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Programme Monitoring Consultants to the
Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform
Beirut - Lebanon

Memorandum

To: Mr. Atef Merhi, IDU Acting Director, OMSAR

From: Dimitrios Sfikas, PMC Team Leader

Cc: Dr Raymond Houry, TCU Director, OMSAR
Mrs Roula Kabbani, EU Project Coordinator, OMSAR

Date: 14 June 2001

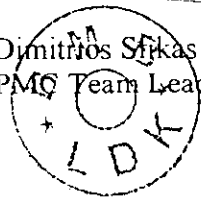
Ref: (a) CSC letter no. 402/5.2.2001 to H.E. Minister of State for
Administrative Reform.
(b) OMSAR/EU Project Coordinator e-mail of 27.4.2001 to PMC

Subject: Civil Service Council.

I am pleased to attach herewith for your approval the General Policy Framework Document, prepared by the PMC Local Administrative Modernisation Expert Dr. Adnan Iskandar, for a Human Resources Management System in Lebanon for the Civil Service Council.

Following your approval please arrange further transmission to the Head of the Civil Service Council for his review and endorsement.

Dimitrios Sfikas
PMC Team Leader



Republic of Lebanon
Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform
Center for Public Sector Projects and Studies
(C.P.S.P.S.)

**REPORT
ON
A GENERAL POLICY FRAMEWORK
FOR
THE CIVIL SERVICE COUNCIL**

**Document
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PROGRAMME MONITORING CONSULTANCY (PMC)

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FRAMEWORK FOR A HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN LEBANON

Introduction

In the framework of ARLA's assistance in the formulation of a performance improvement and modernization plan for the Civil Service Council, a joint task force composed of members from OMSAR, PMC and the CSC was formed and started its work by conducting a fact-finding survey to identify the main problems and needs of the CSC and to suggest possible ways and feasible solutions for dealing with them. On the basis of this survey, the PMC formulated an operational plan for the improvement and modernization of the CSC, which was reviewed and approved by its leadership.

The operational plan involved, as a first step, the development of a general policy framework for a modern human resource management system, which will help to identify the main personnel issues that need priority attention, to strengthen the administrative capacity and ensure optimal utilisation of available human resources, to cope with the many endemic problems that the Lebanese civil service at present is confronted with and to accommodate structural changes.

The survey findings clearly indicate that as a result of a long period of neglect - since 1959 no significant improvements have been introduced in the personnel system - coupled with the long civil war period and its destructive effects on all governmental institutions, the public service currently lacks the basic capabilities to deal with the many human resource challenges that face it at all levels.

Taking into account the present situation and the conditions prevailing in the existing administrative system, it seems to be more suitable for Lebanon to adopt an incremental approach towards the implementation of the proposed interventions : exploring ways and means by which the weaknesses of the current sub-system of human resources management can be gradually remedied.

It is hoped that the proper implementation of the proposed human resource management policy framework, which was formulated on the basis of the recent findings and represents a reasonably integrated and comprehensive approach for dealing with the human resources problems of the Lebanese administration, will help in the development of a modern, professional, responsive and efficient central personnel agency capable of meeting the many personnel challenges that presently face the Lebanese civil service.

This report consists of two parts :

- A diagnosis of the present situation in the management of human resources in the Lebanese Public Administration including an assessment of the local conditions, identification of main problems and basic weaknesses of the existing system and effects in the functioning of the public services.
- A set of proposals for the development of a general policy framework for human resources management reform in Lebanon, taking into consideration relevant recommendations in the OMSAR/PMC Strategy Paper (October 2000).

A. Assessment of the present situation: Constraints and Problems

There is an increasing world wide recognition that the human aspect of management, whether in government or the private sector, is the key factor in the success of any organization. Most governments are now fully aware that reform efforts in the public service cannot possibly succeed without due attention to the issue of human resources management.

This is especially true of Lebanon where the personnel system that dates back to the fifties has not undergone any significant changes to enable it to deal effectively with the changing conditions and challenges in Lebanese government and society. The neglect to update and modernize the personnel system, coupled with the many adverse effects of the war years, have seriously undermined the ability of the civil service to adequately serve the public and the state. The existing state of the personnel system could be briefly described as follows:

- A serious weakening of the merit system especially in matters of appointments, selection and promotion as a result of a resurgence of political meddling in the public administration.
- The lack of any manpower planning that enables the government to identify its personnel needs, including the lack of any reliable information about the total number of the workforce in the public service.
- Serious redundancies in personnel in many instances mainly as a result of political appointments during the war years. This problem has been compounded by the appointment of some of these supposedly temporary workers, who are less than fully qualified, in permanent civil service jobs.
- Serious shortages of employees with new and badly needed skills and competencies coupled with a disturbing uniformity in the backgrounds of existing employees.
- The serious difficulties that the government is facing, for a variety of reasons, in trying to recruit young persons with the required new skills and qualifications.
- The relatively high average age of existing civil servants.
- A demoralized civil service that lacks motivation and commitment.
- Low salaries and unattractive working conditions.
- An archaic system of examinations that does not constitute a valid and reliable tool for detecting and evaluating the abilities and competencies of candidates for public service jobs.
- The lack of job descriptions for almost all of the civil service jobs.
- The many serious difficulties that have so far prevented the government from implementing a performance appraisal system.
- A traditional civil service which is not performance or citizen oriented.
- A personnel system with primary emphasis on controls, seniority and procedural uniformity rather than on building a sound structure and developing modern personnel policies.
- The declining role of the central personnel agency i.e. the Civil Service Council.
- A centralized personnel system that leaves little authority or flexibility for line agencies in personnel decisions, coupled with the lack of or ineffectiveness of line personnel units.
- The lack of an effective accountability system and the deteriorating ethical standards throughout the civil service.

