Myanmar Civil Service Reform (CSR) Strategic Action Plan

Concept Note

A. Background and Rationale

The New Government of Myanmar (GoM) is prioritizing civil service reform (CSR) as a means to transform the administrative machinery, making it more responsive to people’s needs and more accountable and effective in the management of public resources and delivery of services. The GoM has stressed through its policy directives on the need to establish an “efficient government”, which would work for the “benefit of the people” and strengthen “rule of law” and “establish a society free of corruption”.

In addition to its ‘traditional’ contribution to reforming the system through combatting corruption and enhancing the efficiency of the state, CSR is to be seen as an underlying success factor – or limitation – of the establishment of a decentralized and federal system in Myanmar. The Civil Service is indeed part of the broader spectrum of political transformation and there is a need to ascertain civil service capacities and skills as a means to strengthening sub-national governance.

With directives from the new political leadership, the Union Civil Service Board (UCSB) has already engaged in identifying ways to transform and modernize the civil service, allowing it to embrace a new paradigm, dynamics and priorities. The UCSB launched an internal assessment of its current mandate and capacities and started elaborating policies to instigate a new civil service culture based on the principles of professionalism, accountability, meritocracy, inclusiveness, efficiency and service orientation.

The UCSB organized on 2-3 May 2016 an internal ‘Training Review Workshop’ focused on assessing its training mandate and in-house capacities. Major recommendations of the workshop included: (i) establishing a Civil Service Academy (CSA) to enhance the quality of knowledge and skills, (ii) focusing UCSB’s training mandate on public policy and public management, (iii) replacing the military syllabus with physical exercise and team building activities and (iv) improving the learning environment and training delivery capacities.

Simultaneously to the workshop and based on recommendations from the Ministry of Education, Dr. Win Thein, Chairman of UCSB, issued with permission of the President Office an executive decision to terminate the refresher training course for basic and higher education teachers. This decision came in line with recommendation (ii) aforementioned. These training courses, deemed more technical in nature, would be organized by the Ministry of Education. It is anticipated that many other decisions intended to clarify the mandate and scope of work of the UCSB would follow. The new Government has hence marked its first 100 days with strong emphasis on the Civil Service

---

1 The CSA is envisioned to provide two types of diploma and a Master degree: (1) the Post-Graduate Diploma for gazetted officers; this would imply a specialization of the CSA in academic certification for entry level, middle and senior level officials. The CICS would continue providing 4 regular courses: (i) basic course promoting non-gazetted to gazetted officers, (ii) clerical supervisors’ course, (iii) junior official course and (iv) clerical staff courses.

2 The UCSB has mandate over (1) civil service regulatory frameworks, (2) the selection and appointments of gazette officers and (3) training and capacity development, as reflected in the 2008 Constitution (Art 246, Section 1), the Civil Service Act of 2013 and from the UCSB Law (2010) and Bylaws (2011).
Reform agenda and with resounding decisions that are setting the stage for promising regulatory, procedural, systemic reforms and mindset change.

This said, the civil service in Myanmar remains largely supply-driven and lacks a client-oriented and service culture. Despite an overall promotion of the principles of meritocracy, fairness and accountability through existing rules and regulations, these principles have a relatively limited application in practice\(^3\). Nepotism and favoritism are common phenomena that characterize decision making within the service\(^4\), and this undermines the inclusivity of the service and the provision of services to the general public in a fair, equitable and transparent manner.

There is hence an urgent need to change thinking patterns and more broadly the organizational culture and practice in the civil service. The GoM hence needs to determine a new CSR Vision and a plan of action that would reflect the political will and enable to Civil Service to assume its role in the overall modernization of the country.

The UCSB, based on its mandate as lead entity on CSR, has determined the need to facilitate the development of a whole of government CSR Strategic Action Plan that would gradually address inherent organizational and cultural biases. The Strategic Action Plan would also allow UCSB to determine specific entry points to upholding highest levels of integrity, professionalism, inclusiveness and efficiency in the service. It is also important to highlight that the Strategic Action Plan should mobilize all entities within Government and from civil society and is to be considered as the product of a multi-stakeholder consultation process and not a plan for the UCSB. To this end, the UCSB with support from UNDP is organizing a two-day consultative workshop with the aim of developing the CSR Strategic Action Plan.

