High-Level Workshop

“Transfer and adaptation of innovative practices for improved public service delivery in Least Developed Countries (LDCs)”

AIDE-MEMOIRE

Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia
17-19 March 2014
1. BACKGROUND

On the understanding that it will take capable leadership and public servants to strengthen public administration capacity to secure effective delivery of efficient public services in an equitable manner, in the beginning of 2013 the Division for Public Administration and Development Management of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DPADM/UNDESA) started the implementation of Project entitled “Strengthening capacities of the public sector in least developed countries (LDCs) to deliver quality services equitably through the transfer and adaptation of innovative practices”. The Project envisions, among other activities, two Capacity Building Workshops for LDCs to develop the requisite knowledge and skills about approaches and methodologies that are appropriate for effective and smooth adaptation and implementation of successful service delivery practices in their local contexts. During the Workshops, the participants will, based on the specific country needs as well as the innovations contained in the United Nations Compendium of Best Practices, identify specific MDG-related areas of service delivery and discuss the best ways to bring innovative solutions designed and implemented by source Governments to governance problems of Governments and local authorities of those LDCs that are looking to adapt such solutions in the same or similar areas.

The first capacity building Workshop was organised by DPADM/UNDESA under the umbrella of the United Nations Public Service Forum, Day and Awards Ceremony that took place in Manama, the Kingdom of Bahrain, from 24 to 27 June 2013.

The second capacity building Workshop on “Transfer and adaptation of innovative practices for improved public service delivery in LDCs” will be carried out in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 17 to 19 March 2014. The Workshop is organized by DPADM/UNDESA with support from the hosting Government of Ethiopia in cooperation with UNDP, UN-HABITAT and UN-WOMEN.

2. CONTEXT

The access to and quality of public service delivery is critical to the development of any country, including in the context of implementing the Internationally Agreed Development Goals (IADGs), particularly the MDGs. Global, regional and national commitments to sustainable development and poverty reduction require that all citizens, men and women, have equal access to quality services, including health, education, water, sanitation, shelter, and other basic services. It is Governments who are entrusted with the responsibility to deliver quality services equitably. If they lack the capacity to do so, the attainment of the MDGs is unlikely, especially in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) with significantly fewer resources to ensure sustained improvements in service delivery.

The attainment of MDGs requires deliberate efforts on the part of leaders in government, in collaboration with civic society and the private sector. Leadership is especially vital in light of the growing and insistent demands for popular participation and good governance, for the accommodation of ethnic, cultural, gender, political, economic, and
religious diversity. Leaders cannot design and implement strategies on their own, nor is it desirable that they do so.

While some of the LDCs are witnessing noticeable growth rates, others are being left behind, with high poverty rates and lack of access to basic services. In a number of LDCs, “there are persistent inequities in the delivery of public goods and social services, financial services for the poor and legal empowerment, including property and labour rights”\(^1\). In many LDCs, the delivery of services has not been effective and responsive to the needs of citizens because of (a) weak leadership and human resources capacity; (b) weak decentralized institutions, (c) lack of public administration processes and mechanisms that allow for the participation of citizens in determining priority areas, allocation of funds, as well as design and delivery of services, and (d) lack of an organizational culture that promotes innovation and creates ways of delivering services with limited resources. This state of affairs can largely be attributed to limited institutional and human resource capacities at the central and local levels to plan, coordinate, implement and monitor the delivery of services, exacerbated by inadequate interventions to address these challenges.

To ensure greater and more equitable access to quality services, LDCs need to strengthen their institutional and human capacities to manage, implement, monitor, and evaluate the delivery of services in an innovative, transparent and inclusive manner. In its resolution A/RES/65/280, the General Assembly endorsed the Istanbul Declaration on “Renewed and strengthened global partnership for the development of least developed countries” and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020. The resolution encourages, inter alia, further progress in providing access to essential services such as education, health, water and sanitation, and shelter. Within this framework, least developed countries commit to continue reforming institutional, legal and regulatory frameworks as well as the public sector to increase the efficiency and the transparency of service delivery, including through the fight against corruption. In broader policy context, in its resolution 57/277, the General Assembly reiterated that particular emphasis should be given to the exchange of experiences related to the role of public administration in the implementation of internationally agreed goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration.