B. Recommendations on a Policy Framework for Human Resources Development

In light of the above, it is quite clear that some fundamental changes and improvements are urgently needed in order to modernize and rationalize the civil service system in Lebanon. The main objectives of such changes should be the adoption of new principles and practices of human resource management in order to establish a civil service which is merit based, efficient, ethical, impartial, citizen oriented and accountable. The key elements of the envisaged civil service system could be summarized as follows:

Personnel Organization

The success of any human resource management reform effort depends to a great extent on a well staffed central personnel agency which can play a leadership role in the formulation of medium and long term human resource management policies and the monitoring of their application throughout the government administration. It also depends on the active participation and support of the human resource management units in the various line agencies. Unfortunately the existing personnel system in Lebanon is a highly centralized one and has been devoting its main attention to ensuring the strict adherence of line agencies to personnel rules and regulations rather than to modernizing the existing archaic personnel policies and regulations and delegating some of the responsibilities for their application to line agencies. It must be pointed out, however, that although such delegation is an important requirement for the success of any attempt to modernize the human resource management system in Lebanon, it must be carried out within centrally determined policy frameworks and effective monitoring that guarantees adherence to the basic principles of merit, equity and a unified public service. It is also not easy or advisable to decentralize authority for personnel matters while introducing important changes in the system. Also, the process of decentralization should be gradual in order to make it easier for the public service to adapt to the introduced changes.

It should be emphasized that the decentralization of personnel responsibilities should be accompanied by the establishment and strengthening of personnel units in the various line agencies to enable them to properly discharge their new functions in close partnership with the Civil Service Council and to integrate these functions with the goals and objectives of their own agencies.

Manpower Planning

The most important part of a human resources management program is the development of a sound manpower plan which should focus on the following main issues:

1. conducting and maintaining an accurate census of the total number of government employees and their distribution among the different ministries and departments and among different staff categories, which is unfortunately not available in Lebanon at the present time.
2. determining the real staffing needs of the government on the basis of an objective and scientific study. The number of employees in certain categories has increased in an arbitrary and haphazard way without much regards to the genuine needs of the public service.
3. determining the number and location of redundant employees on the basis of the above study and devising plans for dealing with them, which is presently one of the most difficult problems that face the Lebanese government.
4. determining, again on the basis of the study proposed above, personnel shortages throughout the public service as well as the skills and qualifications needed in existing

vacant positions. It is of the utmost importance that some government attempts to fill some of the existing vacancies by some of the redundant and less than fully qualified workers should be abandoned immediately. Such a step will certainly lower the quality of an already underqualified civil service.

Recruitment and Selection

- The government in Lebanon faces great difficulties in its attempts to attract qualified employees to the public service for a variety of reasons. Working conditions are generally unattractive; salaries, especially in the upper levels of the civil service, are not competitive; and the image of the government is a negative one because many of the better qualified candidates believe career prospects in the civil service depend more on political considerations and connection rather than on merit. The recruitment system itself is traditional and negative in its approach because it is often based on the assumption that there is an abundance of qualified candidates in the market whose numbers should be kept down to manageable proportions. This is certainly not true of jobs in the upper levels of the civil service. A modern and positive recruitment system should try to seek out needed talent with a variety of inducements in order to be able to compete with other organizations for the often limited supply of competent candidates.
- The selection of properly qualified employees for the public service, whether for initial appointment or for promotion, depends to a great extent on the use of valid and reliable tests that can evaluate and measure the requirements for success in the job. Since Lebanon does not have a system job description and analyses it is not possible to establish job related competency standards for use in the development of appropriate employment tests. The tests presently used in Lebanon give much greater weight to education at the expense of experience and job related skills. Little use is also made of achievement, performance, and aptitude tests as well as the interview. There is no doubt that the overhaul of the testing system in the public service should be a high priority in a human resources management program. Equally important is the need to revise the system of selection for promotion, especially in the upper ranks of the civil service, because it is based more on political and seniority considerations rather than on merit.
- The recruitment and selection policy of the government should reflect a better balance between promotion from within and selection from outside. In view of the clear need of the public service for new skills and in view of the high average age of existing civil servants, every effort should be made to attract new skills as well as new ideas and attitudes to the civil service and to try to accelerate the promotion of the more promising new entrants to senior positions. It might also be advisable to encourage the early retirement of some existing civil servants as part of the policy to open the door to younger elements who possess badly needed new skills and abilities.

