

Scorecard of Nigeria's Economic Progress: Building the Implementation Gaps

Permanent Secretaries Forum

Monday, 14 December 2009

Building Public Service Capacity for V20: 2020

Forum Chair:

Dr Mu'azu Aliyu Babangida, Governor (Chief Servant), Niger State

Background Presentation:

Building Public Service Capacity for V20: 2020

Mr Stephen Oronsanye, CON, Head of the Civil Service of the Federation

Panellists:

Dr Shamsudeen Usman, Honourable Minister, national planning

Muktar Shagari, Deputy Governor, Sokoto State

Mr. Emeka Ndu, MD, C & I Leasing

Prof. Afolabi, Federal Ministry of Education

The opening session of NES #15 began with the introduction of the panellists and speakers. The Chairman flagged off discussions by appreciating and highlighting the critical importance of the civil service in nation building. He noted that capacity building is essentially beyond sending personnel on training, it is also about exposure, and the sub total of it all is that it includes character and integrity which must go with paper qualifications, exposure, experience and competence.

He raised the issue of "how do we relate all these to our Vision 20: 2020?" According to him, many civil servants failed to appreciate the importance of the vision 20, 2020 which they are responsible for implementing. He cited the annual blame game between the various arms of government (ministers and legislature especially) on who implements the fiscal budget and sought frank and open discussions by participants to enable a pragmatic solution to the current challenges of the civil service. The focus according to him, is how do to drive growth for the actualization of the vision 20, 2020.

The major presentation of the opening session was delivered by Mr Stephen Oronsanye, (Head of the Civil Service of the Federation) followed by four other presentations. Mr Oronsanye in his presentation titled "building public service capacity for V20:2020", started by pointing out that different administrations have

come and gone, but the Civil Service remains permanent and therefore, classed it as the engine Room of Government. According to him, the efficiency of Nigeria's Civil Service is instrumental to the achievement of the goals and objectives of Government contained in her V20: 2020.

He reiterated that since the return to Civil Rule in 1999, concerted efforts have been made to reform the civil service in several areas of governance: budget, public procurement, tax, judiciary, pension, Information Technology, Account & Audit systems, Ports & Customs, Economic & Financial Crimes, Public Service and Ethics but this have been met with a lot of constraints ranging from disinformation on the intentions of Government, scepticisms, resistance by those opposed to reforms, misapplication of rules, selfish tendencies, gaps in capacity, ICT and other core areas, deficiencies in human resource management, deep-rooted unethical values to subjective standards for performance assessment and remunerations.

He further noted that since coming on board, his team has taken up the new challenge of overcoming some of the limitations in the civil service in the areas of: Tenure policy; career development; leadership development; review of reward system / remuneration; improved working environment; automation of processes; travel desk (a one-stop shop where tickets can be issued to officials of government travelling on official business et al with a view to cost containment and management. He concluded his presentation by pointing out that;

- Creative and vibrant public services remains key to optimal national development as envisioned in the vision 20: 2020 plan.
- With the permanence if enjoys, the Public Service must strive to remain relevant to achieving the goals of government
- Fear God and put out country first

The second presentation was made by Alhaji Muktari Shagari, Deputy Governor of Sokoto State. In his submission, he delved into his legal career and his penchant for trying to do the right things at all time, especially in his role as state counsel in Sokoto State ministry of Justice and in his experiences with civil service rules and norms.

He talked about his role working at the federal government level, his humble experience working in the civil service at the state, and how he partnered with the civil service to achieve significant strive as a public servant. He then went further to state that, ministers must strive to give the right protection to civil servants as the country parades the best civil servants when compared with any African country.

His paper which focused on how to tackle the many problems of the civil service, especially at the state level where he operates, fingers poor funding and poor human resource development as the bane of our civil service nationally.

He concluded his paper by pointing out the areas that needs to be addressed urgently by state and federal civil service which includes;

- A review of manpower development and training policy
- Comprehensive manpower audit and training analysis
- Continuous and compulsory training
- Innovative and adequate funding
- Training facilities for existing staff development
- Integrative vetting of all public service officials

The third presentation was made by Mr. Emeka Ndu, MD, C & I Leasing. His paper brought in the private sector perspective to the discussion. He began his presentation by citing a personal example in 1982 after his NYSC year where he chose Price Water House over FIRS job due to the fact that the pay was three times more than the civil service job. He cited Italy which has had several governments since World War II but is perceived to enjoying stability in governance due to its strong and virile civil service. He suggested that;

- Fiscal budgets should be implemented as rolling plans instead of the current short-term culture of truncating budgets every year.
- There is the need to go beyond the living wage. In Singapore, the public service wage is more than private sector wages. We cannot start to talk about promoting ethics without looking at the compensation structure.
- The need for career structures and promotion system. We need to deemphasise the 'culture of mates', and must strive to inject meritocracy in the civil service.

The fourth presentation was made by Prof. Afolabi, of the Federal Ministry of Education. He started by pointing out that Capacity in the civil service is really about efficient management of resources and the key Ingredients for capacity includes: knowledge and skill, Tools: correct stationery, ICT, Work friendly environment, Safety and Security. He reiterated that what is needed for sustainability of civil service includes;

- An efficient and effective Reward and Recognition system.
- An effective Waste reduction system – the current system is prone to all manner of leakages.
- The need to institutionalise succession and mentoring plan into the system
- The need for seamless interchange between public service and private set up- The two worlds must be constantly exchanging ideas, people, skills, knowledge.

