

# **DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAM FOR THE GRADUATE MANAGEMENT TRAINEES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA - THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND PLANNING**

## **1. SITUATION ANALYSIS**

After Independence, successive Governments assisted by an effective public administration were able to achieve impressive gains which were reflected through social indicators. However, the changes in the job market, migration, other significant changes in public administration, the civil war in the North and East and abolition of the Public Service Commission mechanism, lead to incremental increasing politicization, patronage and fragmentation in administration which resulted in an overall decline in civil service standards, capacity and work ethos. There have been a number of efforts to reform and motivate the public administration and improve the service delivery quality. Yet the process of restoring the efficiency and effectiveness of the public service is a major task ahead and will take several years of dedicated and strategic efforts.

Recently the Government of Sri Lanka initiated a scheme to hire fresh graduates as interns under a program with the objectives of satisfying the human resource needs in the public service and also as a strategic move to address the unemployment related issues among the qualified youth of the country. However these fresh graduates need a systematic public sector orientation to develop their understanding of development issues, government systems and necessary skills for them to be productive in the public sector. As their capacity needs to be enhanced while they attend to their daily work, a non class room approach for capacity development of these graduates is needed.

After a request from the Ministry of Finance and Planning (M/F & P) for support, UNDP agreed to support a distance learning programme targeting graduates recently recruited by the Government under the employment of unemployed graduates scheme as well as under the normal recruitment procedures of the various ministries and departments.

The present proposal contains a capacity development package designed with trainees from the M/F & P as the primary target group. The training program is expected to lead to a postgraduate diploma from a recognized University of Sri Lanka. The curriculum of study seeks to provide transversal knowledge that would equip recently recruited graduates to handle assignments with a higher degree of competence, perhaps after a short orientation on location specific responsibilities. The proposed program takes into account the time constraints faced by public servants in attending scheduled classroom sessions and also offers an IT based educational mechanism.

This programme will serve as a pilot for a training programme that, if successful, should eventually be institutionalized within the public service and rolled out across other Ministries and government bodies, both nationally and at the regional and local levels. The Ministry of Finance hopes that future roll-out could also be supported by the expected creation of a Human Resources fund by the Government of Sri Lanka.

## 2. THE STRATEGY

The project will undertake to support the capacity development of approximately 150 graduates to be nominated by the Ministry of Finance based on a set of transparent selection criteria agreed by the Project Board at the beginning of the project. The selection criteria will ensure that candidates are chosen on merit, taking into account the need to ensure a level of balance across the Ministry and across functions. Efforts will also be made to ensure that women are encouraged to register. For this pilot phase, the course will only be open only to those graduates that do not already have a Post Graduate qualification.

The Planning Services Board of the Ministry of Finance, in one of its regular meetings while discussing the issue of the capacity development of the Graduate trainees, gave preference to the distance learning mode for this pilot. They also recommended that the Post Graduate Institute of Management (PIM) of the University of Sri Jayawardanepura (SJU) under the University Grants Commission and the Ministry of Higher Education of Sri Lanka take up this programme. After consultations between UNDP and the Ministry of Finance, it was decided to make the University an implementing partner in this project. The letter from ERD to UNDP outlining the reasons for this decision is provided in Annex 1. Hence the training program will be delivered essentially through a distance learning mode, employing blended learning methods and include the Post Graduate Institute of Management (PIM) of the University of Sri Jayawardanepura (SJU) as a partner for implementation.

The subject and skill areas have been selected on the basis of a needs-assessment of transversal knowledge required in an executive position in the public service. The assessment was supported by UNDP and carried out by the Ministry of Finance and Planning in conjunction with the World View Institute and the Post Graduate Institute of Management (PIM) of the University of Sri Jayawardanepura (SJU) in 2006.

The concepts to be covered and the methods and techniques introduced in the programme will equip participants not only to understand the relevant issues in sufficient depth, within the context of the government's development perspective, but also to suggest alternative methods of resolving them. Therefore, the introduction of theory will be tailored to meet practical requirements. Subjects such as Concepts of Development, Role of the Public Service and Basic Principles of Management, it is hoped that this will provide the conceptual framework and the motivation for effective and efficient public service delivery at various points of the system.

The training curriculum of this programme will include the following subjects based on the individual as well as the institutional training needs analysis. The programme has also been designed looking at similar programmes in other countries.

