

Human resources: annual report

Report by the Secretariat

1. This report presents information relating to priorities and activities during 2010 in the area of human resources management. Information on the staffing profile of the Secretariat is issued separately.¹

STRATEGY FOR MANAGING HUMAN RESOURCES AT WHO

2. WHO's human resources strategy for the period 2010–2015 is currently being put into effect throughout the Organization. As part of the strategy, the human resources function has committed itself to supporting the transformation needed in order to create an institutional culture that promotes excellence. This change will serve to motivate staff and improve the efficiency and overall effectiveness of WHO; it will thus have a positive impact on programme delivery and on the image of the Organization.

3. The human resources strategy has set the following goals to guide this transformation

- **Ensuring that the successful recruits are those who both (i) demonstrate that they are the best qualified for the posts concerned and (ii) embrace the strategic direction and vision of the Organization.** In support of this aim, when filling vacancies increased emphasis will be placed on competency assessment and on identifying the best talent among internal and external candidates (see paragraphs 4 to 10).
- **Enhancing support for WHO's country operations.** This will be achieved through a more rational and strategic deployment of human resources throughout the Organization, improved matching of staff profiles to job requirements, increased rotation and mobility between headquarters, regional and country offices, and enhanced workforce planning (see paragraphs 11 to 15).
- **Contributing to the creation of a more open, visionary, and professional Organization.** In support of this aim, greater emphasis will be placed on innovation, leadership, performance, strategic thinking, networking, knowledge sharing, learning, cultural sensitivity and service excellence (see paragraphs 16 to 37).

¹ See document EB128/31 Add.1.

TALENT MANAGEMENT

4. Talent management involves the design and implementation of strategies, policies and systems to ensure that highly qualified individuals can be attracted, recruited and retained and that their skills can be developed. Managing talent is central to the new human resources strategy.

5. The strategic approaches proposed in the strategy highlight performance management, personnel development and learning, applying competency-based human resources management, mobility, the creation of global rosters and improvements in the area of sourcing and recruitment. All these areas are vital for ensuring that talent management is incorporated into, and sustained within, the management culture of the Organization. The implementation of this strategy is measured through indicators with clear, set time lines. Progress is being made in all these areas; further details for each area are provided in the relevant sections of this report.

6. Talent management is also at the core of a global learning programme aimed at the human resources community within WHO. The programme, which will be implemented in the first quarter of 2011, is designed to promote a shared understanding among human resources staff of the scope of talent management, the importance of succession planning to the future of WHO, and the pivotal role played by the human resources function in assuring organizational sustainability. This will then provide the tools for human resources staff to enter into strategic partnerships with programme managers and assist in integrating the practice of talent management into the mainstream of the Organization's activities.

ASSESSMENT CENTRES

7. In December 2008, WHO's Global Policy Group, composed of the Director-General and the Regional Directors, decided to apply a new standardized assessment procedure to the selection, recruitment and development of heads of WHO country offices. In line with that decision, the Global Roster for Heads of WHO Country Offices was launched on 1 April 2010. Since that time, over 30 vacancies have been advertised to individuals placed on the Roster.

8. The second cycle of this initiative has recently been completed. On this occasion the vacancy notice was also circulated outside the Organization in order to attract candidates from a wider variety of backgrounds. There were 856 applications. After careful screening, 60 candidates were invited to participate in assessments – conducted in English, French and Spanish, as appropriate – at one of the 14 centres set up in Addis Ababa, Kuala Lumpur, Panama and Tunis.

9. In the initial stage of the project, an external provider was engaged to support the design and functioning of the assessment centres. This work is gradually being taken on internally, and during the 2010 assessment process, a large proportion of the work was managed by the Organization itself, with WHO staff receiving training as centre managers. The assessments themselves have continued to be performed by the consultancy company.

10. The Secretariat has now been requested to put forward options for taking on further responsibility for the assessment process, with a particular focus on the assessor function within WHO. The precise implications of these options, as well as their requirements in terms of logistics and estimated funding, will be put forward for review by the Global Policy Group and the eventual decision of the Director-General.

MOBILITY AND ROTATION

11. A management and staff working group has developed a draft mobility policy that has been discussed at several levels within WHO. The policy proposes a global approach involving two parallel actions, namely, a systematic movement of staff within each region, complemented by the use of global rosters for some key administrative and technical areas. A pilot exercise has been conducted in the Western Pacific Region and will be repeated there and in at least one other region in 2011.

12. In addition, a significant degree of mobility is being achieved through two mechanisms: application to advertised positions and lateral transfers, both of which continue to be strongly encouraged.

Global Rosters

13. Following the experience gained in establishing the Global Roster for Heads of WHO Country Offices, it is planned to establish a number of global rosters for generic positions at all levels in WHO. The first of these will concern the Administrative Officer function across the Organization.

14. The target population for the selection of Administrative Officers encompasses: (i) all serving Administrative Officers from P.2 to P.4 level who respond to the vacancy notice, and (ii) internal and external candidates who respond to the generic vacancy notice. The key element in this selection process is the global roster, which constitutes the pool from which candidates will be selected to fill future Administrative Officer vacancies.

