

Human resources: annual report

Report by the Secretariat

1. This report presents information relating to activities that have taken place so far in 2011 in the area of human resources management. Information on the staffing profile of the Secretariat is issued separately.¹

STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

2. The Secretariat's Department of Human Resources Management has contributed to the process of WHO reforms for a healthy future by designing and making changes to the Organization's human resources practices that should increase the effectiveness of WHO's work. In particular, proposals have been made on ways to create a more adaptable workforce and to foster and sustain high performance through improved management processes. Approaches to workforce planning with a range of mechanisms for providing services have been proposed that allow for flexibility in responding to different and changing requirements of programmes. These moves would be integrated into a framework for mobility and rotation of staff and enhanced staff development and learning.

SELECTION AND RECRUITMENT

3. The Secretariat continues to apply a standardized assessment procedure to the selection and recruitment of heads of WHO country offices through use of the global roster for heads of those offices as well as for their career and personal development. At the time of writing, 55 vacancies had been advertised to individuals on that roster. The support of the Regional Directors has been essential for the success of the process and their feedback plays a major role in ensuring that candidates are chosen who are most likely to be able to meet the range of current and foreseen challenges facing heads of country offices.

4. In 2011, qualified persons serving at P.6/D.1 and D.2 levels in the African Region were assessed. All 17 who were invited attended an assessment centre at Brazzaville in September 2011, with proceedings conducted in English and French. More staff will attend such assessment centres in other locations in the near future. The Organization has taken over more responsibility from the consulting company previously contracted to organize and run the centres.

¹ Document EB130/26 Add.1.

MOBILITY AND ROTATION

5. There has been a significant amount of movement of staff between duty stations and from one position to another at the same location. This mobility has resulted from the systematic approach to reassigning staff in some regions, particularly the African Region and the Western Pacific Region, the use of the Global Roster for Heads of WHO Country Offices, and the reassignment of staff whose positions were abolished for programmatic and financial reasons.

6. Work on developing further global rosters has continued. The Administrative Officer roster, designed to fill vacancies at P.2 to P.4 levels, was advertised through an internal vacancy notice and attracted more than 560 applicants.

7. A generic epidemiologist post description has been prepared by a group of representatives of various offices. This will be the first technical, specialist function to be covered by a global roster.

OUTREACH AND DIVERSITY

8. Between 1 August 2010 and 31 July 2011, 12 Junior Professional Officers were recruited, with equal numbers of women and men. The recruitment of nine further Junior Professional Officers is under way.

9. In 2010, WHO provided internship opportunities to close to 600 students (of whom 73% were female). The intern programme provides an excellent source for new talent, and the make-up of the intern population is in line with the Organization's goals on workforce diversity.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

10. The increased use of generic, or model, job descriptions across the Organization serves to reduce workload and processing time for reviews of individual positions and also greatly facilitates a smoother approach to rotation and mobility by ensuring the existence of a larger pool of comparable or identical post descriptions. The increased coherence between posts makes them accessible to larger numbers of applicants. Organizational design also plays an important role in moving towards more aligned structures in both regional and country offices, and the headquarters-based classification team has provided input, directly and through visits, to a select number of offices, thereby ensuring a more consistent approach across WHO.

11. The current climate of constrained resources has heightened the need to align the strategic and programme objectives to the financial environment so that the Organization can continue to work towards its main objectives. Thus, some 30 departments at headquarters have undertaken a major review of their strategic direction and the associated organizational structures, resulting in revised organigrams and job descriptions.

12. In some 20 cases, the restructuring has been substantial and necessitated an exercise in matching existing staffing profiles to the needs of the new structure. The restructuring exercises have also resulted in many positions being abolished and, so far, more than 150 staff members have not been able to be placed. Efforts are under way to place as many of these staff members as possible in other positions.

13. Extensive support measures have been put in place for staff members who have to leave the Organization. Career-counselling sessions have taken place with individual staff and the support will continue into 2012. An outplacement firm has been engaged to help to reinforce the skills of staff members who are leaving the Organization and assist them in more effectively looking for alternative employment opportunities. A greatly improved and expanded Intranet site for career development was launched with a range of online resources and tips to help affected staff members to take stock and plan their futures. WHO has also been working with other organizations in the United Nations system to encourage their favourable consideration of staff members who are having to leave WHO. Within the context of re-organization, clinics on writing curriculum vitae have been organized for all affected departments, including outposted offices. Between July and September 2011, 32 workshops (in English and French) had been held; more are planned for the period to the end of the year.

