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## Governance Reform Program in Nepal : Difficulties in Implementation *Than Bahadur Chhetri*

### 1. Background

The traditional concept of public administration which was responsible only for the maintenance of law and order has been changed into new public management. More emphasis is given to qualitative and prompt service delivery. Now the government has to work on collaboration with private sectors. The challenges have been created by globalization, pressure from citizens for responsive government advancement information technology raising citizens expectation and demands competition from the private sector among other (Atrey, 2000). The paradigmatic shifts show that reform in the public administration has been taken very seriously almost in all the developed and developing countries. Nepal also cannot remain unaffected by this global phenomenon. In Nepal governance reform program has been envisaged as administrative reform and good governance. As a reform process, since 1952 to date five administrative reform commissions were set up. As such Buch commission in 1951, Acharya commission in 1956, Jha commission in 1968, Thapa commission in 1976 and lastly Koirala commission in 1991. But all these reform programs seem to be far from satisfactory due to lack of democratic participation, strong political and bureaucratic commitment, selective implementation of reform program, in adequate allocation of budget in implementing reform process etc. Secondly in Nepal, to achieve good governance the World Bank appointed Jannet tay consultant pvt. ltd., and this consultant submitted its report, in 1997. Since then the government initiated a comprehensive program for governance reforms, entitled "Action Plan on Civil Service Reforms." ([www.ndf.2002.gov.np](http://www.ndf.2002.gov.np)) the <http://www.ndf.2002.gov.np> the government also constituted a High Level Public Expenditure Review Commission in 2002 with the task of reviewing the operations of the government and controlling costs. (Atreya, 2003). The budget for the fiscal year 2001/2002 has included some drastic measure to control the bloated bureaucracy and district offices, commissions and other radiant bureaucratic structures. (Mahat, 2001). Likewise, government had also reduced the number of ministers from 26 to 21 revised civil service and introduced lateral entry at the higher level eliminated various vacant positions and followed the scheme for

downsizing the public service. All these reform efforts prove that reforms in Nepal need further effective actions in improving governance with special emphasis to civil service reform. In this connection for radical improvement in governance, Government Reform Program (GRP) is put forward for implementation which is supported by soft loan of Asian development Bank. This program starts from 2001 and is expected to be completed by the end of 2005. This concessional loan is from the ADB'S special funds resources. The loan will have a maturity of 24 years including a grace period of 1% per annum during the grace period and 1.5% thereafter. ([www.adb.org.documents/news](http://www.adb.org.documents/news))

## 2. Conceptualizing the Theme

UNDP defines 'governance' as the exercise of political economic and administrative authority to manage a nation's affairs. Thus, governance includes the process by which governments are selected, held accountable, monitored and replaced; the capacity of governments to manage resources efficiently resources efficiently and formulate, implement and enforce sound policies and regulations; the respect of citizens and the state for the institution that govern economic and social interactions among them (Upadhaya, 2003). "Reform means a change which is desirable and positive and that has no full stop rather continues as an endless cycle" (Gawali, 1998). Program means a plan. Hence GRP is a comprehensive policy or a plan of restructuring the governance.

In short almost all the countries must follow reform program to make their public sector clean, transparent, economically competitive and service oriented.

## 3. Objective

The main objective of the GRP is to make the country's civil services and public sector management more result-oriented, job-oriented, service-oriented and people-oriented.

To make public sector management lean and transparent. To fulfill this objective how far the HMG/Nepal has reformed its plan and programs and implemented them for good governance is discussed in the following paragraphs.

In Nepal, the GRP covers the following five distinct areas :

- a. Continuation of reform program and development of internal capacity for leading reform.
- b. Improving over all efficiency in civil Service.
- c. Improving governance and reducing corruption measures.
- d. Enhance the competence and motivation of civil servants.
- e. Establish process for improving performance in key ministries

## 4. Progress of the GRP

The Asian development Bank approved a US \$30 million to Nepal on 27 Nov. 2001. Since then the government has initiated a comprehensive program for governance reforms. Some of the reforms to date are as follows.

- » Four anti-corruption bills have been passed by the Parliament
- » Special court for hearing corruption has been structured
- » Personnel Information System (PIS) in Personnel Record Department (PRD) is prepared.
- » Establishment of change unit in all pilot ministries.
- » System of declaring property assets and income disclosure.
- » PIS of teacher personnel of the govt.
- » Coaching classes for woman to prepare for the entry exam. of public service commission (PSC) in Third Class Officers.
- » Abolishing vacant position.
- » Revised training policy has been promulgated by HMG/N.
- » Preparation of report on enhancing competence motivation and tourism have been turned into autonomous.
- » Freedom of information bill has been drafted.
- » Reviewing the current VERS
- » Drafting anti- money laundering act.

