Introducing the Awards
The United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA) recognises excellence in public service and rewards the creative achievements and contributions of public service institutions that have led to more effective and responsive public administrations worldwide. The UNPSA are awarded annually on 23 June, which was designated by the General Assembly as the United Nations Public Service Day to ‘celebrate the value and virtue of service to the community’.

In 2011, the new UNPSA category ‘Preventing and Combating Corruption in Public Service’ (Category 1) was established by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, through its Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM/UNDESA), in partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The United Nations Convention against Corruption (2004) states that corruption hurts the poor disproportionately by diverting funds intended for development, undermining a government’s ability to provide basic services, and discouraging foreign aid and investment.

This article features three winning projects from Commonwealth member countries – from Category 1 – Preventing and Combating Corruption in the Public Service; from Category 2 – Improving Delivery in Public Services; and from Category 4 – Advancing Knowledge Management in Government.

Other winning initiatives included:

• Promoting accountability for procurement of public projects through the Contractors Registration System (Building and Construction Authority, Singapore).

• Helping to empower litigants-in-persons of lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Subordinate Courts of Singapore).

• Use of information and communication technology (ICT) for improving service delivery in passport systems (Director General of Immigration and Emigration, Rwanda; Immigration and Passport Department, Grenada).

• Public service drives by the Aarogyam (District Health Authority, India).

In Category 3 – Helping to Foster Participation in Public Policy Decisions through Innovative Mechanisms – the following achievements were recognised:

• South Australia’s Strategic Plan Community Engagement (Department of Premier and Cabinet, Australia).

• Metro Vancouver’s Public Outreach and Engagement Program (Metro Vancouver, Canada).

Category 5 – Promoting Gender-Responsive Delivery of Public Services – included the following winning initiatives:

• ‘Protecting the Futures’, an initiative of the Small Projects Foundation Africa, that addresses school drop-out, puberty education and reproductive health among adolescents (South Africa).

• Isange One Stop Centre for victims of sexual and gender-based violence (Rwandan National Police Force).

• Integrating gender in the sector and addressing gender gaps (Ministry of Water and Irrigation, Kenya).

For further details on these, the initiatives featured below, and other winners, see: www.unpan.org/unpsa.

Independent Commission Against Corruption, Mauritius
(Africa 1st Place Winner, Category 1 – Preventing and Combating Corruption in Public Service)

The Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) was established under the Prevention of Corruption Act in 2002 to fight corruption in Mauritius. It is mandated to:

• Educate the public against the dangers of corruption.

• Conduct investigation on complaints of corruption.

• Exercise vigilance and superintendence on integrity systems.

For the purpose of the Award, two public sector organisations, namely the Civil Status Division (CSD) and the Mauritius Police Force (MPF), have been chosen to reflect the implementation of the Public Sector Anti-Corruption Framework (PSACF). The CSD is responsible for vital registration (of births, deaths, marriages) and issue of civil status certificates, while the MPF is responsible for, among other things, law enforcement with respect to road traffic offences. Complaints of alleged corruption received at the ICAC regularly involve public officials of the CSD and MPF, among others.

Problem
The recurrent corruption opportunities prevailing at these institutions are:
High autonomy and demands from the public leading to bribery for prompt certificate delivery and the celebration of marriages. Furthermore, there is screening of offenders from punishment with respect to road traffic offences.

Abuse of office for gratification to celebrate marriage of minors less than 16 years (which is illegal in Mauritius). Bribery in the issue of contraventions due to high discretionary power of officers.

Favouritism in posting personnel to offices where registration of marriage between foreigners is high.

Misuse of position in regional offices due to unlimited autonomy and discretion of officers in the exercise of their functions.

Absence of a comprehensive database on contraventions leading to bribery in the processing of contraventions.

Due to limited resources coupled with pressing demands for system reviews from public bodies, the need was felt for a self-administered, holistic and proactive tool to detect and prevent corrupt practices in these public sector organisations.

