



# INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

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Interviewee: Jairo Acuña-Alfaro

Interviewer: David Hausman

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HAUSMAN: This is David Hausman and I'm here with Jairo Acuna-Alfaro on August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2009, Mr. Acuna have you agreed to this interview?

ACUNA: Yes I have.

HAUSMAN: Well thank you so much. I'd like to start by asking you a bit about your background and how you came to work at the UNDP (United Nations Development Program) and what you do here.

ACUNA: *Well, I used to work with the UNDP in my home country in Costa Rica from 1995 to 1999 on democratic governance issues. Then I moved to the World Bank in Washington, DC from 2001 to 2004 and worked on governance and anticorruption at the World Bank Institute. Then I moved on to Oxford to do my Ph.D. in political economy and then I moved to Vietnam since September 2007.*

HAUSMAN: Great, and can you describe how you came to work on civil service reform in Vietnam?

ACUNA: *As part of my work responsibilities on political administration reform, civil service reform is one of the keys, one of the pillars of the political administration reform process in Vietnam. This is one of the areas in which UNDP has been supporting the government in this area. In particular my first introduction to civil service reform was in the initial drafting process of the recently approved civil service law early in December 2007.*

HAUSMAN: Great. Could you talk a little bit about the issues and challenges facing the civil service before the current reform process?

ACUNA: *Well this is a tricky question because there are too many issues but if I may say, with no order of priority or importance: lack of clear roles in terms of recruitment, promotion, appointment and dismissal, dual appointment systems. You have on the one side the government, on the other side you have the party structure. You have very low salaries for civil servants. Then you have a distinction between public officials and civil servants. Indeed it is even more than this distinction. There is a distinction between public officials, civil servants and public service providers. So there are three categories in Vietnam—the "can bo" which in Vietnamese means public officials, "cong chuc" which means civil servants, and "vien chuc" which means the people that work in public services like teachers, nurses, doctors, and so forth.*

*So roughly speaking things that I can think of off the top of my mind, the main issues in civil service in Vietnam.*

HAUSMAN: Can you say a little bit about the goals, just broadly, of the civil service reform program in Vietnam before we get into more detail about the individual components?

ACUNA: *I think there has been an honest attempt by the government to modernize, to include merit-based principles for recruitment and promotion especially. I think that also as part of the natural evolution of the political administration reform process, the country now is moving towards more professional, more accountable, and more clear guidelines in terms of performance management of civil servants. But you know, David, this is very broadly speaking. We need to take into account the starting point for this reform process which is, in Vietnam is very, very low, coming out from years and years of lack of clarity in terms of civil service with no civil service. The predecessor of the civil service law is the*

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*ordinance on public officials and civil servants from 1998. So this is very recent, even the ordinance.*

*The ordinance was subsequently amended in 2001 and 2003 but still it is only ten years of experience dealing with civil service reform issues. And the law has its weaknesses and its strengths but it is an attempt in this direction of modernization of the public sector.*

HAUSMAN: Right. Could you say a little bit about the motivation for the reforms? Do you think it is mainly a response to donor conditions, fiscal needs, aspirations to grade status internationally?

ACUNA: *I think that there is a combination of those elements David. The public administration reform master plan that has its origins in 2001, as I mentioned to you earlier in the introduction. One of the four pillars is on civil service reform, right? The government since the year 2000 has been working on this reform process. So I cannot say that there was already a timetable when they would have a law on civil service in 2009, but it is part of the reform process that has started since 2000. There were some pilots regarding performance management systems. There have been governmental task forces or commissions to review salaries and to work on salary reform. This was beyond just salary increases, salary reform. The creation of the Ministry of Home Affairs as the agency in charge of civil service issues, also, that is one of the elements in this direction. So motivations were made. You can say that this is part of the reform process of the entire public sector.*

HAUSMAN: Okay.

ACUNA: *And the other elements of corruption, system corruption, in the country, I think that this is seen as a key pillar and the criticism regarding the low effectiveness and efficiency of the public sector. So another motivation is precisely how do we deal with system corruption issues in the country. How the country can increase the quality of the services that it provides to the population.*

*There was a lot of discussion also around the civil service law in terms of motivation—what does it mean to transition from a low income country to a middle income country, to Vietnam? How can the public sector, specifically the people who work in the public sector, sustain and improve upon those new income levels?*

HAUSMAN: Great, thanks. Could you describe the people you think were constituents for this reform or was it mostly, did it mostly come from the government itself?

