
**REPORT ON THE IDENTIFICATION OF
CRITICAL AREAS FOR CAPACITY
REPLENISHMENT IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE**

For

The Department of Human Resource
Management and Development
P.O. Box 30227
CAPITAL CITY
Lilongwe 3

United Nations Development Programme
P.O. Box 30135
CAPITAL CITY
Lilongwe 3

July, 2003

PART ONE

GENERAL BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This report presents the outcome of the study on the Identification of Critical Areas for Capacity Replenishment in the Public Service. The Government of Malawi (GOM) commissioned the study with financial and technical support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in response to the recommendations contained in the HIV/AIDS Impact Assessment Study in the Public Service, which was carried out by the Malawi Institute of Management (MIM) in 2001. The study covered five selected institutions, namely; Ministries of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Food Security Education, Science and Technology, Health and Population, Water Development and the Malawi Police Service.

This report outlines the background to the assignment, its objectives, key challenges facing the Public Service in the delivery of core services and the main findings, observations and recommendations as well as the way forward.

The study was carried out from 19 May to 18 June 2003 and focused on ten (10) ministries which were selected by the GoM primarily because of the nature of their services and challenges to meet human resource capacity requirements in the face of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other chronic factors contributing to the high vacancy levels within the public service. As such, the study covered both institutions that were included during the HIV/AIDS Impact Assessment Study and those that were not in order to establish a more comprehensive picture of the vacancy situation and the areas of critical need for replenishment through UNV deployment and other options. However, it is hoped that the findings of this study reflect the general picture of the prevailing situation within the public service and provide the GoM with a platform to develop an appropriate strategy to address both the short and long-term effects of high attrition rates.

1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

1.2.1 HIV/AIDS Impact Assessment Study Results

As indicated above, in 2001 the Malawi Government commissioned an HIV/AIDS Impact Assessment Study in the Public Service. The study was necessitated by the widespread impact that HIV/AIDS has on development efforts and initiatives and, in particular, the central role that the public service plays in Malawi's development management. The findings of the study indicated that there has been an increasing trend of attrition in the Civil Service between 1990 and 2000. According to the study, the average attrition rate in the five institutions for the whole period was 2.3%. The study also attributed HIV/AIDS as the major factor of attrition through death in the public service. A further revelation was that the highest mortality rates were mainly among technical and frontline staffs that were extensively involved in field travel.

Other areas of concern pointed out in the study were high levels of absenteeism through sickness, funeral attendance, caring for the sick family members – a significant portion being attributed to HIV/AIDS cases, as well as attending to personal matters, lack of basic work materials or resources, lack of transport money and low staff morale. The capacity of the public sector to deliver basic services was further constrained by very high levels of vacancies within the various occupational cadres. A major observation and conclusion of the study was, therefore, that high vacancy levels and increased absenteeism resulted in more workload pressures on available staff; adding to their lot, stress, and burnout and thereby negatively impacting on staff morale in the face of poor conditions of service and incentives.

In view of the foregoing, the study also indicated that there was evidence of a decline in productivity and individual staff performance as well as increased financial costs through HIV/AIDS related mortality, morbidity and absenteeism including training and recruitment costs, funeral costs, death benefits, medical and hospitalisation costs and cost implications of absenteeism. Overall, the erosion of the human resource and financial capacity of the various institutions impacts negatively on the quantity and quality of services provided.

As a way forward, the study made a number of recommendations, which have been grouped into three categories for implementation purposes:

- *The first category, relates to the prevention and mitigation of HIV/AIDS in the work environment. These included specific*

recommendations to sensitise all members of staff on HIV/AIDS; involve every staff member on HIV/AIDS prevention and mitigation activities and also provide Anti-Retroviral drugs (ARVs) to employees.

- *The second category relates to improvements in the capacity of the public sector. In particular, it is argued that DHRMD should put in place a mechanism to facilitate fast tracking recruitment system in government operations; a comprehensive incentives package to cater for skills that are difficult to replace and explore possibilities of using UNVs as a short-term measure to replace critical capacities. In addition, the study recommended that government should introduce and institutionalise a performance management or results oriented appraisal system and increase the budget for the Malawi Government Scholarship Fund (MGSF) to cater for the development of critical skills.*
- *The third category of recommendations focused on the improvement of retrieval system in the public sector. In particular, it is recommended that government should put in place information management systems for recording and monitoring morbidity, mortality and absenteeism. Each institution should budget for and record funeral costs.*

1.2.2 Implementation of the Recommendations

In order to implement the above recommendations, Government has put in place appropriate institutional arrangements at two levels. Government has established a Public Sector Steering Committee comprising Principal Secretaries, Heads of Departments and Chief Executives and a Public Sector Technical Committee on HIV/AIDS comprising technical experts. The terms of reference for the two Committees are as outlined at appendix 1. However, one of the immediate issues the Technical Committee proposed for consideration by the Public Sector Steering Committee was to place UNVs in the various institutions, as short-term measure to enhance capacity building in the sector. In this regard, the UNDP and UNV Agency have been approached by the GoM to assist with the identification of the UNVs. To ensure that an appropriate response and strategy is provided, Government in collaboration with UNDP and UNV commissioned this study to undertake a capacity assessment in ten (10) selected public sector institutions which were identified by government as follows:

- *Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Food Security*
- *Ministry of Education, Science and Technology*
- *Ministry of Health and Population*
- *Ministry of Water Development*
- *Ministry of Finance*
- *Ministry of Gender and Community Services*
- *Ministry of Transport and Public Works*
- *Ministry of Housing*
- *Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training*
- *Department of Human Resource Management and Development*

To facilitate the study, Government engaged the services of two Independent Institutional and Management Consultants: Messrs R.T.E. Kamanga, (Team Leader) and C. Alfazema with financial support from UNDP.

