



*Uganda Management Institute &  
The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
(UN-DESA)/  
Division for Public Economics and Public Administration  
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)*

***Report on proceedings of a one-day  
dissemination workshop for the DESA Public  
Service Ethics in Africa Project***

***Uganda Report***

*(DRAFT: 4 September 2002)*

*Wednesday 21st August 2002  
Venue: The Global Distance Learning Center*



## ***Background:***

A dissemination workshop for the UN DESA Public Service Ethics in Africa Project was conducted for Uganda on Wednesday the 21<sup>st</sup> August 2002 at the Uganda Management Institute, Global Distance Learning Center. The Project Coordinator, Ms Elia Yi Armstrong, and a proxy for the Uganda National Consultant highlighted findings of a comparative study on Public Service Ethics in Africa, conducted between 1999 and 2001. The study conducted in ten African countries, including Uganda, aimed at assisting African governments to improve the management of ethics and conduct in their public services. Comparative information on current legislation, policies, programs and practices was compiled, to highlight gaps and practices which can serve as a basis to introduce new or improve existing ethics policies and programs at the national level. Details of this study can be found at (<http://www.unpan.org/ethics>)

Dr. E.F Byarugaba of the faculty of Political Science, Makerere University, developed the Uganda paper. It was, however, presented by Mr. Ashaba Ahebwa, the Director of Ethics in the Office of the President.

## ***Session 1; Opening Ceremony***

The workshop was attended by a cross section of public and private sector organizations in the area of ethics and integrity in Uganda. It was opened at 9.30 a.m. by the Uganda Minister for Public Service who was represented by his State Minister, Mrs. Benigna Mukiibi.

The Director of Uganda Management Institute (UMI) welcomed the minister and the participants with a few remarks:

- In his remarks, the Director of UMI said that high levels of integrity is called for in public and private sectors and that unethical conduct is a threat to the national stability and the reputation of the government. He said that unethical conduct in Uganda is caused by greed and lust for power, but we should not confuse incompetence, carelessness or negligence of duty with unethical behavior, which relates to the abuse of office for personal gain.
- He noted that in the 1950s and 60s, public servants in Uganda were compensated fairly and motivated, and they did not do extra jobs that compromised their employment. Today, however, virtually every public servant wants to operate a kiosk because the salary is inadequate. There is a lack of patience, especially among young people, and there is poor time management, poor communication, poor records management and a lack of transparency in the public sector. He said that it was high time persons who make wrong decisions are held accountable and punished.
- The Director emphasized improvement in monitoring and evaluation of rewards for excellent performance and responsibility and accountability, as ways of improving ethical behavior in Uganda. There is need to re-examine values, attitudes, competence, commitment and the mind-set of public servants.  
In this regard, Uganda Management Institute will be at the forefront to contribute to the struggle to improve ethics in Uganda by designing, developing and delivering appropriate programs.

- The Director concluded by advising that the inculcation of appropriate values must take place in our homes, schools, religious organizations and the community and that ethical conduct cannot germinate overnight. The long term and holistic picture should entail the society conceiving of unethical conduct as evil.

In her opening remarks, the Hon. Minister of State in the Ministry of Public Service said that ethics in the public service is a major concern for governments in Africa.

- She said that poor ethical values in the public service exacerbate poverty in Africa, noting that an erosion of ethics in Uganda is associated with the political turmoil of the 1970s and 80s. Corruption and unethical behavior is exhibited in such habits as taking bribes, theft, corrupting records, unauthorized use of public assets, etc. She said, however, that the National Resistance Government has put in place systems to address this anomaly. Such institutions include the Directorate of Ethics, The Auditor General's Office, The Inspectorate of Government – IGG, the Directorate of Public Prosecution, etc. All that is needed is to strengthen these institutions and afford them public cooperation.
- She cited new efforts being tried by the government under the Public Service Reform Programs (PSRP), which include pay reform, revision of standing orders, rationalization of functions, and improvement of procurement. She noted, however, that even if all this is going on, there are discouraging reports of rising corrupt behavior in the country. It is high time serious efforts went into resolving the issues of unethical behavior and corruption, which are a real threat to Uganda's development.

The UNDP representative gave a keynote address.