**Solution**

Many requests from organisations to build a corruption-prevention infrastructure were received. Enquiries also revealed numerous areas for intervention. Hence, a tool had to be developed to empower public bodies to take up ownership of building corruption resistance in their organisations; the aim being to create the necessary capacity for public bodies to develop, implement, lead and sustain their own anti-corruption initiatives in their respective organisations.

The achievement recognised by the Award is the integration of the PSACF at the CSD and the MPF in the year 2010. Top management of both organisations signed an Anti-Corruption Commitment to implement the PSACF through which corruption prevention is now thoroughly incorporated in the organisational structures and processes, as well as in the behaviours of the employees, so that genuine and sustainable action against corruption is achieved.

The conceptualisation and design of the PSACF manual mobilised most personnel of the ICAC’s Corruption Prevention and Education division. In-house expertise was crucial for the development of the elements included in the PSACF. It took around a year to formalise the framework. Furthermore, by using internal resources, the ICAC avoided the financial costs of outsourcing to any consultant, and made effective and efficient use of the experiences and corruption prevention skills of its staff.

The initiative is being driven by an anti-corruption committee (ACC) set up at the level of the public body. The ACC is responsible for, among other things:

- Formulation of an anti-corruption policy (ACP).
- Development of a corruption prevention plan.
- Development and implementation of an integrated corruption risk-management (CRM) plan.
- Overseeing and co-ordinating implementation of corruption prevention strategies.
- Implementation of the recommendations proposed by the ICAC in CPRs.
- Building and sustaining an ethical culture to promote integrity of staff within the organisation.
- Reporting achievements through the Chief Executive of the Ministry/Department to the Director-General of the ICAC twice yearly.

**Challenges and lessons learned**

Although the PSACF manual contains invaluable information and materials to prevent and combat corruption in an organisation, some difficulties were encountered in the implementation of the PSACF throughout the public sector organisations. These include the lack of expertise and technical know-how on corruption prevention of members of the ACC, as well as inadequate staffing both at the level of the implementing organisations and the ICAC.

The ICAC spearheaded an in-house capacity-building programme for public officers of public bodies, including the CSD and the MPF. The objectives of the programme for capacity-building were to promote a better understanding of the PSACF and empower the public officers with the necessary corruption prevention skills.

The lessons learned are:

- Total involvement of the implementing organisation was requisite. Management commitment was crucial to drive the initiative – without it, implementation of the PSACF would not have been possible.
- It was crucial for the ICAC to set the tone and create a drive to urge public bodies to implement the PSACF.
- Close collaboration with some key ministries, such as the Ministry of Civil Service and the Ministry of Local Government, could have accelerated the application of the PSACF across the public service.

Follow-ups on the recommendations made during Corruption Prevention Reviews are regularly carried out. The salient improvements noted include:

1. Maximum use of computerisation to reduce opportunities for corruption that has enabled immediate delivery of certificates. The MPF is implementing its e-business plan, contravention database and the penalty point system.
2. A rotation policy has been put in place so that every officer is given a fair chance to celebrate marriage between foreigners. Fixed and mobile cameras are being used to reduce opportunities to screen offenders from punishment against gratification.

3. Senior officers are responsible for conduct in regular site visits at regional offices. Supervisory control over the reporting of contraventions has been tightened.

4. A code of conduct for staff has been developed and disseminated to all.

**MP Public Service Delivery Act 2010, Government of Madhya Pradesh, India**

(Asia-Pacific 2nd Place Winner, Category 2 – Improving the Delivery of Public Services)

The three essential aspects emphasised in good governance are transparency, accountability and responsiveness of the administration. Citizens’ charters are an effort to address these issues by focusing on solving the problems that citizens encounter when dealing with the organisations providing public services. This initiative has put legal power behind the citizen charter by granting legal right to the citizen to obtain notification within the stipulated time.

This initiative is a major paradigm shift in the policy regime, from a citizen charter (which had merely declarative force in identifying rights-based delivery as a policy goal) to rights that are actionable on the ground.

