CONCEPT NOTE

Workshop 1: Transforming public service for delivering inclusive and equitable services to leave no one behind in the achievement of the SDGs.
Introduction

The 2019 United Nations Public Service Forum will take place in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan from 24-26 June 2019, under the theme ‘Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through effective Delivery of Services, Innovative Transformation and Accountable Institutions’.

The Forum will be comprised of a series of workshops where various elements related to the overall theme will be explored in more details. This workshop will explore the issue of transforming public service for delivering inclusive and equitable services to leave no one behind in the achievement of SDGs.

Objective

The main objectives of the workshop are: (i) to provide a platform for participants to explore what transformation the public service must undergo to be able to effectively play the critical role of implementing and/or facilitating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the SDGs while leaving no one behind, (ii) to discuss how such transformation can be achieved, and (iii) to share examples and experiences from which lessons can be learned to inspire transforming the public service for the SDGs.

Focus

Effective public sector institutions are a critical cornerstone in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). One of such institutions is the public service. Public service needs to be transformed to be effective, equitable, transparent, accountable and highly effective in the delivery of public services in order to achieve the SDGs.

Such transformation implies first and foremost reviewing the role of the public service in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Understanding what type of public service is required to effectively play this role is essential to identifying clear objectives to drive such transformation.

Public service in any country is an instrument of state action. There are many measures it can take to implement, or to facilitate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the SDGs. These include; (i) policy and strategy planning, (ii) providing services, (iii) developing infrastructure, (iv) resource mobilisation and utilisation, (v) monitoring and evaluation of government activities and programs, and (vi) institutional and human resource capacity development.

The public service is expected to provide the bedrock of rule of law and justice, observance of human rights, law and order, security of person and property, leadership, professionalism, transparency, accountability, ethical conduct, and integrity on which operations of all actors in public, private, and civil society sectors, are anchored. When these are not provided the implementation of the 2030 Agenda gets jeopardised.
Governments count on the public service for their success in meeting the expectations and aspirations of their people. Behind the delivery of such services are institutions, policies, laws, rules, regulations, strategies, infrastructures put in place by governments. The effectiveness of any government lies in the extent to which services of this nature are delivered with equity, responsiveness, inclusion, and accountability. All of the SDGs will require effectiveness of service delivery to be achieved. The principle of leaving no one behind is premised on public service embracing diversity, inclusion and equity in its values, principles, structures and services.

Transformation and development of the capacities for the delivery of public services is a critical need that must figure prominently in the strategies for implementing the 2030 Agenda. Although public sector capacity development has been on the agenda of many governments and development partners, both national and international, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda has heightened its importance. Moreover, it is necessary that the whole concept and practice of capacity development be recast to align it with the imperatives of the 2030 Agenda. This calls for a comprehensive transformation of public service. Several questions need to be raised and answered in this respect, such as what transformation must the public service undergo to be able to effectively play the critical role of implementing and/or facilitating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the SDGs while leaving no one behind, and how can the transformation be achieved? It is also important to look at examples from other countries that can provide lessons learned and inspiration for public service transformation.

Change in the public service is not a new phenomenon. However, public service reform has tended to focus on bureaucratic efficiency and results. In many countries, despite significant resources spent on reforms, public services did not significantly improve, partly because challenges and objectives keep changing. Public service leaders must hence realize that as they embark on the task of transforming public service for achieving the SDGs, they must ensure that services are effective and efficient as well as responsive and accountable.

In light of the above, the transformation that public service must undergo entails a combination of reforms, including the ongoing reform to promote effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery and a significant shift towards equity, inclusion, diversity, integration, openness, and people centric services. In addition, emphasis in the public service should be placed on creativity, innovation, resilience, information and communication technologies, public value, and heightened focus on outcomes. All this needs to be encompassed in a strategy that seeks to improve the delivery of services without leaving no one behind and a public service that effectively embraces and harnesses diversity while identifying and applying highly effective incentives for creativity, innovation, transparency, accountability, ethics and professionalism.
Structure

This workshop will be composed of three sessions. At the closing of each session, the rapporteur will present key messages.

Session 1: Transformation to achieve the SDGs and to leave no one behind
This session will examine how the public service should be transformed to effectively implement and or facilitate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the SDGs while leaving no one behind.

Session 2: What is needed to drive transformation?
This session will examine how transformation can occur, looking at the motivators and elements needed to drive transformation in the public sector.

Session 3: Transformation in Action
This session will allow participants to share examples and experiences from which lessons can be learned to inspire transforming public service for the SDGs. It will highlight the initiatives of the 2019 UN Public Service Awards (UNPSA) winners and showcase the UNPSA database.

Organizational details

- This workshop is organized by the Public Service Innovation Branch of the Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government, UN DESA.
- Participants are expected to come from central and local government officials, policymakers, public governance experts, schools of public administration, practitioners, civil society leaders, and academics.
- The workshop will be conducted in English.

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