- He said that the Public Service Ethics in Africa study is the fruit of the 1998 Second Pan-African Conference of Civil Service Ministers that called for more work to be done on public service professionalism and ethics and the Second African Governance forum that requested for research to promote transparency and accountability and to counter corruption in the region.
- The ten countries in francophone and anglophone Africa in the study were asked what they had in place to manage the conduct of their public servants.
- Quoting findings from a joint UNDP/UNICEF study by Professor Adebayo Adedeji, he said that access to public services in Africa had declined by between 5—60% in the last decade. This decline is associated with low remuneration, poor terms of service, etc, which lead to absenteeism and demoralization of public servants. Consequently, through this study, African governments need to re-examine their position in the area of supporting the public sector to yield good results. UNDP is supporting programs aimed at reinforcing transparency and promote ethics in the public service and is pleased to be a partner with the government of Uganda. He noted that UNDP is collaborating with UMI on these matters and looked forward to the findings and recommendations of the study and hoped that they would be given effect.

**Session 2:                    *Presentation by Ms. Elia Armstrong of  
UN-DESA --***

Ms. Elia Armstrong presented an overview of the Public Service Ethics in Africa Project report, highlighting some of the comparative findings and policy recommendations of this project.

She said that the project aims at assisting governments in Africa to improve the management of ethics and conduct in the public service through surveying existing policies and programs. The aim of a regional comparison is to highlight gaps and best practices which can serve as a basis for introducing new or improve existing ethics policies and programs. The project was advised by eight organizations which ensured the validity and reliability of the data gathered as well as the participation of regional and national stakeholders. She said that ten countries participated in the study, namely, Cameroon, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, and Uganda. A detailed questionnaire developed by UNDESA was used in all the sites to solicit responses which have been analyzed for the regional report. In addition, national consultants wrote country reports aimed at capturing more the contextual and impressionistic information on the subject.

Ms. Armstrong described the conceptual framework of the study which considers national public structures, an inventory of existing ethics policies and programs in the public service i.e. the ethics infrastructure and the assessment of trends and future perspectives by national experts. She then described the ethics infrastructure in terms of functions, elements and survey issues.

The immediate output of this project are a report with a regional emphasis and ten national reports. There is also an MS-ACCESS database based on the survey and an internet website which gives an over view and from which project documents and the database can be down loaded.

Ms. Armstrong described how the database operates, using the self-explanatory menu for the user. Through the selection menu, the user can navigate through the survey data having been converted to web pages on the web site. She gave the internet address as [www.unpan.org/ethics](http://www.unpan.org/ethics) and said that the project website is part of the United Nations Electronic Network on Public Administration and Finance (UNPAN).

Describing some of the findings, Ms Armstrong said that overall, the issue of ethics and the management of conduct in the public service has recently been addressed in research and program development for a number of countries in Africa.

She looked at the findings from five broad areas of structure of the public service, guidance for public servants, management of conduct in the daily business of administration, control and enforcement of good administration and the role of non-governmental actors in achieving the goal of an ethical public administration.

As far as the structure of the public service in Africa is concerned, the findings for 1998 show that the population served per central government employee was highest in Uganda and lowest in Namibia. As far as public sector salary compression ratio i.e. the difference between the highest and lowest salaries in the public service, the findings show that Uganda again, has an exceptionally highly decompressed salary scale. Note that high compression is considered a disincentive for seeking a career and applying ethical standards in the public service.

Regarding guidance for the public service, the findings show that accepting gifts or payments is explicitly restricted in all the ten African countries. However, other areas like the use of insider knowledge, lobbying, use of official travel or nepotism are less frequently covered. Similarly, these standards were said to be communicated to the civil servants at the entry to service but there are few training or awareness programs.

As far as the management of conduct in the public sector is concerned, the findings show that there was no national coordination strategy to provide public service integrity in most of the countries studied. In addition, human resource management strategies such as merit based promotion, publication of vacancies or setting of good examples are infrequently in place in most of the countries. Although there are legal provisions for this, these elements are less frequently incorporated into daily administrative behavior.

Finally, as far as control and enforcement of the ethics infrastructure is concerned, there are no protection mechanisms for public servants who expose wrongdoing, such as guaranteeing anonymity, legal protection and transfer possibilities. In addition, only three countries provide a complaints “hotline” open to all citizens.

Ms. Armstrong concluded by saying that non-government actors were increasingly sponsoring civic education programs on public sector ethics and their roles in enhancing ethical behavior cannot be overlooked. Consequently, in the summary of the above findings, she said that this study should provide an international comparison in order to identify good instruments and policies from which other countries and regions in the world can draw lessons and inspiration. She said that the database tries to provide a national information system that brings all the information on public service ethics regulations and policies together in a systematic way.

### ***Session 3: Presentation of the Uganda Case study by the Director of ethics in the President’s Office***

The Uganda case was presented on behalf of Professor E.F Byarugaba, the National Consultant, by Mr. Ashaba Aheebwa, the Director of Ethics in the Office of the President.