ACUNA: *I think it came from the government itself, specifically from the commission personnel and from the Ministry of Home Affairs. I think that this is definitely a government-driven process.*

HAUSMAN: Great. So now I'm going to go through and ask you about several specific kinds of civil service reforms. Let's start with professionalization and merit. Could you describe the procedures and standards used in the system of recruitment in the civil service now and how is this different from the previous way of doing it?

ACUNA: *There are no procedures. There are no job descriptions. There is no clarity of functions and responsibilities in the vast majority of the public sector. It is very, very precarious in that sense. Of course, for the top position, for the ministers, like ministers, Director-Generals. You would have more or less defined criteria*

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*and job descriptions. But for the bulk of the public service, for the civil service sector and especially in the rural areas, there is no clarity and no transparency in those aspects.*

HAUSMAN: Is there an entrance exam that is standardized?

ACUNA: *There is an entrance exam but it is heavily criticized and prone and vulnerable to corrupt practices.*

HAUSMAN: Is this changing in any way?

ACUNA: *With the new civil service law it is hoped that it is going to change, that the standards will increase, that there will be some work in terms of competency frameworks and recruitment practices starting with job descriptions for civil servants. But I suspect that this is a very slow process of reform. The law that we are talking about was approved in November 2008 and it will be effective on the first of January, 2010, more than one year after, which is very unusual. Usually laws in this country have a six-month period after they have been approved by the National Assembly; in this case it is more than one year to give the government, the Ministry of Home Affairs time for preparation.*

HAUSMAN: What criteria do you think are used in practice in hiring and promotion?

ACUNA: *Let me see how I can say this to be politically correct. I think the first criterion is the level of loyalty to the political system. Nepotism still prevails. Then political affiliation. When I say nepotism, it is who you know within the public sector who your connections are, who is reporting you in the higher levels.*

HAUSMAN: Let me step back a moment before going further and ask you what you think have been the greatest successes in civil service reform so far in say the last ten years.

ACUNA: *It is a difficult question, David, because there have been many pilots. Ho Chi Minh City for example has piloted performance management systems. But it has not moved beyond a pilot. It has not been mainstreamed or streamlined into the public sector. I don't know if you can say it is better to have a law than to have an ordinance. At least here in the hierarchy of the normative legal documents and that might be a success, the creation of a Ministry of Home Affairs, right? It focused on civil service issues. You might say that this is a success story in itself. It has been working on those issues. But yes, it is a tough question to answer because inside it is difficult to see. Even you know islands of excellence. You will expect that, or at least you know the country that I come from, these ministries, civil service is very strong, based on merit, recruitment principles, but it is not the entire civil service system, it is one specific sector.*

*In this country you would say that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for example. It would be interesting to see who is being recruited and how they are being recruited in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which might be one of the strongest and most professional ministries in Vietnam with highly educated people in the ministry.*

HAUSMAN: Let me take you back a moment to merit recruitment procedures and ask you how the new law envisioned changing those and how those changes occurred as kind of a process.

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ACUNA: *The new law, for the first time, mentions the word "merit" as part of the civil service. For the civil service which might be a step forward regarding the ordinance that it specifically mentioned here or the principle of merit in the civil service. To my understanding, what the Ministry of Home Affairs has been doing is they're working on a series of guidelines for the recruitment of people to the position.*

*So that I think, that there, will be a new set of rules and regulations for the way in which public officials are recruited and promoted.*

HAUSMAN: Can you say any more in detail about those new guidelines?

ACUNA: *No, because I haven't seen them. I have not seen any of these documents beyond the law.*

HAUSMAN: I've heard from others that one of the achievements of the new law is the separation of cadres from civil servants and public officials.

ACUNA: Yes.

HAUSMAN: Do you agree that that is an achievement of the law and what would you say about that?

ACUNA: *I think that that is an achievement because it tries to create this separation between the higher levels which in the western societies would be labeled as political advisors, senior civil service appointments. And the core of the civil service remains in place irrespective of changes in government. You need to take into account, David, that in this country, even though it is a one-party system, every five years there is a change in government. There is a change in the cabinet, there is a change in the National Assembly, and there is a change in the party structure. Every five years there is a new set of ministers, there is a new set of vice ministers, and so forth. So the law makes this distinction.*