15. Further global rosters will be put in place for generic occupational groups from the health technical areas.

OUTREACH AND DIVERSITY

16. Over the last 10 years geographical distribution has improved and there are signs that the gender gap in WHO is closing.¹ In order to gain a better understanding of the remaining obstacles to the achievement of greater diversity, a detailed survey has recently been conducted with internationally recruited staff who have joined WHO over the last two years. New members of staff were asked about the quality of the recruitment process and about their personal motivation in seeking to work for WHO. The results will be shared once a thorough analysis has been undertaken.

17. WHO's work on branding has taken a significant step forward and the WHO recruitment web site has been completely revamped. The new version is designed to attract more external applicants by using a different style of language and has been given a more personal tone thanks to the inclusion of testimonials from current staff members. The site will be launched shortly.

18. Each year, WHO provides opportunities worldwide for more than 500 interns. In 2009, the interns came from 74 Member States, 34 of which were developing countries; women represented 67% of the total number of interns. Thus far, data for the current year indicate that the profile will be similar for 2010. The programme is an excellent source of talent for future opportunities in the

¹ See document EB128/31 Add.1 for further details.

Organization. To this end, in September 2010 interns were invited to attend a presentation entitled “How staff came to work at WHO” in line with WHO’s branding efforts as an “employer of choice”.

19. Ten junior professional officers were recruited to WHO during the period 1 January 2010 to 31 July 2010. Of these, eight were women and two were men. Sweden is sponsoring four of the staff members concerned; Germany and Spain are sponsoring two each, and Belgium and Finland one each. Six more junior professional officers have been recruited to join WHO before the end of the year. During the period under review, junior professional officers were assigned in almost equal numbers to country offices, regional offices or headquarters.

20. In line with WHO’s diversity targets, the Secretariat taskforce created for this purpose has continued its efforts to encourage applications from underrepresented groups. Discussions with regional offices have covered new ways of disseminating vacancy announcements using library resources such as specialized journals, scientific publications and related web sites.

21. During the period under review, there have been 11 direct appointments to WHO, six at grade P.5 and five at grade P.4. These appointments involve secondments of staff from Member States (including five from underrepresented countries); women represent 82% of the staff members concerned.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

22. In the area of post management and classification, the Secretariat is continuing to implement its policy of using more generic position descriptions across the Organization. This serves to reduce workload and processing time for individual reviews and also allows a smoother approach to rotation and mobility, increasing consistency between posts and making them accessible to a larger number of applicants. Organizational design will also play a crucial role in moving towards more generic structural approaches in both regional and country offices in the coming years, thereby ensuring a more consistent approach across WHO.

MANAGING AND DEVELOPING STAFF

23. In order to support learning and development, the Organization has established a collaborative approach to planning, and reporting on, the use of learning resources. The Secretariat has coordinated an extensive analysis of learning needs and associated resource requirements for the period 2010–2011, which was completed in early 2010. Learning committees for the major offices took an active role in determining the priorities for learning within their respective regions, and global priority areas were identified for activities that could be designed for use across the Organization. The Secretariat is project managing priority areas for global learning related to core competencies and continues to monitor all global priority areas. The continuing challenge for the implementation of learning programmes is to strike a balance between participants’ other commitments and the Organization’s learning priorities. However, it is anticipated that taking a global approach will improve the way that learning is planned. Although global programmes require more time to set up initially, this model is starting to meet the needs of learners in WHO and will continue to do so in the future.

24. A collaborative approach to learning has been reinforced with the integration of the Department of Global Learning and Performance Management into the Department of Human Resources

Management at the headquarters level. Additionally, staff development officers from the regional offices attended a global human resources meeting held in October 2010. This was the first time that the human resources and learning communities had met together and the meeting provided an opportunity to discuss the harmonization of tools and methods of work, including the establishment of a standard operating procedure for learning.

25. During 2010, a taskforce was set up to investigate different approaches to e-learning and to make a recommendation for creating a platform to host all the Organization's e-learning programmes for staff members and external partners, globally. The taskforce comprises key stakeholders of e-learning initiatives within WHO – selected for their experience in this area – to allow for perspectives from three groups: providers, trainers and managers.

WHO'S HEALTH AND MEDICAL SERVICES AND STAFF WELL-BEING

26. The Secretariat's policy on the employment of persons with disabilities entered into force on 1 August 2010. The introduction of the policy reflects the Organization's zero tolerance approach to stigma and discrimination of any kind, and its commitment to providing persons with disabilities with improved access to employment, advancement and retention in the Organization. It is in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and with the Policy Statement on Disability of the Human Resources Network of the CEB, which was endorsed for the United Nations system by the CEB's High-Level Committee on Management in 2009. Removing barriers to the participation of persons with disabilities in the WHO workplace and integrating consideration of disability issues into the Organization's technical programmes, are critical to ensuring that WHO fulfils its global health mandate.

