

**Executive Committee of the
High Commissioner's Programme**

Distr.: Restricted
4 September 2014
English
Original: English and French

Standing Committee
61st meeting

Human resources issues, including staff security

Summary

This paper reports on major developments in the area of human resources management since the presentation of the last paper during the 58th meeting of the Standing Committee in September 2013 (EC/64/SC/CRP.22). It also includes developments since the presentation of the paper on *Staff safety and security* during the 59th meeting of the Standing Committee in March 2014 (EC/65/SC/CRP.3/Rev.1).

Contents

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction.....	1-4	3
II. Key achievements	5	4
III. New initiatives	6-9	4
IV. Attracting and managing people to meet organizational needs.....	10-22	5
A. Responding to rapidly changing operational requirements.....	10-12	5
B. Staff appointments and assignments.....	13-16	6
C. Workforce diversity and mobility.....	17-20	6
D. Inter-agency collaboration.....	21-22	7
V. Ensuring high-quality performance and accountability	23-37	7
A. Performance management and promotions.....	23-24	7
B. Global Learning Centre	25-29	8
C. Staff health and well-being	30-37	8

I. Introduction

1. UNHCR works in 124 countries with some 458 offices worldwide. It is only because of its dedicated staff who are willing to work in difficult and dangerous situations around the globe, often separated from their families that UNHCR is able to fulfil its mandate of providing international protection and assistance to people of concern. Over the last year, while continuing its work in non-emergency situations, the Office simultaneously responded to four level 3 emergencies (the Central African Republic, the Philippines, South Sudan and the Syria situation). As of 1 August 2014, the organization had 9,036 staff,¹ of whom 8,000 were working in the field.² This picture, however, is anything but static: of necessity, as a field-based organization, UNHCR must quickly adjust to changing operational requirements. In calendar year 2013, for example, UNHCR managed 1,213 assignments and re-assignments for internal staff, new recruits and temporary appointees; over 1,000 job vacancies were issued, approximately one-third of which were in emergencies requiring expedited “fast track” assignment procedures³; and some 400 new staff were recruited for international professional functions.

2. In light of this reality, UNHCR’s Division of Human Resources Management (DHRM) is tasked with managing the dual demands of supporting the well-being and development of its staff while responding to rapidly changing operational needs. These immediate imperatives must be balanced with a third, with an eye to the medium- and long-term: managing existing staff and recruiting future workforce to provide a constant regeneration of skills, capacities, and leadership.

3. Supporting UNHCR’s workforce has become increasingly difficult, as much of the organization’s work today is undertaken in or near conflict zones or remote areas without adequate accommodation and health care facilities. Some 51 per cent of field staff (all categories) work in difficult and dangerous duty stations (categories D and E), while 43 per cent work in non-family duty stations. Among field-based international professional staff, 38 per cent serve in D and E duty stations, while 34 per cent are based in non-family duty stations. The challenging reality behind the numbers has been tragically illustrated this year. In February, a car bomb targeting a UNHCR convoy injured several staff in Mogadishu, Somalia. Two months later an unsuccessful kidnapping attempt near a refugee camp in Dadaab, Kenya, resulted in shooting injuries to a staff member. In May, a staff member was killed in a violent attack in the Central African Republic.

4. In the coming years, UNHCR through DHRM and the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply (DESS) will continue to pursue improvements to human resources and security management that enable the organization to attract and retain a talented, diverse and highly-motivated workforce. Key objectives include the following: (i) effectively mobilizing the workforce for emergency response; (ii) improving talent outreach and acquisition; (iii) managing the appointments and assignments processes to better meet organizational needs while also facilitating career progression; (iv) upgrading internal capacity for business intelligence and analysis of human resources needs and trends; (v) maintaining high levels of staff motivation; (vi) fostering appropriate skills and knowledge through training, coaching and mentoring; (vii) developing leadership capabilities and ensuring sufficient talent pools; and (viii) institutionalizing a culture of well-being in which the protection of the mental and physical health, safety and security of all colleagues is an integral part of all policies, procedures and operations.

¹ This number includes Junior Professional Officers (JPOs).

² The remaining 1,036 include 704 staff at headquarters in Geneva and 332 staff at the Global Service Centre in Budapest and the office in Brussels (combined).

³ “Fast track” procedures are those contained in the *Policy and Procedures on Assignments and Promotions*, including subsequent amendments, providing for expedited application, assignment and deployment of staff to emergency operations.

