

**Human Resources Management Division
Status report on three Project 14 activities**

This document provides an update on progress and achievements associated with three Project 14 activities – Upgrade of the Oracle system, Introduction of PEMS and New HR Policies.

Activity 3.72 – Upgrade the Oracle system to i) improve ease of data extraction and ii) to support substantive staff management, rather than purely transaction processing

I. Background and Overview

1. The HR Management Information Reporting (MIR) project involves consolidating data from various different transactional systems into a single repository of HR information, which managers can access to generate reports and analyze data about their workforce.
2. Prior to commencing this project, HR data was stored in various different systems in table structures optimized for transactions, rather than reporting. Since information was stored in a non-intuitive form and extensive training was required to utilize the tool used for producing reports, extraction of HR information from different systems required the intervention and support of expert analysts. Managers who required a status update on the workforce profile of their Organizational Unit needed to send a request and wait for a response, which typically involved a waiting period of one or more days depending on the work-load of the HR analysts although urgent requests could be processed within twenty-four hours. Reports generated from the system were, moreover, static and paper-based.
3. In addition to difficulties involved in extracting and interpreting data from different systems, the ad-hoc nature of the interaction led to the existence of "multiple sources of truth". Different managers could, and often did, ask for different assumptions to be built into the reports they requested, with the result that there were inconsistencies between reports purporting to contain the same information. For example, one manager might request a report including short term professionals in their count of staff whilst another might ask for a count of staff report which excluded project positions. This lack of a common set of assumptions and a standard way of counting staff and other metrics led to confusion and, at times, mistrust as different managers produced different responses to the same question.
4. A major outcome of implementation of the HR MIR system is that managers will be able to access a set of interactive dashboards from their workstation. The dashboards will contain statistics on key HR metrics such as gender and geographic representation and vacant positions in their establishment structure, and can be interrogated both from a point-in-time and trend perspective. These dashboards will address the most common requests for information. By giving HR statistics interactively on a self-service basis, the system will allow managers to obtain consistent, fast information to make informed decisions. At the same time, it will free up the HR analysts to focus on more strategic and higher value-added organization-wide analysis for workforce planning purposes.
5. The system will also include a more sophisticated analytical platform, from which HR analysts can extract data on an ad-hoc basis to support workforce planning activities and also to respond to management requests for information, which is not readily available through the dashboards. Because the underlying data has been optimized for reporting, extracting information from this tool will be easier than it was previously. A set of standard reports will also be made available in printable format.

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II. Significant Milestones and Next Steps

6. Progress to date has involved establishing the data warehouse, consolidating HR data from various transactional systems and developing and testing a suite of core HR reports.

7. Next steps will include the pilot release of the dashboards and reports in June 2010 to enable user testing before initial launch of the new reporting system by the end of August 2010. After feedback has been collected and improvements have been incorporated, the system will be released to a wider audience.

8. Integration of additional HR data, such as recruitment, roster and performance management data, is expected to form part of a follow-up project, which will commence in September 2010 and will also include the development of new reports, dashboards and further indicators.

Activity 3.70 – Introduce an objective staff appraisal system linking staff performance to organizational objectives based on realistic performance targets and objective assessment criteria

I. Background and Overview

9. FAO's new Performance Evaluation and Management system (PEMS) has been launched to all staff on fixed term and continuing contracts at all levels, up to and including the Deputy Director Generals. Over 3500 staff have either completed or are currently completing the planning phase of the first PEMS cycle in FAO.

10. Prior to the introduction of PEMS, a previous performance system (PAAR) existed in FAO but was not used consistently or effectively. Limitations included the fact that it was applicable only for staff at the P1-P5 level, thus excluding GS and higher level staff, and even then, was used primarily for the purpose of extension or conversion of appointments. Moreover, the PAAR system was paper-based and therefore did not provide any useful corporate reporting mechanisms as inputs to staff development programmes or competency assessment. Attempts had been made in the last 10-15 years to introduce a more comprehensive system without success. Implementation of PEMS, which follows best practices and is consistent with the principles and guidelines recommended by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), has thus been a recent notable achievement in the HR reform process.

