



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

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- IYER: This is Deepa Iyer interviewing Mr. Awni Yarvas. He will start with a quick overview.
- YARVAS: *When it comes to the history of the Civil Status and Passports Department, it goes back to the history of the Transjordan Emirate. The Department of Passports was established in 1921 when the Emirate of Transjordan was established. At the time it was affiliated to the military. But then in 1941 they took this decision to separate these two entities. So the passports department became an independent entity, it was no longer affiliated with the military or run by the military. It became a civil department. The Ministry of Interior is responsible for it.*
- The first legislation governing this process was issued in 1942. It was a legislation on how to issue passports, the stipulations on issuances of passports. It was law number five, 1942. This legislation was implemented until it was amended in 1969. Then a new law for the passports was issued in 2002 and it is implemented to this day.*
- When it comes to the civil status, the first legislation to regulate the civil status work was issued in 1973. But they did not implement the law until 1977; it was delayed, the implementation of the law took place in 1977. There were two different, independent entities, separate entities. We had the civil status department and we had the passports department and each one of them had a different general manager.*
- This situation was implemented until 1988. Then they took the decision to merge the two entities and it became the Civil Status and Passports Department. It had one general manager. That applies to this day. That is a bit about the historic overview.*
- When it comes to the procedures you have a question?*
- IYER: Now I'd like to just start with a series of questions that I have for you. First I'd like you to tell me about your personal career path. What brought you to the Department of Civil Status and Passports? I believe you first entered the department as General Manager in 1996, 1997. I was wondering if you could tell me what you did before and what you did after.
- YARVAS: *1 April 1996. I used to work in the military before that time. I was in the Judicial Department in the military, until I retired from this military department on March 20, 1996. Then I was appointed to the department that you are studying.*
- IYER: This is just an observation but there seems to be a trend of appointing retired individuals from the military to head this department. I wonder if you could speak a little about why people with military backgrounds were often brought in to head the Department of Civil Status and Passports.
- YARVAS: *If you could just track the history I just gave you, the timeline, first of all the Passports Department at the time was affiliated with the military, with the Army. If you could focus on the nature of the job at the Civil Status and Passports Department, we don't issue ordinary documents, it is an official document that has a security perspective. However this trend only took place in recent stages because from 1941 until 1988 there were civil servants who would head the department. They were not of a military background or background similar to people who headed it at different stages. So it is an observation that applies to the recent process.*

IYER: And in your opinion, why is it after the merging of the two departments in 1988 that people from security backgrounds were brought in to head the department as opposed to civil servants as had been done previously.

YARVAS: *There is no legislation that says that we would have to appoint people of military background or of public security background. It is not even a norm that you can say applies to all the cases. For example in 1977 a person of – because you mentioned in the question that you feel pre-1988 it was headed by civil servants only. No, in 1977 the head of the Department of Civil Status was of a military background, in 1977. Then the other answer to the question is, as I told you, it is not an ordinary document. Passports in every country in the world are very sensitive because they could be fabricated and this could lead to security problems.*

That is why I feel that, from my experience in this job, that they appoint people in this job who are qualified to be in charge of this job because it has so many security implications.

IYER: Moving on now to 1988, I know that you were not at the department at this time, but could you give your observations on the merge and what the key challenges facing the department were at this time before Mr. Nasouh Marzouqa implemented reforms and you took those reforms forward.

YARVAS: *First of all as an initial observation, the decision to merge the two entities took place at the level of the heads of the department. So it means that we have one head of department. But when it comes to the base it wasn't merged yet. The head of the department had an assistant for passports who was different from the assistant for civil status. Even when it comes to the employees, those who were in charge of issuing passports would still do the same job of issuing passports, and those who were in charge of issuing civil status documents would still do the same. So when it comes to the job, to the daily job, it is as if the merger never took place.*

It means the first difficulty is that the employee himself, he can't do the job of the department as a whole. He can't do the job of the department as, for example, when it was merged for civil status and passports all together. A citizen who wants a passport, the information about this citizen will be double-checked as we explained yesterday, it would be checked and double checked from A to Z, when it comes to the passports, that's for the passports employee.

Then when he wants to go issue a civil status documents also they would double check and check his information from A to Z once again. So that's what I mean by duplication of the processes.

IYER: So these were the key challenges that I think were facing Mr. Nasouh Marzouqa when he came in in the early 1990s. He implemented some reforms which I personally divide into employee-related reforms in terms of introducing a performance-based promotion system and motivating employees. Secondly process-related reforms in terms of cutting the amount of delaying steps within the process it takes to get a passport. I was wondering if you could speak about when you entered office in 1996 what were the key challenges facing you given that initial reforms had been implemented and what did you feel your mandate was taking the department forward from this stage.

- YARVAS: *First of all when I was appointed in 1996 I noticed that when it comes to actually implementing the actual work, although we had computers we did not use them for all of the processes. We only used it for 10% of the actual work of what we could exploit. We were not exploiting it, we were not using it to the fullest, we were not exploiting what they had. We did not have also the convenient infrastructure for that.*
- IYER: Can you elaborate on these two challenges first before you on to discuss other challenges?
- YARVAS: *I have a background, an administrative background on how to use computers in administration. After conducting a comprehensive study on the department, it was my main objective to computerize everything, to make—I mean we still used typewriters and we still used manual ways of conducting the procedures. So my main objective was after conducting this study, to turn it into an automated department 100%. To have all the procedures computerized, everything computerized, automated for 100%.*
- IYER: Going more into details here you mention that you undertook a comprehensive study of the department. I'm wondering if this was a formal study or an informal process of you learning what was happening in the department.
- YARVAS: *Personally, I was appointed and I wanted to know what this department is about. I couldn't achieve a thing without familiarizing myself with the daily procedures and the nature of the job, everything about it. So we did it from personal motivation to learn about the department.*
- IYER: You mentioned, the second challenge you mentioned was that the infrastructure was not convenient. I wonder if you could go into more detail concerning this challenge as well.
- YARVAS: *When it comes to the computers, it takes so many requirements that we did not have. For example it takes electricity. It was first of all the electricity problems and also the wires, it wasn't implemented in the cable system. Then you would have wires that were uncovered and you would have modems on the table instead of putting them for example in a different way. As a conclusion you could say that we did not abide by the standards of using the computers because we lacked so many things like the equipment and the infrastructure to accommodate this.*
- IYER: So you mentioned these two challenges which are largely technical challenges.
- YARVAS: Yes.
- IYER: I was wondering if you could speak a little more about other challenges that you may have faced in terms of personnel for example or in terms of other aspects of the department.
- YARVAS: *Could you add one point which is an elaboration of the first point, about linking the other computers to the main server also. There was a problem.*
- IYER: Other computers meaning branches?
- YARVAS: *In the offices. When I was appointed there were 74 offices throughout the kingdom. Some offices used typewriters, other offices used handwriting, manual.*