- The need to dump the one size fits all syndromes – where one rule is meant to be applied to all ministries and situations.

The fifth presentation was made by Dr Shamsudeen Usman, Honourable Minister, National Planning. The minister started his presentation with a reminiscence of his past as a civil servant. He noted that the civil service was one of the choicest places to work when he graduated but his short stay in the ministry of national planning as a graduate economist was a sore one which made him give up the civil service job for a postgraduate study in the London School of Economics. According to him, for the civil service to command its rightful position in governance, capacity, commitment, character and Integrity is needed.

The minister went further to speak about the struggle to involve public civil servants in the visioning process, and how the private sector participants were so more committed unlike the public sector. He said that perhaps, the chances of achieving goals of V20:2020 with the present civil service are very slim and that the civil service as it is presently constituted needs to be revamped, else we are doomed.

He concluded by stating that there is urgent need to;

- Re-evaluate the Reward System and proper Manning Levels – he noted that the civil service at the state level across the nation are merely passengers visiting the office only on pay day to collect salaries
- Re-access the issue of attitudinal change-citing the issue of Civil Servants attitude in waiting for ministers to make mistakes

The Honourable minister further cited his experience as deputy Governor of the Central bank of Nigeria (CBN) where he was involved in the trimming exercise (Project Eagle) which streamlined and modernised the apex bank.

He believes in the need to create opportunities for switching of jobs between public and private sectors and the Interchange of people between academia, public service and private sector.

After the fifth presentation, comments and questions were taken from the floor. The first question came from Dr Adegoroye. He started by asking the question; How does the Nigerian public perceive civil servants? He gave a short answer the Nigerian public sees the civil servants as people who just earn money for doing nothing.

Mr Kunle Olumide, a retired federal permanent secretary commented by asking; How can we bring back the golden era of the civil service? According to him, the civil service used to be responsible for running the country – drafting economic perspectives and national development rolling plans. And the key driver then was

education, training and technical competence but all this was destroyed by a combination of the private sector, the military and the media. He noted that there is a strong need for ethical reorientation in the country to tackle corruption.

Mr Steven Funso Oladosu, a deputy director in the Federal Civil Service commented by reiterating;

- The need for cross fertilisation of private and public sector system.
- The need for a review of the reward system – the 2003 monetization policy helped to cushion the meagre income of civil servants.
- The need for continuous leadership development – leadership is an ongoing process
- The need for effective monitoring and evaluation of budget performance

Mrs Ibechukwu, National Planning Commission commented, by suggesting that there is urgent need for effective Manpower Capacity in the civil service-the current system is very poor, especially at the state level. She further said there is the need for a mixture of home grown solutions alongside international training and exposure to boost capacity at the civil service.

Mohammed Lapai, PM, Ministry of Tourism & Culture, raised the question of; How permanent is civil service? This question was however, clarified by the chairman.

Alhaji Muktari Shagari, Deputy Governor, Sokoto State responded by commenting on the issue power supply. He noted that power supply is needed to create the right working environment in the civil service.

Dr Shamsudeen Usman, Honourable Minister, national planning stated that the issues on power, railway and other sectoral issues will be answered in the sessions, plenary and others, during the course of this summit.

Closing Remarks by HOS Orosanye

- On living wages: one wife versus four wives civil servant: really enough to be able to live decently on, to cater for essential needs
- On meritocracy: the civil service despite the recommendations of the federal civil service commission / performance management also being implemented gradually across board

Closing Remarks by Mr Ndu

- Does not think the civil service understand its role / civil service need to reorient itself / who is their customer – government or Nigerians?

General Remarks by Chairman

- Performance contracts – people should be judged by what they do and not what they say.
- Need to do consistent audits in the Federal Civil Service Commission – there is urgent need for all to discuss its role and effective in the civil service development process.
- He gave historical perspective to Mr Olumide’s golden era / talked about the civil service purge of the Murtala regime / since 1983 up to 2006 Permanent Secretaries were not allowed in Council. This should be reviewed.
- On revolving door policy - allowing interchange of workforce across and within the academia and the civil service.
- He commented on capacity and personal development by stating that it is a two way effect – companies and government can train you but the main motivator and beneficiary must be you.
- On the issue of transparency- the chairman stated the need for the government to be transparent at all levels with its programmes.
- On NEEDS – He noted that the planning commission was not aware or involved in the NEED policy formulation stage. There was general scepticism of the civil service so the originators of NEEDS did not consider the input of the civil service who are supposed to implement the NEEDS policy.

Closing Remarks by Frank Nweke, DG, NESG

The Director General NESG closed the session by thanking the panellists and the audience -- comprising current and retired civil servants. He drew from his four year experience in government and his running battles and then asked the question; who really is in charge? –The permanent secretaries or the Minister; the civil service or the President. He answered the question by saying neither the Ministers nor the President is in charge—in any government the civil servants are in charge and must be fully empowered.

He noted that Capacity is about Personal development first and foremost, then service to government and then service to the people. He concluded by stating that the outcome of NES#15 would come out in a Position Paper which would be presented to the Head of Service to Government .