The identified and agreed subject areas will be;

- Concepts of Development
- Macro-economic Framework
- The Role of the Public Service in national development
- National Development Planning : Principles and Practices
- Sectoral Planning: Principles and methods
- Issues of Development : Gender, Environment, Poverty and their incorporation into Macro, Sectoral and Project Plans

- The Budget and the Public Expenditure Program
- The Management Process:
  - Managing Organisations
  - Managing People and Performance
  - Management Information Systems
- Project Development and Management
  - Project Preparation
  - Project Appraisal
  - Project Monitoring and Post-evaluation
- Laws Relating to Public Administration
- Ethics in public sector
- Supplementary Skills :
  - Communication and English
  - IT (data analysis and information sharing methods)

The traditional classroom system, based on scheduled lectures at regular periods is found to be unsuitable for these graduates and therefore distance learning is the chosen modality. Though many local universities and academic institutes are used to the distance learning mode, the e-based learning methodology is still relatively new in Sri Lanka. This delivery method has proved to be productive in other SAARC countries such as India and Malaysia.

While the students do not need to attend fixed time lectures, the success of this methodology the fullest commitment of the participants and of their respective departmental supervisors are essential. While the students do not have to attend fixed lecture times, the time required for personal study is still significant and is vital for the evaluation of the participant.

### **3. Delivery Methodology**

#### **3.1 Course Modules**

What is proposed therefore is to replace the lectures with learning modules, providing “capsuled knowledge” in an easy to absorb manner. What a lecturer normally does in a class room lecture mode is to introduce the subject matter, draw the boundaries of learning, emphasize the most important aspects that needs to be covered, refer to the best learning material(s) or training materials (books, journals, documents and websites) and in the best instance provide some printed notes on the subject matter to be covered.

But the course modules delivered in a distance education system provides almost all the material that needs to be covered with guidelines for study, review questions and exercises. They will be uploaded on to the website for either on- line or off-line learning. The material will also be available in a printable form. In addition to the course specific material, a number of additional selected resources for stimulation will be made available on different subjects / issues.

#### **3.2 Interactive CDs**

Web uploaded modules (printed, where necessary) will be supplemented with interactive CDs that will contain texts, graphics, diagrams and exercises supported by

voice delivery. The interactive CD becomes a better teaching/ learning aid as the teacher/ lecturer is always felt to be “present””, and the CDs will enable students to study at home or in places where they do not always have an internet connection provided that they have a computer of their own.

### **3.3 Group Learning**

Groups of 20 – 25 participants are expected to meet fortnightly for sessions lasting approximately two hours each, to interact with each other on the course modules, to raise questions, receive answers from peers or make observations and comments on the subject matter based on their personal experiences and background of knowledge.

A facilitator will guide the group learning sessions. All facilitators will be given an orientation on the tasks they have to perform through workshops. Where deemed necessary this will be attended by the module writers themselves. Facilitators will be selected through a process recommended by the Advisory Committee and agreed by the Project Board.

### **3.4 Web-Forum**

The web-forum will help interaction among the groups - raise questions, provide answers and comments, and will be guided by a Forum Manager who will refer questions where necessary, to the module writers for their observations. It is the task of the forum manager to stimulate group interaction.

In expensive e-learning courses, facilities are provided for individual interaction with teachers and supervisors. Given the large number of participants, it will not be possible to arrange individual one-to-one interaction with the module writers; however, this will not be discouraged, whenever feasible.

There shall be a compulsory reading and consultation log where the participants will log in all readings and consultations done. This will be submitted to the academic supervisor who will comment and evaluate the performance of the participant.

Participation in the group learning and the web-forums will be monitored by the Post Graduate Institute of Management (PIM) and reported to the Human Resource Development Unit of the Ministry of Finance and Planning. This information will help inform the government on what mediums are most useful and valued – and therefore worth considering for a roll-out of the pilot.

### **3.5 Course Duration**

The total duration of the course of training is 18 months. This includes a month for revision and another month for exam and assessment. Each participant is expected to spend a minimum of 54 hours on each module. This will be a requirement for the evaluation of the participant.

The 54 hour spread of the course shall be divided as follows;

Self-learning	-	40 Hrs
Group Learning	-	4 Hrs
Pre-exam Revision	-	6 Hrs
Web Surfing	-	4 Hrs

### **3.6 Learning Management System**

The learning management system will have the following components;

1. Student database
2. Content Delivery
3. Web Forum
4. Continuous Assessment
5. e-Journal
6. Mentoring Forum

The student database will contain academic and employment related information regarding all the registered students, including the record of their attendance at group learning sessions. The system will be maintained by Post Graduate Institute of Management (PIM), but the Human Resource Development Unit of the Ministry of Finance and Planning will have ultimate responsibility for ensuring that data is regularly updated and provided to the Advisory Committee.

Content delivery relates to the uploading of learning material and other needed course aids and resources. The Advisory committee to the project board will be responsible for advising on the contents and the curricula.

