PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

138th SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Washington, D.C., USA, 19-23 June 2006

Provisional Agenda Item 7.5

CE138/INF/3 (Eng.)
9 June 2006
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

ANNUAL REPORT ON PASB HUMAN RESOURCES

2006 Report of the Human Resources Area Manager

This report contains an overview of the human resources initiatives undertaken by the Bureau in 2005 and the first half of 2006, and the challenges facing the Organization. It provides information regarding the steps taken during this period to improve the recruitment, hiring, management and wellbeing of its personnel. It also contains information regarding the progress that has been made in modernizing human resources management processes and procedures.

Introduction

1.   The Bureau recognizes that its human capital is its greatest resource. Consequently, it continues to work towards a comprehensive human resources strategy that will ensure that it can attract, develop and retain staff of the highest quality and that it can effectively use and manage its resources. An effective and efficient staff is critical to the Organization's ability to meet the many health challenges facing the world community today. While there are still many challenges ahead, progress is being made towards achieving these important goals.

2.   This report contains an overview of the human resources initiatives undertaken by the Bureau in 2005 and the first half of 2006. It provides information regarding the steps the Organization has taken during this period to improve the recruitment, hiring, management and wellbeing of its personnel. It also contains information regarding the progress that has been made in modernizing human resources management processes and procedures.   Finally, it includes the human resources challenges facing the Organization.

3.   The Bureau's staffing profile as of May 2006 is being issued as a separate document.

Classification and Competencies

4.   In 2005, the Bureau implemented the revised classification standard for professional and higher posts which was developed by the International Civil Service Commission for application within the UN system. The new standard simplifies the classification process for these posts; increases participation by supervisors, managers and staff in the process; and results in greater consistency in the preparation of job descriptions across the Bureau.

5.   The classification of local posts continues to be a challenge. However, several currently available classifications standards have been identified and are under review. The Bureau will be testing these standards and, in consultation with the Staff Association, determine which standard best fits the Organization's needs. Once a standardized classification system is in place for local posts, the classification of those posts will be greatly simplified and a greater consistency in the descriptions and grades of posts within and between country offices and centers will have been achieved.

6.   In order to support the Strategic Assessment and Resource Alignment (SARA) exercise currently underway within the Organization, a supplement to the Bureau's competency maps is being prepared to provide an objective means for application of the maps during the exercise. An objective means for measuring staff competencies will ensure that an accurate assessment of staff development needs is obtained as one of the

outputs of the SARA process. Other preparations are under way to provide support to the SARA exercise with respect to the drafting, reviewing, updating and classification of several hundred job descriptions and the training of managers, team leaders and personnel in the application of the Bureau's competency maps.

Improving Selection and Recruitment

7.   During this period, the Bureau continued looking for ways to improve the recruitment, selection and appointment of staff. As part of the efforts to transform the recruitment practices from a traditional approach to a competency-based scheme, the Organization is now producing competency-based post descriptions and is using competency-based interviewing as a tool to assess whether candidates have the required competencies to successfully perform the duties of the post to which they have applied. Since the new technique was introduced, several selections at the senior level have been carried out using this method.

8.   During 2005, a decision was taken to invite the Organization's Staff Association to participate in the selection process for senior staff in the Organization. To date, the Staff Association has participated as a voting member in Senior Selection Committee deliberations with respect to advertised vacancies and will be given the opportunity to provide its comments and feedback on the roster of individuals under consideration by the Bureau for appointment to country representative posts.

9.   In addition, new guidelines and learning activities were and continue to be produced to further educate hiring managers on the Organization's selection procedures and policies (including gender equity). These guidelines are intended to ensure transparency in the hiring process and the fair and equal treatment of all candidates.

10.   An important achievement in the selection process during 2005 was the reduction -- from 6.5 months to 5.5 months -- of the average time it takes to fill a vacant post after the closing date of the vacancy notice. While in 2006 there has been an increase in the average amount of time needed to fill vacant professional posts, some of that increase is attributable to an increase in the amount of time it has taken, after selection, for the staff member to formally assume the duties of his or her new post.

