

**REPORT OF THE NIGERIA NATIONAL WORKSHOP  
ON PUBLIC SERVICE ETHICS IN AFRICA  
ABUJA, 17 OCTOBER 2002**

## **Background**

In 1999/2000, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) with support from the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa conducted a survey on public service ethics in Africa. Nigeria was one of the ten sub-Saharan countries that participated in the survey. The main purpose of the project was to support the Government in improving the management of ethics in the public service through surveying existing policies and programmes and through systematically collecting information on areas of concern and reform proposals.

The information collected during the survey offers a platform for further discussion of concrete policy and funding recommendations in the field of public service ethics and the fight against corruption. To this end, a one-day national workshop was held on 17 October 2002 in Nigerlink Hotels, Abuja, Nigeria. This report summarizes the proceedings of the meeting.

## **Objectives of the Workshop**

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- (i) disseminate the findings of the Public Service Ethics in Africa project as it relates to Nigeria;
- (ii) discuss the findings of the national survey and aggregate views of various stakeholders; and
- (iii) develop a strategic follow-up action that could enhance the quality of public service ethics in Nigeria.

## **Methodology**

The methodology of the workshop was very participatory. Participants expressed their views frankly and openly with genuine concern about the state of public service ethics in the country. Twenty-three participants from various relevant ministries, agencies and NGOs attended the workshop (see Annex I).

## **Proceedings**

The workshop consisted of an opening ceremony, a session for the presentation of findings of the survey at both regional and national levels, and a plenary discussion that brought out key issues and recommendations.

### ***Opening Ceremony***

The Director-General of the National Orientation Agency who also represented the Minister of Information and National Orientation chaired the opening ceremony. The ceremony was made up of remarks by the Chairman and a proxy for the UNDP Resident Representative/UN Resident Coordinator.

In his remarks, the Chairman expressed the national concern for the desirability of ethical standard in the Nigerian public service. He was delighted that there was a national report that highlighted the key issues relevant to promoting ethical standards in the country. To this end, he urged the workshop to come up with solid recommendations that would assist the country to have a more efficient, ethical and transparent public service that takes into account the peculiar national environment. In the same vein, the UNDP Nigeria representative hoped that the findings and recommendations of the study would be used to assist national efforts to promote ethical values and set a high standard of conduct, starting with the public service.

### ***Presentations***

Ms. Armstrong, UNDESA Adviser, made a presentation on the comparative perspective of the survey of the public service ethics in ten African countries that took part in the project. Her presentation covered the conceptual framework of the project, its objectives and ethics infrastructure dealing with guidance, management and control of conduct in the public service. Major outputs and outcomes of the project were also elaborated upon, as well as areas of commonalities and differences among the ten countries studied.

The two national consultants presented the findings of the Nigerian national survey. The presentation featured an examination of the structure of the public service in Nigeria, the institutions responsible for managing the conduct of public servants and ethical standards put in place to ensure efficient performance of the public service. A major feature of the report dwelled on the constraints militating against efficient, transparent and accountable public services. A number of recommendations were made that could assist in promoting high ethical standards and stem the tide of corruption in Nigeria.

### ***Plenary Discussion***

The participants exhaustively deliberated on the different presentations. The main focus of discussions revolved around:

- (i) the present situation of ethics in the Nigerian public service;
- (ii) the absence of systematic and up-to-date data on the public service;
- (iii) the main factors responsible for low adherence to ethical standards; and
- (iv) the weak capacity of institutions charged with managing public service ethics.

The following emerged from the discourse:

- (i) A general agreement that there is poor adherence to ethical standards by public servants in the country; in particular, simple rules and regulations that could enhance good ethics and efficiency in the public service are generally ignored;
- (ii) The absence of coordinated and harmonised roles, responsibilities and activities among institutions responsible for public service ethics;
- (iii) Pervasive corruption is an unethical response to insecurity of tenure, poor employment conditions and, most especially, uncertain future upon retirement;
- (iv) Weak enforcement of rules and regulations relating to unethical behaviour and corruption; in addition, the disclosure system could be strengthened;
- (v) The persistent collaboration of the private sector in the perpetration of the system of corruption in the country; and
- (vi) Limited involvement of non-governmental actors in monitoring and reporting unethical behaviour.

### ***Recommendations***

The following recommendations were made in addition to those contained in the consultants' report:

- (i) There should be a national, integrated strategic approach to the problems of corruption and other unethical behaviour in the public service.
- (ii) There is the need to identify, coordinate, reinforce and sustain the current anti-corruption initiatives in the country.
- (iii) The Government should put in place mechanisms to reduce uncertainties about life on retirement.
- (iv) The capacities of the Planning, Research and Statistics Departments of various Ministries should be strengthened to make them support better performance and effectiveness in the public service.
- (v) There is the need to adopt a targeted and focussed approach to capacity strengthening of various institutions, charged with the various aspects of public service ethics.
- (vi) There is a need for systematized and coordinated data collection, using enhanced existing structures such as the Federal Office of Statistics and the National Data Bank.

- (vii) There is a need for consistent and continuous dissemination of information related to sanctions against unethical behaviour.
- (viii) The non-governmental organizations and the civil society should be involved in complementing the efforts of the Government to stem the tide of corruption and other unethical conducts in the public service.
- (ix) Ethical behaviour should be promoted by the leadership by example.
- (x) Political will to combat unethical conduct is not only necessary but also imperative.
- (xi) There needs to be a recognition of the fact that a stable democratic system of government is a necessary pre-condition for an accountable and transparent public service.
- (xii) There is a need to check political interference in the management of conduct in the public service.
- (xiii) The Government should explore existing opportunities with donors on how to enhance ethical conduct in the public service

### **Follow up**

A two-pronged approach was recommended as a follow up to the workshop. This would be at regional and national levels.

At the regional level, Nigeria should link up with international organizations such as UNDESA, the Commonwealth Secretariat, and African Training and Research Centre in Administration for Development (CAFRAD) for further assistance.

At the national level, all on-going initiatives should be coordinated and supported into a coherent national strategy that would promote good public service ethics.

The National Consultants should disseminate the findings of the workshop at a National Forum as a policy advocacy tool and also participate in future national activities.

## ANNEX I

### NATIONAL WOKSHOP ON PUBLIC SERVICE ETHICS IN AFRICA, ABUJA, 17 OCTOBER 2002

#### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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