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**Approaches, Processes, and Methodologies for Reconstructing Public
Administration in Post-conflict Countries**

by

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Approaches, Processes, and Methodologies for Reconstructing Public Administration in Post-conflict Countries

0: Introduction:

Public administration can be conceptualised as an organisational structure, a system, a function, an institutional construct, procedures and processes or just a set of practices in the exercise of public authority. There has been considerable mutation of the concept of public administration moving from its traditional centralised neutral and controlled expert application of laws, rules and regulations to promote the general interest, to public management following the dictates of efficiency as practised in the management of private enterprises, and recently to governance with emphasis on the participation of the governed in the exercise of public authority. However, even within these mutations there remains a core concept of Public Administration as an instrument of State action, (l'appareil de l'état) which must be sharp for effectiveness in overall development and public service delivery. Whether its sharpness can be strengthened by adopting management practices similar to those of private enterprises or through strong partnerships with stakeholders, involvement of service users, participation of the governed, or a combination of all of these, the fact will remain that so far no country can coherently and prosperously survive and develop without an effective public administration. The United Nations General Assembly emphasized this in its resolution 50/225 of 1996 by recognising that:

"there is a need for public administration systems to be sound, efficient and well equipped with the appropriate capacities and capabilities through, inter-alia, capacity building, promotion of transfer, access and utilization of technology, establishment or improvement of training programmes for public services, strengthening of partnership of the public sector with the private sector and civil society, as well as providing an enabling environment for private sector activities..."

Many countries have been for long devising means of ensuring that their Public Administration is sharp enough to meet the demands of development. The sharpening of Public administration has been differently conceptualized as restructuring, rehabilitation, rebuilding, reconstruction, reform, reconfiguration etc. But beyond the differences in

nomenclature, the main aim has been to make Public administration perform better in accomplishing the missions of the State.

As a consequence of this unceasing search for effective public administration we find that these days public administration embodies several aspects including institutions, structures, systems, functions, practices, norms, and values of the Legislature, the Executive, the Judiciary, and other Government / Public agencies including decentralised ones. These days with practices and mechanisms of Public/Private partnerships including contracting out as a means of private provision of public services, Public Administration has also included consideration of co-opting the private sector and civil society institutions to supplement its efforts to better deliver services to the Public. In this presentation we will concentrate on rebuilding and sharpening public administration in countries that have emerged out of violent conflict with devastating effects

1: Post –conflict countries are not a homogenous entity

While reforming Public Administration for improved performance has been a preoccupation of most countries, it is considered an absolute necessity and prerequisite for sustainable development in developing countries, especially those that have just emerged from destructive violent conflict. The task is even more daunting because developing countries, even those that have emerged out of conflict, are not a homogeneous entity. Some of them have their Public Administration systems completely ruptured and therefore needing to be rebuilt from scratch. This is mostly the case with countries emerging out of severe/violent conflict. Others have their systems so archaic that they have to be remodelled to bring them to modern ways of Public Administration. There are also others which are so much out of tune with the environments they serve that they need to undergo substantive innovations to bring them to be responsive to the needs of the public they are supposed to serve.

One more daunting issue in relation to reforming Public Administration in developing countries, especially those in Africa, is that while the countries are in the process of

mastering the traditional bureaucratic models of Public administration, they are being required to introduce modern and probably more complicated ones.