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- IYER: So essentially there was no electronic way of compiling all of the data in one repository, is that correct?
- YARVAS: *That was the case when I conducted the study but I haven't told you about the process the actual process in which we moved to the achievement of the objective. When you want to computerize everything in the department you have to make sure that all of these 74 offices are linked properly to the main server.*
- IYER: I'd like to take a step back actually and first discuss the comprehensive challenges that you faced before we go on to discussing solutions. You mentioned these two technical challenges of computerization and lack of convenient infrastructure and I was wondering if you could comment on any other challenges you may have faced in terms of personnel, budget, staffing and things of that sort.
- YARVAS: *This is the main difficulty but I still have to go on about other parts. We come to the human resources part. It is very obvious that there is a link between the human resources and performance. There is a link between the machine and the person who works behind it.*
- I had 900 employees at the time and I asked the person who was in charge of human resources department to conduct a study on these employees and their qualifications, who had attended training courses on computers and for example private institutions and who had degrees related to computers.*
- IYER: A survey of sorts then?
- YARVAS: *Yes, it was. I wanted to know who was qualified. Because computers are not—they need someone to work behind them, they don't do the job on their own. How many people were trained for programming?*
- IYER: Do you recall the outcomes of this study? Did the department have the capacity to handle computerization at this point? How many people may have been trained to accommodate such changes in the beginning?
- YARVAS: *Employees who knew how to use computers or had degrees related to this aspect would not exceed 30%. There is another difficulty. Because, for example employees who had degrees related to computers, I would find them working in the archives. So they had a computer degree but they still worked in manual ways because the whole department was manual.*
- Now we move to the budget. Do you want me to elaborate on this?*
- IYER: I want you to elaborate on everything that you can possibly elaborate on.
- YARVAS: *Okay. First of all I would like to explain that as a department we would present our budget, our version of the budget and it could be divided into two categories. We would write or present a list of the costs we would cover for salaries for employees, etcetera. These are stable costs and then we would present a list of our needs, what we need for the future for the department, anything else, computers, cars, these are divided into the second category. This is establishing, like having a new building leasing, for the lease.*
- IYER: Did you find unrelated to budget that normally your needs were met or was there always, was there a scarcity of resources?

YARVAS: *When we prepared this initial draft of the budget we presented to the general budget department which is affiliated to the Ministry of Finance and of course not 100% all of our needs are met because it doesn't even apply to any of the departments in the kingdom. When you want to get the budget you need you have to promote your decision and you have to convince the decision maker who is on the upper level of your decision. You have to promote it. You must market it [laughs].*

IYER: So I'd like to take a step back now and just quickly ask you what do you feel, how would you categorize the reforms undertaken during Mr. Nasouh [Marzouqa] period that you had to build up off of? How would you describe these reforms which came before you?

YARVAS: *Of course whenever you're appointed for any department, of course you don't build from zero, you don't start from zero. Of course other people have done something before you. In fact when it comes to Mr. Nasouh's time, the most important thing he did was, for example cancelling the policy of closed doors, not as on the administration levels. I mean that for example at that time when a citizen had a procedure, when a citizen had an application he would go for a certain employee and this employee would need a signature of another employee who is for example in the other floor, whose office is in the upper floors. Or, for example, an employee who sits in an office that is next to him but they had walls between them, they had doors. They were separate offices.*

So the first thing that Mr. Nasouh did was removing all of these offices and taking them to what is applied to this day, making citizens come with these applications to a counter. All of these employees would sit for the counter and there would be no more walls between them, especially those applications which entail interaction with citizens. So it wouldn't be like offices and floors and you have to—they're all on the same floor, sitting at the same counter so they would interact with citizens easily.

IYER: One question that I have I think that I'm a bit curious about. Obviously there are several different processes occurring within the department in terms of issuing documents because there are several different documents that the department issues. After the merging I understand that Mr. Nasouh came forward and say reformed some of the processes, but I'm wondering in terms of for example this office reorganization or computerization which came later on, how similar were each of these processes?

I mean for example, how similar was the manual process to issue a birth certificate versus the process to issue a passport? Were they completely different or were they quite similar to each other?

YARVAS: *It is completely different. We have 74 offices. Among these offices 26 offices would issue passports. All the remaining offices would issue civil status documents which is birth certificates, marriage certificates, divorce, obituaries, family book and personal ID. At the time you had a family file also and an individual's file. All of these are categorized under civil status. So the passports, when it comes to passports you could get passports all the time.*

Because passports were previously implemented before the civil status, because the department of passports was older than the Department of Civil Status, it was also a point for people who would issue passports or have passports to recheck and double-check their eligibility for nationality. So when they started the Civil

Status in 1977 they would take the passport as proof to prove that someone was Jordanian, as their nationality.

It's different, the documents.

IYER: You mention that you had 74 branches and 26 branches issued passports, the remaining civil status documents, was this during his time or was this after the merge because from what I understood, it was that branches as well were merged to issue both sets of documents.

