

Working Group II: Development Management Branch

6 April 2011 – Conference Room C

This report is intended to inform the plenary session of CEPA, on the substantive issues addressed by the members of CEPA and the UN Secretariat (specifically, the staff of DMB/DPADM/UNDESA) who participated in the working group session on Citizens Engagement and Development Management, held as part of the program activities of the 10th Session of CEPA.

The report includes in part 1 a summary of the proceedings and in part 2 it lists the main conclusions and recommendations.

1. Proceedings

The session of the working group was attended by the following CEPA members: Peter Anyang’Nyongo, Meredith Edwards, Mushtaq Khan, Pan Kim, Martha Oyhanarte, Margaret Saner and Jan Ziekow.

In addition, participants included representatives from Brazil, Canada, Jordan and South Africa, as well as observers from the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) and from different organizations of practitioners and research of public administration.

Also, the following staff of DMB/DPADM attended the meeting: Xinxin Cai, Angela Capati-Caruso, Vyatcheslav Cherkasov, Anni Haataja, Hanna Negatu, Patricia Penuen, Valentina Resta, Stella Simpas and Roberto Villarreal (Chief, DMB/DPADM).

The members of CEPA elected Meredith Edwards as Chairperson for the meeting. It was agreed that the Secretariat would prepare concise notes for the Chairperson to edit freely and present, with the endorsement of the other CEPA members, as a report to the plenary meeting of CEPA.

1.1 Presentation of its program of work and strategies to be delivered by the Secretariat

In accordance with the agenda, the Secretariat made a presentation which, as a point of departure, indicated that the objective was to inform CEPA members, and receive feedback and recommendations from them, regarding the activities and outputs planned by DMB/DPADM for the present year, as well as to start a dialogue on issues of high priority that CEPA members would suggest be considered for the program of work of this branch for the next two years.

The first part of the presentation addressed previous work of DMB/DPADM in the period 2005-2010, related to citizens engagement in a variety of aspects of public administration and development management: budgeting, auditing, planning, urban development, public governance, etc.

In this context, reference was made to activities and outputs carried out by DMB/DPADM in 2010, and about which several members of CEPA were involved, including: a workshop on citizens engagement for development management, held in Barcelona last summer, and guidelines on the same theme produced by DMB/DPADM as a follow up to the workshop, with the aim to provide governments and civil society with concrete and useful guidance on how to engage citizens in public development affairs. The CEPA members who attended the workshop or read these guidelines expressed their high degree of satisfaction about the relevance and quality of both.

Most importantly, the presentation included information on the meetings, projects and outputs that DMB/DPADM is pursuing in 2011, emphasizing how these are closely interconnected and how they relate to one central theme: *Engagement of Citizens by the Public Administration to Improve the Delivery of Public Services, Specifically through Enhancing Public Accountability and Preventing Corruption.*

Four major lines of work were explained, as follows:

- i) *preparation of a major publication and a closely related multimedia product, on the central theme mentioned above.*
- ii) *capacity building project aimed at strengthening participatory governance institutions in Africa, such as Economic and Social Councils and other similar institutions.*
- iii) *a capacity building workshop on engaging citizens for reconstruction and recovery after the occurrence of a natural disaster.*
- iv) *another workshop and a compendium of ICT for mobile devices to bring e-Government to a new generation of public services.*

In addition, the presentation indicated that these lines of work are to be pursued together with efforts to continue building the DPADM's knowledge base (UNPACS), which is to result in valuable inputs for the meetings, publications and other outputs to be obtained along 2011.

Most of the discussion that followed concentrated on the first of these lines of work, given the relative priority it has within the overall program of work of DMB/DPADM for 2011.

In this regard, DMB/DPADM informed the meeting that an informal Advisory Group had been invited, as a first step of DMB to engage in its work diverse experts and practitioners of participatory approaches to development management, in a fashion similar to what DMB recommends government to do about engagement of other actors to enhance their work. The Advisory Group includes 14 individuals invited because of their own expertise and institutional affiliations, very much related to citizens engagement and participatory governance, public accountability and prevention of corruption. These include: 8 CEPA members; 5 key officers from diverse UN agencies (such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Oslo Centre for Governance of the United Nations Development Program, the United Nations

Research Institute on Social Development and two of the Regional Commissions of the UN, specifically those in Africa (UNECA) and in West Asia (UNESCWA); and the Secretary General of the International Association of Supreme Auditing Institutions (INTOSAI).