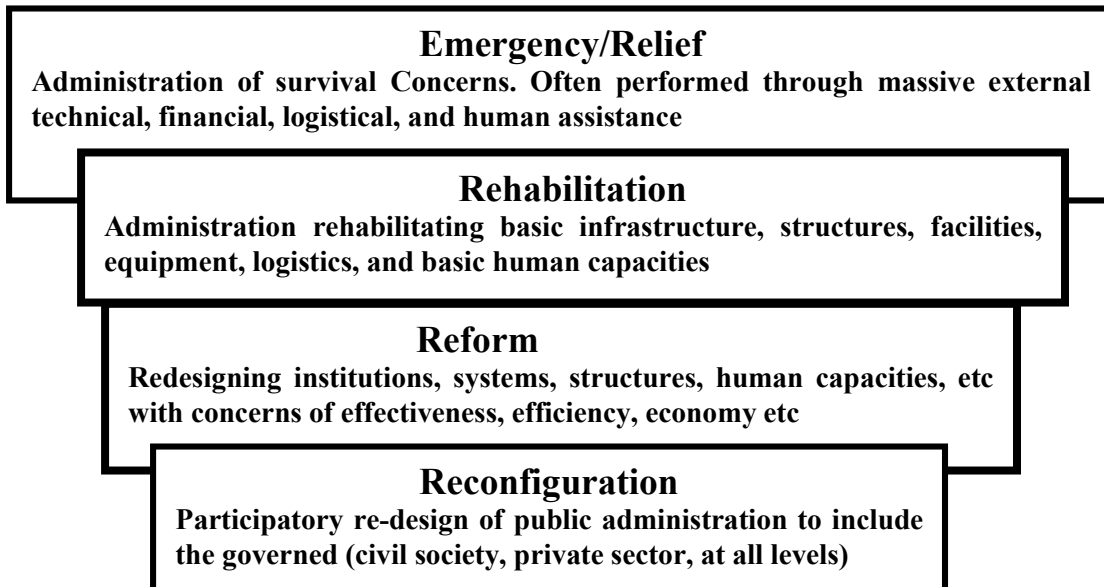
It is clear that a lot will have to be done to make Public Administration an efficient, effective, responsive, transparent and accountable instrument for public policy, planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and overall sustainable development. One extra problem for formulators of policies, strategies and programmes for strengthening public administration in post-conflict countries concerns which basic concept to be followed (building, re-building, reconstructing, reforming, rehabilitating, reconfiguring, or re-engineering?).

Public Administration reform is an appropriate term and strategy for some countries and not for others. In Countries emerging from severe destructive violence, there is no Public Administration system to reform. Here one would be talking of building, rebuilding, constructing or re-construction, rehabilitation, restoring or anything else but certainly not reform. In a country like Rwanda immediately after the 1994 genocide, the Public Administration system had been completely destroyed in terms of people, facilities, information, etc. It could not be reformed. It had to be re-built. It is not until recently that they can talk of reform. The United Nations had to intervene in East Timor to establish their Public Administration. Here again one would not talk of reforming. In Kosovo, the United Nations through UNMIK is trying to structure and operationalize public administration. Again here one would not appropriately talk of reform.

Therefore, post violence/conflict countries present peculiar circumstances, which require different approaches and actions for re-establishing their Public administration. It is important that depending on the circumstances of the past, present, and future of the country in question, the conception of sharpening public administration starts from a clear understanding of what is to be done. One thing we have found to be a stumbling block in this respect is that often the technical intervention is called for after the jargon of what is to be done is already decided. It is therefore often the case to be called upon to provide technical support to public administration or public service reform in Somalia, or

Kosovo, or Liberia, when the right thing to do would be to first and foremost, in such circumstances, build or re-build public administration in these countries.

2: The phases of putting the country's public administration back on truck.



We need to reiterate that the phases strongly depend on the specific idiosyncrasies of each country, the nature of the conflict that has affected the public administration, the extent to which this has been destroyed and what aspects of it have been destroyed. It also depends strongly on how determined the in-country forces are to put back the country on the road to development.

However, we can note that in a general way the above phases interlock with one another because the process of rebuilding public administration is not unidirectional. In other words, it is not possible to first complete emergency before starting rehabilitation; just as it is not possible to first complete rehabilitation before starting reform. Even the process of reconfiguring the public administration system to make it more participatory, responsive to citizens needs, and accountable to the community it serves cannot wait until the reform is complete. They however need to be conceptualized as distinct because some aspects should not be mixed.