YARVAS: *In my opinion 26 offices to issue passports is a high number because the financial issues relating to issuing passports, they cost very much. When you talk about 74 offices, you have for example forty offices out of these 74 with population density or people in areas where there is population density. So the passport you only need it if you want to travel overseas. According to my opinion I feel that passports are not as important as civil status, other civil status files. Passports you only need them when you travel but the civil status documents have something to do with the daily lives of citizens, birth, marriage, divorce, everything. So it is more important for them.*

During my time I had 26 offices but then I opened only one office for the passports, only one additional office for the passports, so they became 2,7 although I faced pressures from members of the Parliament who approached me, for example to finish some services for the people of their districts.

IYER: Okay, I think my question actually was, something I had heard, when the department was merged in 1988, branches that previously offered only passports added the civil status services to their you could say repertoire of services offered and then branches that had previously only offered civil status documents added passports to them. So I had assumed that there were 76 branches that offered both services but from what I'm hearing from you there seemed to have been branches dedicated to passports and branches dedicated only to civil status, so I was wondering if you could clarify how the merging happened within branches.

YARVAS: *As I already explained the merging took place on the level of the administration and on the level as a title. So it became one department and it had one head of department. It became one entity, that's right, but it doesn't necessarily meant the same employee who could issue a passport could issue a civil status foil or document. If you go now to issue a passport you will have to go to a certain employee, but if you want a civil status file you would go to another one.*

It's true that when you have the document it is issued by, as the title it is issued by the same department, but of course, as a way to divide the tasks and duties, you would have two different employees to do these kind of things.

IYER: Yes.

YARVAS: You mean branches in other, outside of Amman right?

IYER: Yes. The 76 offices you were referring to, branches outside of the--

YARVAS: *I meant 74 throughout the kingdom.*

IYER: Right.

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- YARVAS: *It depends on the office because they follow the administrative structure in Jordan. For example, you have offices for the government which are authorized to issue passports, but you have offices in the subdivisions which are not authorized to issue passports but they can issue a national ID, but they can't issue a passport.*
- It just has to do with the distribution of tasks. I am talking about the time when I was appointed. At the time, for example, employees who were dealing with passports did not know how to deal with civil status documents. We took this as a challenge that we worked on overcoming. When I established the Department of Development and Training all of the employees of the department were trained on all the procedures in the department including passports and civil status files. When a head of department or anyone wants to appoint an employee from the previous passports department, he can issue civil status files.*
- So we qualified them to do both jobs. But that doesn't mean that the same employee can do both at this time. If you want a passport you go to a certain employee. If you want a civil status file you go to another employee. But that means that each one of them can switch places.*
- IYER: So it was done to facilitate transfers. I understand. Just one last clarification. You mentioned that there were 74 branches, 26 which issue passports and I was wondering—.
- YARVAS: *Twenty-six plus one.*
- IYER: Yes, 26 plus one which you established. So do all 74 issue civil status documents and of these 74 26 also issue passports or is it 26 issue passports and the remaining 48 offices issue civil status? Does that make sense?
- YARVAS: *So the numbers—.*
- IYER: Well you could say that all 74 issue civil status and of these 26 additionally issue—26 plus one additionally issue passports or you can say that 48 issue separately civil status and 26 plus one issue passports.
- YARVAS: *They issue both, passports and civil status files.*
- IYER: You said that certain offices were distributed according to population density and I was wondering if you could expand on that.
- YARVAS: *Population density is linked to the administration structure in Jordan. You could find offices in some areas or some places where they could only issue say four documents a day. In other offices they could issue 300 to 400 documents a day.*
- IYER: I was wondering if we could now go back. You were mentioning the challenges that you were facing at this time in terms of computerization and moving on now to the solutions that you implemented to address this challenge. First I was wondering if you could start with just providing an overview of how you addressed the technical challenges in the department at this time.
- YARVAS: *I formed a committee and I called it the planning committee. It was comprised of senior employees. One of them is the director of the computer department. I was focusing on how to develop using computers. We started with the main servers expansion, expanding the capacity of the main server. Also the modems, the scattered modems, we tried to address this issue. Of course we also focused on*

the most appropriate way of dealing with modems, the way they were, and instead of keeping them on the tables uncovered we would have special technical cupboards especially designed for this purpose.

These are technical especially designed cupboards for keeping the modems, closets. Also the telephone lines. We called the Communication Minister; we organized the cables where you can't see them because they were all over the place. We also called the department for electricity to work on cables. We also addressed the electricity cut so they had their own generator. When the electricity is cut for example for the other places in the kingdom we would still have the electricity to keep going on the computers. So now we had it under control so we could actually start the reform. When it comes to technical issues that's what we addressed.

IYER: So that's on the technical side. Moving now to the human resources side which was the other key challenge that you mentioned. I was wondering if you could discuss some of the initiatives you implemented on that front.

YARVAS: *After this survey we could have a better glimpse of what was happening in terms of human resources and we had a consultant who was working with the Royal Scientific Society.*

IYER: Dr. [inaudible]?

YARVAS: *No, someone else.*

IYER: Okay.

YARVAS: *So we had partnership with the Society and we assigned him to conduct this study on our needs, on the department's needs.*

IYER: In terms of human resources?

YARVAS: *Yes, in terms of human resources. What are the qualifications we needed in terms of programming etcetera? I mean what are the degrees we need people to have, degrees and qualifications. So according to this study we would send the employees to private institutions where they could attend training courses according to the study. According to the numbers, we would need, for example, a certain number of employees equipped and trained for this course we would send them for training courses. That is when it comes to computerization.*

So that applies to employees who are dealing with computers. But now there are other employees who are dealing with data entry, which is less complicated. So we made them all go to training courses when it comes to people who deal with the computers in terms of complicated procedures, processes. We would have certain people to train them and other people for the data entry, they would go for institutions, any institutions for teaching computers which were available at the time. This was a very simple process, it was not as complicated as the other procedures.