**Provisions**

The Madhya Pradesh Guarantee of Public Service Delivery Act was passed in August 2010 and implemented from 25th September 2010. This landmark legislation provides:

- Statutory justifiable rights to the eligible citizen to obtain notified services within the stipulated time frame. The designated officers are legally duty bound to provide the service to the entitled applicant.
- A two-tier grievance redressal mechanism in place (in the form of a first and second appeal) for when a designated officer fails to provide a service.
- Imposition of penalties on errant officials and compensation offered to the aggrieved applicant who may have been wrongfully denied a service. To implement this part of the Act, it is now mandatory that every applicant gets a receipt when they apply for a particular service, indicating the date by which the service will be delivered. In cases where the service is not provided by the date stated, a redressal mechanism may be set in motion.

**Resourcing and results**

1. The existing resources and manpower available within the government were used by the respective departments in delivering the services – this was done through reorientation, a redesign of processes and training.

2. Some additional financial resources were used by various departments for upgrading their ICT, for the design of training material and modules, and for the delivery of a training and awareness generation campaign.

3. Around 20,000 officers from the existing staff were designated to provide the services. These officers were given training by various departments.

4. Around 1500 computers were purchased from the existing budget and were deployed for delivery of services.

Following the Madhya Pradesh example, 11 other states in India – namely Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab and Karnataka – have also enacted similar laws that provide their populace with the right to public services. That the groundbreaking initiative of Madhya Pradesh has been successfully implemented by other state governments around the country is evidence of the transferability of the initiative.

**The e-Kasih initiative, Malaysia Prime Minister’s Department**

(Asia-Pacific 1st Place Winner, Category 4 – Advancing Knowledge Management in Government)

e-Kasih was established in October 2007 as a new initiative to improve the effectiveness of poverty eradication implementation programmes. It is a centralised national poverty databank that keeps information related to poverty. The main objective of e-Kasih is to avoid duplication of the aid/programmes provided, and to prevent leakages to the poor and hardcore poor by establishing a central databank that can be accessed and used by all agencies and other related parties involved in poverty eradication programmes at federal and state levels. Thus, all agencies are accessed and referred to in the same repository.

Raising living standards of low income households (LIHs) was one of the National Key Result Areas (NKRAs) announced by the Malaysian Government in 2010. This group, for which the household income is less than RM2,300 (US$750) per month, makes up about 40 per cent of Malaysia’s total population.

In Malaysia, there are several ministries, agencies, NGOs and associations responsible for poverty eradication programmes at federal and state levels. Before e-Kasih was introduced, only a small percentage of agencies had a record of the beneficiaries or recipients of assistances in an automated system, while some of them are still doing everything by hand. There was no integration or consolidation among them, which resulted in multiple sets
of data. For example, an individual could apply for assistance from many different agencies, each of which did not know what assistance had already been given to that individual. There was a high risk of overlapping of assistance, as well as potential problems with integrity and consistency issues. In addition, no progress monitoring of an individual was carried out after the assistance was given; for example, whether he or she had fallen back into poverty or even survived.

As of November 2011, there were more than 350,000 heads of household and more than 1.2 million household members registered with and verified by e-Kasih.

A user requirement workshop was held to find out the users’ needs and to get feedback. This workshop was attended by key users from all the main ministries and agencies involved in the country’s poverty eradication programmes. After the workshop, the system requirements were finalised and properly documented. Business Process Reengineering was also conducted to study the workflow and the process of aid distribution at ministries and agencies before the system was developed. A series of roadshows were then conducted in collaboration with the system owner, People Welfare Division (BSR), and the application developers. These roadshows were targeted to potential e-Kasih users at federal and state levels, with the aim of explaining the basic concept of e-Kasih. They also helped to gather comments and feedback from these stakeholders.

e-Kasih was developed in-house, using internal resources and without system developments cost. The time taken to develop it was five months. The team of six includes one project manager and five system developers. The cost for development was only for the infrastructure – such as Web Front End Server, Application Server, Database Server, software licence, storage, communication peripherals and maintenance – cost about RM7 million ($2.3 million). The server is located at the Implementation Coordination Unit (ICU), in the prime minister’s department, and is accessed by 3,900 users from 264 agencies throughout the country. An ICU team led the development work, with the help of a Microsoft Consultant Services (MCS) technical adviser.