II. Key achievements

5. Key achievements over the last 12 months include the following:
 - The automation of key steps in the appointments and assignments process has reduced bureaucracy, streamlined administrative burden and further clarified the allocation of roles and responsibilities among applicants, DHRM and managers.
 - New or revised policies have:
 - clarified the responsibilities of staff and the organization with regard to staff-in-between-assignment (SIBAs);
 - updated criteria governing promotions of international professional staff for to the P-4 through D-1 levels and introduced “rank-in-post” for P-1 to P-3 levels and expert positions;
 - enhanced flexibility and opportunities for local staff to participate in temporary international deployments; and
 - further streamlined fast track assignments procedures to expedite re-assignments in support of emergency response.
 - The first Entry Level Humanitarian Programme (EHP) cohort has been recruited, including 44 staff members from 34 nations, while the Capacity Building Initiative (CBI) was launched with the advertisement of 100 positions targeting critical gaps in capacity and skills.
 - A new Talent Outreach and Acquisition Section has been charged with improving emergency response staffing capacities; sourcing talent for both shorter- and longer-term needs; overseeing and enhancing operating arrangements for workforce provided through United Nations Volunteers (UNV) and United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), as well as consultants and interns; managing the JPO programme; and implementing the EHP and CBI initiatives.
 - The establishment of posts for a medical doctor and an assistant in each of the regional offices in Bangkok, Dakar and Nairobi has enhanced medical support to staff based in these regions.
 - The field security workforce has been reinforced and now includes 68 professional posts and over 160 locally-recruited staff.
 - A review of the scope and impact of 2007 *Policy on Achieving Gender Equity in UNHCR Staffing* has been initiated. The results will inform the development in 2015 of a comprehensive strategy and framework to better address gender equity and diversity in the workforce.

III. New initiatives

6. Since September 2013, DHRM has initiated three major projects whose full implementation will be completed over the next few years. A risk-based analysis has led to DHRM identifying these projects as critical and time sensitive.

7. **MSRP upgrade.** Oracle’s contract support for UNHCR’s PeopleSoft HR and Payroll version 8.9 ended in December 2012. Since that time, the maintenance required has increased significantly and the human resources management function has evolved, requiring new functionality. The upgrade foresees the migration of UNHCR’s system to a supported version of PeopleSoft with built-in functionality that reduces the need for costly customization and supports human resources (HR) data and analysis consistent with UNHCR’s priorities in HR management. The majority of the project is scheduled for completion by the end of 2016.

8. ***Professionalization of human resources management.*** This initiative seeks to effect a transformation from an approach of “HR administration” to one of full partnership with other entities in the organization as well as with staff themselves to ensure the development and well-being of both individual staff and the organization as a whole. This shift entails better anticipation of critical workforce trends as well as skills and competencies needed by the organization; greater clarity of roles and responsibilities; a longer perspective in the career development and management of staff; and proactive measures for the physical and mental health of staff. The project should be completed by end-2015 and will include the following:

- (i) analysis of future HR needs, skills and competencies, compared with existing HR expertise at headquarters and in the field;
- (ii) revision of HR job descriptions, with primary focus being on field-based positions, to incorporate the full spectrum of modern HR responsibilities, ranging from recruitment, postings and personnel administration to career management, strategic HR advice and staff well-being; and
- (iii) establishment of an HR certification program to provide objective assessment of candidates’ suitability for HR positions.

9. ***Leadership development and talent pools.*** Planning for future workforce requirements, DHRM must take into account the evolving nature of UNHCR’s operating environment; future retirements, which are projected to double for international professional staff over the next five years as compared with the preceding five years; and the new and additional skills that have been identified as necessary. In response, DHRM has initiated the development of a comprehensive framework for future workforce planning that will include tools and leadership programmes to identify and prepare pools of potential leaders and people with functional capabilities, skills and competencies to meet future workforce requirements. Details are provided below, and the framework should be completed in 2015.

IV. Attracting and managing people to meet organizational needs

A. Responding to rapidly changing operational requirements

10. Strengthening emergency response capabilities to better support operational needs remains one of UNHCR’s key priorities. During the period under review, multiple complex emergencies have tested the organization’s capacity and necessitated a variety of staffing arrangements, including emergency staff deployments, short- and longer-term missions, temporary assignments, recruitment of new staff, drawdown against standby agreements, loans of personnel and the use of services through UNV and the UNOPS. Quickly filling large numbers of positions with experienced staff without depleting other critical operations posed a significant challenge.