A number of developing and developed countries designed and implemented innovative practices in service delivery in various areas, including health, water management and education, which have been documented by the United Nations Public Service Awards Programme (UNPSA) that is managed by UNDESA in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). Promoting transfer and adaptation of these innovative practices is a central component of UNDESA’s strategy to provide LDCs with a range of possible solutions to their service delivery challenges. It is also at the core of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which has extensive network and experience in supporting countries to mitigate corruption risks in

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\(^1\)United Nations Ministerial Conference on Least Developed Countries, Making Globalization work for the LDCs, Istanbul, 9-11 July 2007, Issues Paper, UNDP.
sectors such as education, health and water to promote transparency, accountability and integrity thus contributing to achievement of MDGs and poverty reduction. UNDP provides advisory and technical support to over 100 countries to implement transparency, accountability and anti-corruption initiatives.

In 2010-2011, UNDP developed three studies capturing methodologies, tools and good practices in education, health and water sectors to provide some guidance on how corruption risks are mitigated in these sectors. In 2012, UNDP piloted its initiatives in 16 countries to identify and address corruption risks in education, health and water sectors. After successful implementation of a pilot phase, in the end of 2013, UNDP launched Phase 2 of sectoral initiative to upscale pilot initiatives in more than half of the countries from the first phase and also added 11 country pilots because of the increased demand of such projects from UNDP country offices and the governments around the world.

Learning and adapting successful initiatives from other countries’ experiences can considerably save resources and time, inspire new reforms, and in some cases help countries to leapfrog stages of development. UNPSA has proved to be a useful framework for disseminating information about innovations in government, and most importantly, helping transform such information into knowledge for finding effective solutions to governance problems. UNDESA has thus formulated a development project to serve as a vehicle for the transfer and adaptation of innovative practices to address governance challenges in LDCs by enhancing the capacity of their public servants.

This is particularly vital in key service delivery areas of education, health and water, where LDCs have made little progress in terms of efficient, equitable, transparent and responsive service delivery. A number of innovative practices in this critical areas have been documented by DPADM, e.g. integrating health services like in Zambia; creating innovative administrative support to clinics to improve the tuberculosis rate in South Africa; reducing “patient waiting time” by integrating medical services through a one-stop-shop in Botswana; bringing health services to remote rural areas through the Phelophepa Health care train; promoting family planning and empowering women through health and reproductive education in Jordan; providing access to drinking water by engaging citizens in water management in India and Morocco; empowering local communities to manage essential social services in India; and empowering people to alleviate poverty through participatory decision-making in Rwanda, among other initiatives.

There is evidence that a good practice is transferable when it is generic, adds value and involves simple processes, quick wins, is cost-effective, addresses an expressed or felt need among replicators and is effective. As recommended during the recent Expert Group Meeting on “Transfer and adaptation of innovative practices for improved service delivery in LDCs” organized by PACB/DPADM in New York in February 2013, special attention in the process of implementation and adaptation of innovations should be given to collaborative governance approach, as especially in the time of severe lack of financial and human resources cooperation of public sector with civil society and private sector may become crucial in achieving objectives of effective and equitable public services.
Meanwhile, success in transfer of innovations depends on contextual factors that are best understood by those who live and work in LDCs. For this reason the workshop is designed to enhance capacities of senior government officials in central and local authorities to identify service delivery areas that could benefit from innovation and to implement new service delivery systems.

3. PURPOSE

The Workshop will provide participants with the opportunity to a) gain knowledge about new trends, ideas and emerging issues in governance and innovation; b) learn about concrete solutions to complex governance challenges and explore the possibility of adapting good practices; c) share and discuss ideas about innovative tools and approaches to build national and local capacity; d) network with government officials, experts, the private sector and civil society representatives, as well as practitioners from around the world, and e) leave the Workshop with renewed commitment and inspiration to better serve communities and work together to improve the future for all.

The main objective of the Workshop is to facilitate the transfer of innovations, identified by LDCs that use collaborative governance methods at any level of government to deliver government services that help achieve MDGs.