The data collection was carried out by the Department of Statistics (DOS) in the initial stages. The DOS was involved since it is the government department entrusted with the responsibility of collecting, interpreting and disseminating the latest statistics in their monitoring of national economic performance and social development. A total of RM6 million ($2 million) was allocated to the DOS in order to conduct a poverty census across the region. Over 330 part-time enumerators were hired and trained by the DOS and deployed nationwide.

A project manager for each district of the 14 states was appointed from among the poor and hardcore poor. The managers help in the implementation process and in the user training. They also try to resolve issues and act as a single point of contact for e-Kasih in their respective districts.

Challenges and lessons learned

The biggest challenge was allowing for components to be upgraded and application systems enhanced while continuing to process data on daily basis. Fortunately, e-Kasih was designed using three-tier architecture that is flexible and robust. It can easily be expanded to accommodate large volumes of data and an increase in user numbers, with minimal changes to the system. Information captured can also be broadened to cover a wider range of information related to LIH, such as criteria and measurements for LIH.

The second obstacle was the frequent change in policy and procedure in the implementation process flow. Changes in development policy will normally have a direct impact on e-Kasih in terms of the processes as well as the application system itself. Thus, e-Kasih needs to be dynamic and constantly realign its strategies and directions. As the number and diversity of programmes/projects increases, the techniques of monitoring aid distribution also need to be improved in order to address new challenges and demands. To accommodate these demands, some policies or procedures may also need to be changed. Reflecting these considerations, a permanent team has been set up at ICU to operate, maintain and study the impact of any policy changes to e-Kasih.

The third obstacle was network infrastructure. The availability of a reliable and high-performance communication network throughout Malaysia was critical to the successful implementation of e-Kasih. This was especially true for rural and remote areas where the accessibility and connectivity of the network was unstable and unreliable due to geographical limitations. The government has recently approved the implementation of the National Broadband Project, which focuses on upgrading the network infrastructure and bandwidth nationwide. While waiting for the National Broadband Project to take off, ICU has also initiated its own network-upgrading exercise in collaboration with the Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU). Network bandwidth for e-Kasih sites across the nation has been upgraded from 64 kbps to a minimum of 256 kbps.

The final obstacles included the high turnover rate among officers involved in e-Kasih implementation. The main reasons for this included promotion, relocation and retirement. Some ministries and agencies have backup officers to take over or carry out duties in the event of a responsible officer becoming unavailable. Continuous change management and training programmes need also to be carried out to ensure continuity. Another approach adopted was the ‘Training for Trainer’ concept. By doing so,
the trainers can act as first level support within the ministries or agencies.

One lesson learned concerns the involvement of local leaders. In the initial stage, local leaders were missed out during the census, and realising that their involvement was essential for obtaining accurate data, the next round of data collection will include local leaders.

Appropriate and continuous training was another essential component that makes the initiative a success. Trained users are more likely to carry out their role successfully than those who do not have adequate training. Training was provided on a scheduled basis and can also be arranged upon request. Workstations have also been set up whereby users can have walk-in training if required.

The Social Safety Net was another positive for e-Kasih participants. They are given a Smart Card with special privileges, including discounts for basic needs such as rice, sugar, flour, cooking oil etc. They are also eligible for special discounts for basic infrastructure, such as housing rentals and purchasing, electricity, water, public transportation etc, and their children are able to get special assistance for education, including uniforms, transport and tuition. Having proven its benefits, with some local customisation, e-Kasih can be replicated in other countries that have a similar government structure to Malaysia. This is really a Malaysian product that can be marketed to the outside world.

For further detail and full contact information on these and other projects, see www.unpan.org/unpsa