MANAGING AND DEVELOPING STAFF

14. **Pilot and electronic Performance Management and Development Systems.** The pilot Performance Management and Development project was tested across the Organization on more than 750 staff members. Its aim was to reinforce the performance culture of the Organization towards better organizational performance and results and greater cost-effectiveness. The project, whose design is based on qualitative and quantitative research in 2010, looks at performance, accountability and career growth – pillars of the organizational reform. It entails behavioural interventions that focus on attitudes and behaviours underlying performance management. The Performance Management and Development System tool has been improved. The 12-month long pilot will be evaluated when it ends in July 2012. Regional offices are being supported to make the transition to the electronic Performance Management and Development System, whose introduction will enable monitoring and reporting of compliance and final ratings by department and of other critical aspects of performance management, such as development and learning.

15. An interagency workshop on “Innovations in Rewards and Recognition and Means to Address Underperformance” was held with the aim of laying the groundwork for an Organization-wide policy in the next biennium on an approach that is integral to high performance.

16. The range of global development opportunities has been expanded, with priority given to country-level activities in line with the proposed WHO reforms¹ through greater use of e-learning. Highlights include the following.

- **Professional administrative learning programme.** Ten workshops have been held in three regional offices and four at headquarters, and by the end of 2011 a further two workshops will have taken place in the two remaining regional offices. Administrative staff from G.4 to P.6 levels attended the workshops. To date, 345 staff members, with 104 from 59 country offices and 241 from regional offices and headquarters, have participated.
- Work has begun on an e-learning **global induction and orientation programme** for both staff members new to the Organization and existing staff members. The content and format are being developed in collaboration with all regions. The course will complement and not replace other induction-related activities, and a CD and Intranet version are expected to be

¹ See document EBSS/2/2, paragraph 156.

available in the first half of 2012. In addition, the module will also be made available through a new platform for e-learning that is being introduced.

- Another e-learning tool is a programme on **writing effectively for WHO**, which has been revised and updated with a module on proposal writing. With an individual tutor assigned to each learner, this course represents an excellent example of interactive e-learning. So far there have been 128 participants, 81 being staff members from country offices and the rest from regional offices and headquarters.
- **Language learning.** Although it has been a long-standing policy to encourage staff members to become proficient in two or more of the official languages, those in some regional and several country offices have had no or limited access to language training. Following a pilot programme in 2009, the Regional Office for Europe started earlier this year a six-month distance language training programme for its staff. At headquarters, staff members are offered language training at the Organization's expense in all six official languages. As the contract with the language training provider came to an end in August 2011, a request for proposal was launched at the end of 2010 as a joint exercise between WHO, ILO, ITU and WIPO – the first joint bidding process for the provision of language training in the United Nations. The main benefits include economies of scale, optimized class sizes and costs, and better administrative support from the service provider.
- The **basic negotiations skills** programme is now being offered online, an approach that also provides savings on face-to-face training. The module has been customized to include case studies that are relevant to public health. The face-to-face advanced negotiations workshop has been run in all major WHO offices.
- **Global Learning Programme.** Competencies of staff members throughout the Organization have continued to be strengthened in 2011 through the targeted Global Learning Programme, which, in relation to human resources staff, focuses on improving communications and managing change. A global learning programme is defined as one that is relevant to multiple organizational units in different geographical locations or an identified target audience across multiple locations; 22 proposals for such programmes, at a total cost of US\$ 9 million, were approved in 2010-2011 for funding by the Global Learning Committee. Programme owners report progress on a quarterly basis to that Committee. Although some global activities have been postponed owing to limited human resources, most programmes have been successfully implemented.

17. One of the lessons learnt from the global approach to learning and development is that increased collaboration is needed between the proposers of learning projects in order to avoid content overlap and to ensure that programmes can be made available at a time to suit the target audience. The design and implementation of a global e-learning strategy will be a priority for 2012-2013.

18. The global Staff Development Fund continues to be administered to support learning activities Organization-wide and in the major offices. The allocation of funds is determined by the Global Learning Committee, based on the submission of proposals every biennium. Support for secretariat functions is provided to the learning committees in headquarters and major offices, with emphasis on ensuring a coordinated approach to learning and development across the Organization.

COMPENSATION AND UNITED NATIONS COMMON SYSTEM

19. The Secretariat has continued work at the normative level on bringing policies and practices into line with those of the United Nations common system and on clarifying the provisions of the WHO e-Manual. The purpose is to ensure consistency of implementation and to provide a cost-effective basis for the management of certain processes. Amendments have been made in provisions related to assignment grant, travel, removal and non-removal, policy on the employment of retired persons, minimum age of eligibility for the education grant, and medical evacuation for an extended period.