11.   With the adoption of the eRecruitment system in 2004, the number of external candidates for professional posts has increased significantly. In 2005 and the first half of 2006, 52 percent of new appointees were candidates from external sources. Prior to the use of eRecruitment, external candidates accounted for only 39 percent of all candidates. In keeping with the goal of continuously improving the recruitment, selection and appointment processes, new professional appointees recruited from external sources are

being asked to complete a survey intended to obtain feedback regarding the recruitment and induction processes.

Managing and Developing Staff

12.   In an effort to make learning more strategic and systematic, the Bureau's Staff Development Unit with the support of the Organization's Learning Board, asked country representatives, center directors, and area managers to identify key group and individual learning needs linked with the strategic objectives and priorities of their respective offices.   Twenty-nine learning plans were received.   The learning plans were competency-based and included learning activities targeted to different audiences addressing core, managerial, technical, and administrative competencies using a variety of learning modalities. Staff Development funds were allocated to support some of the learning activities.

13.   In 2005, the second workshop of the WHO Global Leadership Program was delivered. Sixty two mid- and senior-level managers from the Bureau participated in this program. To date, PAHO/AMRO has been the WHO region with the highest number of participants in the program.

14.   In May 2006, the Bureau obtained $1.2 million in funding from the WHO Global Learning Committee to carry out organization-wide learning activities and address competency gaps identified as part of the SARA exercise being undertaken in the Bureau.

15.   Efforts continue to create and enhance networks and partnerships within the Organization and outside the Organization (with agencies such as the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and UNAIDS) in an effort to share knowledge and best practices related to learning and development endeavors.

Providing a Supportive Work Environment

16.   During this period of time, the Organization continued its focus on staff well-being and policies that promote work-life balance. Some of the more important initiatives included:

•   Completion of Organization-wide training on the Bureau's *Policy on the Prevention and Resolution of Harassment in the Workplace* -- In July 2004, the Bureau rolled out its *Policy on the Prevention and Resolution of Harassment in the Work*place. All PAHO personnel have now been trained and the Bureau is now investigating how best to provide recurrent training in the policy.

- Preparation and implementation of the Bureau's *Code of Ethical Principles and Conduc*t -- In 2005, the Bureau developed a new Code *of Ethical Principles and Conduct* and on 1 January 2006, the Code was formally implemented throughout the Organization. Pursuant to the terms of the Code, in 2006 the Bureau established a new Ethics Office and, as of 15 May 2006, a newly-appointed Ethics Program Manager has been carrying out the functions and responsibilities related to the Bureau's ethics program. As part of that program, and to ensure that all persons working for the Bureau have a good understanding of the Bureau's ethical standards, an on-line learning course is being prepared and will be ready for release this summer.

- Development of a human resources policy on HIV/AIDS in the workplace -- This policy includes basic facts on HIV/AIDS; contains details on where information can be obtained; ensures confidentiality of personal information; and discusses alternatives for testing and counseling. This new policy was rolled out during World Health Day, April 2006. In addition, a learning program is currently under development as part of the rollout of the Bureau's new policy on HIV/AIDS. This program will include, among other things, mandatory workshops and other activities intended to ensure staff's understanding, support and implementation of this critical policy.

- Revisions to the Bureau's flexitime policy -- The Bureau has long had a flexitime policy, however, revisions were recently made to ensure its consistent application throughout the Organization. Moreover, in order to promote a healthy work/life balance for its staff, the Bureau has begun exploring other forms of alternative work schedules.

- Improvements to the Bureau's Nursing Policy – A revised nursing policy was recently issued to ensure consistency between WHO-recommended lactation guidelines and the Organization's internal policies. Moreover, the Bureau established a dedicated lactation room at headquarters for nursing mothers.

- The Bureau's Health Unit has requested 2,000 influenza vaccines for the upcoming 2006-2007 flu season for administration to staff members and their recognized dependents. This is in response to the anticipated shortage of the influenza vaccine and the Bureau's preparation and implementation plan for the pandemic avian influenza. The Bureau is continuing to work to define specific plans and roles in the event of an outbreak of avian flu, including the naming of essential personnel and continuity of operations planning.