It means that all of the employees who used to do the manual work were trained on how to use the computers. Of course you would have people who can't do it after all probably because of their age, some because of their mental capabilities. They don't understand it. So it means that those people who couldn't do it because of their age, because of their mental capabilities, it is not mental as they have disabilities, it is just they can't understand the computer system or they are

very old or something like that. So these people would go to the archives department because after all even if it is fully automated, completely automated, there are still some procedures which have to be done manually. So that's how they became qualified to deal with computerizations.

IYER: Okay and in terms of, one key question I have is when you have the automation of procedures, you know you described the computerization can be divided into the simpler data entry functions and the actual computerization of processes themselves. I think something, when you have the automation of procedures innovatively you have employees and middlemen whose manual processes are now computerized. I was wondering how these employees are dealt with in the fact that jobs that they may have been previously doing were now different or were taken up by the computer. So their jobs were either made unnecessary or they were forced to shift in some way.

I was wondering whether you could talk about this, whether this was a key challenge and how this shifting was addressed.

YARVAS: *They no longer needed this number of employees?*

IYER: No, no, for example the fact is when you computerize certain processes a lot of middle men's jobs are no longer necessary or, alternatively, also he mentioned a lot of people have to learn to do their jobs differently. I was wondering how this went down with the employees and secondly how individuals the nature of whose jobs completely changed, how were they dealt with besides training.

YARVAS: *Okay.*

IYER: Or those whose jobs were completely unnecessary, how were they dealt with?

YARVAS: *Okay, unnecessary and how we dealt with completely different ways of doing the job.*

IYER: Yes, because essentially this is changing behavior all the time so I was wondering.

YARVAS: *So you have two parts of the question, right?*

IYER: Yes.

YARVAS: *As an initial answer, we did not have like you said, a number of employees who did unnecessary jobs. That's for a start, but then even when it is completely computerized you would still have jobs that would have to be done manually. You would still find jobs that did not need computers at that time. For example the accountant at that time. Also the archiving and keeping the files, these did not need computers. Archiving of applications. So those people who couldn't deal with computers for different reasons as we mentioned earlier, just like age, capabilities or willingness, just like that, they would have to move to the archiving department or the accountant.*

It happened before that time. Previously people who had degrees in the computer would work in the archives before the computerization process. So they just switched places. People who had computer-related degrees were moved to the jobs or the departments which required computer use and then others who did not want to use the computer were moved to the other departments.

IYER: Do you recall if this was at all controversial amongst employees. I mean I feel like this is something that might create discontent and I was wondering if you could speak about whether this existed and what he did to deal with that if it did.

YARVAS: *You had a very popular theme when it comes to administration which is resisting change. Any person, this is a human trait, if you have something new you are always afraid of it. So that's when it comes to employees, they were just afraid of new changes. It was different when it comes to people who already had qualifications to deal with computers. But now I am talking about people who had never dealt with computers at the time.*

I feel the first segment of employees, this segment of employees who already had skills to deal with computers on the contrary they were happy about it because they felt that after all they were appreciated because at the time they did things that were not related to their degrees or to their qualifications. So on the contrary they felt that they were taken to the right places. They were serving in the right places, they were convenient for this place. So they felt that they were appreciated and they were happy about it. They were very enthusiastic for this change.

As for the other segment, people who have never dealt with computers and who don't have any experience in this field, those people who resisted change, after they started attending training courses and they were familiarized with the whole process and the computers, etcetera, they moved to quiet satisfaction or content, they were not dissatisfied any more or resisting change. Also you would have another segment which completely refused the whole thing, so they did not train them, they just moved them to the department where they did manual procedures.

According to the budget that they have for the department, at the end of the year they would pay additional payments for the employees. Previously these financial incentives, they were given to employees according to different criteria but he says that during this time they would take into consideration the employees qualifications on dealing with computers and the employee's performance, how many applications they could finish on a daily basis. So the person, for example, who issues 100 documents would take higher than people who would issue 40.

IYER: So bonuses were matched to performance.

YARVAS: *Right. We previously mentioned that we had a segment that completely resisted change and completely rejected training courses which is the third segment, some of these people, not all of them, when they saw that the financial incentives and bonuses were linked to computer performance, they came and they willingly expressed their desire to attend training courses.*

IYER: So I had a quick question because this bonus, these bonuses linked to performance are something mentioned previously. I was wondering, you mentioned that they were previously allocated according to different criteria and I was wondering if you could elaborate on these criteria and elaborate—you said that you added their interaction with computers to this criteria. So if you could just speak a little more about this because this is something that we have seen across a lot of different countries so it is something that we are very interested in.

YARVAS: *You mean the criteria of allocating the bonuses previously?*

- IYER: What it was beforehand and if you could elaborate on what it included after you as well—not after you but during your time.
- YARVAS: *I don't really care about what it used to be previously before my time, but for example, one of the criteria they used to implement was the level of the employee. For example a senior employee would take a certain sum and lower level employee etcetera.*
- In my time I tried to employ a different strategy because I tried to apply justice. It is not fair for an employee who issues four documents to take the same bonus as an employee who issues 100 documents.*
- Also you take into consideration that people who deal with programming should not take as people who deal with just data entry. The volume, the performance, that's the criteria.*
- IYER: You mentioned previously that you had training courses to really reduce the disparities you could say between the employees who were allocated to different tasks. You had training of employees who were dealing with computerized processes and you had training of employees related to data entry. I was wondering, how long did the process of adjustment take place to really get the department—you could say to get the employees fully trained. How long did this process take?
- YARVAS: *It wasn't overnight of course. We started in October 1996 issuing these, for example birth certificates as computerized, only birth certificates. As a beginning we started with birth certificates because that's what we could afford at the time in terms of employees and printers also. But we started training employees. We started—by the end of 1996 we could issue different documents on computers, it took us two months to go ahead and proceed with other documents, other civil status documents on computers.*
- So in 1997 we focused on the national ID, the personal ID. So you see this was gradual. We took—in May 1997 we started issuing national IDs, personal IDs, as computerized. Then we started thinking about developing the passports. Of course it is obvious that the passports are very complicated. It is much more complicated than the civil status documents.*
- IYER: Why would you say this is? This is something I've been curious about, how the different processes are different and how some processes are probably more manual and complex than others. So can you just elaborate on this?
- YARVAS: *Okay. You mean the processes are different in terms of a national ID versus a passport?*
- IYER: Yes.
- YARVAS: *And what is the second part of your question.*
- IYER: The second part is, when you were deciding the order in which to automate different processes you mentioned that first you did birth certificates and then personal IDs and later different documents. I was wondering as to—you mentioned it was in terms of budget what you could afford really determined what was the order it went in, but that is directly related I think as to how the processes are different and why one process might be cheaper than another in terms of making it less manual. So I was wondering if you could just speak about why

certain processes are cheaper than others. What really determines how much a process costs?

