

## Report on information technology

### Report by the Secretariat

1. At the nineteenth meeting of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board in January 2014, the Secretariat presented its first annual report on information technology and telecommunications.<sup>1</sup> This report is a response to the Committee's request to the Secretariat<sup>2</sup> to report on the progress of project implementation and costs and to highlight how information technology supports the work of the Organization.

2. The previous report stated that the Director-General has decided that information technology should focus on five key areas (Figure 1). The Secretariat has steadily pursued initiatives in modernizing systems, consolidating and streamlining areas to generate savings, setting the right processes and tools to increase staff productivity, and standardizing work across WHO offices.

**Figure 1. The mandate of information technology in WHO**



3. Resource constraints in recent years have limited the capabilities of the Organization's Information Technology and Telecommunications Department to deliver solutions at the desirable speed. The focus has consequently been on its operational role, rather than its function as a strategic enabler.

<sup>1</sup> Document EBPBAC19/4.

<sup>2</sup> See document EB134/3.

4. The Secretariat has developed a revised strategic direction to increase the capability of the Department and to support the Organization in several key initiatives, such as WHO reform, transformation of the Organization's global management system and its response to the outbreak of Ebola virus disease in west Africa.

## VISION, MISSION, STRATEGY AND TACTICS

5. Information technology is the delivery of both infrastructure and information systems supporting business processes – not merely the infrastructure aspect of the working environment (such as connectivity, communications, and workstations). The true value of information technology to the Organization will be realized by focusing on all these key areas, alongside the delivery of global shared services.

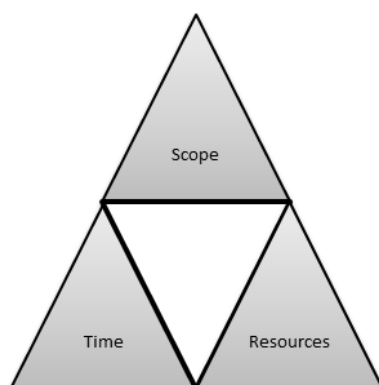
6. The **vision** of information technology in WHO is to be a world-class information technology organization and the partner of choice within the Secretariat to help achieve goals by leveraging information technologies.

7. The **mission** of information technology in WHO is to bring together the geographically dispersed workforce within the Secretariat, to collectively and cohesively deliver information management services that help the Organization achieve its goals.

8. To achieve the mission and work gradually towards becoming an excellent information technology organization, the **strategy** is to address several key result areas:

- **Staffing for success.** To deliver true value, the Department must have the right set-up. It is therefore critical that key functions, such as solution architecture, information security, business intelligence and a project management office (where there are currently still some gaps), are established and appropriately staffed.
- **Project management.** To deliver projects on time and on budget, it is vital that the “scope–time–resources” triangle of constraint (Figure 2) is managed. A centre of excellence in project management will allow proper capture of requests, assignment of capable project managers (and other resources) to agreed initiatives, and timely monitoring of financial and technical progress. Additionally, the right methods and tools, developed by the centre of excellence, will support project managers and teams in achieving their deliverables.

**Figure 2. Triangle of constraint**



- **Infrastructure and shared services.** Speed and efficiency in delivering information technology solutions are vital in enabling the Secretariat to be responsive to needs in a changing public health landscape. It is critical that a corporate approach is adhered to and that a corporate information technology team is used to deliver a solid and clear set of shared services. Given a catalogue of such services (see paragraph 11 below), duplication will be avoided and unnecessary parallel information technology spending in other technical units reduced.
- **Business process support.** Technical solutions are not only the means to improve delivery and increase output and productivity. More often than not, business units need to be advised and guided to review current processes, identify bottlenecks and remap processes to generate higher yield. Current (“as-is”) and future (“to-be”) processes need to be documented and, if possible, quantified before any information technology solution is identified. This will ensure cost-effectiveness in delivering the expected results. Information technology resources will be instrumental in advising business units to think about processes and systems as one cohesive solution.
- **Leadership.** Guidance and leadership are needed to increase communication and the “esprit de corps” of the information technology workforce in WHO, so that the vision and direction are shared and realized.