**B. The Civil Service Reform Strategic Action Plan**

**a. Objectives and Anticipated Results**

The ‘CSR Strategic Action Plan’ aims at supporting the GoM in formalizing a holistic vision for CSR in Myanmar and determining a result-oriented plan of action serving as a strategy document to establish a modern and competent Civil Service.

The Strategic Action Plan is expected to contribute to the following results:

- Modernize the civil service and enabling it to support and effectively contribute to the political and societal transformation of Myanmar;
- Transform the Civil Service and its personnel into a trusted partner of the Myanmar people upholding the highest standards of integrity, equality and accountability;
- Support the positioning of UCSB and other governmental and non-governmental institutions in support of the fulfillment of the transformation of the Myanmar Civil Service.

---

\(^3\) Demonstrated by the UCSB-UNDP ‘Perception Survey on Ethics, Meritocracy and Equal Opportunities in the Myanmar Civil Service’, 2016.

\(^4\) Ibid.
b. Substantive Focus

The CSR Strategic Action Plan will be primarily informed by policy considerations set by the New Government. It is hence expected to put strong emphasis on the new service delivery paradigm and on responsiveness to citizens, while upholding accountability and efficiency in system and procedural reviews. The Action Plan would also benefit from a Politics, Economics, Social, Technology, Legislation and Environment (PESTLE) analysis, which would provide a broader analytical framework for devising activities.

i. The Vision Statement

The vision statement for CSR in Myanmar would reflect the core values determined by the new political leadership, namely Integrity, Honesty, Objectiveness and Impartiality.

It will also need to provide a platform to promote the principles of Professionalism, Equality Inclusiveness, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Meritocracy, Accountability, Responsiveness, Client and Service Orientation.

The Consultative workshop will need to discuss and validate a first draft of the Vision Statement that has been development by the UCSB, as follows:

“Ethical, merit-based, inclusive and responsive Civil Service promoting public participation and strengthening the trust of the people.”

ii. CSR Entry Points

The below identified themes have been drawn from various analytical documents and are herein proposed as main components of the Plan. They would provide entry points for the reform process and would need to be translated into activities and targets.

Theme 1: New Civil Service Governance

- Client and service oriented culture: Regulatory and procedural amendments
- Delineating the mandate and role of the Union Civil Service Board and other Union and State and Regions Institutions

Theme 2: Towards a merit-based and performance-driven culture and systems

- Making recruitment, selection, promotion and posting more meritocratic, transparent and gender sensitive
- Motivating civil service personnel through allowances and benefits systems
- Modernizing performance management systems
- Human Resources Management organizational structures

Theme 3: Effective and Efficient Civil Service

- Revisiting and upscaling training and learning methods and environment in Myanmar
- Innovative ways to building the skills of national expertise and mobilizing international experts
- Investing in engendered leadership programmes
- M&E and Quality Control

Theme 4: Promoting Transparency and Accountability in the Civil Service

- Whistleblowers and complaints mechanisms within the system
- Checks and balances across the civil service (Emphasis on the role of the UCSB)
- Ensuring effectiveness of public complaints and grievances

**c. Process**

The development of the CSR Strategic Action Plan would follow a ‘strategic planning’ approach, whereas the vision statement would inform the plan and determine specific outcome(s) or results to be achieved. This approach emphasizes strong monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that would need to guide and assess the implementation of the plan and achievements of results.