YARVAS: *For example, the birth certificate doesn't cost very much because it is simply just a paper and you have a program which provides it. It is a very simple procedure, doesn't cost very much. That is for the birth certificate. But when it comes to IDs, you have different items which you use. For example you use plastic and you use something else to cover it, laminate. These items cost very much. You need a different printer for the ID, a special printer for IDs and it costs very much. Also this printer requires ink and ribbons and all of these are included in the list of costs. Also if you can consider when it comes to IDs you need colors. It is not black and white, it is colored ink.*

There is a huge difference between black and white and colors in terms of costs. Does that answer your question?

IYER: Yes.

YARVAS: *So when you move to the passport procedure the printer you need for passports has a different price and it is much higher. Also the passport itself used to be printed in Europe by international companies so this was very—so there is a huge difference between the costs of a birth certificate, a computerized birth certificate and a computerized passport. Also they used items, materials for the passport which are of the finest quality in the world which is 3M laminate, confirmed laminate.*

Also when we started developing the passports we looked for standards that would deter the fabrication of the passports. So for example, if you look back at the tender we offered at the time you would find standards for protection against chemical items, against steam, against everything so that it couldn't be fabricated. We had always the security perspective on this. Every part of this would cost a price so that's why it is very complicated.

IYER: So the way I see it in each process there are certain commonalities. You have the presentation of inputs of documentation to indicate, prove who you are essentially when it comes to getting a passport for example or when it comes to getting a birth certificate you still have to give certain inputs into the process. Then you have data entry which you stated was very simple. Then you have the creation of the document itself within the department and last but not least you have the distribution of the document to the citizen.

I was wondering if you could reflect on which of these stages was exactly computerized. I mean I understand that data entry and the creation of the document were what were mainly influenced by the computerization, but to what extent was the reviewing of inputs computerized? Was that still something that was manually done?

YARVAS: *When it was done in a manual manner any citizen who would fill in an application they would go back to his file. He had, in fact, two files, a file in the passport department and a file for the civil status. So when we started the computerization process we applied this way. Instead of having—so when we started the computerization process we would have this file computerized so that you would have this data from the file entered into the computer, in the main server. So once you entered the national number for the citizen, you would have all the information. When we started the computerization process the employee only uses your national number and he enters it into the computer and he has all of*

your information. He doesn't have to ask for your mother's name and your father's name, etcetera.

IYER: I understand now. So one question I have, we're nearing the end now, one question I have is, when it comes to employees, you mentioned you had to have a massive training program of employees. I was wondering from what I understand, civil service procedures in terms of hiring and firing here in Jordan are quite difficult to work with. In some sense, was there any way that hiring procedures for example changed because now there were new requirements in terms of what employees in the department needed to know, they needed to know how to deal with computers. When you were hiring new employees was this something that was taken into account or were new employees hired according to the previous rules and then simply trained upon entering the department?

YARVAS: *So hiring and firing how we changed it and how we take into consideration their skills regarding computers.*

IYER: Just hiring first.

YARVAS: *Okay, that's number one and you're asking if for example we appoint someone and then we train him on the computer or we essentially employ people who already know.*

IYER: [Indecipherable] based on—.

YARVAS: *I am talking about my time. We need for example a certain number of employees for example when it comes to data entry. We would write conditions and qualifications and announce the vacancy. For example on publishing this announcement the Civil Service Bureau would send us, for example we have five vacancies, they would send us twenty applicants. We would make them sit for a test, written tests, oral test, interviews. You understand?*

IYER: Yes.

YARVAS: *We take into consideration experience, degrees, personality. People who would achieve the highest grades among these twenty would be selected. Now we appoint them. I am going back to the point I already mentioned in which we established a committee for planning and development and training. This committee is tasked with giving these newly appointed employees lectures on laws regarding, laws of nationality, citizenship, the laws on passports and the laws on civil status. They would familiarize them with the legislation. Because even if this employee is only tasked with data entry, at the end it means he is dealing with these procedures according to the law.*

So now when these employees are newly appointed, they are given training courses on all the procedures including passports and civil status from A to Z. Afterwards they are trained by the head of the computer department within the department. They are trained on computers and the mechanisms of work for a month; this training course would take a month. That is the initial phase of the appointment because they are still not selected for a certain post. They are just trained and trained and trained before the distribution of posts.

We published a guidebook on the procedures and the applications and that applies to all the procedures which the department carries out. This was given to the employees to review it and study it, this guidebook. After these training

courses take place, after they complete the training course, they would sit for another exam. They had to achieve 90 out of 100. A successful candidate would achieve 90 and above. People who would achieve less than 90 would be re-trained; they would go for the training courses once again. You would be surprised, why 90 specifically. It's 90 because the employee in this department cannot make mistakes. This mistake would cost him very much because if he, for example, enters data that is not accurate for the date of birth for a citizen, or the national number or name, that would cause so much trouble for the citizen. So these employees have to be very accurate because they can't make mistakes.

IYER: So one question I have is related to the national number. You mentioned that during computerization what was new was you could just enter the national number and get all the inform. From what I understand Mr. Nasouh Marzouqa also used the national number to pioneer certain ideas. I was wondering if you could speak a little bit about how processes have depended on the national number and how the national number was integrated into processes at the department.