11. Some key elements of the PEMS system are as follows:

1. It is strongly aligned with the new Strategic Framework and based in Results-Based Management (RBM) principles, thus facilitating an "accountability loop" between Organizational Results, Unit Results and individual performance.
2. It supports annual individual workplanning and formal assessments of achievements against agreed work plans;
3. It includes developmental objectives that focus on areas of competency improvement, in addition to workplan objectives;
4. It incorporates 360 degree feedback, whereby performance is assessed by both supervisors and peers; and
5. Being on-line, it supports corporate reporting on overall staff performance related issues.

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12. Implementation has occurred in a phased approach, with PEMS pilots held in 2008 and 2009. Approximately 130 staff participated in the 2008 pilot, selected from a limited number of FAO Divisions or Departments, with 96% of participants indicating that they found the planning exercise to be useful and 83% indicating that they appreciated the 360 degree feedback received. Over 400 staff were involved in the 2009 pilot, 95 of whom were PEMS focal points, who received special training, enabling them to facilitate learning and offer support to future participants. The purpose of this pilot was primarily to increase awareness, knowledge and acceptance of PEMS prior to full roll-out in 2010.

13. Training has been delivered across the whole organization to approximately 3500 staff members for the planning phase of PEMS with a participation rate of 96%. Given that this is the first year of PEMS roll-out, combined with the introduction of RBM across the Organization, the development of individual PEMS agreements is taking longer than would be the case for future cycles. Some staff, especially in decentralized offices, have asked for more time, in order to complete better quality individual objectives and indicators of performance tied to their unit results. Current efforts to offer support, particularly to staff in Decentralized Offices, are likely to increase participation rates in the field over the next month.

14. The next step, which commenced in June and will continue throughout the year, is to offer soft skills 'giving and receiving feedback' and 'manager as a coach' training to all FAO staff. Training on how to provide effective written feedback in performance evaluations will also be provided to all staff just before the 2010 year end review.

15. In order to increase the robustness of PEMS, supporting systems and linkages to new and existing initiatives need to be strengthened and developed. Important initiatives for PEMS this year are the development of rewards and recognition modalities, establishment of a PEMS rebuttal board, a mediation procedure to manage disputes and the completion of the competency framework.

16. Possible rewards and recognition modalities will entail the drafting of a white paper and strategy document, in consultation with other UN Specialized Agencies and with reference to ICSC papers on this topic and developing an implementation plan through an iterative process, involving consultation with stakeholders. By the end of this year a proposal, training and implementation plan are expected to be tabled for stakeholder consultation.

17. The establishment and development of a PEMS Board, PEMS Rebuttal procedure and mediation team are progressing well and should also be completed by the end of this year. Concurrently, steps are being taken to consider linkages between PEMS and other core HR processes, such as learning and development. The development and implementation of an organization-wide competency framework, currently in progress, will underpin all of these processes and ensure their alignment

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HR Policies

Progress on three new HR policies, which are being developed in line with the IPA, is summarized below.

I. Gender Representation

18. IPA activity 3.59 calls for implementation of an effective policy for geographic and gender representation, which will assist FAO in reaching the UN target of 50% female representation at professional and higher levels.

19. Over the past sixteen years, steady progress has been made in increasing the percentage of women in professional and higher level positions from 18% in 1994 to 32% in April 2010. The current percentage remains, nevertheless, significantly below the UN target of 50% female representation at professional and higher levels, which was also endorsed by the FAO Council as the new corporate target at its 139th session in May 2010.

20. A number of actions have been introduced in FAO, particularly in the past three years, to improve its gender representation. These include the establishment of two-and four-year interim targets reflected in the MTP 2010-2013; new selection procedures which stipulate that at least one qualified woman must be included in recruitment short-lists, and the development of a new recruitment database to ensure wider publication of FAO vacancies to target groups, including professional women.