Moreover, DMB/DPADM informed that it has prepared a preliminary output for the major publication under consideration, and that feedback is being received already from members of the Advisory Group. Also, in its presentation, DMB/DPADM shared a series of questions that seem fundamental for the publication to respond adequately, with the aim of helping UN countries to make well informed policy decisions in respect to the engagement of citizens for improving public service delivery, enhancing public accountability and preventing corruption about the delivery of services.

CEPA members in the working group agreed on the comprehensiveness and crucial importance of this preliminary list of questions identified by DMB/DPADM and offered to make further contributions in this respect, through emails to be sent in the next days or weeks.

DMB/DPADM explained that the same issues and questions to be answered through the publication will similarly be dealt with through an innovative multimedia product. The motivation for this is that the publication will appeal to constituencies used to more formal analyses and reading, while the closely related multimedia product may be useful to diverse audiences many of whom learn typically through audio and video, interactive deliberations and other manners facilitated by the new ICT technologies and media. Given that both types of constituencies are active in promoting innovations in public administration and public service delivery, DMB/DPADM looks forward to address both for a larger impact on results. Some observers reacted very favourably to this, indicating that reaching out to a progressively larger number of stakeholders and involving them in contemporary debates on these matters would not only increase their capacities, but could also improve the work of DMB/DPADM by helping to focus on the most important issues and responding to considerations and needs of these stakeholders.

DMB/DPADM further elaborated on a series of meetings it will be hosting in June, July and October, which will help prepare the publication, specifically by receiving inputs from experts and practitioners from countries in all regions of the world. These meetings will include an expert-group one and two workshops (one of which will be held back to back to a symposium jointly organized by DMB/DPADM and INTOSAI). Members of the Advisory Group previously commented will be invited to attend these meetings, with the aim of helping DMB/DPADM to attain high-level deliberation on the most important topics of the publication.

The Secretariat went on to describe three other lines of work it is pursuing. In connection with institution building for participatory governance in Africa, it was explained that considering recent developments in several countries in North Africa, a meeting may be organized in the second half of this year, in an exploratory fashion, to better identify the ways in which DMB/DPADM can extend its ongoing work of Economic and Social Councils in Africa, to best serve the needs of Arab countries in North Africa to build institutions for the engagement of development of development stakeholders from the private sector and civil society in order to enhance participatory governance for development management.

With regard to citizens engagement in reconstruction and recovery after a natural disaster, DMB/DPADM indicated that there are two aspects it plans to address in a workshop, which is to take place in the context of the Public Service Forum 2011. First, the coordination by the public administration of actors from civil society and the private sector, who take part jointly with government entities in a variety of physical or material efforts to provide urgent assistance to those affected by the disaster. And, second. the observance of practices to secure accountability and prevent corruption in relation to the management of domestic financial contributions and international aid that flows to help reconstruction and recovery, and about which the engagement of citizens can help maintain necessary public accountability.

Finally, on the use of ICT and mobile means for public delivery, DMB/DPADM shared with participants in the working group the increasing opportunities that are arising for government to enter into what the e-Government practitioners' jargon denotes as Government 3.0, namely: government entities reaching out to citizens in user-friendly and proactive manners, offering them public services online, to facilitate compliance of their obligations and bring them easier and timely access to a variety of public services.

1.2 Discussion by all participants in the working group

A lively discussion by all CEPA members and observers in the working group accompanied the presentation made by DMB/DPADM. Several rounds of interventions took place, giving opportunity to the Secretariat to respond to questions or provide additional information on several important aspects.

As a starting point some exchanges helped clarify basic terms, such as engagement and participation, in the sense that DMB/DPADM intends to use the former to refer to explicit strategies pursued by the public administration to bring citizens and their organizations in civil society and the private sector into aspects of development management, while the latter refers to initiatives oriented to the same aim but arising from the side of citizens in a spontaneous manner, not as a response to a strategy put in place by government to this effect.

CEPA members deemed the participation of citizens as an important process, for instance when authoritarian regimes fail to deliver the policies and services that citizens demand. In this sense, some CEPA members referred to participation in a positive matter not just for its effects on the conduction of development management, but also as part of democratization trends.