9. The immediate actions or tactics to support the strategy are the following:

- reinforce and support the global information technology operations team in Kuala Lumpur, to deliver services efficiently from a cost-effective location;
- enhance the current capability for application development, to ensure the capacity to develop applications beyond the area of the global management system (for which adequate support is available);
- formalize the process by which functional requirements are captured – gathering and documenting the business requirement, analysing/validating the need, objectively assessing the way forward before investments are made, and securing executive sponsorship – to see projects through to completion;
- develop the project management framework that will serve as the basis for managing and monitoring implementation of projects in a standard way, with relevant and timely reporting;
- reinforce the commitment of information technology teams to deliver services according to ITIL (formerly known as the Information Technology Infrastructure Library), which is the de facto standard in managing information technology services and helping businesses to change, transform and grow;
- develop a compelling catalogue of shared services that will inform end-users of service availability, costs and support;
- establish new shared services such as business intelligence (analytics), solution architecture, security, and collaboration services, to provide end users with robust and more relevant tools and solutions;

- strengthen the existing foundation for information management systems in human resources, finance, and logistics through the global management system transformation project. This project will be implemented in a phased manner, under a strong governance mechanism and reviewing priority processes from an “end-to-end” process perspective. The aim is to adopt simpler processes that better respond to the needs of the Organization. The first set of initiatives, focusing on “hire-to-separate” and “procure-to-pay” processes, as well as on improving system performance and reporting capabilities, is planned to be launched in February 2015.