YARVAS: *It is a ten-digit number. I am talking about the time before 2000. The first three digits from the left are about the year of birth. Then you would have a number to indicate the sex or the gender, female or male. Then you would have other digits to tell the date of birth for each year. So we changed this pattern because we had problems. We changed this pattern because it had many problems. When it comes to, for example you could find similar numbers if you don't notice the difference. That's number one and number two because when we—remember when we talked about problems when it comes to 2000 and computers and how we were going to deal—.*

IYER: [inaudible]

YARVAS: *Sometimes there were people, there were cases of people who would go to the court and change the date of birth, the year of birth. So if you for example depended on this for the national number, for the three digits, for the year of birth, this would change. Some people would change it in the courts. So part of the job was also to improve the legislation, to amend the legislation that governs this sector instead of just computerization. So these people would face difficulties because when they went to any department they would think that they were fabricated. So instead of finding this contradiction, they would change the national number. But this is a wrong policy because the philosophy beyond the national number is that this is a number that you would carry from your birth until death. It doesn't have to change, it can't change.*

So he says even after death it won't change, this is reserved for Deepa for example. So they changed the pattern on which they decide the national number. They kept it ten digits. They changed the pattern. Do you want to know the details about this? They started with—it means the national number for the Jordanian citizen will stay for like 1000 years now.

IYER: So this was something that was done nationally, not within this department?

YARVAS: *But it was responsible for it.*

IYER: Did it influence this department? Was this department responsible for enacting this change?

YARVAS: *The pattern of the national number?*

- IYER: Yes.
- YARVAS: *This has to do with the policy of the state as a whole but it was a suggestion made by the department. The Council of Ministers formed a committee. The committee was comprised of people working in the department and other departments that have to do with demographics. It was a meeting which was attended by representatives and deputies of so many ministries and departments and they discussed the different patterns of national numbers and afterwards they took a decision to implement the suggestion of the department.*
- IYER: On question I have is before Mr. Marzouqa the national number was not at all linked to the files within the department is that true?
- YARVAS: *Not at all—*
- IYER: Yes, I just want confirmation on when the department started using national numbers to link its files.
- YARVAS: *Yes, it wasn't implemented. He is not sure about the exact date but it is somewhere between 1991 and 1992.*
- IYER: Can you just quickly tell a little bit about what the passports of 2002 specifically addressed?
- YARVAS: *Passports?*
- IYER: I'm sorry never mind, let's move one. When did you specifically leave the department?
- YARVAS: *You mean when did I resign or retire?*
- IYER: Yes.
- YARVAS: *It was in April, 7th of April, 2005.*
- IYER: Can you speak a little bit about how legislation was changed over your tenure? I mean you mentioned there was a law in 2002 and that one of the department's responsibilities was for influencing legislation. So I was wondering if you can speak a little bit about how legislation has changed.
- YARVAS: *Okay, it is important to note that when the legislation was issued it was meant to address the manual procedures. When the computerization process took place a lot of these procedures had to be changed because they were no longer necessary or took place. So it means following the computerization process the procedures they followed were inconsistent with the procedures mentioned in the law, in the stipulations of the law.*
- For example, when – because we already mentioned that we have 74 offices – for example each office would have a civil file or civil documents for people in that district. People registered in that office, for citizens who were registered with that office. So for example a person living in Zarqa would have to go for his official information and his official documents for this office only. So if he moves to Aqaba they don't have the information about him in the offices of Aqaba. But after computerization process the main server or all of the offices would have on civil file for all of the people of all of the offices. So if you go to any of these*

offices they would just enter your national number and they would know the information about you and offer him the service he is asking for. Previously if I'm registered with Zarqa I should go only to the office of Zarqa because that's where they keep my file.

IYER: I see. Now I'd like to ask you, how do you measure success in terms of what the main successes of your tenure were. What measurements either formal or informal would you use to determine what worked well and what didn't during your time?

YARVAS: *What do you mean formal and informal? Do you mean as statistics numbers?*

IYER: Yes, and informally just in terms of if you could say what you feel your major accomplishments have been. An example of a formal number would be, for example, how did the time it takes to get a document changed during your tenure—or how did the number of documents issued become more?

YARVAS: *We haven't tackled all the developments when it comes to performance because, for example, there were so many procedures that were changed and amended and developed and they had an influence on other ministries' performance.*

When you talk about development you talk about a series of procedures, a long list of procedures. For example, let's take Amman office. They used to have six printers and six employees. They used to have twelve typewriters for passports, six typewriters with six employees who would enter the information in Arabic and six employees and six typewriters who would enter it in English. But after the computerization process they would have four computers that would make up for the twelve and the four employees would enter the information in Arabic and English.

It is obvious that the human mistakes could have an influence on the issuance of passports because it was obvious that you should take into consideration that people could enter wrong information for the names in English or the names in Arabic. A huge part of their job was to address the mistakes that were previously made during the manual input of information.

You can say a larger effort was done just to correct the mistakes done previously when they used to use manual ways to enter information. You have to make sure that we did this effort to correct the information because one mistake would affect generations of people. When you have correct information it would also have a positive impact on these generations. That's why a mistake in this department is not acceptable. So when we wanted to address the names in English, we had a committee to study the issue and we wanted for example to work on a dictionary or something like that with the names of citizens and how they're written in English.

We consulted the Ministry of Education because we realized that the Ministry of Education when they issue certificates, which is the national exam as I already explained. When they issue these certificates, they write the names in English. So we asked for their help. They gave us assistance as to how to write, for example, Mohammed in English, how to write Ziad in English, how they already wrote it, because they used to do it. So we took a disc from them and we had employee at the department to analyze the names.

We had an employee at the department to analyze the names. For example, if they realized that 90% of Mohammed is written M-o-h-a, for example m-m-e-d,

they would accept this as the standard for Mohammed. So now, when you enter the name in Arabic to the computer, the computer would have it translated into English with this spelling automatically.

IYER: Standardized, so how—?

