JPLG Supports Effective Human Resource Management in Districts for improved Service Delivery to Citizens

The ability of a local government to deliver the highest standard of public service delivery requires a uniform, methodical and transparent recruitment process to ensure the best qualified and suitable individuals are employed.

In Somalia, recruitment for employment has often been viewed as a potential economic resource, attracting unsuitable candidates, through nepotism (including clan affiliation) and unclear recruitment practices leading to poor organizational performance, tension and even conflict. One of the main priorities of the Government of Somaliland, since they approved decentralization legislation in 2014, is provision of public service delivery at district level. The Decentralization Policy highlights: “the authority for implementing a human resource management system for the recruitment, selection, performance appraisal, and dismissal will be within the scope of the local council to determine...”

Support to the evolving process of decentralization in Somaliland has been provided through the UN Joint Programme on Local Governance and Decentralized Services (JPLG).

In 2013, the Ministry of Interiors in Somaliland, supported by JPLG/UNDP, worked to produce Local Government Employment Regulations and Procedures. They also produced a Human Resource Management Manual for Local Governments. As the Somaliland Human Resource Management Manual highlights: “The local government civil service should be an area characterized by transparency, uniformity, and consistency in the application of procedures.”

The Human Resource Management Manuals elaborate how local government staff can deliver effective personnel management through standard procedures and guidelines. Areas covered include: Roles and functions of Human Resources at the District Level; Human Resources Planning and Budgeting; Payroll Management; Rules and Regulations; Health and Safety; Recruitment; Transfer, Promotion, Demotion and Discipline; Separation; Performance Management; Leave and Training and Development.

To ensure compliance with employment and district law, JPLG/UNDP supported extensive consultations with the Ministry of Interiors’, Ministry of Labour, Civil Service Commission and District Governments. The Human Resource Management Manual has been adopted by both Somaliland. In Somaliland, Employment Regulations were gazetted in February 2015.

JPLG/UNDP has supported the conversion of the Manual to training modules, translated into Somali, which forms the basis of a Local Government Human Resources Training Programme. Ten
JPLG/UNDP Finance and Administration Consultants and sixteen district participants including Departmental Directors from Hargeisa, Gabiley and Berbera, attended two Hargeisa trainings in November 2014 and May 2015. The training has enabled participants to take their skills back to their districts to train additional local government staff.

Ismail Bede Geele, Head of the Personnel Unit at the Borama District Council said: “The training is useful. It will encourage local government staff to stay in their offices and work eight hours a day which will increase productivity. Local government staff have a better sense of their responsibility and they have acquired an understanding that their performance is linked to promotion or demotion. The training has made my role and my responsibilities much clearer – and has helped me to organize my daily work. I also learned the importance of communicating with other departments on personnel issues.”

In June 2015, the Mayor of Berbera, Abdishakur Mohamud Hassan, made strong statements in support of human resources reform at a meeting attended by Somaliland Mayors’ in Hargeisa, supported by JPLG/UNDP.

“Our efforts to bring about tangible change, were tough but fortunately we (the administration) had the support of the Ministry of Interior and we were able to bring in difficult reforms related to improving the capacity of our district personnel.”

The meeting bought together Mayors (and their representatives) from seven districts to create support for the newly gazetted Employment Regulations.

The Mayor of Berbera highlighted that in 2012, the Berbera District Administration had very few management systems in place; it was dysfunctional and was not able to provide basic services. In 2013, there was commitment from Berbera District Administration to reform and make progress in support of the provision of basic health, primary education and water and sanitation services; as well as improve district infrastructure and promote local economic development.

The Berbera District Administration, supported by the Ministry of Interior and JPLG/UNDP (District Capacity Development Consultant) worked to introduce reforms. This included the restructuring of local government departments from sixteen to six, with work plans and an effective reporting system in place - and the development of an Annual Work Plan and Budget.
There was resistance from employees but the Administration were determined to realize positive change.

“None of the previous directors’ had the knowledge and experience specified in the six newly-developed department TORs. Therefore, we had to recruit six new department directors, who were university educated, who had the right skills and qualifications and move the previous directors who took on the role of departmental section heads.”

The Mayor of Berbera is proud of this new generation of qualified and motivated employees who are focused on achieving results and are working to deliver improved services to residents.

The Berbera Administration also implemented Human Resources reform through the establishment of a personnel office which followed policies and procedures outlined in the Human Resources Management Manual.

The Mayor of Berbera: “Every employee has a personnel file; there is a policy in place on staff attendance; we implement employee performance assessment; we produce a payroll; we administer promotion and demotion (previously exercised through informal procedures). Serious cases of misconduct are investigated, mostly related to employees who were fingerprinted on the payroll of several Administrations’ in Somaliland. This led to their dismissal.”
The Mayors at the Hargeisa meeting were uplifted by the success achieved in Berbera. The meeting was closed with comments from the Vice-Minister, Ministry of Interior, who urged the Mayors to start adhering to the Employment Regulations with a Ministerial Decree, enforcing the regulations, likely to be issued later in 2015.

The Vice-President of Somaliland, Abdirahman Abdilahi Ismail, honoured the Mayor of Berbera with a Certificate of Appreciation with his commitment to improved service delivery making him a Champion for local governance and decentralized services. The Mayor of Berbera said: “Sustained and strengthened municipal capacity is a prerequisite for the development of any local community. Improved management of district personnel is leading to more local government capacity with a work force that is qualified and motivated to deliver services. The attitude of the citizens towards Berbera administration is improving as they see our personnel working to make progress.”

With the generous support of the European Commission, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and UK Aid, JPLG works closely with local counterparts in promoting improvements in the ability of local governments to provide equitable services to communities. In 2015, JPLG/UNDP continues to work to strengthen district capacity in support of improved public service delivery to citizens in eight districts of Somaliland - Hargeisa, Gabiley, Borama, Berbera, Sheikh, Burao, Odweine and Zaylac. The momentum towards improved systems and processes has led to Employment Regulations being gazetted in Somaliland in 2015, laying the foundations for a professional local government workforce capable of delivering basic services to citizens. JPLG/UNDP continues to create policies, regulations, manuals and guidelines which strengthen capacity and are relevant to all districts in Somaliland.