21. The above initiatives are being incorporated into a comprehensive HR Strategic Action Plan, which consolidates a range of strategies aimed at increasing gender representation and is entering the formal consultation stage, with an expected submission date to Senior Management of September 2010. These strategies include targeted recruitment activities in order to encourage a greater number of suitably skilled and qualified women to apply for vacancies, developing internal staff capacity so that the potential to advance to more senior positions within the Organization is realized, and helping build and sustain a flexible, gender-sensitive culture within FAO.

II. Mobility

22. FAO has a relatively static workforce. Workforce data at 31 December 2009 indicates that 24% of staff on fixed-term or continuing appointments have been at the same grade and post for more than eight years. The situation is particularly acute amongst General Service staff, 29% of whom, as compared to 17% of Professional staff, fall into this category. On-going efforts are in progress to introduce a staff mobility policy framework in FAO, governing the rotation of staff within the same duty station as well as between Headquarters and Decentralized offices.

23. As a critical component of career development and a key element to the development of a staff member's skills and abilities, mobility provides staff members with broader exposure to a variety of activities and locations and assures greater efficiency of the Organization's operations.

24. In support of IPA activity 3.61 - "Establish an incentive based rotation policy in HQ and between HQ and the decentralized offices with clear criteria", a target of at least 100 managed mobile assignments has been set for the 2010-2011 biennium (phase I of FAO's Mobility Programme). Revised targets will be set for subsequent phases of the mobility programme based, in part, on outcomes from a comprehensive review of phase I.

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25. In February 2010, Guiding Principles of FAO's Mobility Programme were discussed and endorsed by the Senior Management Team. A draft Mobility Policy was subsequently prepared and circulated to the Staff Representative Bodies in April 2010 as part of the consultative process. The draft mobility policy has two parts - a "Staff re-assignments" scheme which establishes a mechanism for geographic and within duty station assignments of more than one year's duration and a "Temporary mobility assignments" scheme which provides for short-term geographic and within duty station assignments of up to eleven months duration. The anticipated date for implementation is September 2010.

III. Junior Professionals Programme

26. FAO has a relatively ageing workforce. Current reports indicate that 44% of staff on fixed-term and continuing appointments are aged 50 or above and based on information available about the current workforce profile, projections suggest that in the six-year period 2010-2015, almost 30% of professional and higher lever staff on fixed-term and continuous appointments will retire or separate from the organization, 80% of whom are men. This presents an opportunity for FAO to implement initiatives designed to support rejuvenation of its workforce.

27. IPA activity 3.62 calls for the establishment of a joined-up and consistent system for the recruitment and development of young professionals, particularly from developing countries. Consequently, the Junior Professionals Programme Policy was endorsed in May 2010 and implementation of the policy commenced in June 2010.

28. The Junior Professionals Programme (JPP) is a centrally-coordinated, structured programme involving a streamlined process, which will enable FAO to recruit young, motivated professionals under the age of 32 on an initial two-year fixed-term basis and benefit from their skills and knowledge for the duration of their assignment. It complements existing programmes, which aim to attract young, talented professionals to FAO, including the Associate Professional Officers (APO), Volunteer and Internship programmes. In particular, it will provide a structured mechanism for the recruitment of entry-level professionals from under-represented member countries. Targets have been established for the JPP pilot programme of at least 60% participants from non- and under-represented developing countries and 50% women. Active measures have also been introduced to attract participants from these groups, such as the development of a database of relevant educational institutions and professional associations, to whom the programme can be advertised. In this respect, the JPP is closely aligned with and supports IPA activities 3.59 (Increasing Geographic and Gender Representation) and 3.64 (Wider Publication of FAO Vacancies). The first cohort of approximately fifteen Junior Professionals is scheduled to commence in September 2010.