## 5. Difficulties in Implementation;

The progress of GRP is slow because of malfunctioning of democracy, insecurity in many parts of the country, dissolution of parliament and elected bodies since the last two years. The civil servants are also guided by political parties or suppressed from them. In such a wounded nation it is difficult to implement GRP as well as painful for adjustment.

While reviewing the last thirteen years of multiparty system in Nepal , the political parties have not been able to work in accordance with the norms the politicians had already set. Most of them are motivated to personal aggrandizement. The leaders lack vision and direction to govern the nation but developed a culture of opposition for opposition. Breach of law, compelled the constitution defunct and his majesty king got opportunity to sack the elected P. M. S.B. Deuba's government on 24 Oct. 2002, since 1990 the nation had experienced thirteen prime ministers within a short span of time but no body could administer for full duration. The mother of all these problems goes to political instability. It enforced frequent changes in government, which has caused to weak administration, increase corruption and leakages which undermined the effective implementation of reform programs. Dissolution and termination of all the elected bodies both at the center and local level also impede effective implementation. The legislative organ of the country is defunct, judiciary too became under severe criticism by giving various wanted and unwanted decisions, financial give and take etc. The fifth organ of the democratic system is also not functioning as it is expected in democracy. These four pillars of the nation-state are ineffective. In such state of affairs people are in confusion not knowing who is actually ruling and controlling the country. The rebels have paralyzed the govt. both at the center and local levels. The unprincipled

parliamentary political parties have been on the street for more than one year demanding various demands. The bureaucrats had nothing to do except watching such thing and waiting for the time to go home at the end of the day.

The prolonged national crisis and the deadlock in peace truce talk with the rebels further deteriorates the maintenance of law and order. The reports of casualty of security personnel and common people, looting banks, setting fires and bombing in personal houses, industries, damaging development infrastructure, needless national strikes become a common feature, human survival has become a dream. As a result security expenses are shooting up, revenues tumbling down, nation's economy is pushing down the hill etc. have raised social political uncertainty. In such a situation, government's law enforcement and performance capability have weakened. On the other hand, Nepalese administrative management is also criticized on the ground of non-excellence work culture, non-responsibility, unaccountability and non-availability when they are needed. The political leaders made them groupism on partisan basis to meet their political ends. Such a weak filthy culture GRP implementation blocked by internal and external interest. Frequent transfer of government officials working in reform commission coordination has lowered the morale of the employees. There is poor communication and co-ordination among the executing agencies. There are no fulltime staff in change units, this also impedes effective implementation of proposed reforms.

The GRP focused more at the management structure and process only at the centre of government that is inadequate to lead and support the reform effort. The orientation program of GRP for the parliamentarians in generating enabling reform could not be achieved because of dissolution of parliament (Thapa)

The road map of GRP is wholly prepared by donor agencies. But reform models of developed countries are incompatible in the developing countries like Nepal.

In addition, a few other factors are the GRP is a aid tying by donors. The donors imposed 31 tranche conditions that Nepal have to fulfilled these.

### Suggestions

Despite the above short-comings, the following are some of the options to remedy these malaises.

Frequent changes in government hamper to carry out development activities and implementation of reform program. Hence peace and stable government is the most necessary condition. In a developing country like Nepal where poly communal societies and political parties are sharply divided according to their vested interest, a conditional democracy would be appropriate for stability. So that political leaders can carry out people's mandate.

Our reform agenda encompasses wider issues of economy and governance, so there must be continuous co-ordination and communication with GRP units and other ministers. Regular monitor and follow up program system should co-exist.

Application of new public management (NPM) in Nepalese administration can

also contribute in implementing reform program.

Need to develop effective democratic parliamentary culture and quality representative in the legislature is essential in Nepalese political system.

Prompt changes in attitude and behavior of political leaders and civil servants are needed to correct the piling of past mistakes.

Strengthening responsiveness and accountability of public agencies to the public as well as anti corruption institution to translate rule governance to goal governance.

In sum, to materialize the concept of GRP needs high levels of sustainable internal and external support from both political leaders and bureaucrats. Cooperation and coordination among different ministers and GRCU is also indispensable. Sound functioning of political system, visionary leaders as well as peace and stable government what is most essential for the nation.

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