(i): Emergency and relief: For example at the stage of emergency and relief, the stakeholders are not yet organised in a stable way, emotionally and otherwise, to effectively participate in the re-thinking and re-design of the public administration of the future. At this stage the public administration itself is almost non existence, the private sector is often equally destroyed and civil society is as in disarray as the society it represents. The social tempers from the causes and immediate effects of the conflict will be too high to permit rational debate of the way the public administration should be reconfigured. This is a stage of fire fighting and who ever has a bucket of water is welcome to pour it on the fire.

(ii): Rehabilitation: This phase in most cases involves repairs on facilities such as buildings, putting back some form of structures and systems to permit orderly administration and decision making. It also includes reassembling some human resources and training them to man the rehabilitated structures and systems. The rehabilitation stage should prepare the country to participate in a deep and engaged debate on how the future of the country's public administration should be. The problem with this phase is that in most cases it pre-occupies itself with putting back structures which may just a few years ahead have to be pulled down as reform and reconfiguration takes place. In most cases a successful phase of reform will end with adequate administrative institutions and structures such as functioning legislatures, ministries, institutions of judiciary. However, these institutions and structures will be mostly inefficient with problems of inadequate human capacities and systems. Also the linkages among them will be weak because in the process of being rehabilitated there was very little collaboration among them. Sometimes the rehabilitation of some is done with support from one donor or development partner while another donor or development partner does the rehabilitation of others. Where these have not collaborated it is possible to have two institutions in the same country following contradictory systems.

(iii): Reform: The phase of reform is more on the side of re-thinking systems, procedures, organizational structures, human capacities, information management, methodologies, and institutional linkages as they relate to the entire process and needs of

development. The biggest preoccupation of reform is efficiency. In most cases reforms have been coming as packages conceived from elsewhere and branded “**best practices**”. Rarely have we seen reforms that are home grown to respond to the situation of the country in question. Consequently, there have been reform efforts, for example, geared towards downsizing the public service when the country has inadequate personnel even in terms of numbers. There have been cases where in the confusion surrounding rehabilitation some countries have been hurried to privatise enterprises in the name of reform even when the social ownership of such enterprises has not been sorted out.

