. They too have a role to play in the promotion professionalism and the implementation of the Charter. Each institution will play its role in its area of intervention, in partnership with other institutions at national, subregional and regional levels.

But then how can these institutions collaborate and network to promoting professionalism in the public sector and in the implementation of the Charter? How does one know who does or can do what? Hence the importance of collaboration to harmonize actions, encourage and support one another. It is important to consult one another regularly, exchange practices and methods used. Work sessions may also be organized to bring together several entities to have more impact on results. Many schools could, for example embark on joint actions in their communities or various firms in the same locality may organize joint actions arousing interest to their employees. Student or parent associations could organize events to mark the end of the school year. These types of links and actions will not only enhance collaboration but also awareness, education and professionalism. Is through conducting concerted actions, which may be ad hoc or permanent, that public services in Africa will be improved and the Charter will become a source of inspiration for transformation of Africa.

c) Strategic activities within the partnership for promoting professionalism and implementing the Charter

After its adoption by the Heads of State, the Charter should become a work and reference instrument for the whole of Africa. It is not just for the Ministers of Public Service, but a statute regulating the behavior of all officials on the continent and applicable to all public services. Therefore, the Charter must be supported by all Africans without discrimination. To accomplish this gigantic task, close cooperation is sought from individuals and all African public, private or social institutions. The actions and to take as well the programs for implementing the Charter must participatory and inclusive. Several types of strategic actions are to be taken in order to promote professionalism in the public sector and enhance implementation of the Charter. Among the strategic actions to take in partnership and collaboration with the various parties, stakeholders are the following:

1) Establishment of a Unit or Department in charge of the Charter. After the adoption of the Charter by the Heads of State, a unit or structure should be identified or created within the African Union to support the promotion, disclosure, coordination and evaluation of the implementation of the Charter. This entity will work in common agreement with national, subregional, regional and international institutions to conduct all the activities related to the
Charter. The head of this unit will be a dedicated, exemplary and motivated person in order to defend and promote the Charter across the continent.

2) Developing a work program on the Charter. The first responsibility of the Unit is that of designing a continental program which promotes professionalism and the Charter. A participatory program is relevant so as to frame and support joint efforts in this domain. This is a program that contains the vision, mission, objectives, activities undertaken and the outcomes for a certain period of time, at the same time providing the expected impacts and resources needed for its implementation. The program should also provide for the budget, staffing and logistics. This program will require funding up to the level of results achieved out of promoting professionalism and implementing the Charter.

3) National Focal Points for the Charter. There will be designated, entities or units in charge of promoting professionalism and the Charter in all the countries. These units will work in synergy with the regional coordination unit which is within the African Union and will be responsible for promoting professionalism and the Charter in their respective countries or institutions through their interventions. These national, regional and subregional focal points shall work in a synergy, collaboration and partnership and shall also liaise with similar structures found in other continents.

4) Creation of subregional and regional focal points. Each sub-regional and regional institution shall be involved in promoting professionalism in the public sector and in the implementation of the Charter. Within each of these institutions, a department or unit will be designated to serve as a focal point. These sub-regional and regional focal points shall work in synergy with the regional unit within the African Union and also with national units in each country. This networking and teamwork shall enable the continent to achieve results in this area.

5) Adaptation of the charter to the national laws and regulations. The Charter is legal at continental level and shall also be country level. It shall therefore, be reviewed at national level so that its implementation is in harmony with national laws. In order for this to be possible, the legislature and the judiciary must be familiar with the spirit of the Charter so that its reading and implementation can be adapted to the national context.

6) Translation of the Charter in various languages on the Continent. In order to be recognised and used as a Continental text, the Charter must be read and understood by all categories of people on the continent. Its translation into the languages used by the African people is a requirement. The translation must be simple, but precise in order to keep the text message intact.

7) Dissemination of the charter. To be successful, the Charter should not be limited to a text for civil servants. The Charter, in its mind must be at the service of civil servants, leaders of countries, leaders of the private sector and civil society, as well as the entire population. For this
to be possible, it is needful to have a wide dissemination of the Charter, using all the means: in print, electronic, visual, audio and various kinds of media.

8) Promotion of the Charter.

Several forms of action shall be organized not only to publicize the Charter but also to use it and have to have an impact. In that regard, Seminars, conferences, exhibitions, debates may be organized about it on radio and television, specialized programs of instruction, etc.. The Charter may have an important place during the celebration of the African Day for Civil Service, June 23rd of each year.

If all these actions are taken, the Public Service in Africa shall show a different image and shall contribute to the development of the continent. That was the wish of Ministers of Civil Service who took the initiative to institute the Charter. The Charter is thus an instrument of promoting professionalism in Africa

V. Professional civil service based on the implementation of the Charter

A professional public service is one that is able to satisfactorily meet the demands of its users. It is also one that has the ability not only to meet the present needs but also to anticipate evolutions and changes and then adapt, improve and develop. In order to be professional, the civil services should be based on merits, output and performance of its staff and its services. This is a public service, based on the results of actions taken, policies and strategies. It is undertaken by competent, motivated and dedicated officials, exhibiting, in all circumstances, behavior of integrity, transparency, fairness and professionalism. This public service is possible in Africa if efforts are made to implement the Charter. The Charter must be the basis for actions to take and behavior to be exhibited. It is in this perspective that the public will move towards fulfilling its primary mission which is that of serving. Certainly, at the beginning of this 21st century, Africa must strive through public service and the entire public sector to adapt to changing times and to globalization. The public sector has a key role to play in this process and can be used to support these efforts, steer the changes and development.