

Initiative on Good Governance for Development (GfD) in the Arab Countries:

Theme 1: Civil Service and Integrity¹:

The Civil Service in some Arab countries is seen to be overstaffed, rendering weak productivity and having issues of integrity. Beyond this simple statement of low performance, problems are complex and touch upon crucial political and social issues. In order to achieve sustainable change, reforms have to use different levers.

Challenges:

1. Reducing the workforce:

- How to decrease the number of public employees and move away from being an employer of last resort?
- How best to devise workforce adjustment strategies that are coherent with overall public sector restructuring strategies?
- How to best mitigate the social effects of downsizing?
- Improving adaptivity and productivity:
- How to make recruitment, career and pay systems more merit-based?
- How to measure the performance of civil servants and increase individual productivity?
- How to make the public employer attractive and pay levels compatible with on the one side, performance and integrity, and on the other side, sound public finance?
- How to make the civil service an adaptable workforce in the context of globalisation?

2. Improving integrity and preventing corruption

- How to improve civil service integrity, and most importantly decrease the levels of low-scale and large-scale corruption?
- How to achieve consistent legal, institutional and procedural frameworks for effectively preventing corruption and promoting integrity?
- How to develop specific laws, institutions and procedures to prevent corruption?
- How to ensure the impartiality of decision-making, in particular identifying and resolving conflict-of-interest situations?
- How to address risk areas for corruption such as public procurement, contract management and customs?
- How to help managers with tools to ensure integrity in daily management?
- How to keep public officials accountable for their actions?
- Devising a sustainable and systemic reform

¹ *This Framework for Policy Dialogue*” includes priority issues gleaned from international experience. [This is not an exclusive listing of issues; countries may change or add their own priority issues.](#) The purpose is to serve as a reference point, a guide for policy discussion. Working Groups in Arab countries may find them useful as they embark on the implementation of activities related to the six themes of the GfD Programme.

- How to make reforms sustainable over time in view of important time lags before results and benefits are visible?
- How to overcome barriers to reform when implementing civil service and integrity reforms in view of strong politicization of issues related to public sector employment?
- How to achieve that reforms reach a critical width and depth in order to achieve systemic reforms bring changes in the civil service culture?

Policy priorities and actions:

1. Reviewing HR systems:
 - Increasing the flexibility of human resource systems, including greater flexibility for civil service employment, while maintaining government coherence and promoting integrity
 - Engaging in dialogue between social partners in the HRM reforms.
 - Improving merit-based recruitment and promotion.
 - Reviewing pay structures.
 - Reviewing the performance management systems in place.
2. Linking public sector employment reduction programmes with public policy and development programmes and strategies.
3. Reviewing the framework for the management of senior civil servants, with a view to identifying talents early, breeding leadership committed to reforms, and re-training to increase adaptability of senior leadership.
4. Reviewing the political/civil service interface with a view to enhancing performance of the different actors and creating a framework for long-term integration of political appointees.
5. Reviewing basic conditions for integrity in the public service:
 - Statute, guarantees for independence, recruitment, pay
 - Financial controls, audits, procurement rules
 - Transparency of procedures, relationship with citizens, administrative simplification.
6. Developing an “Ethics Code”, i.e. specific regulations, procedures and institutions to promote integrity and prevent corruption:
 - Conflict-of-interest rules, anti-corruption legislation
 - Guiding documents such as codes of conduct
 - Procedures to monitor compliance and deal with misconduct
 - Co-ordination of integrity and anti-corruption policies
 - Assessment – developing methodologies for evidence-based feedback on the implementation of integrity and ant-corruption measures and their impacts.
7. Promoting a “culture of integrity”:
 - Prevention is better than cure: Mapping risk areas for corruption and adjusting preventative mechanisms
 - Ensuring understanding of core ethical standards and developing skills for daily application by training and counseling.