
Implementing WHO management reforms

Programmes and priority-setting

The final phases of development of the Programme Budget 2018–2019 were completed through bottom-up planning in close coordination with Member States, and the 2017 operational planning exercise was conducted based on the priorities identified. The joint planning exercise concluded with face-to-face meetings in Cairo to ensure more harmonized plans, clearer roles and responsibilities for the two levels of WHO and the incorporation of a risk management approach.

Operational planning for the 2018–2019 biennium was also guided by the *Roadmap of WHO's Work in the Eastern Mediterranean Region 2017–2021* as a five-year strategic plan for WHO in the Region. The roadmap translates global and regional commitments, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the WHO reform agenda, into a set of strategic actions to guide WHO's work with Member States in the Region. In the context of the Sustainable Development Agenda, the Regional Office launched an initiative to strengthen cross-cutting work at the regional level by encouraging new avenues for technical collaboration. Lessons learned from the regional approach will be incorporated at country level during the next planning cycle to encourage the intersectoral collaboration needed to achieve the health-related targets of the SDGs.

In 2017, more authority was given to heads of budget centres for the management of corporate flexible funding for priority activities in order to allow for the timely utilization of such funds, particularly in country offices. Review at the end of the biennium showed that 77% of expected outputs had been fully achieved, and the Region's contributions were incorporated in the Organization-wide results reported to Member States. In keeping with corporate commitments to focus on countries and increase overall organizational transparency, key information on country achievements and on budgetary and financial matters was made available online through the WHO programme budget portal. Tools to support monitoring and decision-making included the addition of new dashboards aimed at monitoring budget and fund utilization, technical progress and a number of key compliance indicators.

The Region actively contributed to the development of the Thirteenth General Programme of Work and its planning and budgeting framework, including major contributions to improve related prioritization and planning processes.

Governance

High-level meetings of 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 provide an excellent opportunity to review with ministers of health and senior government officials the progress in addressing key priorities since the previous meetings. They 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 the World Health Assembly provided additional opportunities for Member States from the Region to interact and agree on common positions that affect the Region.

At its 64th session, held in Islamabad in October 2017, the Regional Committee endorsed five resolutions in relation to the regional strategic priorities. Immediately prior to the session, a day of technical meetings was held to discuss current issues of interest.

Management

The Regional Office continued to develop essential instruments to enhance the WHO reform process with a special emphasis on managerial reform, working closely with the other levels of the Organization to achieve the goals listed in the Twelfth 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.

Managerial actions associated with the reform process taken by the Regional Director with respect to staff mobility and rotation, performance management and human resource planning and

management continued. Accountability and controls remained at the heart of improvement efforts, focusing on the compliance areas that were mentioned repeatedly 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 2017, all audits resulted in satisfactory or partially satisfactory ratings, showing continued improvement in controls and a deep commitment to zero tolerance of 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 continuing improvement in accountability and control, as embedded in the regulatory frameworks.