11. Consequently, DHRM undertook a number of measures to facilitate the assignments process and other arrangements for workforce support. These included improving selections through more rapid and systematic functional assessments in cooperation with relevant divisions; streamlining fast track vacancy management procedures, including deploying appointed staff within 14 days of appointment; strengthening talent outreach and recruitment capabilities; implementing new or enhanced training and induction programmes in functional areas and for coordination and leadership in inter-agency contexts.

12. In total during 2013, some 4,072 individuals worked with UNHCR through various workforce arrangements. As of 31 December 2013, 2,200 consultants, UNVs and UNOPS personnel were working with UNHCR, more than one-quarter of whom were providing workforce support in the six countries covered by the Syria situation. The Office previously negotiated arrangements with UNV for emergency staffing capacity and is undertaking a

review of its memorandum of understanding with UNOPS, with a view to improving value for money, simplifying administrative procedures, and improving insurance coverage for UNOPS staff.

B. Staff appointments and assignments

13. In the period from 1 August 2013 through 31 July 2014, UNHCR advertised some 1,031 positions in the bi-annual compendia, two addenda and six fast track exercises. The Joint Review Board (JRB) convened seven sessions to review recommendations to the High Commissioner. As well, 1,278 requests for temporary assistance were processed.

14. DHRM continues efforts to achieve the target of 18 weeks from the advertisement of regular positions in the compendia/addenda to the announcement of appointments. Meanwhile, the timeframe for processing fast track vacancies has been reduced to less than three months from advertisement until announcement of the High Commissioner's decision. Notably, fast track assignments accounted for roughly one-quarter of all positions filled in 2013.

15. Despite recent improvements and streamlining of procedures, the assignments process remains time consuming and labour intensive. A review of the *Policy and Procedures on Assignments* (PPA) is pursuing improvements to address the decision-making process, workforce planning, and gender equity and diversity considerations. A revised policy is expected to be issued in 2015; meanwhile several simplification measures will be implemented in the next few months.

16. Given the high number of emergency and fast track assignments in the last year, "backfilling" positions in non-emergency operations (where staff have been released at short notice) has been a significant challenge. DHRM actively seeks temporary staffing solutions, pending the filling of vacated posts through regular vacancy management procedures. In addition, procedures have been updated to make temporary assignments more efficient, competitive and transparent, in line with audit recommendations.

C. Workforce diversity and mobility

17. To enhance workforce diversity and capacity, the Talent Outreach and Acquisition Section (TOAS) was established in Budapest in January 2014 with the objective of strengthening and professionalizing UNHCR's outreach strategy and recruitment processes. This change had already been initiated in mid-2013, with the launch of the EHP. Some 13,000 applications were received for 44 P-2 positions, and the successful candidates were recruited and deployed to their first assignment by the first quarter of this year. A second programme, the CBI, was launched after a detailed workforce analysis identified critical areas where UNHCR lacks adequate capacity. The first phase of the CBI involves outreach for external recruitment and conversion of qualified staff to fill 100 new positions. Retooling and training of current staff to acquire critically needed new skills and competencies will further complement the CBI. DHRM has also introduced "profile-based recruitment" to develop pools of "ready-to-hire" candidates in 12 functional areas for temporary recruitment for emergencies or backfilling, or recruitment for regular positions when no qualified internal candidate can be identified.

18. To ensure that UNHCR can attract the best talent, DHRM is strengthening efforts to make UNHCR an employer of choice, including through a "recruitment branding strategy". This includes the development of a state-of-the-art recruitment portal and use of social media platforms. DHRM will continue to target its recruitment efforts in areas where UNHCR lacks "functional capacity", including protection, programme, information management, supply, admin/finance, human resources, external relations, and field safety. In so doing, the Office will reflect key institutional priorities related to diversity and gender balance.

19. Career counselling and career management continue to be key HR management functions. Counselling is available to all staff, with particular attention to rotating international professionals. Support and counselling is also provided for staff-in-between-assignment (SIBAs) under UNHCR's mandatory rotation policy. At 31 July 2014, some 38 staff were in-between-assignment and not working, of whom 26 remained as such for less than seven months. Career transition workshops reached 193 staff, while the 44 new EHP staff received support for career planning as part of their Induction and Orientation Programme.

