

COUNTRY PAPER: AFGHANISTAN

# Public Administrative Reforms

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Independent Administration and Civil Service Commission of  
Afghanistan

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**10/21/2012**

This document briefly states the public administration and public governance reforms in Afghanistan from 2002 with more focus on IARCSC activities and illustrates the strategy and the most important areas and future plans base on the Afghanistan National Development Strategy.

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# **Public Administration Reforms in Afghanistan**

This document briefly states the public governance, public administration and civil service reforms in Afghanistan from 2002 with more focus on IARCSC activities and illustrates the strategy base on the Afghanistan National Development Strategy and IARCSC five year strategies and programs.

## **Background**

After Taliban era, the new government performed many programs in conjunction with and by the support of International Community (IC) and development partners. Through preparing a comprehensive document addressing the necessary requirements and activities by which the government could expand his authorization all around the country, named Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), new horizon of development was introduced.

Moreover, other partners assisted Afghanistan in preparing and performing ANDS as well as Afghanistan Millennium Development (AMD) Goals. After 2002, the strategic priorities were essential governance institutions and capacity, high priority and high impact reconstruction programs to restart the economy and social services. The strategy focused on improving livelihoods, fiscal strategy, institutions and management, governance and public administration reform and enabling private sector development.

## **Initiatives and programs**

In the last ten years, Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GoIRA) in close collaboration with the International Community and the development partners has made significant strides in establishing and developing modern institutions of democratic governance to realize the delivery of essential public services, to promote law and order, and to create an enabling economic environment focusing on reforming the public sector to strengthen the economy and develop modern public institutions.

The government had and has two major strategy of reform and capacity development i.e. Reform of Public Financial Management System and the Reform in the Civil Service Sector. Both reform efforts have produced good results in term of developing the legal basis and institutional structures for the establishment of modern and democratic institutions working on principles of good governance.

As the principles of ANDS, the GoIRA has made 6 programs, called National Priority Programs (NPP), “strengthen democratic processes and institutions, human rights, the rule of law, delivery of public services, and government accountability.” NPP for Financial and Economic Reforms introduces a comprehensive set of reforms to strengthen a more fiscally sustainable Afghan economy and to ensure that public (including donor) funds are used in a responsible and efficient manner, leading to effective development outcomes. The Afghanistan Program for Efficient and Effective Government aims to improve civil service management by: (i) Introducing and implementing broad-based policy, legal, and structural reforms in public administration; (ii) Improving public service delivery through a simplification of procedures; and (iii) Developing comprehensive training and improving working conditions of the civil service. In bringing government closer to the people by ensuring that local government is both empowered and accountable, the National Program for Local Governance focuses on implementing the Sub-National Governance Policy, as well as strengthening institutional development and democratic representation at the sub-national level.

The central institutions supporting the agenda of reform and capacity development and fighting corruption has been established. Ministry of Finance (MoF) has been the lead institution for reforms and capacity building in the public financial management legal and policy areas while the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC) has been leading the civil service management reform and human capital development within the GoIRA.

Through the first reform program i.e. Priority Reform and Restructuring (PRR), the IARCSC and its development partners were able to introduce and strengthen the much needed merit-based recruitment system in GoIRA, which makes the basis for meritocratic institutions. In PRR, the reform was introduced to a limited number of directorates/ department of a ministry/agency and the incentive used was Interim Additional Allowances as there was no legal base for salary reform. PRR was followed by Public Administrative Reform (PAR), in which, reforms were implemented in all the departments of a single ministry / agency.

During the implementation of PAR, the legal base for a whole of salary system reform as well as the required human resource capacities was built to manage the Pay and Grading Reform (P&G) as the new system of organizational structure and payment framework. The P&G resulted in breaking the old, ineffective and traditional human resources management systems and changed them to more efficient and effective ways of functioning and operations. Through PAR and P&G implementation, the basis for rules-based and meritocratic civil service management was created. These major reform programs were successfully complemented by several short-term capacity injection programs/projects, which not only facilitated smooth implementation of the reform processes but also attempted to build sustainable capacities in critical client ministries/agencies of the GoIRA. Also, many highly qualified Afghan experts were hired for different GoIRA agencies through some projects and programs like Management Capacity Program (MCP), Civilian Technical Assistance Program (CTAP), etc. which are followed by Capacity Building for Result program (CBR) that affects most of important positions including General Directorates, Directorates, Officers and experts to facilitate reforms and develop sustainable systems and processes aimed at increasing organizational efficiency and performance.