Mr. Ashaba gave highlights of the report, starting with a brief historical background of Uganda’s Public Service. He said that before 1960, Uganda had a small, efficient and well-remunerated civil service largely free of unethical behavior. However, corruption infiltrated the service from mid-1960s as a result of changes in the political direction.

The introduction of nationalized parastatals in the 1960s ushered the civil servants into a new form of service based on political consideration. Soon, under Idi Amin, crafty business practice *mafuta mingi* dealt a final blow to ethical conduct in public service.

On the other hand, the Amin era brought about insecurity of employment and in the 1980s this situation worsened. During the 1970s, there was no parliament and no institutions to fight corruption and/or unethical behavior. The single party of the 1960s and the suspension of the rule of law in the 70s, which gave rise to unprincipled recruitment and consequently a bloated civil service, coupled with insecurity and rigging of politics in the 1980s all contributed to an increase in corruption and unethical behavior in Uganda. The civil servant of the 1950s and 60s who was equipped to give timely, reliable and concrete information, develop policy, give professional

advice, exhibit loyalty, integrity, accountability and discipline had by 1980 faded out and been replaced with a new breed of civil servants lacking these attributes.

The public servant of today is poorly paid, works in a bloated public service and is largely uninterested in his/her work. On the other hand, public service ethics i.e. values, standards and demands are no longer kept up, and there is corruption in the form of abuse of power entrusted to public servants. Mr. Ashaba described the forms of unethical behavior as bribery where one gets a service they are not entitled to, illegal use of public assets, payment of service for non-existent workers, payment for goods not supplied, fraud, embezzlement, commissions of all kind, removing documents from files, etc.

He said that unethical behavior is caused by a lack of effective structures to ensure accountability, a lack of effective sanctions against wrong doing, a lack of interest by the public in tracking unethical behavior, economic pressure from relatives and friends, pressure from work-mates and pressures of survival due to very low remuneration. He cited political insecurity, job insecurity, excessive ambitions to get rich, a lack of guidance i.e. induction, a lack of an effective code of conduct and corrupt leadership as important causes of unethical behavior in Uganda.

He however said that the NRM government is committed to eliminating corruption and improve the public service. Under the ten-point program, there have been efforts to improve the public service in Uganda. These include liberalization, privatization, better remuneration and a smaller public service.

The NRM government has put in place mechanisms for education about ethical behavior and systems, which have enabled the development of a leadership code, the establishment of the Inspectorate of Government and a Department of Ethics and Integrity to handle policy matters. Parliament and Service Commissions are also in place to set standards for recruitment into the public Service.

Mr. Ashaba noted that decentralization policies, public service reorganization, results oriented management - ROM, de-linking the common cadre, computerized pay roll, remuneration policy changes, revision of the code of conduct for public officers, the establishment of commitment control systems, better records management, the involvement of the mass media and NGO sector and creating avenues for participation at the grass root levels are some of the measures being put in place by the government to address the evils of unethical behavior and corruption.

He said, however, that the underlying causes that exacerbated corruption and unethical behavior have never been dealt with in Uganda. The ground is still fertile with corruption and the social and economic factors that predisposed this break down are still real. Although the political side has been dealt with, people don't feed on politics.

Mr. Ashaba suggested that in order to further consolidate the above achievements, the government should address the issue of poor remuneration of public servants, improve and train civil servants in ethical standards, increase punishment to include confiscation of property for unethical officers, increase public and internal audit, strengthen civil society and improve coordination and integration of evidence gathering. He said that Ugandans ought to make integrity a way of life and that there should be a clear and smooth system of shifting power from one political organ to another through a democratic process.

#### ***Session 4: Discussion***

After the presentation of the Uganda case, a lively discussion ensued, touching on many issues of ethics and corruption.

A participant noted that studies such as this are good but Uganda is not short of such knowledge, which is rather abundant and commonplace. What lacks are effective solutions.

It was also argued that Uganda does not lack policies or regulations to enforce ethics and integrity; rather the country lacks values and practices for fighting corruption. Ugandans have never resolved on what is wrong or right for their common good. Similarly, government has not helped Ugandans establish this common understanding. Government does not treat Ugandans at fault in the same way. There is selective consideration in enforcement of ethics and integrity. A participant wondered why the interdicted NSSF Chief was compensated while the Chairman of the Electoral Commission interdicted under similar circumstances was not compensated. On the other hand, the government has persistently failed to inform Ugandans about important public transactions such as the sale of the Uganda Commercial Bank, the power purchase agreement of the AES Nile Power, etc. Yet there is insider knowledge of bogus deals with top officials involving billions of shillings. How can the government streamline ethics when such obvious loopholes exist in its ranks? Why can't the public be involved?