The web forum is expected to stimulate inter-group discussions.

Continuous assessment is a system, through Multiple Choice of Questions (MCQs) and other exercises where participants will be able to assess their absorption of knowledge.

The e-journal will provide news and information on conferences, government decisions and policies, implementation reports and international events etc. which have a bearing on the subjects that are being studied by the participants. A compulsory electronic journal will be introduced and this shall serve as the space for future reference of all assignments submitted by the participants of the course.

The mentoring forum is where a volunteer senior public servant or a private sector personal or a civil society personal will be made available through the internet platform in order to provide an opportunity for the participants to interact and discuss issues or to get additional help on course assignments and so on. The role and the commitment of the Advisory committee will also be reflected here.

### **3.7 Examinations**

The final examination will be held on the 18<sup>th</sup> month of training.

The question papers will be set, answer scripts corrected and grades allocated by the Post Graduate Institute of Management (PIM) of Sri Lanka. Those who meet with the requirements will be awarded the certificate of 'Postgraduate Diploma'. The examination will also include a practical research report from the participant as a partial fulfillment of the course on any desired problem that the participant has faced in his / her job and how they had been able to overcome them by the knowledge gained during the course. The immediate supervisors of the participant may also act as the supervisor for this part and the Post Graduate Institute of Management will facilitate this by allocating academic supervisors for this purpose.

#### 4. PROJECT RESULTS AND RESOURCES FRAMEWORK

<b>Intended Outcome as stated in the Country/ Regional/ Global Programme Results and Resource Framework:</b>				
<b>Outcome indicators as stated in the Country/ Regional/ Global Programme Results and Resources Framework, including baseline and targets.</b>				
<b>Applicable MYFF Service Line:</b>				
<b>Partnership Strategy</b> UNDP will partner with the Ministry of Finance and Planning and the Post Graduate institute of Management (PIM) of the University of Sri Jayawardanepura, of Sri Lankan, as the implementing partner.				
<b>Project title and ID (ATLAS Award ID): Graduate Training Programme</b>				
Intended Outputs	Output Targets for one and a half years	Indicative Activities	Responsible parties	Inputs (USD)
1. 150 graduates from the Ministry of Finance and Planning becoming well equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to perform their duties effectively and efficiently	1.1 Preparation and curriculum development for the training modules	1.1.1 Establishing an Advisory Committee 1.1.2 Development of guidelines 1.1.3 Commissioning of subject specialists 1.1.4 Content and language editing 1.1.5 Computerizing text and graphics 1.1.6 Acceptance of the materials	Ministry of Finance and Planning  The PIM  The PIM  The PIM  The PIM  The Advisory Committee; Project board and the	44,650

		1.1.7 Uploading on Ministry web site	Ministry of finance and Planning The PIM	
		1.1.8 Production of interactive CD and copies	The PIM	
	1.2 . Selection and registration of students	1.2.1 Selection Criteria Agreed	The Advisory Committee; Project Board and the Ministry of finance and Planning	8,050
		1.2.2 Registration of students	The PIM	
	1.3 Delivery of programme	1.3.1 Facilitation of GI activities	The PIM	
		1.3.2 Selection of Forum Manager and role ascertained and the remuneration	Advisory Committee, Project board, Ministry of Finance and Planning	
		1.3.3 E learning management system	Ministry of Finance and Planning and the PIM	
		1.3.4 Selection and payments of Director	Advisory Committee, Project Board, Ministry of Finance and Planning	
				60,965

	1.4 Assessment of programme	1.4.1 Examination	Advisory Committee, Project Board, Ministry of Finance and Planning	6,700
	1.5 Certification	1.5.1 Cost of accreditation	and the PIM Ministry of Finance and Planning	2,860
	1.6 ICT / contingency and administration expenditures		Ministry of Finance and Planning	36,490
	1.7 Pilot Monitoring and Roll-Out Preparations (support to an Advisory Committee (AC))	1.7.1 Regular meetings of AC	Ministry of Finance and Planning	15,000
		1.7.2 Secretariat to AC	Ministry of Finance and Planning	
		1.7.3 Lessons learned and reports for the AC	Ministry of Finance and Planning	
	1.8 Evaluation		UNDP	4,465



