
Implementing WHO management reforms

Programmes and priority-setting

Supporting Member States continues to be at the centre of WHO's work. The initial phases of the development of 2018–2019 programme budget were undertaken in close consultation with Member States through bottom-up planning approach. A preliminary human resources planning exercise was conducted in the Region to inform the development of a programme budget based on realistic needs. The category and programme area networks proactively supported the planning exercise by providing guidance and feedback to country offices, and by stimulating cross-cutting programme planning aligned with the SDGs. As a result nearly two thirds of the Region's budget for base programmes was allocated to country offices, one of the highest proportions among all regions.

The outcome of the mid-term review exercise showed that 76% of the expected outputs were on track to be achieved by the end of the biennium, despite the financial challenges and conflicts in several countries. As with the programme budget planning, the category and programme area networks played a vital role in ensuring achievements and challenges at the country level were captured in the regional progress reports and in informing adjustments to the programme directions.

In December 2016, a regional standing group on evaluation was established with the aim

of facilitating implementation of the global evaluation policies and building a culture of evaluation and organizational learning in the Region. Following its first retreat, the group's vision, mission and scope were outlined and a plan of action was drafted.

Human resources remain the Organization's core investment to support Member States. Capacity-building activities for staff on results-based management, programme management and related areas were reinstated in 2016. In close collaboration with the human resources team, an overview of WHO's results-based management cycle was integrated into the Region's induction programme for new staff. More such capacity-building activities are planned in the future with a focus on the staff in country offices.

As part of enhancing support to country offices, a regional network of programme management focal points was established to improve the coordination of programme management and related exercises across the Region. The network played a key role in the improvement of statutory monitoring and reporting during the mid-term review exercises. A new Business Intelligence tool was also launched which generates a wide range of information to inform decision-making, including several dashboards aimed at improving the monitoring of programme implementation.

Governance

High-level meetings for ministers and representatives of Member States and permanent missions in Geneva continued to be held prior to the World Health Assembly and Executive Board. These meetings provided an excellent opportunity to review with ministers of health and senior government officials the progress in addressing key priorities since the previous meetings. They

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have also had a positive impact in strengthening the engagement of Member States in global discussions on health and WHO reform. Daily briefings during the Executive Board meeting and Health Assembly provided additional opportunities for Member States from the Region to interact and agree on common positions that affect the Region.

At its 63rd Session in October, the Regional Committee adopted several amendments to its rules of procedure that concern: a code of conduct for the nomination of the Regional Director; election of officers; establishment of a programme subcommittee; and identification of a process for the nomination of Executive Board members and the nomination of a country of the Region as President and other elected officials of the World Health Assembly. These amendments are in line with global governance reform and reflect efforts to harmonize procedures across the Organization.

Management

The Regional Office continued to develop essential instruments for the enhancement of the WHO reform process with special emphasis on managerial reform, working closely with all other levels of the Organization to achieve the goals listed in the 12th General Programme of Work. It also continued to improve its planning, forecasting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation capacity aimed at more efficient use and distribution of limited resources.

The managerial actions associated with the reform process taken by the Regional Director with respect to staff mobility and rotation, performance management and human resources planning and management continued. Accountability and controls remained at the heart of improvement efforts with focus on the compliance areas, which were repeatedly mentioned in preceding years' internal and external audit observations: direct financial cooperation, direct implementation, imprest purchase orders, asset inventories and non-staff contractual arrangements. The use of monthly compliance dashboards throughout the year has increased the awareness and capacity of staff across the Region with regard to key administrative issues. Activities aimed at managing financial and administrative risks effectively, improving the internal control framework, reducing audit observations to a minimum and closing outstanding audit observations in a timely manner. In 2016 all audits resulted in satisfactory or partially satisfactory ratings, showing continued improvement in controls and a deep commitment to zero tolerance to non-compliance across the Region.

WHO will continue to address key challenges including the need for: capacity-building to help Member States remain aligned with evolving requirements; strengthening country level perspectives in responding to acute and protracted emergencies; consideration to deploy and deliver on a no-regrets basis; and continual improvement in accountability and control, as embedded in the regulatory frameworks.