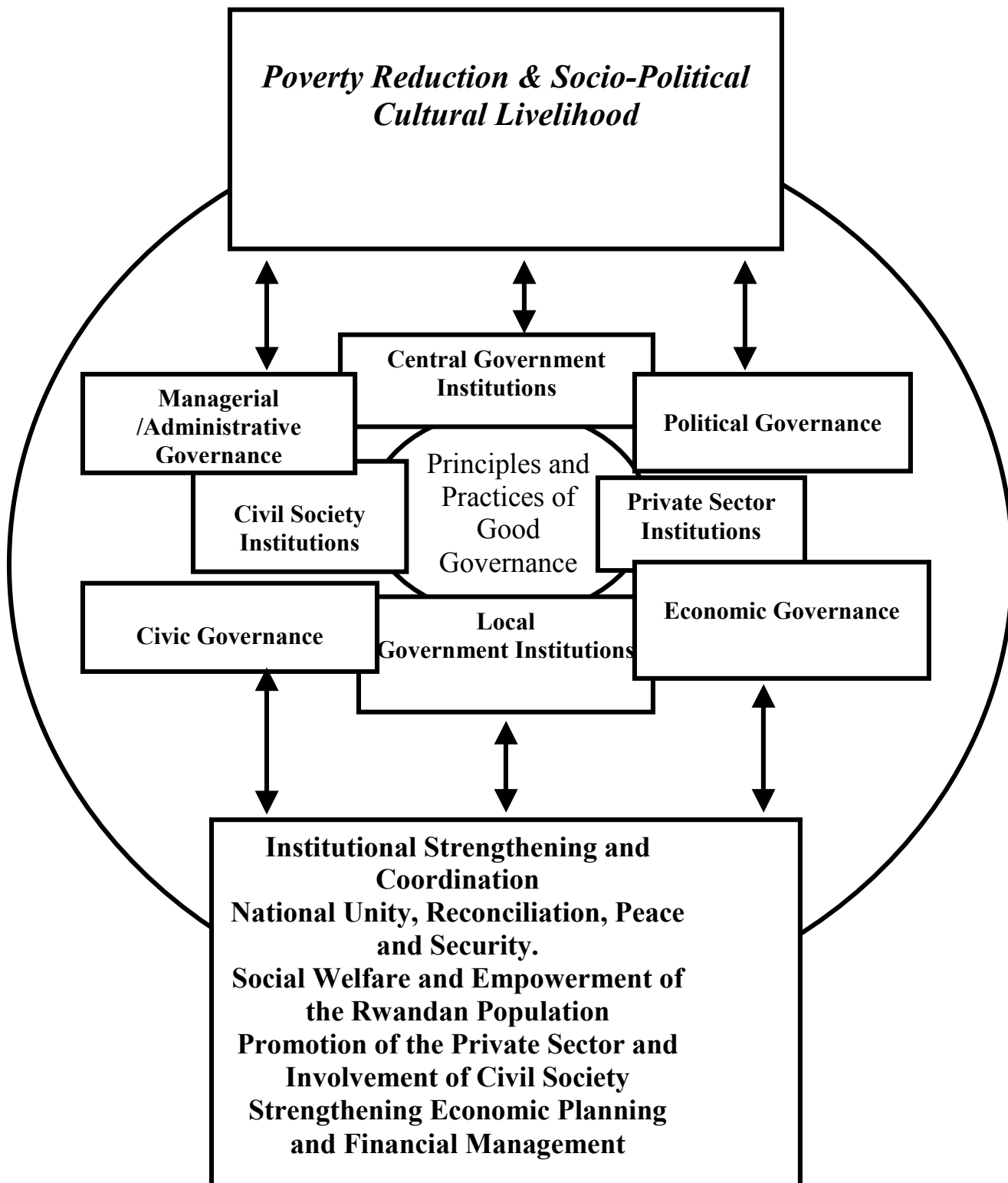
(iv): Reconfiguration: This is the phase of intensive socio-politico-economic and cultural self examination and development strategic planning of the country. It is the phase that lasts longest depending on the readiness of the country’s leadership and people to engage in participatory re-thinking and re-engineering of the country’s future governance and public administration. This phase will result in settlements on the issues such as decentralised governance, private sector development, the extent of involving civil society as a strong partner in socio-politico-economic and cultural governance, and the extent of partnerships among government, private sector, and civil society at all levels involving the community, local, national, regional, and international actors. Reconfiguration reaffirms a country’s acceptance of participatory governance as a shared responsibility and the critical role of global actors and the forces of globalization in the development process of the country. It all permits the country to be self-assertive and anchor governance and public administration on the premises of its own problems, needs and circumstances.

One can then say that while emergency and relief, re-establishes the existence of a country and its people, rehabilitation puts back some form of administration, reform strives to make public administration efficient, while reconfiguration installs governance. This can be summed as rehabilitation emphasises public administration, reform emphasizes public management, while reconfiguration is centred on governance. We need to add that what we are noting here is not a theoretical concept but rather a practice we have observed in post conflict countries where we have supported the rebuilding of

public administration. Indeed outside this box of stating what has been observed, there is nothing that stops activities of reform from being geared towards governance. But the point should not be lost that most reforms have tended to emphasise introduction of public management.

