Forum on Ensuring Accountability and
Transparency in the Public Sector

Presentation
of Results and Recommendations

by

Evelyn Levy

Secretary for Management
Ministry of Planning, Budget and Management - Brazil

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Focus Group 1 - Managing Conflicts of Interest

Crucial factors of a sound conflict of interest policy to ensure impartiality in carrying out public duties

- Clear and realistic **definition** of what can lead to a conflict of interest situation, namely when the private interests of a public official may be in conflict with the public interest.
- Setting unambiguous **rules** on what is expected of public employees in order to resolve this conflicting situation.
- Put stated standards into practice by:
  - **socialisation**: communication, training and counselling
  - **enforcement**: disclosure system, detecting and punishing those who do not comply with the stated standards.

Policy Recommendations for Managing Conflicts of Interest

- Raise awareness of the basic concept of public service, namely public office is for serving the public interest and not for private gain.
- Involve public servants and the wider public in the development of standards in order to ensure that those standards reflect public expectations.
- Mobilise public opinion to scrutinise daily practice and ensure accountability. Protect those who report violations: whistle-blowing.
- Assess the impact of conflict of interest measures: review existing policies in order to identify risk areas.

Challenges and Options for Implementation

- Elaborating standards is the easy part of the work, their implementation (socialisation, enforcement and monitoring) is more difficult, not to mention to achieve real change in the culture.
- Co-ordinate prevention and enforcement measures and integrate them into a coherent institutional framework.
- Balancing contravening principles
  - for example protecting privacy <—> and ensuring transparency: providing access to information on private interests.

- Assess the impact of conflict of interest measures: review existing policies in order to identify risk areas.

Focus Group 2 - Establishing Efficient and Transparent Budget Process

- Budgets should follow the principles of good governance:
  - Transparent, Accountable, Coherent, Future Oriented, Integrity (rule of Law)
- Countries must construct a budget process to fit cultural and organisational realities

Basic Principles:

- Comprehensive Budget: reflect all revenues and expenditures
- Need Automated/Integrated System
- Good Legal Framework- Rules known to all
- Budgets should be based on multi-annual plan
- E-Government, internet based -- open to civil society
- Public Service must be engaged -- its values and principles are key determinants of success

Focus Group 2 - Establishing Efficient and Transparent Budget Process

• Budget reform is continual process, no silver bullet, can not rely on one process

Results/performance Oriented

- Need to link inputs with product or output of government
- Outputs should relate to societal goals
- Stable, limited, timely and measurable performance indicators
- Need to know economic cost of government (Accruals)
- What is “Opportunity Cost”of government activity?

Accountability

- Clear line of responsibility -- Specific person responsible
- Systematic integration between goals, standards, annual budget and multi-annual plan

Focus Group 2 - Establishing Efficient and Transparent Budget Process

Accountability, continued

- Sanctions must be reasonable, but significant and enforceable
- Efficient and timely audit: audit must evaluate program effectiveness and program quality; avoid audit fatigue
- Systematic reporting on schedule; comparable over time
- Independent agencies special case - “Bratislava Principles”: Granting autonomy requires:
  - Need for clear governance structure and strong reporting mechanisms
  - Need for strengthened capacity of central ministries and audit bodies to control and monitor semi autonomous agencies
  - Need to set up a review process to assess the benefits and shortcomings of the agency system

Transparency

- There should be a role for Civil Society/Non-governmental Organisations as well as effective Legislative oversight
- Cultural change and common regulatory systems

Focus Group 3 - Accompanying mechanisms for public scrutiny and access to information

What do we need?

- LAWS: Access to information and Guarantees for public participation
- POLICIES: Training and management; Collection and analysis of information; Development of indicators
- RESOURCES: material, financial and human

INDEPENDENT BODIES: for monitoring and oversight

What are the obstacles?

- Lack of awareness and education on the part of citizens
- A culture of secrecy within the Public Administration
- Lack of resources
- Absence of specific skills in the public sector
- Lack of an independent media
- Technological, cultural and knowledge barriers

Focus Group 3 - Accompanying mechanisms for public scrutiny and access to information

How can we ensure real public information and participation?

- Less propaganda, more accountability
- Developing concrete methodologies
- Introducing appeals mechanisms/independent monitoring
- Fostering a proactive culture in the public service
- Building performance measurement and indicators
- Publicising success stories
- Strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations
- Building capacity and awareness in the public service
- Stimulating capacity in civil society
- "Assured listening"