

Human resources: annual report

Report by the Secretariat

1. This report presents information relating to priorities and activities during 2008 in human resources management. A preview of the Secretariat's staffing profile at 30 September 2008 will be issued separately.¹

TALENT MANAGEMENT

2. Talent management involves deliberate actions to attract, develop and retain people with the aptitude and competencies required in order to meet organizational needs. The results of the Global Staff Survey on Recruitment and Retention in the United Nations common system (carried out by the International Civil Service Commission in 2007) are being used as one element to develop WHO's policies in this area. From a preliminary analysis of the findings presented in the recently received International Civil Service Commission report, there is an indication that a marked focus on staff development and performance management will be needed. Retention in itself is not seen as a major issue in the United Nations system, including within WHO, as there is little attrition, apart from normal retirement. There is some evidence that the priorities identified by staff are more motivationally based, for example, relating to lack of opportunities for professional growth. The raw data for WHO have been made available; data analysis will be carried out and a further report made to the Executive Board at its 125th session.

ASSESSMENT CENTRES

3. WHO has been monitoring the use of assessment centres in the selection and development of staff. Such centres are used by a number of organizations, both inside the United Nations system and beyond. Usually, an assessment centre is used to provide a mix of individual interviews, psychometric testing and practical exercises in order to evaluate communication, negotiation, team working and leadership skills. Such centres have proven to be very effective in reviewing the competencies of both candidates and staff. It has been decided to use an assessment centre, organized by an external company, on a pilot basis, for the post of Director, Department of human resources management. This is scheduled to take place in December 2008, with all candidates shortlisted by the advisory selection panel invited to participate. The experience will be reviewed in order to determine whether a similar approach might be adopted for the selection of staff to fill other senior management posts and whether

¹ Document EB124/30 Add.1.

in the longer-term an assessment centre would be a useful tool for identifying development needs of staff in relation to higher-level openings within the Organization.

STREAMLINING OF RECRUITMENT

4. For some time the Organization has been encouraging programmes to use similar post descriptions that would allow advertisement and selection for more than one post. From early 2008, headquarters vacancy notices have featured an additional phrase, "Other similar positions at the same level may be filled from this vacancy notice". The approach is now used extensively and facilitates further recruitment from a vacancy notice where the advisory selection panel recommends more than one candidate.

5. This is part of a move towards the introduction of rosters for generic or very similar posts for which there is frequent recruitment. The Regional Office for South-East Asia has issued a number of vacancy notices for temporary opportunities in a number of programmes. The Regional Office for the Americas has issued a vacancy notice in order to establish a roster of pre-qualified candidates for PAHO/WHO Representatives. A similar global scheme for WHO Representatives in other regions, which will involve headquarters and regional staff in the selection process, is in the final stages of establishment. Generic post descriptions also exist for the jobs most in demand in the general service category at headquarters.

OUTREACH EFFORTS

6. The Organization is committed to reaching the widest possible range of qualified candidates for its vacancies. In addition to its long-standing targets in relation to gender and geographical distribution, WHO has been endeavouring to broaden the range of grade levels at which openings are advertised, especially in respect of grades P.3 and P.4. This should encourage applications from younger people. At the same time, efforts are being made to design jobs that are suitable for candidates with a variety of educational backgrounds and public health experience. The information material on the WHO employment web page has been revised to make the requirements for jobs at different levels clearer and to describe better the conditions of employment, including contract types.

7. Seven junior professional officers were recruited to WHO during the period from 1 January to 30 September 2008. The seven people concerned (four females and three males) were sponsored by six donor countries, Belgium, Germany, Finland, France, Italy and Republic of Korea. Six more junior professional officers (four females and two males) are to join WHO between 1 October and 31 December 2008, sponsored by France, Germany and Italy. The recruitment of 10 junior professional officers sponsored by Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Norway and Spain is underway and the successful candidates are expected to be in place by the end of 2008 or early 2009.

8. Efforts are being made to sponsor more available junior professional officer posts through the donor countries and to encourage those countries that have not yet sponsored any posts to join the programme. In addition, WHO has been active in encouraging donors to consider sponsoring nationals of developing countries as junior professional officers, as was the case for the Kenyan national sponsored by Belgium. This policy has been endorsed by the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit in its recent interagency review of the junior professional officer system.

9. At its third meeting, the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee asked that future human resources annual reports should provide information on the number of direct appointments made by the Director-General.¹ During the period under review, there were 13 such appointments: two involved ungraded officials, two at grade P.6, eight at grade P.5, and one at grade P.4. Five of these appointments involved nationals of underrepresented countries.

10. A review of the desirable geographical distribution ranges has been initiated. This is to take into account the changes in assessed contribution levels and national population changes, together with the inclusion of new Member States. It will also reflect the change in the total number of posts in WHO. The work will be finalized during 2009 after the new United Nations scale of assessments has been agreed by the General Assembly.

MANAGING AND DEVELOPING STAFF

11. A new induction programme for recent recruits is being piloted, with the aim of having a common and comprehensive induction system for new staff in all offices. Composed of four modules, the programme seeks to ensure that new staff understand the following: WHO as an organization; the responsibilities of a WHO staff member with respect to the code of conduct and principles of performance management; WHO's ways of working; the role of the governing bodies; key aspects of financial and human resource management; ways of communicating; and convening meetings and workshops. In addition, staff are briefed on settling into a new duty station, health insurance and pensions. The programme combines face-to-face briefing with online media. Following its pilot phase in headquarters, the programme will be modified as necessary before being deployed throughout the organization for local delivery.

12. The role of the heads of WHO country offices is central to the overall impact of WHO's work at country level; for this reason the development of their capacities constitutes a high priority for the Organization. In response to this, a programme has been designed to prepare all newly appointed heads for their diplomatic, political, and managerial responsibilities as well as to enhance their technical, communication and negotiation skills. The induction, training and mentoring programme takes place over a 12-month period, involving ongoing training and mentoring; the face-to-face induction event will be held twice a year, starting in April 2009.

PROVIDING A SUPPORTIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT

13. In the area of HIV/AIDS in the workplace, WHO continued to build the competence of staff through the implementation of the United Nations Learning Strategy on HIV/AIDS at headquarters and the WHO LIVES policy, which requires that all staff attend a learning session. The programme was expanded to cover the needs of adolescent children of staff. Relevant curricula were piloted and finalized and shared with counterparts in regional offices.

14. In the area of disability in the workplace, WHO contributed to the CEB HR Networking Group on Disabilities. At the internal level, WHO constituted the Task Force on Disability to support the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in force

¹ Document EB117/3.

since May 2008, promoting throughout the Organization design and implementation of programmes and projects taking into account the needs of people with disabilities.

IMPROVING DELIVERY OF HUMAN RESOURCES

15. In line with the intentions expressed in the annual report submitted to the Executive Board at its 122nd session,¹ during 2008 a full review to update and fine-tune all WHO's human resources management policies and procedures and the WHO Human Resources Manual was undertaken, leading to a single authoritative reference and information source on WHO's human resources management policies, procedures and training tools, which is known as the "HR e-Manual".

ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

16. The Executive Board is requested to note this report.

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¹ Document EB122/24, paragraphs 48 and 49.