There is need for revitalization of reforms and a reassessment across the Government as to 'next generation' reform initiatives needed to build on this base.

### **Achievements**

Despite the challenges and constraints, recent national and international events related to Afghanistan provide massive opportunities for reforms. The continuous commitment to reforms by the senior leadership of the GoIRA and the international community in London, Kabul and Tokyo Conferences in 2009, 2010 and 2012 respectively strengthen the stance of reform leading agencies and its international partners in GoIRA. The recent Presidential Decree No. 45 and its considerable focus on reforms in the public sector of the country to increase efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability and improve organizational performances to improve service delivery exhibits the strong and strategic commitment of the GoIRA to reforms and sustainable capacity building in the country. The commitment of the international partners in Tokyo Conference (2012) to align 80% of their funds to the 22 National Priority Programs and 50% of the funds through the national budget process displays the continued commitment of the development partners to reforms and capacity building of the GoIRA.

Since 2002 IARCSC has achieved to:

- Development of reform policies and legal framework based good governance principles and service oriented public administration.
- Implementation of three deferent stages of reform (Priority Reform and Reconstruction, Public Administration Reform and Pay and Grading). In this last stage of reform which started less that 4 years back, a comprehensive assessment of ministries/ agencies strategy, structure, function and job analysis were contacted and for each position in civil service a job description was developed. Out of 375000 civil service positions, 365000 are covered under Pay and Grading reform.
- Introduction of merit based and competitive recruitment system.
- Introduction of performance management and performance appraisal into the civil service sector.
- Establishment of civil service institute and its satellites in the provinces for capacity building of civil service personnel.
- Training and capacity building of senior management in leadership and middle managers in basic management computer literacy and English, and university graduate as interns, training of civil servants in five common functions and conducting need based training for civil servants.
- Technical assistance to ministries/ agencies in business process simplification.

#### Challenges:

The management of the civil service and reform of public administration system face a number of challenges and pressures over the coming years while some previous challenges are still remained. Continuing conflict and insecurity adversely affects Afghanistan's development as well as support from development partners. To enhance effectiveness, GoIRA develops a comprehensive, long-term human resources strategy for the civilian sectors; focus on the strategic level analytical work to develop long-term assistance strategies in sectors that are high priority for the government; support the development of a coherent, shared approach to sub-national governance to enhance the sustainability of national programs.

The slow progress in civil service and public administration reforms is a function of many factors. One of the more significant factors is that important policy discussions on reform are crowded out by security related issues. Other system-wide challenges range from deficiencies within the legal and regulatory environments, capacity constraints within the operational and institutional environments in ministries and agencies at the central and sub-national levels. The most important challenges are:

- Insecurity
- Budget funding and limited national economic resources
- Limited coordination among donor funded programs
- Public aspirations and expectations
- Donor funded staff and weak human resources capacities
- Political interferences

- Limited national talent pool for capacity building
- Change resistance and low motivation

Specifically, there are some challenges that PAR faces. Among them are special challenges:

### **Human Resource**

Career development is not encouraged by the current system of civil service management. Other related factors such as performance appraisal and training are often not well coordinated as they are based on the realities on the ground. Human Resources Management (HRM) practices are disconnected and undermine the long-term sustainability of the civil service.

### **Gender Equality**

Traditional barriers, security challenges, limited education and investment in capacity development and insufficient policy supports are the major challenges faced by gender equality in the civil service.

### **Reforms in all national level**

A 'one-size-fits-all' approach to reform does not work in Afghanistan. Ministries/agencies are at different stages of reform readiness. Some Ministries have a basic platform of competencies in place, with P&G, and trained civil servants performing their duties according to job descriptions aligned with the Ministry's mandate. Others even have limited basic competencies. Reform requires a sophisticated, targeted gap-filling approach, recognizing the different stages of readiness. This makes planning across-government reform initiatives extremely complex.

### **Business and administrative processes**

A large number of lengthy and complicated business and administrative procedures undermine operational performance and expand the potential for corrupt practices both within the GoIRA and with the public.

Many of the current procedures in government are bureaucratic (and sometimes archaic), generally dating back decades. They are found to be time consuming, complicated and involve many layers of the bureaucracy that are considered mystifying to the average person needing services.