YARVAS: *Yes, standardized. After observing this case I decided we had to do something about it. For example I would find so many employees who had nothing to do and you would find people waiting, so many people waiting for the accountant because the procedures themselves were quite hard because the accountant had to have three copies of the paper with which he had the name of the citizen, how much he is paying and all this information, he would have a copy for the accountant, a copy for the citizen and a copy to keep on the desk. So that would take a lot of time.*

I realized that so many people were waiting for the accountant to pay the fees while so many other employees were doing nothing, one of the suggestions was to increase the number of accountants so it would be easier. But even increasing the number of accountants would mean additional costs because you'd be paying them salaries. I realized there would be a more efficient suggestion, which is instead of writing these papers they would have tickets, tickets which had the fees mentioned in it. Because after all the fees they paid were stipulated by the law so it was clear to everyone how much they would pay. So they had tickets. Do you understand now?

IYER: What did they do with these?

YARVAS: *[end of file one]. We had to, of course, address the Ministry of Finance. So we asked the permission from the Minister of Finance to use the tickets instead of writing papers on the issue. Instead of having crowds of people waiting for the accountant, because previously the accountant used to write a receipt which has the name of the citizen, national number and what application he is paying for, the fees, etcetera, and he would have three copies as I mentioned. So now they have a ticket.*

This ticket has, for example, a book of tickets, we would give it to the accountant in the morning and it has a certain number of tickets and we know how much it costs. So this is a way for accountability. We know, for example, if you give this number of tickets to citizens, you should have this amount of money by the end of the day. That's number one.

Number two, we have two copies of the tickets. I mean two parts. One for which you pay and the other one is linked to your application. So when they enter the number of the ticket they know which citizen it is for instead of having the name and the national number, etcetera. So that saved a lot of time and effort for both citizens and the accountant. But you understand they have two copies of the ticket. It means one copy is with the citizen and another one is linked to his application, is attached to the application.

IYER: So this reduced the capacity for corruption essentially.

YARVAS: *Yes, yes. It saved also a lot of time because previously this employee, for example, if he issued 400 receipts, he would have to put them in something called the cashier's book or something like that and he would have to send them to the Ministry of Finance so they could double check for accountability. That*

means, previously we used to spend three and four days just checking everything after that. So now this document is shortened.

The employee, the accountant would just issue, say 100 tickets and this 2000 JDs, this generates 2000 JDs. That takes five minutes from the Ministry of Finance to check it instead of three days just checking the receipts and the books, etcetera. So three days or five minutes. We know that annually we would issue, for example—previously they used to have these notebooks for the receipts. We would have to publish, so publishing these books, having these books for the receipts, on which you would write the receipts would cost us 14,000 JDs a year while the cost of these tickets was 1,200.

This is a simple, basic example on how the procedures were made more efficient and less costly.

IYER: Could you give any other examples of such creative solutions which you might have implemented? I'd love to hear about such innovative techniques.

YARVAS: *We also served other departments which we could serve. For example the military training department, they used to come, to approach us, to the department and ask for statistics on people who were asked for military service. Also for the Department of General Statistics, we would give them the number of births, etcetera. Even other departments would ask for statistics. It was very easy to give them statistics because everything was computerized.*

IYER: I'd like to conclude by asking—this is just a question that we normally ask at the end of our interviews to elicit reflections, but if you were asked to write a chapter in a book about managing a department that deals with official documents like civil status documents and passport documents, what would be the main lessons that you would include in such a chapter?

YARVAS: *On public sector reform?*

IYER: A book on managing a department related to official documents like passports.

YARVAS: *At the beginning you have to focus—it took us a large effort, a tremendous effort, to address the mistakes of previous administrations. That's number one. The other thing was—also according to the growing number of citizens in Jordan, you can't always abide by bureaucratic procedures because when someone has a problem you have to send them to the legal department, etcetera, etcetera. This is a problem, bureaucracy is a problem. Sometimes routine can be a problem and bureaucracy can be a problem.*

For example, we realized there is a problem with the accounting system and they had a creative solution to do that. This had an impact, a positive impact on the performance of the department and also on the performance of the Ministry of Finance because we saved them time instead of doubly checking all those books.

We have 74 offices. The major offices were completely computerized and we did not have an annual file, while the other sub-offices, minor offices or something like that, they would still work with annual files.

IYER: What do you mean by annual files?

YARVAS: *It means the annual file in which you register citizen and all the information about the citizen is kept in this file. That is where we go for a reference, for the information about the citizen. But that is what I was talking about when computerizing this file so that all the information can be found in the computer instead of going back to the annual file. You understand? It is the reference for all the information on the citizen.*

At that time we had almost 40 offices that still worked with annual files. They worked for seven working hours. At the time there were offices that did not have workloads, for example, they would deal with ten citizens a day, that's it. We studied working hours. We have officially seven working hours but in fact they're just working for two hours and the remaining hours they're not doing anything. So computerizing these offices would cost a lot.

IYER: How did you conduct a study of the working hours in the branches and did you get them to self-report their working hours? I'm just a bit curious about that aspect of it.

YARVAS: *We have a monthly statistic on all the offices.*

IYER: Computerized? Do they log in their hours?

YARVAS: *No. We judge by the number of applications they finished.*

IYER: I see.

YARVAS: *We see for example that you finished ten applications and it has taken ten minutes so it means you worked for only—.*

IYER: So they have a system that looks at times and hours basically?

YARVAS: *You have a general overview because you know that this office, for example, from 8 a.m. until 3 p.m. has issued ten documents. So you have a glimpse of what they're doing. You can personally say it has taken them, for example, ten minutes to do this.*

IYER: I see.

YARVAS: *This is obvious how long does an application take so you can judge by the number of applications.*

IYER: You take the number of applications and—.

YARVAS: *We take the number of applications and we say, for example, you have ten applications in this office, so it means the employees.*

IYER: [Inaudible].