1.3 OBJECTIVES AND TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 Overall Objectives

The overall objective of the study was to enable the GoM through the Department of Human Resource Management and Development (DHRMD) to identify critical human resource capacity needs as well as the demand for UNVs in the public sector. Hence, the results are intended to help government determine informed interventions for addressing the HR needs and utilization of UNVs as a short-term measure.

1.3.2 Terms of Reference

While the overall objective was to identify priority areas that would require urgent replenishment in the public sector institutions, the specific terms of reference required the Consultants to undertake the following tasks or activities:

- *Review core documents on capacity development.*
- *Consult stakeholders on capacity development in the public sector.*
- *Identify professions or cadres that are affected most.*
- *Suggest appropriate replacement measures and time frame.*
- *Propose long-term capacity replenishment programme.*
- *Develop an appropriate work plan for the placement of UNVs.*
- *Organize a workshop of key stakeholders to critique the draft report.*
- *Finalise the draft report by incorporating the feedback from workshop and stakeholders*

1.3.3 Expected Outputs

The main expected output of the study was a report reflecting critical areas of human resource needs and short and long-term replenishment recommendations to address the situation.

1.4 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

1.4.1 Approach

While the terms of reference spelt out the basic approach to the study, the Consultants sought a clear understanding of objective of the study and scope of work from both Government (DHRMD) and UNDP in order to ensure that in addition to the institutions that were initially covered under the HIV/AIDS Impact Assessment Study, other relevant and key institutions with equally critical areas of HR needs based on increased attrition rates were also identified and agreed upon along with the reporting arrangements. The process also provided further insight into the background and basic requirements to UNV personnel since during the period of the study a UNV Mission from Bonn was also in the country to undertake a rapid assessment of UNV demand.

1.4.1 Methodology

Three main methods were engaged by the Consultants which included review of relevant documents, consultations through meetings and interviews with key personnel in the institutions under review as well as administration of a questionnaire on the extent of vacancies mostly from PO/AO grade to S2/P2 and the subsequent analysis of the same. To ensure the findings and analysis were relevant, the Consultants engaged all participating government institutions and selected development partners in a workshop process to review the draft report which was subsequently revised with their input. A list of the institutions that were visited and or participated is at appendix 2.

1.4.3 Consultants' Understanding of Critical Areas of Need

A key part of the study was to clearly understand what constituted critical areas of need. Following discussions particularly with government officials and UNDP officials as well as the UNV-Bonn Mission, the Consultants' understanding of critical areas of need was two-fold. First, HR needs that have greater value or higher impact on the delivery of core services within and across the various institutions especially in contributing to the poverty

reduction strategy adopted by government as a long-term strategy for development. Normally, such areas seek to integrate and consolidate the manner in which the services will be delivered as well as how resources are mobilized, allocated and utilized. Hence, within the report these areas have been identified as being of high policy impact or strategic value to respective institutions. A second aspect of critical area of need can be derived from the analysis of vacancy levels. Areas that reflect a greater vacancy level due to multiple factors and post recruitment problems will fall under critical areas of need within the specific occupations. In this study, every effort has been made to consider both aspects of definition of critical areas of need as they have both qualitative and quantitative impact on the delivery of services. The Consultants have proposed short and long-term interventions not only in consideration of UNVs availability in the critical areas as defined but also other replenishment measures that government should put in place in minimizing the attrition rate and particularly in view of the impact of HIV/AIDS and the concerns raised in the HIV/AIDS Impact Assessment Study.

1.4.2 Relevance of the Findings and Recommendations

Although the study was limited to only ten institutions within the civil service, the findings, by and large, reflect the general picture on ground. As such, the recommendations advanced in this report are significant and relevant to the entire public service. As will be noted in the latter sections of the report, what may be necessary is to replicate the study to more institutions to establish the real picture of HR capacity gaps to facilitate appropriate interventions to address the situations as they exist in the different public sector institutions.

1.5 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The report is divided into six main parts which are in turn divided into other sections. Part One is this General Background. Part Two is a brief discussion on the key challenges that have emerged and impacted upon service delivery. Part Three is a presentation of the main findings of the study and related observations. Part Four is an outline on the vacancy analysis results by grade and profession in the ten ministries. In Part Five the critical areas for UNV support have been highlighted while in Part Six, emerging institutional and management issues on the proposed replenishment programme have been discussed including on the way forward. It should be noted that although the six parts are distinct and focus on specific issues they are interrelated and interdependent.

PART TWO

2.0 KEY CAPACITY CHALLENGES FACING THE MALAWI PUBLIC SERVICE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A number of studies carried out within the public service have revealed a wide range of the nature and scope of capacity challenges that have tended to impact negatively on the delivery of services at both management and technical/professional levels. While Government has initiated and adopted an on-going public sector reform programme as currently embraced under the Public Sector Management Reform Programme to address such capacity challenges, the desired impact has remained elusive. This is largely due to the impact of HIV/AIDS pandemic on attrition rates and related HR aspects whose study in the public service has necessitated the search for further institutional and human resource interventions; policy review and development in general; and in particular, specific sectoral approaches under what is generally referred to as Sector Wide Approaches (SWAPS).

In this regard, before the discussion of key findings and observations of this study, it is essential to put into context the key challenges that have been well documented and comprehensively covered under various institutional, management and policy studies associated with the on-going reform programme in the public sector. The rationale is to underscore and support the strategic challenge to public service management not only from the perspective of policy reviews and development to the findings and recommendations of this report but more so to ensure that

CoM in collaboration with development partners, civil society and private

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