20. Given its importance, a review of the career management function is underway. Key areas include developing individual staff profiles to enhance career discussions and career development plans; better defining career paths and career transition plans; and developing an interactive career planning portal that will support self-directed career planning. Additional resources will be directed to senior leadership development; identification of candidates for strategic inter-agency secondments and Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator pools; and succession management for key functional areas and senior level positions. Finally, data collection and analysis will be strengthened to better inform decision-making processes in meeting global workforce goals.

D. Inter-agency collaboration

21. UNHCR remains fully engaged in the Human Resources Network of the United Nations Common System. Among the most important on-going initiatives is a comprehensive review of the United Nations compensation package. Recognizing that the deep-field, operational nature of UNHCR's work shapes the organization's needs and those of its staff, the High Commissioner has advocated that the revised compensation package must (i) foster a highly motivated, mobile workforce; (ii) be adaptable, flexible in character, and simple to administer; (iii) enhance efforts to achieve gender equity; and (iv) accommodate specific operational challenges of UNHCR and its staff related to security, service in remote and hardship duty stations, and mandatory rotation.

22. Along with six other UN agencies, UNHCR is piloting a programme facilitating the inter-agency secondment of female staff at the P-5 level, with the objective of enhancing their skills and experience in preparation for senior leadership assignments.

V. Ensuring high-quality performance and accountability

A. Performance management and promotions

23. A new policy on performance management, nearing finalization, will simplify some aspects of the process. The policy strengthens the framework for checking inflation of ratings and for identifying "outliers" whether those who are truly exceptional or those whose performance shortcomings persist after development efforts have been exhausted. It will clearly indicate measures to be taken to improve sub-standard performance. Additionally, in cases of serious mismanagement and non-performance, it clarifies actions that may be taken, including termination or non-renewal. Once the policy has been fully implemented in conjunction with the MSRP upgrade, and a more robust system of performance assessment is firmly in place, a new contracts policy will be issued enabling the grant of longer fixed-term appointments beyond the current maximum of two years.

24. The *Policy and Procedures for the Promotion of International Professional Staff Members*, promulgated earlier this year, established the "rank-in-post" principle for staff serving at grades P-1 to P-3, as well as staff serving in expert positions. Following its issuance, the High Commissioner promoted staff consistent with the policy governing P-1 through P-3 and expert posts, and promotions exercises were held in July to review staff eligible for promotions to the P-4 through D-1 levels. The results are expected shortly.

B. Global Learning Centre

25. In the first half of 2014, the Global Learning Centre (GLC) recorded some 20,000 course completions – a rate similar to that of calendar year 2013, with nearly 40,000 course completions. UNHCR maintains its policy of providing its inter-agency, NGO and academic partners with access to learning materials and courses. Just over one-quarter of all completions are attributable to non-UNHCR staff. Partnership is a fundamental element of the Protection Cluster training, which is delivered by the GLC in cooperation with the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, on behalf of the Global Protection Cluster. Recent trainings have reached UN, NGO and governmental partners in the Middle East, with upcoming trainings targeting participants from Africa, the Caribbean and Europe before the end of the year.

26. Support for emergencies remains a focus of UNHCR's learning strategy. Responding to lessons learned in recent emergencies, the GLC launched a portal that provides key learning materials required by new staff, organized by function. Easy access to these materials facilitates the functional induction process, especially in emergency operations that experience a sharp increase in workforce or high turnover. A training package on preparedness and contingency planning has been piloted in Chad, and the first French language Workshop on Emergency Management (WEM) will be held later this year in Dakar. It complements the three English language WEMs held annually. As part of UNHCR's on-going effort to prepare and train staff for high risk security environments, security remains a significant component of the WEM.

27. Enhancing programme management capacity, in light of the increasing complexity of the function, also remained a GLC priority. Earlier this year the GLC launched pilots for two new blended learning programmes (Programme Management I and II) to build capacity and eventually provide the basis for the certification of Programme Officers.

28. A new e-learning course supports implementation of the 2009 *Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas* as part of the Office's efforts to strengthen interventions in support of urban refugees. The course was received with considerable interest, and some 330 learners enrolled within a month of its launch. It will also be placed on external platforms such as www.disasterready.org, which caters to NGOs and has been included in academic curricula for humanitarian managers.