SERVICE EXCELLENCE

20. The human resources data-quality strategy was implemented, and its objectives had been reached by October 2011. Validation and verification exercises were undertaken across all WHO offices. Staff members checked or updated their personal and family information in the Global Management System, and human resources staff and administrative focal points undertook extensive cross-checking exercises to ensure the accuracy of assignment data in all human resources areas. Audits were undertaken to ensure the accuracy of the records of leave and absences. Stringent procedures for monitoring and internal control as well as continuous training on human resources administration were introduced in the Global Service Centre in order to enable regular monitoring and maintain data quality.

21. As a complement to the work on ensuring data quality, training of staff on the Global Management System in areas related to human resources continued in 2011 with additions and updates to the online training tool for the System.

22. Standard operating procedures have been established and incorporated into the human resources section of the WHO e-Manual so as to clarify roles and responsibilities in the new decentralized environment and to facilitate understanding of administrative processes.

23. In terms of human resources management, the reporting tools in the Global Management System for constitutional bodies, management and staff members are being enhanced and are expected to be available before the end of 2011. These improvements will facilitate analysis and decision-making by management at different levels of the Organization. Revised software, automated notifications to staff members on their entitlements and obligations, and better standard communications continue to improve information exchanges and increase users' satisfaction.

24. To ensure the successful introduction of the Global Management System in the African Region, the Global Service Centre has formed a dedicated team to provide all the necessary human-resources administrative services. Communication has been improved, with regular updates to staff members on the status of their requests. To track the performance of the Global Service Centre, a system has been introduced to monitor the turnaround time of each transaction.

POLICY AND HUMAN RESOURCES E-MANUAL

25. Experience with the former human resources e-Manual was valuable in the development and design of the comprehensive new WHO e-Manual, and a revised and expanded section on human resources was included in the WHO e-Manual in September 2011.

26. In continued work on the administration of justice, the Secretariat has implemented the revised policy on the prevention of harassment at WHO. The policy reinforces the Organization's commitment to a work environment free from harassment, in which staff members at all levels avoid behaviour that may create an atmosphere of hostility and intimidation. The policy also provides a process for the consideration of claims of harassment and due process for all concerned.

27. The Secretariat also continues to implement an informal means of reviewing administrative actions or decisions, with a view to resolving matters at an early stage, before the initiation of the formal appeals process. This review process has proven to be successful in defusing conflicts, and has promoted a more positive and constructive work environment, facilitating the evaluation of management decisions and enabling the administration to examine issues of accountability where necessary, as well as identifying potential shortcomings in rules and procedures.

28. Currently, ethical issues are treated by the Organization in different entities: the Office of the Director-General, the Department of Human Resources Management, the Office of the Legal Counsel and the Office of Internal Oversight Services. The establishment of a dedicated ethics unit is being considered as a key element of the WHO managerial reform process. An online training programme on ethics, which will be mandatory for all staff members, is currently being prepared in collaboration with UNAIDS, on the basis of a programme already in place in PAHO.

HEALTH AND MEDICAL SERVICES

29. These services provides preventive, medical and psychosocial care to all WHO staff members, in particular giving support during the current period of restructuring. In addition, the team continues to provide health education sessions on various topics, in particular stress management, first aid, HIV in the workplace, and smoking cessation.

30. The management of stress in the workplace and staff psychosocial support and advice are provided through stress management group sessions and individual medical, psychosocial and psychological consultations. Medical and psychosocial support to staff members in order to facilitate their return to work is also provided following extended sick leave absence.

31. WHO closely cooperates with other United Nations bodies and contributes to the harmonization of health policies and practices in the United Nations system.

32. In collaboration with technical departments, United Nations medical emergency response teams and the United Nations Critical Incident Stress Management Unit, the health and medical teams at headquarters and regional levels provided medical and counselling support to WHO staff members and their families affected by traumatic incidents such as the nuclear accident at Fukushima, Japan, and the bomb attack on the United Nations building in Abuja.

33. Following the launch of the Secretariat's global policy for occupational health and safety at work, the health and medical team took the lead in organizing consultations aimed at defining the role and responsibility of the headquarters' Committee on Health and Safety at Work and identifying the activities to be run in the coming year.

34. A global web-based medical database has been implemented in the regional offices for the Americas, South-East Asia and Europe and IARC in order to facilitate the monitoring of the health of staff members and the management of any illness or conditions.

ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

35. The Board is invited to take note of this report.

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