A discussant argued that decentralization merely shifted the problem of accountability from the center to the Districts. Decentralization had intensified corruption without the tools to control it at the district level. There are no proper systems for ensuring accountability at the Sub-County level where public expenditure is highly committed. District Tender Boards are involved in serious malpractices, which cannot easily be checked. As a result, newly constructed buildings are collapsing; a lot of public goods have been embezzled, and there is a lot of money going into inflated costs. The participant wondered why everything seems to be faulty. For example, elections are flawed and good governance is no longer straight. It was argued that there are no more role models in Uganda.

A participant argued that proliferation of institutions to fight corruption did not mean that Uganda is better off in this area; rather it could be an indicator of a very big problem, not necessarily good performance. It was said that without self-discipline and individual integrity, we couldn't boast in all the laws available.

Another participant thought that the enforcement of the regulations was the biggest problem of Uganda. For example, the Uganda Commercial Bank has been 'privatized' twice; at the first attempt the country lost 69 bn/- in bogus deals but no one was punished or dismissed for this loss. Yet the laws are there, and the Constitution is clear about dealing with people who cause financial loss. On the other hand, the courts and the general public are not officially included as institutions for fighting corruption.

A participant said that the ethics of public servants depend on those of political leaders. If politicians are unethical, then professional people cannot behave differently. It was noted that corrupt politicians drag public servants into corruption as collaborators. Similarly, concern was raised over the fact that if the leadership could not punish corrupt politicians, then there was no way a Permanent Secretary, for example, would punish his technical staff. *The rules and regulations and codes of conduct can only be effective if the enforcement mechanism is in place.* There was a comparison of the leadership code where in Uganda it is applicable only to respect to senior civil servants and elected leaders but in Nigeria, all civil servants are affected.

A participant argued that in Uganda, civil society participation in fighting corruption is very weak. Laws are passed and never enforced, and it becomes routine for those who are to enforce not to do so, and those who should comply not to do so.

One participant lamented about the wasteful lifestyle of government. There are too many 4-wheel drives in Kampala consuming a lot of public resources. In reality, a public servant working and living three miles away from the office does not need such an expensive vehicle. There is actually no need for such 4-wheel drive vehicles in Kampala.

An argument was made that personal example can build up a culture of integrity. A case was given of the Speaker of Parliament whose official vehicle is parked during non-duty hours. It was said that a culture of integrity could be built to become a practice. In Uganda, the regulations for handling and the use of public vehicles are in place, but they are broken. No one questions this practice as people do in Tanzania.

A participant complained that the worst part of this scenario is routine violation of regulations and rules with impunity. This is the biggest roadblock in establishing a workable system. For example, during the last campaigns, the President issued an order for Ministers not to use public vehicles in the campaigns. Ministers defied this order, and nothing was done. It was never discussed or brought up at any forum. There was no follow up or sanctions against errant officials.

However, there was a consensus that the parliament as an oversight institution and a policy-making organ of the state had tried to enforce ethical behavior in public servants and politicians, but their task was still too big.

Finally, it was recommended that the Uganda Management Institute should introduce training on corruption, ethics and integrity in its curriculum, and all public servants should benefit from this course.

### ***Session 5: Comments from the Presenter***

The presenter of the national report clarified that the country report addressed mainly political behavior and not about public servants killing ethics in the country. He particularly noted that politics had completely influenced public affairs in Uganda. He was also disturbed that the government had allowed leaders to maintain several roles at the expense of ethics and integrity. *Being a minister and a member of parliament and mixing these two roles increases structural and administrative problems.*

He also said that a major problem now is the law of evidence. On the one hand, you cannot win cases against corruption without evidence. On the other hand, there are no genuine *whistle blowers* in Uganda. The majority of people who shout about corruption are those who have lost out with the government or those not benefiting from authority. He mentioned that there is nothing that makes Ugandans identify with their country. Nothing unites Ugandans like Americans for the USA. Indeed, at every point of failure, the opposition will quickly come out to express indifference and regret.

Yet one cannot be reactionary to corruption. How many people would one need to police the public? The presenter suggested that what Ugandans needed was to re-orient their minds so that

they define their collective interests and rally everyone behind these interests. In order to get to national values, the country needs to first cultivate professional values whether as medical professionals, lawyers, accountants, sociologists, etc and this is a process that takes time. For example, how come Uganda does not have a national language when Luganda or Luo can be spoken in virtually all parts of the country? The problem is that one group cannot stand to promote other's interests. But why? Ms. Armstrong from UN DESA added that in modern life, people make a distinction between public and private spheres. What the study and this workshop is addressing is professional ethics. Wrongdoing arises when public servants are caught between conflicting personal and professional values. It is important for them to be aware of these conflicts and to know where duty calls.