DMB/DPADM was asked in this regard whether the attention given to citizens engagement, according to its present program of work, responds mostly to development management needs or to an agenda for democratization. The Secretariat indicated that it was only in connection to development management, precisely along the mandates that came out of the recent UN summit on the MDGs, held last September, which call for participatory approaches and the engagement of communities and citizens to enhance public services, especially those connected to the MDGs, such as healthcare, education, water and sanitation, etc. That is not to neglect the importance of citizens engagement for empowering the people and for democratization, but a way to maintain

consistency with the mandates of DMB/DPADM geared to public administration and development management, and not to social or political development.

Next, the discussion within the working group covered issues about the prevention of corruption from several angles. Some CEPA members highlighted the importance for DMB/DPADM to be aware of numerous similar analytical and policy oriented works pursued by many international organization for many years, regardless of which corruption continues to be a widespread problem in most countries around the world. Furthermore, other CEPA members and some observes called attention to the contributions made by the United Nations Anti-Corruption Convention and the international agreements fostered by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to avoid bribery of public officers by international corporations, among other valuable normative and analytical documents publicly available in the field.

In this regard, DMB/DPADM was asked to clarify how its planned work will be different to previous one as just commented. The Secretariat indicated that the references above are of utmost relevance and importance regarding certain types of corruption that are not like those typically suffered by citizens and ordinary people regarding public service delivery. Specifically, the UN Anti-Corruption Convention addresses mostly themes like the criminalization of corrupt acts, the recovery of assets affected by corruption, and international money laundering, all of which mostly refer to high-level large scale acts of corruption usually found in the context of financial transactions, concessions for private investors and privatizations, and other similar ones. In contrast, the approach of DMB/DPADM about the engagement of citizens to prevent corruption will be narrowly focused on corruption about the delivery of determined public services to citizens, precisely in the interface between the provider and the individual user or consumer of the service. This other type of corruption, sometimes referred to in the literature as petty corruption, affects in many countries huge numbers of citizens, damages trust in government and has negative impacts on the delivery of services as it creates many distortions in the allocation of resources and the demand for services for all groups of the population. Yet, this kind of corruption needs to be deemed also as criminal acts, since it affects not just the particular individual who pays a bribe to obtain a determined service in certain conditions, but it also affects the entire community because it induces a generalized culture for transactions occurring outside the Rule of Law.

Other CEPA members highlighted that access to public information about public service delivery should be incorporated as well into the analytical work pursued by DMB. This is motivated because, when presented with open and systematic information on how public services are provided, citizens are more inclined to participate or be engaged to demand public accountability and fight corruption, than when information is scarce or anecdotal. Indeed, information is a precondition to effective citizens engagement. Also, public access to information in this regard serves as a deterrent against corrupt behaviour in the delivery of services by public officers. These ideas were acknowledged by the Secretariat and are to be elaborated in the outputs to be put forward, as mentioned above.

In a similar way, it was also mentioned by CEPA members that the engagement of citizens contributes to legitimacy of public service providers and continuity of service provision without

disruptions provoked by eventual accountability or corruption crises. Democratic elections may not suffice in some cases neither to maintain legitimacy nor to secure accountability, nor to sanction corruption. Therefore, participatory methods may add something valuable here.

Also, CEPA members highlighted the importance of considering the engagement of citizens for promoting accountability and preventing corruption with respect to public services, not only at the national or central level of government, but also and importantly at the local level of government. It is at this level that many services are directly delivered to citizens, especially because of decentralization. The Secretariat agreed with this view and that it should be reflected in its analytical and normative work ahead.

Moreover, some CEPA members indicated that citizens engagement alone may not be enough, or may be ineffective, to enhance accountability and prevent corruption about public service delivery. Increasing the capacities of both government and society, including its institutions, is much needed to effectively bring forward participatory approaches. The Secretariat agreed on this and, furthermore, expressed its awareness of the fact that participatory approaches may result in insufficient or ineffective means to improve public services when public utilities are severely constrained by excessively narrow budgets, or by inadequate regulations, or by wage rates to their employees which make it unlikely to get the skills needed to attain the performance improvements that could be expected out of increasing popular pressures to enhance accountability and eliminate corruption.