### **'Next Generation' Governance**

For the past few years, the PAR strategy has been driven by the ANDS which was established with the overall objective of creating an environment – legal, administrative, systemic and physical –to function efficiently, effectively and accountably. With the advent of the Kabul Process and the Tokyo accords, the governance and public administration reforms must now become more strategic, focusing on a self-sustaining and self-reliant Afghanistan.

### **Steps forward**

The NPP3 "Afghanistan Efficient and Effective Government", is the flag-ship program and government wide reform initiative which will be managed and facilitated by the IARCSC with support of Governance Cluster and would be implemented by ministries and agencies. The NPP3 is designed based on analysis of the past 10 years of reform implementation experience. In the document the current situation, major achievements, challenges and constraints as well as opportunities are identified and on the basis of reform specific analysis and within the overall government policy of modernization and democratization.

Based on the analysis has been agreed upon, it is to “ *Strengthen the institutional, organizational, administrative and individual capacities of the Government at both central and local levels to enable more efficient and effective service delivery, economic growth, justice, stabilization and security*”. The goal of the project is a long term vision for reform initiatives, with 15-20 year time horizons with specific objectives and deliverable which can be delivered during three years cycles.

The governmental bodies have many and various mandates to fulfill the priorities and programs. Besides the mandates and activities of state bodies, the IARCSC mission is to provide leadership, strategic direction and expertise in the management of the civil service and to support the development of a strong, effective and efficient system of public administration public governance. This will contribute to the adoption and enforcement of an orderly, fair and uniform system for the administration of the state enabling it to raise revenues and deliver better public services to the Afghan people.

Through research processes, the IARCSC will ensure the promotion of excellence in the leadership and management of the civil service and in the delivery of affordable and sustainable quality services through a modern system of public administration.

Also, by 2008, the Government had approved a new Pay and Grading policy. P&G, which is ongoing, is a success story for IARCSC as it has resulted in restructuring most of Ministries and Agencies. Approximately 365,000 positions have been reformed. This restructuring has not only initiated a position-based pay system but removed functional duplications and areas of overlap within individual Ministries resulting in a more efficient structure. The P&G program will continue with more focus on quality of the process and will be completed by end of 2013. Its implementation will take into account the methodology and selection criteria drawn from the experience of current implementation efforts. It is important to note that the P&G reforms will be synchronized or integrated with related business process simplification.

### **Human Recourse**

The IARCSC will develop a HRM policy that *inter alia* incorporates unique traditional and cultural factors. This will include a national training policy for the civil service that is linked to performance and career development and a civil service performance appraisal policy with supporting procedures and handbook that can be implemented across government. Performance would be linked to training and career development, as well as to performance incentives and disciplinary measures.

The HRM policy will also feature better HR planning in terms of civil service needs and recruitment plans for all levels at the center and provinces. These results will be assessed through routine monitoring of the implementation of HRM related policies, laws, regulations and systems.

### **Gender Equality**

The Gender Directorate is the IARCSC’s official mechanism for the promotion of gender equality in the civil service. Its goal is to improve and maintain gender awareness and an environment conducive to the promotion of women in the civil service in order to maximize gender equality.

A more concerted effort will be made to redress the current gender imbalance in the Civil Service through greater recruitment of women. Efforts will be increased to recruit more women into the Civil Service and to provide them with education and training opportunities. The implemented plan

will raise awareness of opportunities for women in the civil service at both the central and provincial levels and will aim not only to boost the numbers of female candidates applying, but also to support women's advancement through the ranks of the civil service, so that they attain higher management positions.

### **Reforms in all national levels**

The action plan will be developed and will identify those priority ministries and provinces for which TCAs will be carried out. Different approaches may be taken for different provinces, based on their unique security and other considerations. Also, specific attention will be given to priority districts.

### **Business and administrative processes**

The current BPS strategy and management framework will be revisited and where necessary revised and amended with input from other key Ministries. In order to expediting the simplification of the processes, BPS units will be established in priority ministries and agencies and will have responsibility to work in partnership with the IARCSC. The IARCSC will provide guidance to Ministries regarding the simplification of business processes while the Ministries will be responsible for the analysis and implementation of any recommendation for simplification. Lessons learned and other factors will inform the refinement of the BPS framework and the updating of the strategy and plan for longer term.

