

Revised human resources strategy

1. In the context of WHO's managerial reform, an Organization-wide human resources strategy was developed that encompasses a model for strategic workforce planning and career development and that allows WHO to rely on a workforce that is flexible, mobile, high-performing, fully trained and ready to take on new challenges. The Secretariat's current human resources strategy, which covers the period 2010–2015, was prepared before the WHO reform programme began. The revised human resources strategy¹ responds to the challenges in human resources for the Organization as part of WHO's managerial reform.

STRUCTURE

2. The revised human resources strategy may be imagined as a kind of woven fabric, comprised of two sets of threads. One set – the three pillars described below (attracting talent; retaining talent – career management; and an enabling work environment) – runs lengthwise, and the other, representing four cross-cutting principles (gender balance, diversity, collaboration and accountability), interlaces with, and is an integral part of, each of the three pillars.

Pillar 1. Attracting talent

3. Selection processes will be simplified, streamlined and made faster through the application of standard operating procedures that harmonize practices across the Organization. The target time for the selection of international staff in the professional and higher categories has been cut to 15 weeks, that is, less than four months from the posting of the vacancy notice to the selection decision. In addition, global rosters of prequalified candidates will be established for selected positions in order to enable faster filling of the posts.

4. With the discontinuation of continuing appointments, the fixed-term appointment type will become the main contract for newly hired staff members. It has been amended to allow the Organization to employ staff members on fixed-term appointments beyond the current period of five years, in order to meet programme requirements and on the condition that funding is available. Also, temporary appointments will be used in a cost-effective way.

5. In addition, discussions on reform have underlined the need for WHO to use non-staff contracts more efficiently. With the understanding that non-staff have different status, rights and obligations to those of international civil servants, the Organization will provide for employment alternatives for clearly defined non-staff activities, which will be used consistently across WHO.

¹ http://www.who.int/about/who_reform/ebpbac-hr-strategy.pdf (accessed 20 December 2013).

Pillar 2. Retaining talent: career management

6. In order to remain relevant and competitive in global health, WHO must not only seek talent in the initial recruitment phase but also retain and develop talented staff, particularly those who have been given a continuing appointment. A career management model is needed in order to ensure that staff members at all levels of the Organization have the requisite skills, knowledge and experience for WHO's short- and long-term plans, and that they are motivated to learn and take up new challenges. Staff members are expected to take the lead in managing their own careers, with support from the Organization. Career management has four major components: workforce planning, performance management, career development and mobility.

7. Workforce planning will be achieved through a skills inventory, staffing gaps analyses and succession planning. The inventory is intended to collate information on the skills and experience available across the Organization and will serve as an effective planning tool for staffing, career development and attracting new talent.

8. Performance management is a continuous dialogue between managers and their staff about past performance and future development. It aims to foster a culture of trust, transparency, collaboration and accountability, where individuals are held to account for their performance, recognized for their achievements and mentored to realize their potential. Dealing with uneven levels of performance is a challenge for all intergovernmental organizations. In addition to recognition and rewards for outstanding performers, a toolkit for managing underperforming staff will be developed.

9. A Learning and Staff Development Framework will be elaborated and implemented with three objectives: to equip staff members so as to excel in the performance of their functions; to support their career development; and to help to foster a working environment that supports a culture of respect, collaboration and excellence.

10. Mobility is a core element of career management as it provides opportunities for new experiences and learning in different locations. Having staff with diverse experience and exposure can enrich the Organization as well as individual staff members. It helps to create a corporate identity and foster "One WHO". Policies will be drafted for the different forms of mobility: geographical, functional, movement of general service staff members and National Professional Officers to international professional grades, and mobility outside WHO.

Pillar 3. An enabling working environment

11. A culture of collaboration, respect and excellence is required in order to create an enabling working environment that will allow the revised human resources strategy to be successfully implemented. Three main aspects need consideration: a respectful and ethical working environment, the enhanced administration of justice, and modern staff management. The latter includes the enhancement of managerial competence through a new Management Development Programme; a focus on a healthy work-life balance through family-friendly policies (including flexitime and teleworking arrangements), and partnership with staff representatives.

IMPLEMENTATION

12. The implementation of the human resources strategy is a shared responsibility among three groups: human resources personnel (at global level: Department of Human Resources Management and Global Service Centre; clusters and regional offices; and country offices), management and staff members.

13. The revised strategy contains several inherent risks. These include a lack of resources to support the implementation of the different human resources initiatives (for example, funding for creating and maintaining the skills inventory); inadequacies of current systems and tools; a lack of full engagement by all enablers in implementing the human resources strategy; changing priorities; and the need to manage expectations.

14. The work of human resources in any organization is a long-term undertaking, particularly when its aim is to bring about fundamental cultural changes, especially in the areas of career management and mobility. It takes time to groom the necessary skills and competencies to respond to the Organization's new priorities.

15. As the Organization's priorities change, so will its staffing needs. Succession planning, for example, can be effective only when there is a 5- to 10-year vision for the Organization's work and needs, and when the profile of the staffing needed for those priorities has been identified.

16. The implementation of the human resources strategy depends, inter alia, on the United Nations common system and WHO's funding model. The outcome of ongoing discussions on the change to the mandatory age of retirement of serving staff and the reform of the compensation packages (remuneration and benefits) in the United Nations common system may have a major impact on the human resources strategy. The initiatives proposed in the revised strategy are also highly dependent on a funding model that allows predictable funding and the global and holistic management of WHO's human resources.

17. A phased implementation of the human resources strategy is proposed: (1) design and construction, 2013–2015; and (2) full implementation – operation and review, 2016–2020.

ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

18. The Board is invited to note this report.

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