*The problem is the way that the decision has been made in the law—and this is something that we are starting to see, until recently we didn't foresee this. These two categories that I mentioned before—"can bo" in Vietnamese for public officials and "cong chuc" for civil servants—were more like informal hierarchical ways of referring among people. So if you had a position of status and privilege and you had some level of seniority, you would be referred to as a "can bo," irrespective of the position you were holding. So you could have a "can bo," somebody who is actually not a "can bo" but a "cong chuc". But in the official way of referring among the people, they would refer to that person as a public official, as proof of respect and seniority, but that was more informal than formal.*

*Now the law is formalizing that relationship. So you might have a big group of members of the civil service who now are referred to as "can bo" and as of January 1, 2010 will have to be referred as "cong chuc" because it is formalizing that relationship. So it might be downgrading those categories.*

*So I don't know what the implications are, and this is something that we are working on to trying to identify, how this can be handled in practice. The other element is that there is a third group of, how can I say it, public employees, who have not been included in the law. They are, as I said before the so-called "vien chuc" who are the civil servants working on the provision of public services like teachers, nurses, doctors and so forth, and they are not included. What we have*

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*been hearing from the government, from the Ministry of Home Affairs, is that they are working on a separate law for public employees. But also, regarding this distinction between "can bo" and "cong chuc", one of the things that we have been hearing is that probably in the government, in the next revision of the civil service law, it is in three, five years, you don't know, one option might be whether to separate the "can bo" from the "cong chuc", separate the cadres, public officials from the civil servants and have two separate laws.*

*So at the end of the day they will have three separate laws regulating three different groups of civil servants. So to make the answer short yes, in the beginning it was seen as a positive development to have this separation. But apparently it is not that straight forward how you make that separation. That might be conflicting with informal practices within the culture of Vietnamese and the way that they refer to each other in the public sector.*

HAUSMAN: So has there been resistance to the formalization of the separation between "can bo" and "cong chuc"?

ACUNA: *There has been discussion, I don't know resistance, but there have been discussions. The Ministry of Home Affairs is also working on implementation decrees for these two categories of employees. But again, David, we haven't seen those decrees yet from the government.*

HAUSMAN: Okay, thanks. Let me go on to the next area, retrenchment and staff size. Have there been any attempts to decrease or increase staff size in the civil service and if so, what specific goals did they set and what form did they take?

ACUNA: *I don't know. Sorry.*

HAUSMAN: Okay, we'll go onto the next one.

ACUNA: *Of course it is possible, there have been some attempts. I can tell you that intentionally or not, what has happened in the public sector especially last year was a very big brain drain from the public sector to the private sector, especially in the finance sector, in the banking sector which might have represented some sort of downsizing of the public sector. But I cannot say if there has been any policy from the government on this issue.*

HAUSMAN: Since you bring that up, do you know whether there have been any initiatives to counter that brain drain and if so what sort of initiatives?

ACUNA: *There was discussion last year of how those positions would be filled up because the problem of the brain drain last year was in very technical levels, as I said before in the banking, in the finance sector. How were these people going to be replaced within the system? There was an attempt to bring forward people on the waiting list, people who had passed the entry examinations and were on the waiting list to participate in the public sector and also there were some attempts to publish some recruitment, open competitive recruitment processes with job descriptions and so forth. I was expecting that most of the positions were filled up. But again, the question is, what was the specific criteria that was selected for those new appointments and for the promotion of people there. I don't know, I cannot answer with much more level of detail.*

HAUSMAN: Let me go on to ask you a few questions about pay policy. The cost of civil servant wages is often a major problem and a strong impetus for civil service reform. Could you talk about any changes that have been made to pay policies

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here? Have there been attempts to decompress pay, to increase wages, decrease the total civil service wage bill?

ACUNA: *As I said before, David, I think there has been that government task force to review salary reform structures. The Ministry of Labor has been working on increases, small increases, on the minimum salary levels and I think that in the past two years there has been a significant increase in minimum salaries. But still salaries, people keep referring to them as very low, as not sufficient to satisfy living conditions, and then there have been some attempts to revise the coefficient system in the civil service in the salary structure.*

HAUSMAN: Could you describe the coefficient system?