- It should be noted that the Bureau's Staff Association has made significant contributions to many of the initiatives outlined above and that an open and

collaborative relationship continues to exist between the Staff Association and the Administration.

Improving Delivery of Human Resources Services

17.　　During 2005, an electronic version of the Bureau's Performance Planning and Evaluation System (PPES) process was developed and piloted. By establishing an electronic version of the PPES process, the Bureau will better ensure that PPESs are being completed by managers and staff in a timely manner; can ascertain where there are bottlenecks; and will no longer have to keep track of paper originals. Accountability and efficiency will be enhanced once the electronic version of PPES is available. The system will be rolled out to the entire Organization by June 2006. The next step in the process of enhancing this performance management tool will be the incorporation of the Bureau's competencies into the PPES process.

18.　　In 2005, the Bureau began developing an expertise locator for the competitive selection of short-term professionals and consultants. This database is being developed in parallel with a policy on selection criteria (in terms of educational background, years of professional experience, languages and IT skills) for the recruitment of such staff.

19.　　During 2005, a project was undertaken to convert the Bureau's personnel database (PAS) from Microsoft Access to SQL Server in order to make the personnel system more robust and to allow it to be more readily integrated with other Bureau corporate systems (e.g., the Bureau's electronic Expertise Locator). Work on the migration to SQL server is continuing.

20.　　 In 2005, the Bureau streamlined the selection and recruitment processes by launching a SharePoint site through which receiving units and selection committee members could easily access all relevant selection and recruitment documents and materials. Implementation of this site has reduced the amount of administrative work related to the selection process and helped shorten the time it takes to fill a vacant post. Sharepoint and E-Works workflow technologies are also being used to support other initiatives related to the Bureau's Human Resources Management area and will be used even more extensively in the near future.

The Challenges Ahead

21.　　While some steps have been taken to decentralize and streamline basic human resources functions, additional efforts will be made in the coming months to accelerate this process. A stronger emphasis on developing the technology to support these efforts is currently underway. Decentralizing and delegating some of these functions will facilitate the work of the Organization, empower managers to make decisions that

directly affect their work, and establish new accountabilities. It will also allow the Organization's Human Resources Management area to be more strategic by focusing on issues of broad applicability, including human resources planning and succession management, rather than on day-to-day operational matters. Currently, the ever-increasing number of routine inquiries and requests make this difficult.

22.   The existence of a multiplicity of contractual mechanisms for the hiring of personnel is problematic and administering so many different types of contracts is extremely time-consuming. Consistent with the contractual reform movement currently underway within the UN system and WHO, the Bureau will analyze how best to reduce the number of different contractual mechanisms currently being used within the Organization. In addition, guidelines on the appropriate and most effective use of the various contractual mechanisms retained by the Bureau will need to be developed as well as a uniform approach to staff benefits (e.g., health insurance, pension, leave) associated with each type of contract.

23.   Developing, coordinating and implementing numerous learning activities related to the SARA process will be a challenge as these activities will need to be implemented across the Organization within a relatively short period of time. The cooperation and participation of managers and staff in this important process will be needed in order to ensure that Bureau's investment in the development of its staff yields the desired results -- personnel who are committed to the Organization's values and goals and who possess the knowledge, skills and competencies to successfully carry out the Bureau's work. An important aspect of this process will involve coaching senior and middle managers so that they will understand their role and accountability in the performance management process for staff.

24.   Continued efforts must be made to ensure gender balance in the Bureau's hiring and promotion processes, particularly at the professional level within the Organization. While gender balance has not yet been achieved throughout the Organization, a commitment to this important goal has been made. As a result, managers and supervisors throughout the Bureau are being asked to renew their efforts in this regard.

25.   Ongoing emphasis will be placed on the importance of adhering to the Bureau's values and ethical principles. With the establishment of the Bureau's Ethics Office, the elaboration of a clear and concise *Code of Ethical Principles and Conduct*, and the ongoing development of an integrated system within the Bureau to manage conflict and integrity issues, a clear path is being established for managers and staff to follow.

- - -