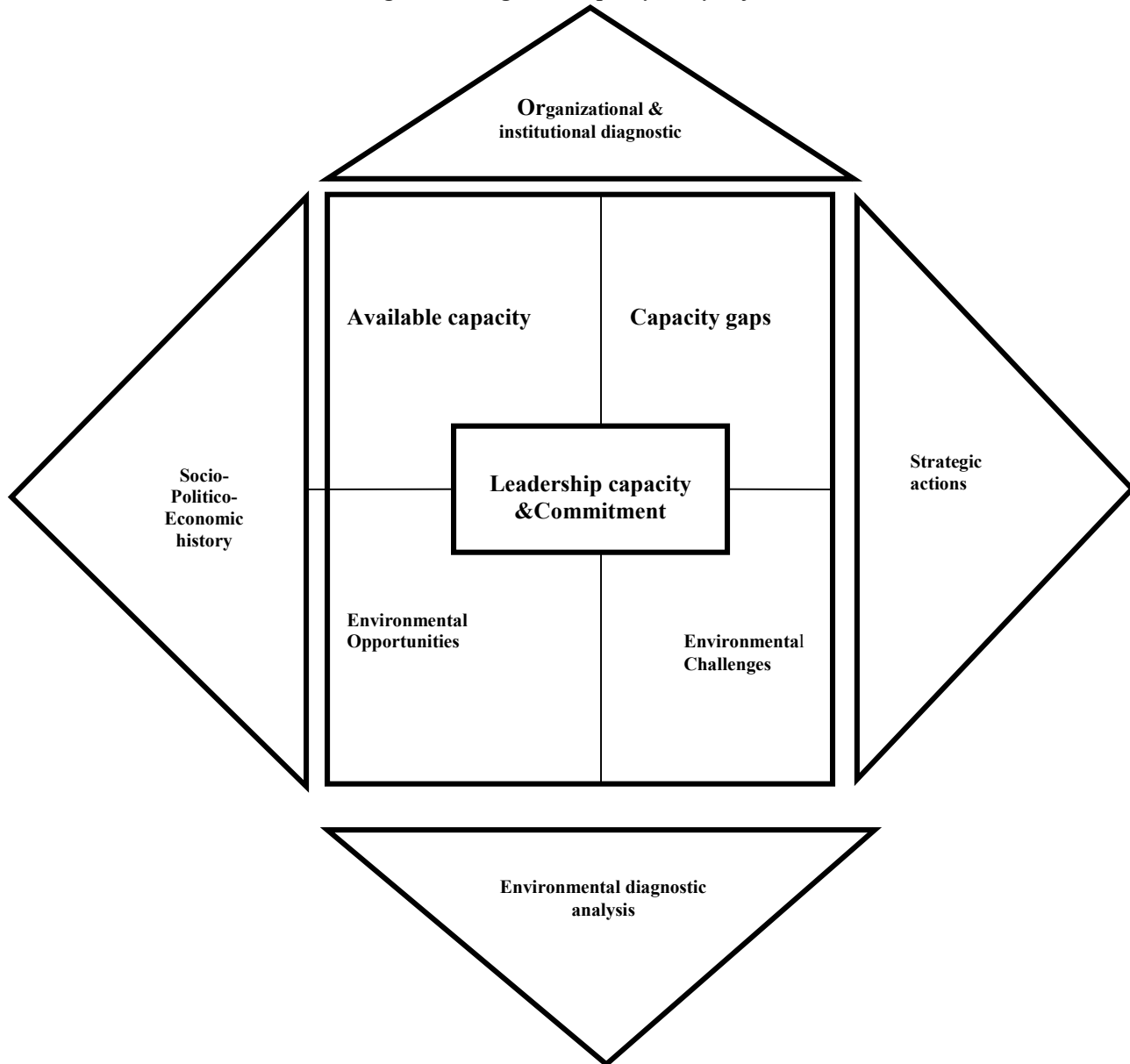
Below we give an example of a governance-strengthening programme that is aiming at reconfiguring rather than just reforming governance and public administration.