ACUNA: *The coefficient system is based on the number of years that the employee has and the position that he holds. He will have kind of a premium to his monthly salary and it is based on a coefficient according to different criteria. I can give you later the different coefficient categories. But basically what it tries to do is to make a distinction between seniority and level of responsibilities according to the job. Also there have been some policies to promote relocation to mountainous and difficult areas in the rural sector. There are now specific policies on that.*

*But if you ask me, David, yes, salaries are low, but if you count only the salary, there are all these other non-monetary sources of income that the civil servants receive, like housing for example. I think that this is part of—I don't know if that has been included in the salary reform process, but this has to be also taken into account, all the benefits in addition to the monetary income that these people receive.*

*Then my other comment on that, on the salary issue, is we know that corruption is systemic, that it is rampant, that it is everywhere, all over. But we also know that for certain positions it has a price tag. If you want to have a certain position, you have to pay. Last year there was a very exposed case in the media in which a government official paid around 10,000 US dollars for a position that will officially give him 1,200 dollars a year for example. So how do you account for that?*

HAUSMAN: What position was that and what official?

ACUNA: *I don't have the specific details, I can send them to you, it was in Ca Mau province. But there have been tons of studies on these issues of pay. But the discussion of how is it possible that for such a low paying position you pay such a large amount of money? So what are the expectations, the kickbacks that government officials receive in those positions? I think that is not a problem of lack of resources from the government, right? It is a problem of how the incentive system is organized in this country.*

*We know that political officials get all these envelopes to attend different activities and different meetings, to participate in different task forces, and so forth. You can see them as bonuses to their salaries, but all this is very informal. It is informal in the accounting system, it is formal in the public sector to some extent. So why doesn't the government of Vietnam try to work on what I call officialization—making official all these informal sources of income, all these practices of giving and taking envelopes to participate in other activities, in addition to what the civil servant is supposed to be getting?*

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*Some people will say that this is an extreme case of meritocracy because this is the most talented, the most intelligent, the most proactive people who get a request to work on these other issues in addition to his or her position and is still working on these other issues that he or she can get all these envelopes. So why don't we try to work on making these informal sources of income official? Because at the end of the day, it is money that is coming from the public sector. It is not that these people are working for the private sector, it is money from the public sector that is circulating around. In different departments they have budgets for envelopes.*

HAUSMAN: So something like the housing allowances that you mentioned, are those informal as well?

ACUNA: *They are formal according to the position, but again, how big is your house? Or if you are retired, you might be given some piece of land for example. How are these situations allocated? Somebody in the National Assembly, one of the examples that he was given is that the average salary of the member of the National Assembly which I know is not included in the civil service law but is around \$500 a month. But if you add all the other allowances like car, houses, and so forth, it tops out to \$1000. So his proposal was: why don't you increase the salary of these people to \$1,500 a month and forget all about the extra allowances? That person can concentrate fully on the task that he or she is supposed to undertake as a civil servant.*

HAUSMAN: Can you say a little more about the salary taskforce that has been formed?

ACUNA: *It is a mystery. I don't know who the members are. I know it is led by the Ministry of Finance but I haven't seen any report from the salary taskforce and I think that no report is expected until, it was revised, but maybe next year.*

HAUSMAN: And you were just saying there was a need for the monitorization of various benefits, has any of that taken place already?

ACUNA: *Not that I am aware of.*

HAUSMAN: How has the new system of allowing service delivery and administrative agencies financial autonomy affected salaries? Do you know whether that has any major effects?

ACUNA: *I don't know, sorry. I'd rather say I don't know then to give you a misleading answer.*

HAUSMAN: Let me ask you a few questions about the political context of the reforms. What political factors have affected the reforms?

ACUNA: *Let's see, I think that at the moment none, because Article 8 of the civil service law still is very strong and very prominently the role of the party in the civil service. So I guess in a very, very—nonpolitical factors have been affected, until the government keeps the dual appointment system, still there is this government central committee commission organization and person within the party. That is the one who decides who goes where and when and how and why. So the answer to your question—what are the political factors that have been affected with the reform—the answer would be maybe none.*

HAUSMAN: Okay.