YARVAS: *Because we knew the number of minutes it takes for each application. It's obvious, you don't need in analyzed to know. For example this application will take ten minutes so you worked for 100 minutes and that's it. It means if you want to computerize these offices it will exceed the budget you have allocated for the department. But there was an inconsistency we had to address. You can't have annual and computerized procedures. So we had a problem. But the solution could not be computerizing the whole thing because it would exceed the budget. During the meeting of the planning committee, I asked the head of the*

computer department if there was a possibility to connect more than one office on one modem. He said yes, that was possible.

Instead of computerizing all of these offices, we would have for example three to four offices linked to one modem. Instead of the costs for each office there would be three or four merged into one cost. We gave them a printer for issuance of civil status documents. That was a problem to address because we couldn't have, for example, people working on annual procedures and people working on computerized procedures. But, at the same time we did not have the budget that would cover the computerization of the entire, all of the offices so that is why we linked three to four offices to one modem just to cut the costs. [interruption, end of file two.]

Also you could control, you could have them under control from the main server. We have it under control now. It is linked to the main server and you have it computerized but without having the same cost. Previously we were linked by telephones, normal phones, dial up. This would effect, of course, the speed, the performance. I addressed the Ministry of Communication but also they had a problem with it and they did not know how to solve it. I talked to three different people at the time because they changed their posts. There were three different people in this post. Then afterwards we could find a solution and we could link it using our lead up, from dial up to leads line which is supposed to give them fast capacity from 250—I don't remember, a certain number.

All of these issue required a tremendous effort. It wasn't just easy to do all of these technical issues also. The administration and the management, it is very obvious that the simplest step is taking a decision but the hardest one is to follow up on it and to see how it is implemented.

IYER: One or two final questions. You mentioned that there was a long period of correcting the mistakes of previous administrations when it came to data entry.

YARVAS: Yes.

IYER: I was wondering how successful was this, were 100% of mistakes corrected?

YARVAS: *it's not optional; you have to have it 100% corrected. To overcome the bureaucracy and routines I implemented the open door policy. When it comes to the open door policy, it is not just a cheesy statement or something like that to say, it is not that a citizen can walk in your office and file a complaint or complain about something and then that's it. It has to do with the procedures. For example, if a citizen has a mistake in his information, previously it used to take him over a week to address it according to the bureaucracy and the routine procedures.*

During my time and according to my vision of the problem, citizens who had mistakes could walk in my office and give me an overview of the problem and explain what the problem was to me. I wouldn't take a week to decide, I would take a decision immediately. So that I would save time and effort and everything for the citizens. They wouldn't have to wait to see what happens; I would just take a decision immediately. That is what had to be done in this case. I had the authority because I was the head of—. This policy saved years of time that it could take to correct information.

So that applied to—in this case that is explained this way. When I was appointed the head of the department we took charge of correcting the mistakes. How we would realize it was when citizens come into issue, for example, a document or

something like that, they would find out that there is a mistake regarding their information. So they would know that there is a problem and they would walk in my office and I would take an immediate decision. So that is how we discovered the mistakes; that's how we know that there is a mistake. When citizens come and there is something wrong, there is an inconsistency, that is how we know there is a mistake and they address it immediately.

When I was appointed we put this timeframe of ten years to correct all of the mistakes. Ten years was not a random choice, because passports are issued for five years and they're renewed afterwards. Also national IDs were issued for ten years. So that is why we put ten years as a timeframe so that each of these citizens who have documents issued today would have the time, for example, they would maybe need something after a long period of time, so that's why we had this timeframe, it was not a random choice.

Also when it comes to the legislation, we proposed this amendment to give the authority of changing the last name to a committee within the department of civil status and passports department. But previously this authority was given to the judicial branch and it took a month or two months. But according to the amendments of the legislation, which they proposed, or which they suggested it was made according to the decision of the committee within the department.

IYER: Were these amendments accepted?

YARVAS: Yes.

IYER: In what year?

YARVAS: *2002. So this committee would meet every day to see what applications, what documents they had, to decide on them. This is a committee to correct, to change the last names, which was chaired by the general director.*

IYER: My final question, to end on a nice note. You were at the department for nine years, is that correct?

YARVAS: Yes.

IYER: If you could list the major changes that occurred at that time in a very succinct way, what do you think were the major successes or changes that you witnessed during your nine years at the department?

YARVAS: *As I already explained, computerization. It means computerization of the department with the exception of the archives, but also in 2004 we had a proposal for the electronic archiving of files but I don't know if it was implemented. That was before I left, they had a proposal. Issuance of national IDs, computerized national IDs which were used during the elections. The passports which are read in an electronic way, OCR.*

According to the Constitution Arabic is the official language of the state. So all of the documents were issued in Arabic with the exception of the passports which were issued in Arabic and English. But after having this dictionary and this glossary of names, how they were written in English, etcetera, we would have all the documents issued in Arabic and English. We decided to issue documents in both languages because that would save time and money for the citizens. Very often when you issue a birth certificate or any official document in Arabic this citizen would have to translate it once again if he is trying to submit this

document as an application to a foreign country, immigration, studying abroad, marriage of a foreign woman or a foreign man, etcetera. He would have to submit this applications and documents to a foreign country.

So when they issue it in Arabic he would have to retranslate it and that would cost him a lot. Previously to accept a translated document, the translator would have to go to the court and he was have to say that he translated it in a trustworthy manner, etcetera so that would take time and money of course. So as a service to the citizen they would translate it. So as a service to this citizen instead of having to issue it in Arabic and then take all these procedures, I asked the head of the computer department, within the department, to have a program to write or issue documents in both Arabic and English.

We started with the birth certificates but then we took gradual steps towards all the other documents. So now we issue the documents in Arabic and English in an official manner and we would have it notarized by the department because it is issued by the department instead of having it translated somewhere else and then having the translator go to court and then saying I translated it. That previously would cost 20 JDs. So previously it would cost a citizen 20 JDs to have it translated and all these procedures apart from the time it would take him. Now in the department when we issue the document in Arabic and English we would charge one JD.

IYER: Thank you so much.

YARVAS: Thank you.