29. The GLC continued work on a certification programme for Representatives, Deputy Representatives and Heads of Office at the P-5 level and above. A particularly challenging programme in light of its scope, the pilot programme is anticipated to be launched at the end of the year. It includes a suite of self-study modules in key accountabilities and responsibilities and an assessment of managerial skills. An HR certification programme is also under development, with a similar timeframe. The development of certification programmes for supply chain and finance functions is also anticipated.

C. Staff health and well-being

30. DHRM continues to cultivate a shift in organizational culture from one of staff medical and welfare administration to a full-fledged framework of workforce well-being and a duty of care that includes occupational health and safety support to staff and operations.

31. Two global surveys the *UNHCR Staff Well-being Survey* and *Health Appraisal Survey* – were undertaken during the reporting period with the intent of obtaining a clear picture of the geographical distribution of the health and psychosocial risk factors across the organization. The surveys' results are currently being analysed and will not only inform strategic decision-making, but also enable more efficient and targeted interventions in support of staff health and well-being over the next three years. The results will be made available later this year.

32. In January 2014, the 6th annual meeting of the Staff Management Consultative Council (SMCC) discussed an agenda focused on internal communication, trust and integrity, accountability, and staff support and welfare. The meeting reviewed progress on prior SMCC recommendations, which had been informed by the Global Staff Survey (most recently conducted in 2011), and formulated 16 priority recommendations to the High Commissioner. In order to measure improvements over the past three years and identify areas currently requiring attention, the High Commissioner has called for a new Global Staff Survey by year-end.

33. Recognizing that effective internal communication and information dissemination play an important facilitative role in staff well-being, DHRM has begun a comprehensive restructuring of its intranet and web portals. In collaboration with the Division of Information Systems and Telecommunications (DIST), DHRM is developing collaborative workplace platforms to enhance communication between and among staff members and the organization. To support team communication and interaction and reduce workplace conflict, the GLC delivered a series of workshops on workplace conflict management that reached some 500 participants in Geneva, including new staff and senior managers.

34. In the area of psychosocial support, implementation of the recommendations emerging from the 2013 evaluation *UNHCR's Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for Staff* is nearing completion. In the first half of 2014, individual support provided by the Staff Welfare Section to staff and other workforce included 2,662 therapeutic actions in 88 operations worldwide, with the majority of requests made by individuals serving in D and E duty stations. The largest category of individual interventions relates to working conditions, including work-related stress that interferes with a sense of well-being. In such cases, counsellors work with concerned colleagues and, with their consent, their managers and peers. Support for staff and additional workforce following critical incidents is the second largest category of response, a result of the many difficult and unstable environments in which UNHCR operates.

35. Support for pre-mission psychological preparation has recently been introduced, in line with the recommendations of the mental health and psychosocial evaluation. While not mandatory, most colleagues accept the offer. Psychological debriefing at the end of hardship assignments is also accepted by two-thirds of colleagues offered the service. The services of trained volunteer Peer Support Personnel (PSP) complement the capacity of nine professional Staff Welfare Officers, six of whom are based in the field. Currently 305 colleagues are trained as peer support first responders for critical incidents. PSPs are also available to colleagues who are seeking feedback, advice or simply someone to listen. Statistics for the year 2013 indicate that the PSPs engaged with over 2,000 individuals and organized more than 375 group activities.

36. Efforts toward health promotion and prevention were reinforced through the creation of three regional positions for medical doctor earlier this year in Bangkok, Dakar and Nairobi. Regular surveillance of epidemics potentially affecting UNHCR's staff and other workforce worldwide was initiated in 2013. Since that time, 11 outbreaks have been of concern to UNHCR, including Dengue Fever, Yellow Fever, Meningitis, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis E, Cholera, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome, Measles, Cholera and now the Ebola crisis.

37. The position of Global Staff Accommodation Manager (GSAM) was established in 2013 in order to provide support and ensure better consistency among country operations on housing issues, including standards of accommodation, rental agreements, emergency housing construction and Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS) or Minimum Operating Residential Security Standards (MORSS). New draft policies on UNHCR-provided accommodation in the field and on environmental and occupational health and safety are under consideration. Once finalized, their implementation will contribute to the overall institutionalization of a culture of safety, health and welfare for UNHCR staff and others working with the organization.