The below process would guide the development of the CSR Strategic Action Plan:

i. **Determining a CSR Vision**: The CSR vision would be holistic to all the civil service. It would be presented to and discussed with all concerned internal and external stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector. The UCSB based on its mandate on CSR will propose a draft vision statement and validate it through a broad consultative basis.

ii. **Translating the CSR Vision into Results and Specific Actions**: The second phase of the process would be to develop the results statements that would be aligned to the vision. This process would need to be as consultative as possible and involve all concerned stakeholders. In order to ensure broad-base consultations, a national consultative workshop will be organized that would facilitate the identification of results/outcomes for CSR. These results would be elaborated into outputs and activities with indicators of achievements.

iii. **Identifying SMART indicators and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Mechanisms**: The outcomes, outputs and activities embedded in the plan will require a dedicated monitoring framework that would need to be institutionalized early in the process. There is a need first to determine Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound (SMART) indicators, based on which a M&E plan and framework would be devised. This framework will include responsible parties/persons to ensure that the results are reached and the frequency of monitoring.

iv. **Establishing a timeframe for implementation**: The activities in the plan need to be prioritized and scheduling and sequencing of activities carefully examined, given the inter-related character of many activities that would be retained in the plan. The timetable is a crucial element for the M&E framework and determines the expected actions by the involved stakeholders.

v. **Devising management arrangements and determining inputs and resources**: In support of the different activities retained in the plan, inputs and resources would need to be determined in order to identify what are the requirements for implementation. Stakeholders for implementation will need to be identified and assigned the task of management/implementation of activities until results are reached. External support for the
implementation of some activities might be required, and the identification of external technical assistance would need to be reflected in the plan.

C. Consultative Workshop for Developing the CSR Strategic Action Plan

The ‘Consultative Workshop on Developing the Civil Service Reform Strategic Action Plan’ aims at supporting the GoM in formalizing a holistic vision for CSR in Myanmar and determining a result-oriented plan of action serving as a strategy document for national and sub-national levels to establish a modern and competent Civil Service.

a. Objectives and Anticipated Results

The Consultative Workshop is expected to yield the following results:

✓ Instigating broad-base stakeholder discussions on the Myanmar’s Civil Service reform and modernization requirements;
✓ Ascertaining a National vision for CSR that would enable the State to support and contribute to the political and societal transformation of Myanmar;
✓ Identifying a plan of action for CSR, inclusive of SMART objectives, outputs and agreed-upon timelines;
✓ Determining technical and institutional strengthening requirements in support of the delivery of the Action Plan.

b. Format

The Consultative Workshop has been designed in manner to prompt discussions based on factual diagnostic and existing assessments/studies performed or ongoing in Myanmar, but also to instigate innovative thinking in identifying changes and improvements through the discussion of international lessons learned of new public management practices. The following provides the basis for the format of the workshop:

i. ‘Plenary Discussions’ have been included at the beginning of each of the two days in order to provide participants with best practices and innovative ways to modernize and transform the civil service. Panel discussions with international and national scholars and practitioners will highlight new trends in the public service/civil service and would prompt participants to consider new approaches to CSR.

ii. ‘Parallel sessions’ will be organized to treat the four themes. Parallel sessions would include ‘presentations’ by national and international experts addressing CS related assessments and studies performed in Myanmar. The Myanmar stakeholders will also be providing the parallel sessions with presentations of the current regulatory and institutional reality governing the specific topic/theme discussed.

iii. Appropriate space for discussion and consultative avenues would be provided during the parallel sessions, and discussions in the parallel sessions will help to reach consensus on the elements of the CSR Strategic Action Plan.
iv. Parallel sessions will be facilitated by prominent Myanmar experts and practitioners and will comprise dedicated note takers to record discussions and inputs to the CSR Strategic Action Plan.

c. Participants

The national workshop will comprise government and non-government stakeholders, including donors and development partners (as listed below).

- Union Parliament, including staff;
- Union Ministries and Governmental Institutions/Agencies;
- States and Regions Governments;
- Civil Society Organizations;
- Academia and Think Tanks;
- Media institutions;
- Donors;
- Development Partners;
- Union Civil Service Board (UCSB) and Central Institutes of the Civil Service (CICS).

d. Duration and Scheduling

The National Consultative Workshop will take place over a period of two (2) consecutive days, on Thursday and Friday 25-26 August 2016.

e. Venue

The Workshop will be convened at the Myanmar International Convention Center (MICC) II, in Nay Pyi Taw.