CEPA members also recommended that the Secretariat limit the scope of issues to be included in the analytical work to be pursued, considering limitations of human and financial resources in DMB/DPADM. In this sense, advice was given to prioritize those issues about which, if adequately informed and advised, countries can attain the greatest impacts in terms of improvements in public service delivery. In a related way, CEPA members also recommended the Secretariat to get an adequate mix of analysis and policy advice. The Secretariat welcomed this remarks and expressed that it is their objective that the work ahead does not concentrate on advocacy, but rather provides government and non-government actors, in countries around the world, with relevant and useful information to analyse themselves how their respective countries can gain from participatory approaches for the purposes under consideration, and how could they eventually adopt and adapt these approaches to meet their specific needs, in the institutional, juridical and socio-political context they face. In few words, the objective is to present countries with updated information on what seems to work, in concrete terms, based on the experience recorded in a variety of countries.

Indeed, during the session, several participants referred to experiences that have had positive or negative outcomes, about the engagement of citizens to strengthen public accountability and to prevent corruption regarding the delivery of public services. For instance, some examples from Bangladesh, Canada and Kenya were commented by CEPA members and observers.

Some discussion took place about how people adapt to situations where corruption is there in public service delivery and how appropriate interventions would need to be adopted. Time constraints did not permit full consideration of this matter.

Finally, the representative of UNECA expressed that there are several important points shared by the programs of work of UNECA and DMB/DPADM in these matters, and kindly offered to promote closer cooperation to attain synergies.

2. Conclusions and recommendations

CEPA members devoted some time at the end of the session to list a series of concrete points which in their opinion are most worth highlighting as conclusions and recommendations.

CEPA members who attended the workshop on citizens engagement for development management, hosted by DMB/DPADM in 2010 in Barcelona, and those who have read the guidelines produced as a follow up, highlighted the relevance and quality of both. On these grounds, DMB/DPADM was encouraged to pursue similar efforts in 2011, considering that the goals this time are more ambitious.

CEPA members concluded that the overall assessment of the program of work for 2011 presented by DMB/DPADM is largely positive. It was considered relevant and aligned with mandates from UN member states in regard to participatory approaches to public service delivery for reaching the MDGs. Moreover, it was deemed as well focussed and structured.

CEPA members advised DMB/DPADM to keep in mind the notions of limiting the scope of issues to be addressed in the analytical work, prioritizing those that seem to offer the greatest impacts on the achievement of the MDGs, and maintaining an adequate balance between required analysis and research, on one hand, and information to countries for adequate policy making, on the other hand.

Moreover, looking at limitations faced by DMB/DPADM in terms of time and human resources, CEPA members recommended to devote to the construction of the knowledge base UNPACS just enough time and effort, but not at the cost of priority work. It was concluded that keeping UNPACS updated will be a very time consuming task, and this could adversely affect the capacity to deliver other outputs of the program of work with the timeliness and quality that are desirable. Thus, if facing likely budget cuts in the future, as informed by the authorities of UNDESA to CEPA in the Opening Ceremony earlier this week, it was recommended by CEPA members that most attention and available resources should be devoted to the main outputs along the lines of the work plan, and not so much to UNPACS.

It was also concluded by CEPA members that maintaining a close link between public service delivery and the achievement of the MDGs would be a very valuable contribution from the work to be done. In relation with this, they also agreed that it is appropriate to look in this regard at citizens engagement as a means to enhance public administration, and not as an end in itself.

CEPA members pointed out to the importance of looking at local governments in connection with citizens engagement for public service delivery. Furthermore, CEPA members recommended that DMB/DPADM take into consideration the need for increasing capacities both in government and in civil society to better put in practice adequate participatory approaches

which can be internationally identified, on the basis of evidence, as effective to increase accountability and prevent corruption about public service delivery.

Observers in the meeting were satisfied to hear from DMB/DPADM that there is a plan for gradually opening up the analytical work to practitioners and stakeholders, in interactive manners, as made possible by existing ICT.

Finally, CEPA members proposed that a closer communication be maintained between the Secretariat, specifically DMB/DPADM, and CEPA members, to continue a dialogue as the one conducted in this session but throughout the year. Preference to use email for this purpose was expressed, as this reaches them in easier and more direct manners than other ICT communications platforms.

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