## 5. Annual Work Plan Budget Sheet

Year 2008 - 2009

EXPECTED OUTPUTS and indicators including annual targets	PLANNED ACTIVITIES <i>List all activities including M&amp;E to be undertaken during the year towards stated CP outputs</i>	TIMEFRAME						RESPONSIBLE PARTY	PLANNED BUDGET		
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6		Source of Funds	Budget Description	Amount
1.1 Preparation of training modules	1.1.1 Establishment of an Advisory Committee	X						Ministry Of Finance in consultation with Project Board			0
	1.1.2 Development of guidelines	x						PIM			3,570
	1.1.3 Commissioning of subject specialists	x						PIM			7,150
	1.1.4 Content and language editing	x						PIM			1,160
	1.1.5 Computerizing text and graphics	x						PIM			1,250
	1.1.6 Acceptance of the training materials	x						Advisory Committee, Project board, Ministry of finance and planning			0
	1.1.7 Uploading on Ministry web site	x						Ministry of Finance and Planning and PIM			1,160
	1.1.8 Production of interactive CD and copies	x						PIM			30,360

1.2 Selection and registration of students	1.2.1 Selection Criteria Agreed	x						Ministry of Finance and Planning and PIM			8,050
	1.2.2 Selection and registration of students										
1.3 Delivery of programme	1.3.1 Facilitation of GI activities		x	x	x	x	x	PIM			9,845
	1.3.2 Forum Manager		x	x	x	x	x	PIM/MOFP & UNDP			16,275
	1.3.3 E learning management system		x	x	x	x	x	PIM			9,845
	1.3.4 Director, Distance Learning	x	x	x	x	x	x	PIM/MOFP & UNDP			25,000
1.4 Assessment of Programme	1.4.1 Examination						x	PIM			6,700
1.5 Certification	1.5.1 Cost of accreditation						x	PIM			2,860
1.6 ICT Support and Admin	ICT/ Administration Expenditures							Ministry of Finance and Planning			36,490
1.7 Pilot Roll- Out Preparations	1.7.1 Secretariat for Advisory Committee, and regular reporting to Committee	x	x	x	x	x	x	Ministry of Finance and Planning			8,700
	1.7.2 Conducting and coordinating meetings										1,100
	1.7.3 Validation and Publication of the lessons learned.										5,200
1.8 Evaluation	Programme						x	UNDP			4,465
<b>TOTAL</b>											<b>179,180</b>

## 6. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

This project is designed to be a Nationally Executed Project of UNDP in partnership with the Administration Division of the Ministry of Finance and Planning as the main implementing partner, and the Post Graduate Institute of Management (PIM) of Sri Jayawardanapura University as an additional/other implementing partner.

### The Project Board:

In accordance with UNDP prescriptive content on results-based management, the Project Board will provide the necessary directions to the project management, and will be responsible for making decisions on project implementation. The Project Board will meet at key stages in the project, for example, to agree the selection criteria for the students and to assess the course implementation after the first module has been completed etc. Aside from designated meeting times, the Project Board will manage by exception – i.e. only being called if the project becomes off track in terms of budget or delivery time (exceeding tolerance limits to be agreed in the first Project Board meeting)

The Project Board contains three generic roles each responsible for specific functions. These roles can be filled by one or more person/groups depending on complexity and size of a project. They are:

- The Executive role

The Additional Secretary (Administration) Ministry of Finance and Planning or his / her nominee will function as the National Project Director (NPD), representing the project ownership to chair the group.

- The Supplier role

This role is to provide guidance regarding the technical feasibility of the project and will be represented by the UNDP ARR/ Programme;

- The Beneficiary role

This role is to ensure the realization of project benefits from the perspective of the project beneficiaries. This role will be represented by the Director of Human Resources or Career Management in the Ministry of Finance and Planning. In addition a representative of the Ministry of Public Administration and Home Affairs will be invited to join the Board membership in the role of an additional beneficiary.

Since a large part of the work is to be outsourced to a University, it is not envisaged that the project will require any additional project staff (except for a part time assistant to support the Advisory Committee – see below).

However on understanding the technical nature of the project, it is agreed that the project will support the position of a Forum Manager and a Distance Learning Director. The TORs for the position are attached as annexes to the project document. The PIM has identified an expert for

the Director post with both high academic qualifications and knowledge of distance learning courses. *The ERD has endorsed their recommendation to recruit on a sole source basis and a justification letter has been provided to UNDP.* The selection and recruitment of Forum Manager positions are according to the accepted standard procedures.

### Advisory Committee

The Ministry of Finance and Planning, on the advice and guidance of the Project Board and the support of the Human Resources Development Unit of the Ministry will establish an Advisory Committee.

The principal roles of the Advisory Committee will be to provide advice to the Project Board and to monitor this pilot phase of the project, with a view to providing policy recommendations for later roll-out. The Advisory Committee will therefore:

- a) Advise on the process of selection
- b) Advise on the curriculum
- c) Review the implementation of the program by the PIM
- d) Propose and support guidelines in monitoring
- e) Propose and support on the evolution of the program
- f) Review the lessons learned from the program
- g) Review the curriculum, contents and the delivery methodology if needed
- h) And ensure the continuity of the programme if felt needed and adoptable – drafting of policy recommendations.