National Program for Strengthening Good Governance for Poverty Reduction



3: Diagnostic situation analysis and systematic participative strategic development planning: The genesis of reconfiguration

Diagram 1: Diagnostic capacity analysis framework



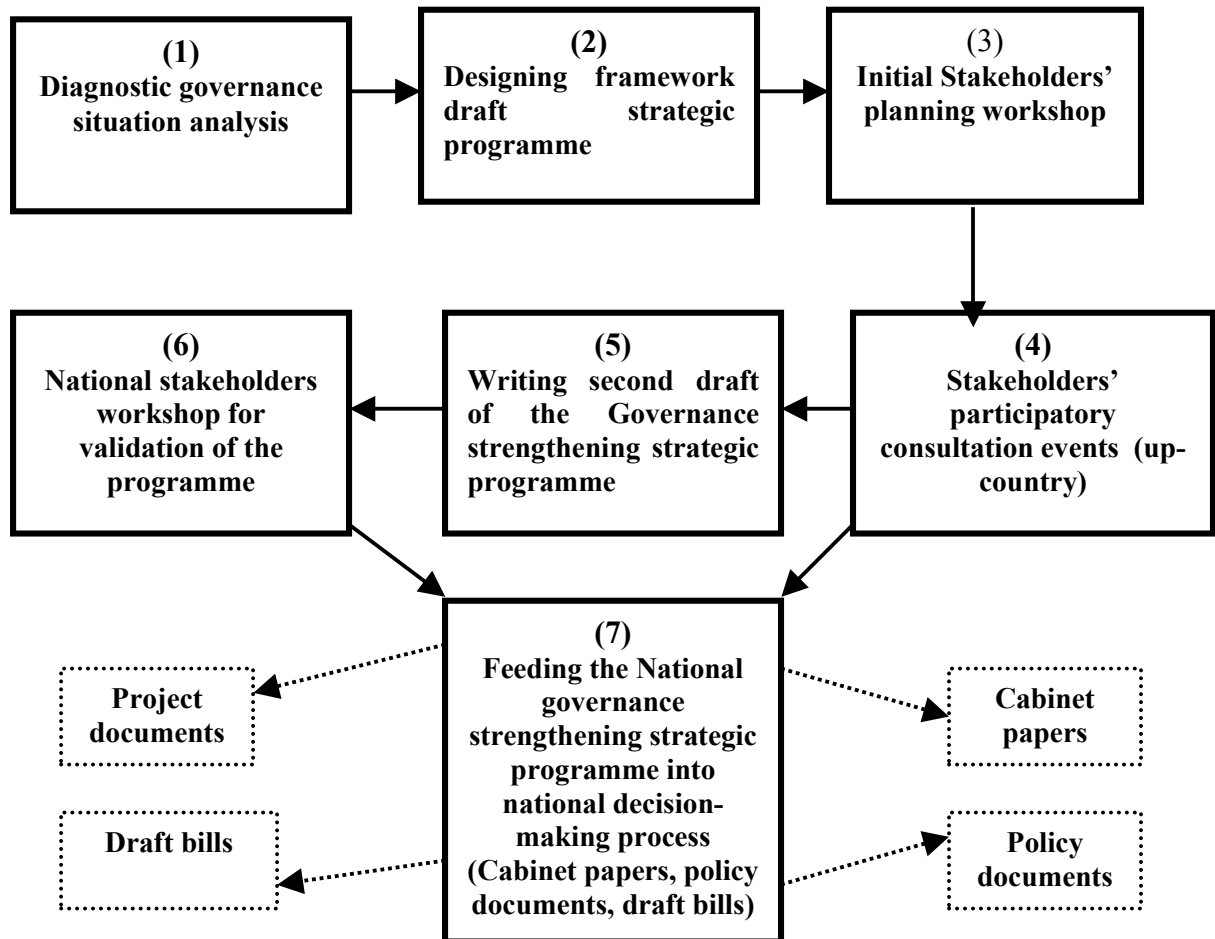
The beginning of reconfiguring public administration as part of post-conflict reconstruction lies in making an exhaustive diagnostic situation analysis that would permit a informed participative strategic development planning for the country to develop

an entirely new governance and public administration system that would avoid the mistakes that lead to the conflict.