### **Next Generation of Public Administrative Reform/ initiative to improve public governance:**

Past and current PAR programs will be evaluated as the essential first step. A standard outcome evaluation of the experiences in PAR would identify the major results. Then IARCSC will assess PAR performance and generate lessons learned, identify good practices, assess institutional and management aspects and develop recommendations for the NGPAR.

The NGPAR paper would propose the vision for a future system, lay out the broad parameters of the program, and be used as the basis for government policy decision to proceed with the envisaged next generation reforms. An implementation strategy and plan will be developed and would form the basis for funding requirements, would clearly identify priorities, and be linked to donor funding mechanisms.

### **Plans for future**

The ANDS Prioritization and Implementation Plan presented to the Kabul International Conference on Afghanistan remains committed to the ANDS vision, by solar year 1400 (2020), of:

- A stable Islamic constitutional democracy at peace with itself and its neighbors, standing with full dignity in the international family.
- A tolerant, united, and pluralistic nation that honors its Islamic heritage and the deep seated aspiration toward participation, justice, and equal rights for all.
- A society of hope and prosperity based on a strong, private-sector led market economy, social equity, and environmental sustainability.

All plans and programs within IARCSC as well as the GoIRA are to having a legitimate, non-political, stable, service-oriented and accountable civil service in the framework of good governance, having the ability to use public resources more effectively and efficiently for basic services delivery,

enhancement of revenues and supporting the development of the private sector for national economic and social development.

### **Human Resource**

The HRM strategy will address the longer-term career development and performance of civil servants (or people) within the broader systems architecture of the Government, the decision-making processes and routines, and the underlying culture. A pyramid based career progression structure may be devised defining the job requirements at each step of the ladder.

HRM policy, when implemented, will result in: (1) a more efficient and effective civil service through enhanced job security; (2) the opening up of career opportunities for young (as well as established) Afghan professionals; (3) the contributing to employment in public sector; and (4) the prevention of the brain-drain.

### **Gender Equality**

The main results to be expected over the medium term include: (1) the civil service will be composed of a higher percentage of women in different layers of administration and management, with specific targets to be set (at least 30% of all civil servants will be female); (2) committees or bodies created under law, regulation or procedure will comprise a higher percentage of women; (3) gender units will be established in all Ministries/agencies with significant advances made towards gender parity in the Government; and (4) gender equality in relation to working conditions, salary and opportunities for advancement will be achieved.

### **Reforms in all national levels**

Some Ministries/agencies have seen significant reform achievements, while others have not been as successful in institutionalizing policies, processes, procedures and systems. There is a need to better assess the landscape of reform across government and develop a comprehensive, but targeted approach that completes a basic package of reforms in priority Ministries/agencies. Reform is not something that is 'done' to a Ministry, but rather something that must spring from the Ministry's acknowledgement and alignment of its core service delivery mandate with its functions, structures and activities. There is a need therefore to place the responsibility for achieving reform in the hands of the line Ministries/agencies.

The results or outcomes to be expected from reforms in this area will include: (1) improved service delivery through service standardization, benchmarking, the use of a citizens' charter among other measures; (2) reduced incidence of administrative corrupt practices, (3) increased revenue growth (4) improved stakeholder awareness, and (5) better management through better communications and public relations. In support of this, the organizational capacity of ministries, agencies and provinces to absorb on-budget support will be assessed, and budget execution and service delivery capacity development needs will be determined.

### **Business and administrative processes**

The BPS policy and practices across the public administration will develop a (pilot) plan for simplifying priority processes, implement the plan and strengthen BPS units in ministries, and develop a strategy and plan for the reform of administrative processes over the medium to longer term. The results expected from the specific actions noted below will include: (1) improved service delivery; (2) reduced potential of administrative corrupt practices; and (3) increased revenue growth.

### **Next Generation Governance**

An updated vision and strategy of future governance and public administration will produce results to ensure:(1) that Government Ministries/agencies function more effectively and efficiently with a sense of common purpose and in a more coordinated and consistent manner at both the national and sub-national levels; (2) corresponding strengthening in accountability and transparency within a more modern system of public administration; (3) continued improvements in efficient and effective delivery of executive and regulatory functions; (4) improved delivery of services and revenue generation capacity of the Government that serves larger segments of the population; and (5) that functions of Ministries/agencies are clearly defined, duplications are eliminated and priorities are established in the discharge of executive, regulatory and oversight functions of the Government.