The members of the Advisory committee will be decided by the Project Board. Some suggested members are:

- a) A representative from the Ministry of Finance and Planning
- b) A representative from the Ministry of Public Administration and Home Affairs (perhaps the Human Resources Director)
- c) A member from the Human Resources development Unit of the Ministry of Finance and planning
- d) A member from the Department of National Planning (NPD)
- e) A member from the Post graduate institute of management (PIM)
- f) A member from the Sri Lanka institute of Development Administration (SLIDA)
- g) A member from the Open University of Sri Lanka
- h) A member for Project Assurance from the UNDP

It is suggested that the Advisory Committee meet quarterly, however this should be flexible depending on need and there may be need for more regular meetings towards the end of the project. A key output from the Advisory Committee should be a paper making policy recommendations for the next stage of the distance learning programme, building on this pilot.

Though a large part of the work is to be outsourced to a University, since it is proposed to have a Advisory Committee created to provide advice to the project, the project budget includes a

provision to support a part time position in the Ministry of Finance. It is envisioned that this post would provide support the Ministry to carry out its secretariat function to the Advisory Committee. In particular the appointee would coordinate the AC meetings, liaise with the members to ensure that they have the required materials and work with the PIM to give advance warning of reports or data that has been requested.

### **Financial Arrangement and Budget**

The Administrative Division of the Ministry of Finance and Planning as the main implementing partner will be responsible for ensuring that the allocated resources are utilized effectively in funding the envisaged activities. It will also maintain records (including receipts) and controls for the purpose of ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the project financial information in line with the signed annual work plan and ensure that disbursements are within the approved budgets and according to the work plan. Upon opening of a dedicated project account in accordance with government regulations, quarterly advance funds will be released in line with the agreed work plan. The Ministry of Finance will be responsible for releasing funds from this advance to the other (implementing) partner, Post Graduate Institute of Management of the University of Sri Jayawardenapura (PIM), who will in turn be accountable to the Administrative Division of the Ministry of Finance. Subsequent quarterly advances are subject to the submission of financial reports by the main implementing partner accounting for prior quarter expenditure.

Funds will also be disbursed on the basis of direct payment requests submitted to UNDP by the main implementing partner for specific inputs such as procurement of equipment, certification and evaluation of the project.

### **Procurement of Goods and Services**

Under the project's national execution arrangement (NEX) Government guidelines for competitive procurement of goods and services (advertising, tender bidding, evaluation, and approval) in line with international standards will apply for all project-related activities.

Upon specific request of the implementing partner UNDP can in line with UNDP procurement policy provide procurement and recruitment services to the implementing partner including:

- a). Identification and recruitment of project and programme personnel
- b). Identification and facilitation of training activities
- c). Procurement of goods and services

As per the letter of agreement between the Government of Sri Lanka and UNDP for the provision of support services signed on 5th July 2002, UNDP shall recover the cost of providing the support services outlined above. The rate of the cost recovery is fixed at 3% on the value of the amount of the contracts of the services to be procured or obtained through UNDP.

## 7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Administration Division of the Ministry of Finance and Planning will be responsible for monitoring the activities of the Post Graduate Institute of Management (PIM) in relation to the project.

It is intended that this programme serve as a pilot for a programme that could be developed and rolled out across the public service in the future. Monitoring, evaluation and the drawing of lessons learned are therefore highly important. For the pilot phase the Ministry of Finance and Planning (Administration Division) will be responsible for this role and will have access to the students' database that is to be set up as part of the programme. The Ministry of Finance and Planning will serve as the Secretariat for the Advisory Committee and as such will be responsible for preparing regular reports on implementation.

In particular, the Ministry will collect and analyse data on:

- Whether all students that register complete the full 18 months, or is there a high drop out?
- Whether the students that enroll in the programme experience faster career progression, or receive better than average work appraisals after the course, or during it?
- Whether the students complete the course and stay with the Ministry or leave for jobs elsewhere and whether these jobs are in government or outside.

Some of this data will only be available after the completion of this specific course and programme. It will therefore be important for the Ministry to make a long term commitment to monitoring and reporting the impact of the training.

The Ministry should also collect observations and comments from the supervisor of each participant to assess the usage of the knowledge gained by the participant on their job.

The Project Board will outline the required frequency of reporting and the exact information that is required, in close consultation with the Government body usually responsible for human resource management across the civil service.