The above diagram summarises what the diagnostic situation analysis would have to look at. The important thing to note is that it starts by an honest diagnosis of the past. Without this the forces that lead to the conflict would not be understood and the planning of the future could easily leave them unsettled. The current capacities and the environmental challenges and opportunities would have to be exhaustively diagnosed and analysed. Finally the future needs to be projected clearly specifying the missions, objectives, strategic actions, and the programmatic activities to be undertaken to reconfigure the whole spectrum of the state, public administration and governance in general. One important thing that is done during this planning is to review and re-state the missions of the state as they relate to the development aspirations of the country.

The process needs to be highly participative involving government, civil society, private sector, international community working within the country, the academia, and the press as well as all political parties or forces. The process is long but worthwhile.

4: Seven Step Process in Designing the National Program for Strengthening Good Governance



The process is first and foremost participative. The basic assumption is that the entire country is undergoing a self-examination and assessment exercise. The first step (the diagnostic situation analysis) is best done with strong support from a team of people who are intellectually competent to do diagnostic and analytical research. However, even these have to be instructed to utilise methodologies that include not only reading available documents but also to consult and discuss with a wide spectrum of stakeholders.

From this step one would expect a comprehensive report of the governance situation in the country as it stands and as the historical socio-politico-economic and cultural forces that have shaped it. Most importantly, the issues and problematic concerns of the society have to be clearly articulated because basically they are the ones that the programme will address.

Based on this comprehensive diagnostic assessment of the situation a competent or a team of competent socio-politico-economic strategic planners need to design a governance strengthening strategic frame work that briefly summarises the problematic situation, the missions that should be pursued, the strategic objective and actions, the capacity strengths and gaps as well as the environmental opportunities and challenges.

This draft framework will be presented in a national workshop bringing together representatives of government, private sector, civil society, local government, international community who will enrich it with their inputs and discussion. Such a workshop needs to be facilitated by a person or persons highly competent in facilitating participatory problem solving and strategic planning events. They must in addition, and probably more importantly command respect and acceptability from a cross section of the country both because of their competence but also known neutrality and intellectual objectivity. This is very important because some of the issues that will be handle are extremely sensitive and are at the core of the origin of the destructive conflict in the first place.

The inputs from this national stakeholders workshop are used to write the second draft of the strategic programme, which is now not only richer but also more representative. Then this draft is presented to a number of consultative planning event all over the country. In effect these are structured in the same way as the national stakeholders workshop only that they are taking place upcountry. The major aim is to reach as many stakeholders as possible.

When all the stakeholders' consultation workshops all over the country are completed, the inputs are then fed into the writing of the final draft of the programme. The draft is then presented into a final national stakeholders workshop to validate the programme. The formula is like “ The last time we met you, we agreed on a draft governance programme. We have consulted the whole country on the draft and incorporated the inputs of the stakeholders from the whole country. We are now submitting to you the final draft for you validation. The stakeholders will discuss the draft, make whatever changes they wish to make and validate it as a national programme.

After this validation the implementation of the programme will take various forms. Some of its components cannot be implemented until they are supported by new laws. Some can be immediately implemented but still they have to first be formulated into projects. What we have found useful in this process is that it mobilises most decision makers to take decisions quickly concerning the various aspects of the programme. This is because the decision makers have followed the design of the programme and are no longer in doubt as to its validity nor its acceptability. There have been even cases where donors and development partners, having participated in and followed this process, immediately allocate funds to the components that are in their line of intervention. It is an effective resource mobilisation process.