There is also the problem of culture where one is praised and admired for embezzling. The new values acquired by Ugandans are those that would be considered deviant. Ugandans take deviance for 'normal' culture, and correct behavior is rejected or ridiculed. He argued that what Uganda needs is a leader who can force us into a desired state of development, even if at the expense of heated opposition. Otherwise, when Cabinet appointments are based on religion, tribe, etc., one cannot talk of significant progress. What is needed is to build systems so that it doesn't matter where one goes or to whom you have talked, the answer is the same. Everyone should be subjected to similar conditions, and erring people should be identified and uprooted.

## ***Closing Ceremony:***

The closing ceremony was presided over by the Minister of Ethics and Integrity, Mrs. Miria Matembe.

The Director of the Uganda Management Institute briefly explained the activities of the day and said that ethics is a very important subject, not only in the public service but in society as a whole. He reiterated that the critical way forward in ensuring ethics and integrity in the public service lies mainly in establishing uniform systems for all offices and public entities so that a consistent response is provided at all levels. However, this still cannot do the trick if the mindset of public servants cannot be transformed to embrace correct values in public conduct.

He then invited the Minister to make a few remarks and close the workshop.

The Minister expressed disappointment that many participants did not turn up. Yet the issues for discussion were very important. She thanked UMI, UNDP, UN-DESA, especially Ms. Armstrong and the survey team, for disseminating the findings. She said that ethics is the issue of what is right or wrong or good or bad. People are unethical if the decision they take is bad in relation to the expectations of the people they serve. She said that upholding ethical values calls for discipline and loyalty. In Uganda, today, ethics have broken down mainly because people have lived with what is wrong for so long that it has become normal.

Corruption has created cynics of government, yet most corruption is at the level of public servants.

She said that emphasis on legal technicalities was bogging down the struggle against unethical behavior in Uganda. Lack of evidence has resulted in no action being taken even in obvious cases.

She lamented that there are no strong systems in the country or the relevant institutions are simply too weak to investigate and prosecute.

The Minister pointed out that her department had developed an action plan to fight corruption in Uganda. The action plan identifies eight areas of priority, including reforming the procurement system, public service pay reform, strengthening accountability at local government level, ensuring coordination of anti-corruption agencies, reviewing and strengthening systems for codes of conduct and enabling the development of a strong civil society. She said her department had recruited more officers and in the office of Directorate of Public Prosecution -DPP, established and staffed regional offices for the IGG, established chain links for the judiciary to expedite hearing of cases, conducted integrity surveys, established an integrity committee in the judiciary, improved the central tender board, established contract committees, strengthened financial accountability including the Public Accounts Committee- PAC, put in place a leadership code, reviewed the anti-corruption law, etc. She said that her department was working towards reforming evidence law and providing for a vibrant press. The department is also working with civil society to monitor public funds.

She however lamented that people in Uganda are not committed to fighting corruption. Corruption is not taken seriously as an evil such as AIDS or gender inequality. There is a lack of personal will, resources, commitment, and institutions at the forefront in the crusade are not properly funded. There is a lot of selfishness and hoarding of vital information for many reasons.

In conclusion, she said that the war against unethical behavior and corruption is far from won in this country.

*The Minister then declared the workshop closed.*

## ***Recommendations***

The participants made recommendations on the way forward with respect to the Uganda case study. The recommendations are based on those made initially by the national consultant.

1. Prioritize public servants' pay in the budget. Remuneration packages should be based on market rates. Pay packages should be comparable to those in the private sector;
2. Address poor resources for integrity institutions e.g. IGG, DPP, Auditor General, CID , Courts etc,. Also increase personnel and training;
3. Increase training on ethical standards. Develop a multi-sectoral curriculum for ethics in the public service; also focus on politicians;
4. Increase punishment for defaulters in ethics. Operationalize laws; strengthen the capacity to implement the leadership code;
5. Increase audit (also cover the ministry of internal affairs and defense and the president's office);
6. Strengthen civil society;
7. Improve coordination and integration of ethics and integrity measures; need to strengthen integration part. Ethics should become a way of life;
8. Improve evidence gathering in corruption cases;
9. Provide better training for investigators, recruit new ones;
10. Re-orient the police to economic crime; make it easier to report cases of crime;
11. Carry out more studies on the issue of burden of proof;
12. Mainstream culture of integrity; and
13. Smoothen transition to democracy.