Job Descriptions and Classification

One of the important elements of a human resources management program is up-to-date job descriptions and analyses which are needed for a variety of personnel actions in such areas as position classification, training, performance evaluation, examinations, etc...At present there are no job descriptions for the various staff categories, including the permanent classified positions. Although a significant number of job descriptions have been completed as part of a position classification project which was started few years ago, this project has been suddenly

abandoned and the job descriptions already completed are out of date. The completion of this task deserves priority and can be completed without much difficulty.

Performance Appraisal

Another key element of a human resources program is an objective and reliable performance appraisal system which constitutes an indispensable basis for personnel decisions relating to training, promotion, compensation, motivation, etc...The government has just launched a performance appraisal system which has met with strong resistance from employees and some government agencies as well. This is probably the result inadequate advance training and preparation which an important requirement for the introduction of such a novel system. The Lebanese public administration like Lebanese society suffers from serious religious and political divisions which hinder the application of such a system in a fair and objective manner. The lessons learned from this experience should be carefully reviewed and analyzed in order to introduce needed changes in this system. More importantly, intensive training seminars should be held for employees and supervisors to explain the many uses and advantages of performance appraisals as well as the proper methods and techniques for preparing them in objective way. It might be advisable during the first stage of the implementation of this system and before it is refined and fine tuned not to link it to decisions on pay matters or dismissal from service for poor performance.

Training and Development

It is obvious that training and development is an important and integral part of any modern human resources development program. In Lebanon the need for training assumes greater urgency in view of the inefficient and outdated civil service which lacks many of the modern and technical skills. The main purpose of training is to improve the efficiency of service delivery by the public administration and its responsiveness to citizens' demands. From the point of view of the civil servants, training is an important right which provides them with better opportunities for advancement and career development. Since the need for training in the Lebanese public service is practically unlimited, and since the resources available for training are quite limited it is important for any human resources program to carefully study training needs throughout the government and develop a training strategy accordingly.

Ethical Standards

There is a general awareness that ethical standards within the public service have sharply declined, especially since the start of the civil war. This situation constitutes the most important cause of complaints by citizen and their declining trust in the state and its institutions, especially the public administration. Although the Civil Service Council is not responsible for imposing disciplinary penalties on civil servants, it has the responsibility for formulating a clear and more detailed code of ethical conduct which should emphasize the importance of the values of integrity and honesty and which will provide for stiffer penalties for offenders. The Civil Service Council, through a variety of means especially training programs, can play an important role in promoting awareness among civil servants and guiding them to ethical conduct. In this connection it should be emphasized that widespread violations throughout the civil service are partly the result of the excessive or undue protection accorded to civil servants and which makes their dismissal from service exceedingly difficult regardless of the cause. There are many who believe that the security of

tenure enjoyed by civil servants should not be at the expense of their responsibility to the state and the public.

Motivation

An important aspect of any human resources development program, although it is more difficult to deal with, is how to motivate employees to encourage them to improve their performance and productivity. This is usually done through a variety of incentives, material and non material, which cater to the various needs of employees. This is especially important in Lebanon in view of the widespread demoralization evident throughout the public service and which is the result of a variety of factors, including the failure of the government to devote sufficient attention to this problem. The Lebanese personnel system has generally given more emphasis to the duties and obligations of civil servants than to their rights for adequate working conditions, fair and equitable treatment based on merit considerations, fair compensation for work done, compensation levels comparable to the private sector, right to continuous training to improve performance and enhance career prospects, right to a fair grievance and appeals system, and the right to collective bargaining. In view of the growing importance of this personnel issue, many organizations conduct annual surveys of the attitudes of their employees to identify related problems and try to deal with them.

Personnel Information System

One of the important pre-requisites of a modern human resource management system is a modern personnel information and communication system for collecting, compiling, processing, and updating personnel files. The information technology revolution has opened up tremendous new opportunities for governments to provide better information and service delivery to the citizens through new media like the internet, to make it much easier for citizens to reach and deal with the different parts of government, and to improve communications between government departments. The public service in Lebanon has trailed behind these technological developments. In the few cases where modern information systems were introduced, some government departments resorted to the establishment of their own different systems separately from each other to meet their own special and different needs. This has resulted in some incompatible systems and services which are not integrated. If the Lebanese government is to take full advantage of the benefits of the developments in information technology, they have to develop an overall master plan that aims at integrating these different and separate systems together.

Research and Development

Finally, a key element of any human resources management program is its ability to keep abreast of the many rapid changes and developments which are taking place throughout the world. This requires a special research department in the central personnel agency which is well staffed with personnel with multi disciplinary backgrounds and which will be responsible, not only for tracking new personnel developments and best practices world wide, but also for conducting research about a variety of personnel problems within the Lebanese public service and suggesting ways for dealing with them.

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Finally, it must be pointed out that at the time of writing this document, the Minister of State for Administrative Development had submitted to the Council of Ministers a proposal for a draft law creating a ministry of administrative development. We do not know yet when this proposal might be approved and in what form. But it is quite likely that when such a law is finally approved, it will inevitably have some impact on the role of the Civil Service Council in the human resources management system envisioned above.