4.1: Benefits of the seven-step process

The temptation is to consider the process as useful only in as far as it helps to produce a national strategic programme for good governance. In fact the benefits from this process go far beyond that and include the following:

(i): Acquisition of participative planning skills: It is an effective tool in training for participative problem identification, analysis and solving as well as strategic programming. When well planned and followed those who get involved in its implementation acquire invaluable knowledge and skills in participative situation analysis and strategic planning. They also acquire skills in facilitating participative planning workshops. This is why it is always advisable to ensure that the consultants hired to do this job work to support national teams whose members will eventually acquire the skills.

(ii): Facilitating dialogue and reducing tension among conflicting groups: The process brings together different stakeholders and groups in an environment that is conducive to objective consideration of various interest. At least it encourages each interest to be put on the table and be negotiated. In this sense it contributes a lot to reducing tension and conflict bringing stakeholders to agree on the essential development needs. At the limit of difficult issues, at least the process exposes them and lets those who cherish them talk about them. This is not a small contribution knowing that exposing interests is the beginning of addressing them.

(iii): Galvanizing commitment to the programme: It is an acknowledged fact that most well designed programmes often meet problems in implementation stemming from the fact that they lack commitment from the stakeholders especially those that hold influential and resource allocation positions. The seven-step process described above in most cases progressively galvanises this commitment from even among the donors. Or at least the process reveals very easily that the programme that is being designed will have no

commitment from the leaders. Normally this is reflected from the way the leaders participate in the process itself

(iv): Resource mobilization: It is a strong (probably the strongest we have seen) tool for mobilising resources. Normally because donors and development partners participate in the process, they easily judge how serious the government is with the programme as well as how the programme is composed of national priorities agreed by stakeholders. This quickly prepares them to commit resources to the programme.

(v): Mobilization of political support for the government: The process illustrates to many stakeholders the fact that government respects their views and is ready to consult them even outside political forums to get their views. They see themselves telling their leaders what to do in order to develop the country. This strengthens their support for the government in power.

4.2: Success factor for the process:

We must point out that the process does not have an automatic success card. We have used it in about in six African countries. In three of them it was stopped mid-way before the programmes could be completed. This was because the project that was supporting them dried out of money. It was not therefore possible to judge the success of the process. In the other three the process was followed up to the end and the programmes produced. But in one of them it is now three years since and not a single component of the programme has been implemented. In the rest two, the programmes were implemented almost immediately with strong support from donors and development partners. From this scenario we are able to estimate the factors on which the success of the process depends.

(i): Commitment from top leadership to let the people participate in the determination of their development and destiny: If the top leadership does not show commitment to the process and the final outcome two things will happen: the government

will not take the necessary decisions and steps to implement what ever programme that will come out of the process, and the donors and development partners, having noted the governments lack of commitment will not put any money into the implementation of the programme. It will remain a beautiful strategic design on paper. In the two countries where the programmes were successfully designed and implemented, the national workshops would include Ministers, Parliamentarians, Judges and they would be either opened or altogether attended by the Presidents. In one both the President and the Prime Minister attended the workshop that lasted three days.

(ii): Highly competent and trusted participatory planning facilitator: The process will not be well followed if it is not facilitated by a very competent and respected facilitator. The tendency is to look for this one from outside the country. However, this success factor is re-enforced if the facilitator is from within the country. It emphasizes the national ownership of the outcome.

(iii): Financial resources: The process is long and expensive for a country where spending one hundred US dollars means a lot. The process requires a minimum of two months and that is in an average small country. In a big country the process would have to take longer because of the travels involved in making national consultations up-country. Generally the programme cannot be produced with less that 250 US dollars using this process. But given the positive outcomes including resource mobilisation, it is worth the money.

(iv): Appropriate timing: Within the sequence of emergency, rehabilitation, reform, and reconfiguration, as we note above, designing a governance strengthening strategic programme using this process falls within the phase of reconfiguration. If it is time wrongly, for example coming at a time when rehabilitation is still the main issue, it will not succeed because the society will not be ready to engage in deep objective debate. The donors and development partners themselves will sense that the process is getting into issues that probably far ahead in the future of priorities and therefore out of step with the development agenda.