

# **CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOPS FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING**

## **Outcome Report**

### **March 24 Kick-off Workshop**

On 24 March 2009, the General Secretariat for Development Planning hosted a one-day Outcome-Based Planning (OBP) kick-off event for 100+ senior government officials from the public sector agencies.

The primary goals of the kick-off event were as follows:

1. To introduce senior officials to the principles, purpose and benefits of OBP
  - Building long-term cross-agency capability to be relevant in the future.
  - Cooperating with other organizations to achieve results.
  - Demonstrating the concept of value for money.
2. To provide a heads up for a series of five-day workshops for agency planners in the upcoming workshops.
3. To promote interest among the participants of the workshop in attending the scheduled series of workshops.

#### **The event was successful in meeting its two primary goals:**

- Participants demonstrated a shared understanding of key OBP terms and concepts by using these terms and concepts in their group discussions and report backs.
- Participants in the March workshop exceeded the estimated number and the envisaged demand for the upcoming workshops registration is high .

#### **Key findings regarding current planning practices**

The following three main findings were identified in feedbacks provided through electronic polling and group discussion:

1. Several participants reported that their agencies have strategic plans and annual output plans and that these are being implemented and monitored effectively
2. Several participants reported that their agencies have no plans or are missing either a (i) 3-5 year strategic plans or (ii) annual output plans.
3. Several participants reported that their agencies do not have a senior management team (SMT) that can make formal, strategic decisions about the agency and its business. Other participants reported that while they have a SMT, it does not meet regularly to discuss (i) work progress and challenges, or (ii) the development or implementation of strategic plans or output plans.

#### **Key findings regarding agency challenges in using OBP**

Participants indicated that their top four challenges in agency planning are as follows:

1. Aligning agency priorities with national priorities
2. Turning strategic priorities into a plan for concrete action

3. Focusing staff on completing work that contributes to strategic priorities
4. Lack of agency knowledge, skills, and experience regarding planning.

**Other challenges mentioned included the following:**

- **Uncertainty regarding upcoming changes to agency legislation, role, and mandate** – some participants commented that ministers are currently considering either merging their agency with another or changing their mandate. Under these circumstances, participants noted that OBP should only begin once Higher Authorities have finalized their agency's functions and mandate
- **Financial uncertainty regarding the price of petroleum products** – some participants raised the difficulty of planning in the medium term with an annual input and project-focused budget, rather than one focused on outcomes and outputs
- **Need for better coordination, communication, and leadership among senior managers** – some participants noted the need to strengthen the individual and group performance of their senior management teams and stated that leadership regarding the development and implementation of plans must come from the top of their organizations
- **Inadequate supporting processes**– some of participants noted the need for stronger processes to support the development and implementation of plans in their agencies. The most commonly noted were communications, operational reporting, and staff performance appraisal systems tied to strategic outcomes
- **Lack of continuity** – some participants noted that changes in ministers and turnover of key staff can result in significant disruption when the agency has no written plan to follow during the transition from one Minister to another or one manager to another. They noted that ideally the strategic priorities are rooted in the agency mandate, national priorities, and evidence-based policy decisions – none of which should change considerably in the medium-term

**Next Steps**

- 1- GSDP will be organizing two more workshops in the coming months to work with ministries and agencies on the preparation of the National Development Strategy and helping them prepare their executive plans.
- 2- A follow-up meeting will be conducted with each ministry and agency to provide support for their planning needs.
- 3- In addition, GSDP will explore opportunities for sustainable Capacity Building programs in the future in cooperation with all available capacity building institutions.