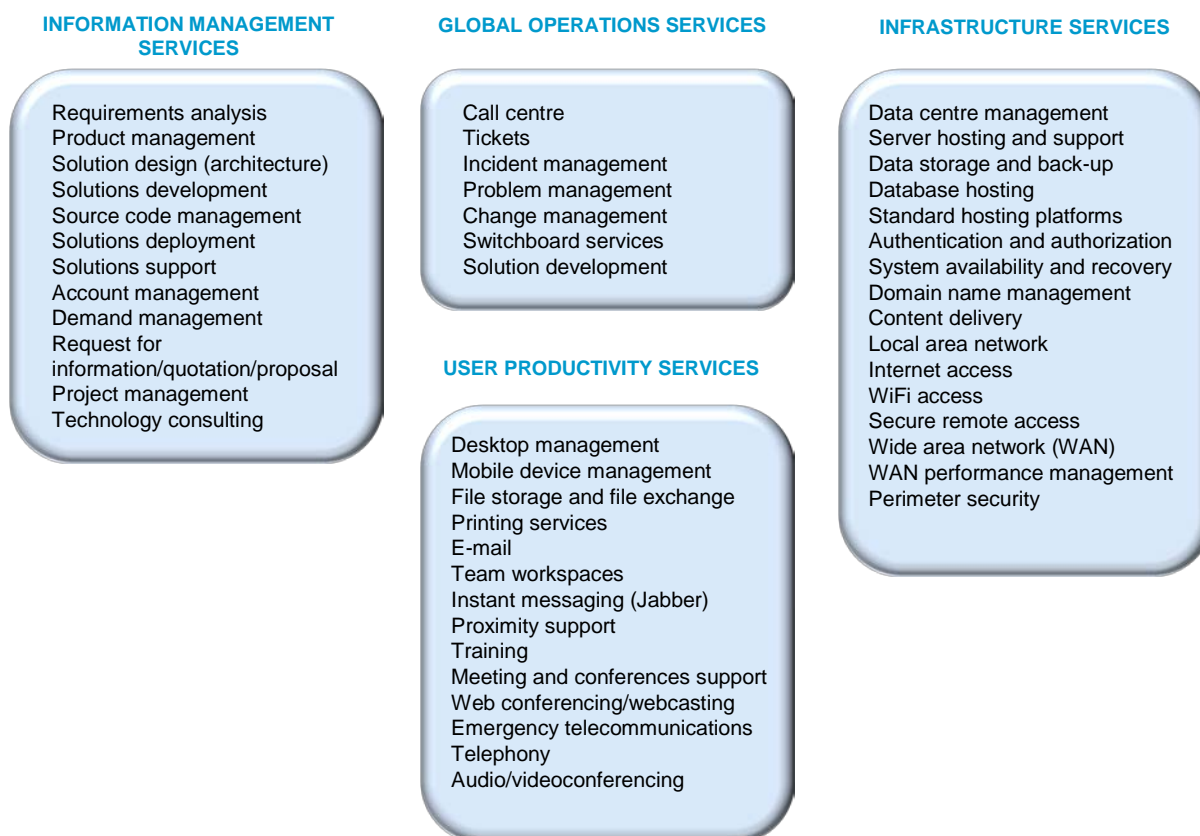
## **ADDING VALUE**

10. The Director-General’s mandate for information technology will continue to be addressed, notwithstanding the revised strategic direction. In fact, the new vision, mission, strategy and tactics strongly support and are very well aligned with the five areas of that mandate as outlined in paragraph 2 above. For example:

- The implementation of corporate or global shared services harmonizes the disparate delivery mechanisms for the same service across the world. This leads to a better way of delivering the service, improves user productivity and, more importantly, reduces duplication and unnecessary spending for the Organization.
- The development of a corporate project management framework compels all information technology teams to adhere to a standard approach in managing projects, allowing for consistency in delivery. More importantly, this framework forces the Secretariat to develop clear business cases that aim to improve the current situation, create efficiencies and/or increase the productivity of staff.

11. The services received by end-users have been rearranged and simplified into four major groupings. The key value-added services provided by the Department are clearly depicted in Figure 3. These areas will be used as basis for developing the global information technology service catalogue.

**Figure 3. Information technology services to support business needs**



12. Information management services are critical to any knowledge-based organization. The development of a corporate capability in information management is critical for maintaining and further strengthening the Organization's position as the global leader in public health.

### **THE ROLE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN OUTBREAKS OF EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE**

13. Since the outbreak of Ebola virus disease in west Africa was declared a public health emergency of international concern, the Department has played a key role in assisting the response.

14. As an immediate action, the landscape of information technology solutions being implemented was evaluated, from which it was clear that both tactical (immediate) and structured (long-term) responses were needed to support the Secretariat and the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response in stopping the spread of the disease. The steps described below have been taken.

- A project management office is being established which captures functional requirements, ramps up and assigns resources to projects, develops project plans, monitors implementation and reports on progress. This has ensured that projects are delivered according to expectations and within the agreed constraints of scope, time and resources.

- Current and future business processes are being mapped, to understand the bottlenecks and implement the right solutions within business units. This has helped in addressing the issues through business procedures and/or technological solutions.
- Sound solution architecture is being developed for information and systems, to ensure integration, scalability, robustness and sustainability.

### **PREPARING FOR 2015 AND THE BIENNIUM 2016–2017**

15. The work being done to assist with the Ebola response will be strengthened. More importantly, development of the core capabilities that are to be essential for viability will be pursued. These capabilities will enable the Secretariat to meet new challenges quickly and efficiently.

- The Project Management Office will assist business units to map processes and increase productivity, to develop toolkits that can be promoted for use across the Secretariat, and to manage resources according to demand.
- A business intelligence centre of excellence will enable the Secretariat not only to collect vital data but also to report on key performance indicators, thereby allowing decision-making for business improvement.
- A solution architecture centre will allow the Secretariat to build tools with the right technology and platforms that will be cost-effective, scalable and maintainable.
- An information security office will explore threats and vulnerabilities and take remediation action to ensure that the Secretariat's data and information are secure and protected.

### **ACTION BY THE PROGRAMME, BUDGET AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE**

16. The Programme, Budget and Administration Committee is invited to note the report.

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