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- ACUNA: *The incentives are still there and it would be very difficult, because of the one-party nature of the political system.*
- HAUSMAN: During civil service reform many countries make significant organizational or structural change in government, could you talk about the changes that have been made in the way the civil service is structured?
- ACUNA: *Well, again, the creation of a Ministry of Home Affairs is one of those. There has been an attempt to reduce the number of ministries but not the number of staff and to work towards what Vietnamese call the macro management ministries. Also there has been a lot of discussion about socialization of public services. In other countries you would use the word privatization. I guess that is related to your earlier question. But how it has affected the structure of the government remains to be seen.*
- One of the things that we have been discussing is why don't we try to set up within the Ministry of Home Affairs a unit that documents successful cases of public services and public administrative service provision, that recognized those achievements, that rewards excellence within the public sector, and that disseminates best practices of public service in the country.*
- HAUSMAN: Could you tell me a little more about the attempts to reduce the number of ministries, which ministries were eliminated and—?
- ACUNA: *The Ministry of Fisheries for example was merged into the Ministry of Agriculture. So now we have, I think we have the largest ministry in Vietnam, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. It makes sense considering that 70% of the population lives in the rural areas. There was a Ministry of Investment and a Ministry of Trade, now you have one ministry, Ministry of Trade and Investment. There has also been some discussion about merging the Ministry of Planning with the Ministry of Finance, but we still have two ministries so far. I can send you by e-mail this table that we are compiling of what have been the other significant changes in numbers. We need to go into details of which are the ministries and so forth, but historically, from about 1975 the tendency has been that first there is an expansion of the number of ministries and then there is a contraction, and then another expansion. There have been about two waves in that regard. Now the tendency is toward compression in terms of the numbers.*
- HAUSMAN: How would you describe the motivation for the merging of the ministries and how did it actually work out?
- ACUNA: *Attempts to rationalize services, attempts to respond to citizens' criticism and honest attempts by the government to find ways to provide better public service. Also it is all this integration of Vietnam within the world economy as well. I think that many of the WTO (World Trade Organization) requirements, for example, might be playing an important part. Also nowadays, Vietnam is much more exposed to other countries in terms of how the government is organized and how the government is structured. So it looks at examples from other countries in terms of government organizational structure and maybe some attempts to emulate success stories and bring those cases to Vietnam.*
- HAUSMAN: Can you give me examples of particular cases of rationalization or reaction to public criticism?
- ACUNA: *The Ministry of Fisheries, for example, and the merging of the Ministry of Fisheries with the Ministry of Agriculture. There was a lot of criticism in terms of*

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*to what extent the government was having uncoordinated responses to the largest segment of the population of this country, which is in the rural areas. So one of the responses of the government was to put together these two ministries and see how they could rationalize, streamline, and have a more coherent and easier mechanism for rural workers to interact with the government agencies in these regards, for example.*

*The other is in the public administration system and the classical example is the one-stop shops, which are the offices that have been set up all over the country as a way to facilitate and expedite the granting of licenses and certificates to citizens.*

HAUSMAN: Since you bring it up, I was actually about to ask you about one-stop shops. Could you describe how they first came about?

ACUNA: *They first came about, my understanding is that it was a pilot in Ho Chi Minh City in the mid 1990s, if I'm not mistaken. What Ho Chi Minh City tried to do was, in other countries it is called one single window to process and permit, licenses, mostly for businesses. Then it was expanded to include services that citizens can have. The model was seen as a success in Ho Chi Minh City, which is an urban province. Then it was replicated in Da Nang, in Hanoi and later on it was established as a national policy. Now every one of the 63 provinces has one-stop shops as a way to try to expedite the provision of public initiative services to citizens.*

HAUSMAN: Which administrative services do the one-stop shops cover?

ACUNA: *Birth certificates, land permits, construction permits, I believe driving licenses. Yes, mostly. There was an attempt to have one-stop shops for public services, like healthcare centers and so forth. But the rural nature, the rural conditions of most of this country make it very difficult. So now the one-stop shops focus mostly on what is called public administrative procedure. If you need a permit, if you need a license, then that is what the one-stop shops are aimed to do.*

HAUSMAN: Do you know whether they have tended to reduce the time necessary to get these permits and if so, do you know any examples?

ACUNA: *I cannot remember now out of my mind, but I know that I can send you some information on that.*

HAUSMAN: You mentioned macro management as a concept, could you explain what that is?

ACUNA: *Well, the macro management, the attempt in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development for example is to try to work more on the policy, setting policies, and less on implementing and delivering specific public services. It means more outsourcing, it means more decentralization at the local level, and it means what Vietnam calls socialization of public services.*

HAUSMAN: Could you say a little bit more about that?

ACUNA: *What the ministries, what the MARD, or Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, is looking for is to find different ways to provide services to farmers and to the rural sector not by implementing them directly but by way of having a stricter control mechanism, more deregulation, and allowing the participation of the private sector in the provision of specific services for the rural sector. So it is*

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*more like if you think about a ministry that set up the guidelines, that has a more regulatory function, than a ministry that delivers and implements on a daily basis. That is my understanding of the macro management system. I guess that that would have some impact, or some influence in terms of the civil service, how the functions that they have to perform will be more regulatory than implementation.*

HAUSMAN: Okay, thanks. Let me now ask you generally about other civil service reform or public administration reform programs in which the UNDP is directly involved that haven't come up.