The Workshop will offer a platform for participating public sector managers to increase awareness of the innovations available for important areas of service delivery to facilitate the interested LDCs in choosing their country specific priority for public service delivery. Specifically, the workshop will serve as a working space for networking and for exchanging ideas, knowledge and strategies on the ways to design and implement efficient, equitable and responsive delivery systems. The workshop will capitalize on the advice and recommendations stemming from the Expert Group Meeting held in New York in February 2013 and is expected to make recommendations about which specific innovations are to be transferred and adapted, as well as which countries would participate in the subsequent practitioner-to-practitioner knowledge transfer exchanges.

4. THEMES FOR DISCUSSION

The workshop is expected to bring together senior government officials from LDCs in order to discuss the following sub-themes:

i) Role of innovations in attaining MDGs and examples from the UNPSA pool of relevant successful innovative practices appropriate for adaptation/transfer;

ii) The benefits of collaborative governance approach in the process of implementation and adaptation of successful public service delivery practices

iii) Lessons learned from innovations in Africa and potential of adaptation/transfer for LDCs;

iv) Lessons learned from innovations in Asia and potential of adaptation/transfer for LDCs;

v) LDCs own priority areas of service delivery;

vi) Experiences of participating LDCs and their preparedness and commitment to adapting the experience of successful innovators;
vii) The facilitating role of UNDESA project in match-making between successful innovators and recipient LDCs

5. EXPECTED OUTPUTS

The outcomes of the workshop are expected to contribute to the short-term, medium-term and long-term objectives of the development account project by:

a. establishing immediate connections between innovators and adaptors in LDCs that can be built on to promote, in a concrete way, peer-to-peer exchange programmes and field visits planned for the next phase of the project;
b. identifying and strengthening cooperative relationships between actors from the public sector, civil society and the private sector, already engaged in the development frameworks of LDCs (such as regional and country networks for cross-country and cross-continental learning about innovations in public administration);
c. instigating opportunities for collaboration and mobilisation of required resources with local and regional actors in the public and private sectors and civil society (to promote collaborative governance approach) and with innovator countries;
d. elucidating the benefits of innovation sharing and adaptation for innovator countries as well as for adaptor LDCs;
e. capturing the information presented at the workshop for a report to form the basis for future outputs of the project such as on-line training modules, innovation case studies, resource publications on innovation transfer, mentoring relationships and networks, and other outputs intended to perpetuate knowledge transfer in regional and local contexts and maintain momentum for innovation with minimal external support;
f. promoting the project as a catalyst for generating ongoing, self-sustaining and collaborative public sector innovation that can stimulate new ideas across public services with multiple benefits encouraging a culture of innovation;
g. boosting engagement of regional networks, civil society and other potential institutional partners in the implementation of the project for effective achievement of its goals.
h. contributing to the development of existing UNDESA methods and techniques for promoting innovation in public service into resources that can support the equitable delivery of quality services sector in LDCs and promote collaboration on an ongoing basis.

6. ORGANIZATION

6.1. Participants

The target group of the workshop is high level government officials of LDCs, who are well-positioned to make decisions and support adaptation and implementation of innovative solutions for delivery of public services in their respective countries.
Representatives from civil society with relevant experience should also be included. The composition of the workshop should strive for gender balance. Including both experts and successful practitioners into the workshop will enhance the likelihood of acceptance and implementation of the recommendations for knowledge transfer.

6.2 Official languages

The workshop will be conducted in English with simultaneous interpretation into French.

6.3 Electronic networking

All the documents of the Workshop will be posted on the United Nations Public Administration Network (http://www.unpan.org/).

6.4 Format of the Workshop

The meeting will be organized over the course of three days, and participants will take part both in plenary sessions and deliberations in working groups.

Participants will consider and select the areas where service improvement seems most relevant for them and set their priorities as well as discuss implementation modalities of replicating innovations, with particular emphasis on institutional arrangements. The workshop will also make recommendations about which specific innovations are to be transferred and adapted, as well as which countries would participate in the subsequent practitioner-to-practitioner knowledge transfer exchanges.

The format of the workshop is interactive and participatory with focus on discussions among the officials. Presentations will set the scene for discussions among all participants to guide them to solid and practical approaches of rolling the project activities forward.

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