27. Continuing efforts on policies to protect and promote staff health globally were supported by the official endorsement in March 2010 of the global policy for occupational health and safety at work at WHO. This policy redefines roles and responsibilities, re-enforces the role of the committees of occupational health and safety and stresses the need within the Organization for a global assessment and monitoring of health and safety at work.

28. The roll-out has begun of WHO's global web-based medical database, which is designed to facilitate monitoring and management of staff health. As part of this effort, two members of the health and medical services of the Secretariat are undertaking missions to each regional office in order to support the installation of the database, the training of users and the introduction of the e-sick leave facility in the regional offices and IARC.

29. Among their activities, the medical and psychosocial teams at WHO provide: health education sessions to promote health and safety on various topics, in particular stress management, first aid and HIV in the workplace; active monitoring of sick leave with support to facilitate the return to work; and regular medical, psychological and psychosocial consultations for work-related, personal and family issues.

ZERO TOLERANCE FOR HARASSMENT

30. In September 2010, the Organization issued a revised policy on the prevention of harassment at WHO, following a comprehensive, two-year collaborative process undertaken in response to the Director-General's request in 2007 that the existing policy be reviewed. The consultations were

extensive and included input from representatives of the WHO staff associations, senior management, and other administrative actors at headquarters and in the regional offices. The policy reinforces the Organization's commitment to a work environment that is free from harassment, where grievances are promptly and fairly resolved, and where the generally accepted principles and practice of courtesy, civility, and professionalism constitute the standard expected of all staff.

31. The policy sharpens the focus directed at managers' responsibility to demonstrate commitment to, and provide assistance in, preventing harassment and taking the necessary corrective measures. In addition, it expands substantially the informal resolution options available to staff members by means of a conciliation procedure that can include mediation. Conciliation is a voluntary, confidential process designed to afford staff members an opportunity to resolve harassment complaints with the assistance of a designated neutral party – in most instances, the Organization's Ombudsman at headquarters or in the regions. It is hoped that this mechanism will allow complaints to be resolved in a manner satisfactory to the staff members concerned, thereby preventing tensions from escalating and generating protracted, costly adversarial situations. In order to monitor progress in this area and ascertain whether the changes to the policy have had the intended affect, a monitoring and evaluation group has been established with representation from both the administration and the staff associations.

THE GLOBAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AND GLOBAL SERVICE CENTRE

32. During 2010 extensive collaborative efforts between the Global Service Centre and all major office human resources teams have succeeded in improving human resources service delivery to staff members. While members of the human resources team at the Service Centre have continued to develop their knowledge of the Global Management System and associated human resources issues, substantive system enhancements and programming corrections have led to a noticeable improvement in terms of system stability and user-friendliness.

33. In conjunction with improvements made to the Global Management System, a second phase of training has been organized at headquarters and in regional offices in which the System is running in order to improve the quality and speed of staff member transactions. To complement and reinforce this work, a set of standard operating procedures defining global end-to-end human resources processes that involve the System have been established in consultation with human resources staff throughout the Organization. These procedures have now been integrated into the Human Resources e-Manual and are available to all staff members. This foundation work will be built upon throughout 2011.

34. In response to an audit report in 2009 that raised issues on data quality in the human resources database,¹ a project team has been established to identify critical data areas, define a data-quality strategy and undertake activities to ensure data integrity for the future. The first such activity was a data-cleaning exercise conducted by the human resources team at the Global Service Centre. Although significant progress has already been made, efforts will continue during 2011 to implement the data-quality strategy fully.

35. The African Region is due to join the Global Management System on 1 January 2011. In preparation for this, a comprehensive training programme has been developed to provide trainers in the African Region with the necessary knowledge and materials to facilitate their own training of staff.

¹ Document A63/37.

WHO's in-house experts delivered training on the System to approximately 70 trainers working at the regional and country office levels in the African Region. The courses concerned were delivered in English and French over a three-week period between September and October 2010. This was the first time that a training course on the Global Management System had been delivered in French and that the relevant training materials and tools had been available in that language. Lessons learnt from rolling out the System in other locations and experience gained in change management have been applied to the training strategy, which should ensure a smooth transition for the African Region.

36. The records management system is separate from the Global Management System and is the Organization's official repository for confidential, human resources information relating to individual staff members. The Global Service Centre has gathered all human resources-related documentation received since the launch of the Global Management System on 1 July 2008 and has successfully incorporated it into the folders of the records management system. The latter system's function of retaining documents has been integrated into the human resources standard operating procedures and the human resources team at the Global Service Centre is responsible for ensuring compliance. The final phase of completing the transition of all human resources information into the records management system will be completed during 2011, when all historical human resources records will be uploaded. The process by which permission is granted to access the records management system is currently under review. The aim is to ensure the highest level of confidentiality while at the same time making sure that information is made available to the appropriate user groups.

37. A new priority list of enhancements for the Global Management System, jointly agreed upon by the System's business owners, will be taken up for development in 2011. Work in the area of human resources will focus on further automating calculations for entitlement eligibility and related payments, particularly with respect to field entitlements, and on ensuring automated validation of human resources data input.

ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

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

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