ACUNA: *That's basically it. What I mentioned to you about the one-stop shops in Ho Chi Minh City, UNDP, we were supporting them. It was an effort that was later picked up by the Swedish Development Corporation on the one-stop shops. We are also supporting the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in this transformation. We also have a project with Ho Chi Minh City on organization reform, and we have a project with the Ministry of Home Affairs supporting them on the implementation of the master plan of public administration reforms.*

HAUSMAN: Can you describe how your program with the Ministry of Home Affairs got started and how your cooperation works?

ACUNA: *It started in early 2000 with the drafting and establishment of the Power Master Plan from 2001 to 2010, having supported the ministry in that effort through the development of different task forces to draft these programs of reform. Then UNDP has been supporting the implementation and, in 2005 there was a review that UNDP also strongly supported, an internal review of the process. And now what we're doing is supporting them with the evaluation from the past ten years of implementation, but also helping them with implementation of some specific reform processes that have no relationship with civil service like establishing a monitoring and evaluation system to measure all the administration performance. For instance, to pilot the abolishment of people's councils in some rural areas and to propose different options and models of public service delivery.*

HAUSMAN: Okay, thanks. Let me end by just asking you a couple of general questions. If you had a chance to do some of these reforms over, for example drafting of the law that is going to take effect and other things, would you do it differently this time around?

ACUNA: Yes.

HAUSMAN: Which ones?

ACUNA: *If I had to draft the civil service law again I would do it in a more participatory manner. For example, I would do much more research and much more analysis of the structure of the civil service system in the country. I would do lots of surveys to try to measure performance, measure perceptions, and measure the degree of competition within the public sector and within the civil service. The bottom line is I would rely more on hard data and less on [Indecipherable] data evidence.*

HAUSMAN: When you say you'd make the process more participatory, how did the process actually work?

ACUNA: *There was a taskforce that was set up with about twelve members and most of them were from the Ministry of Home Affairs. There was one member from the National Assembly, a couple of members from the office of government. This is*

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*one of the first things, to diversify the composition of the drafting team. Then go out and consult more with the stakeholders involved. It is not enough to only have meetings with the drafting team, more members of the drafting team. Go out and collect opinions in a much more scientific and systematic way.*

*There was some level of consultation of course, but it was not as focused and widespread as one would have expected it to be.*

HAUSMAN: Do you think there are any aspects of the civil service reform here that reflect local traditions or cultural practices that one might not understand without understanding the practices?

ACUNA: *Many, many things, like not having clear job descriptions. I think that is inherent in the Vietnamese culture. Hierarchy levels, again, this is a very hierarchical society. The way that the people refer to each other also has some influence in the way that civil service is structured and organized. Then the one-party nature of the political system again is very different from many other countries.*

HAUSMAN: When you say that not having clear job descriptions is inherent in the culture, what aspect of the culture do you think?

ACUNA: *I think that it relates to the working habits that—my impression, and this is my own personal impression, is that the working habits are much more reactive and much less propositive. So civil servants are just sitting there waiting to receive instructions. There is no culture of open, public deliberation and argumentation. You don't disagree in public with your colleagues or your supervisors, for example. That is a way in which the system, having this lack of clarity in terms of the rules, in terms of the functions, that allows room for discretion. And it is good for me as an employee and it is good for you as my supervisor because as a supervisor I can ask you whatever I feel you should be doing and as an employee I can do all these other things that, because there are no specific rules on what should I be doing or not, so I can get access to all these informal sources of income that we were talking about earlier as long as I distribute.*

HAUSMAN: Well thanks so much for answering those questions. I just have one or two concluding questions that are more general, kind of drawing on your experience here. If you had a chance to write a handbook for people who manage civil service reform in challenging environments, what kinds of topics would you think were most important?

ACUNA: *A handbook for?*

HAUSMAN: For people like you trying to implement civil service reform in different environments.

ACUNA: *I would include the importance of job descriptions. The handbook would provide details on how do you do competency frameworks and how do you evaluate performance, different ways to evaluate performance. It would, the first thing it would include is a description and explanation of merit as a principle, what it means and how it works and recruitment practices, examples of best practices—or good practices, there are no best practices—good practices in terms of recruitment and that. Maybe the handbook will include something about different civil service systems in different countries, what are the key characteristics of those different systems.*

HAUSMAN: All right. Thanks so much.

ACUNA: *I hope it was useful.*