

Human Resources Management Guidelines

1. Introduction

Recognizing that staff is the most essential resource for its success, OCHA is committed to improve the management of its human resources. To this effect, every effort will be made to ensure greater transparency, accountability, performance-based advancement, consistency in its decision-making and mutual respect for all staff in order to foster an organizational culture based on loyalty, commitment and pride, and thereby maximize the efficiency and performance of the Office and ensure its sustainability.

OCHA shall appoint the best-qualified staff in accordance with Staff Regulation 4.2. Paramount consideration in the appointment and promotion of staff shall be given to the need for securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. OCHA will open its doors to dynamic young talent while concurrently taking fully into account the experience, knowledge and institutional memory of its staff. It will strive to achieve gender balance and a geographically diversified cadre of staff. It will support career and staff development, promote mobility, and encourage human resources management initiatives with the goal of creating a renewed sense of teamwork and commitment to OCHA.

Staff career development, a critical element of this goal, shall be the shared responsibility of OCHA Managers and staff. While OCHA Managers have a commitment to promote staff career development within the general framework of the UN Staff Rules and Regulations, the principal responsibility for pursuing and furthering one's professional development and advancement rests with the staff member. Managers, however, have a responsibility to guide, coach, mentor and support the staff, ensuring that they gain new skills and increased levels of responsibility, with the goal of achieving the overall aims of the department. To that end, the following Human Resources Management Guidelines have been established to guide OCHA Managers in decisions related to recruitment, contractual status, mobility, separation, and stress management. These policies are consistent with UN rules, policies and practices as well as the overall objectives of the department. Their implementation shall take into consideration both the career aspirations and performance of staff.

These guidelines shall be an integral part of OCHA Managers' Terms of Reference and shall provide a tool for the Senior Management Team to assess the performance of managers in the context of human resources management. These Guidelines will be reviewed in the first quarter of 2006.

2. Recruitment/Selection Guidelines

Managers shall assist and encourage OCHA staff members in filling vacant positions, particularly those offering opportunities for career development. OCHA shall retain and promote its competent staff and personnel while recognizing the limited number of posts available within the Office and the exigencies of its operations. Managers shall support staff with career aspirations seeking increasing levels of responsibility. All vacancy announcements shall be made accessible to OCHA staff as soon as possible following standard procedures as follows: 100 series posts and GTA posts with assured funding for at least one year shall be advertised in accordance with the new staff selection system on Galaxy; 200 series posts shall be advertised in Relief Web for a minimum of two weeks. All OCHA staff will be advised via e-mail.

For temporary vacancies of four months or more, OCHA shall advertise the vacant position internally and externally. Vacancies of less than four months shall be filled at the discretion of the Manager. In case of sudden emergencies, Managers may appoint staff without advertising the vacant position for a maximum of 6 months beyond which the post has to be advertised.

In order to assist Managers in the evaluation of candidates, staff member shall provide, as required by the selection system, copies of their last two PAS when submitting their job applications. Managers shall ensure that PAS of applicants are reviewed and taken into account in the evaluation process.

Filling of vacancies shall be governed by Staff Regulation 4.2 which stipulates that the paramount consideration for appointment and promotion of staff shall be the necessity for securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. Managers are accountable to select the best short-listed candidate whether from within or outside of OCHA, while taking fully into account the experience, knowledge and institutional memory of OCHA candidates. However, in the event that candidates have equal qualifications, OCHA candidates shall be given priority consideration. OCHA staff is encouraged to notify the respective manager/officer responsible and the EO/AO about the submission of his/her application.

In filling vacancies, Managers shall strive towards improving the gender balance, targeting in particular posts at the managerial levels from P/L4 and above, as outlined in the Gender Action Plan circulated on 16 May 2003. Similar efforts shall be pursued to enhance geographic representation.

Under established UN policies and practices, the selection process is confidential. OCHA shall ensure that the Interview Panel for professional staff is headed by the Chief or Deputy Chief of the Branch where the vacancy exists. For field professional vacancies, Head or Deputy Head of Field Offices shall be involved in the selection process.

Managers shall ensure that the selection and placement process is completed as quickly as possible. The selection process shall not exceed three months from the deadline for application. Two months shall apply in the case of field and other vacancies under the 200 series.

In case of official travel and absence of the manager/officer responsible for selection, the selection process shall be delegated to the OIC as appropriate in order to complete the selection process within the established timeframe.

Senior Management will be involved in the final approval of Heads of OCHA Field Offices. All things equal, Management shall select candidates with OCHA working experience, particularly in the field.

In the event that the Emergency Relief Coordinator declares a new emergency, the emergency rules on recruitment shall apply.

3. Career Development and Mobility

In the context of the PAS review process, Managers shall discuss with staff their skills and career development opportunities.

Managers shall make all efforts to support and release staff willing to undertake other functions across occupations, duty stations, departments of the Secretariat and agencies of the UN system. In particular, Managers shall facilitate the secondment of OCHA staff to other IASC member agencies.

OCHA shall support mobility of its staff within OCHA, particularly bearing in mind the ladder effect.

Managers shall ensure that staff members with relevant experience are given the opportunity to gain increasing levels of management experience through regular coaching and more delegation of authority. Managers shall be encouraged to delegate authority together with accountability. However, certain delegations can only be passed on from the USG for Management, the Controller, the ASG for OHRM, the ASG for OCSS, to specific individuals.

OCHA shall ensure that in the short-term, a rotation plan is elaborated for OCHA staff at the professional level. The Directors of OCHA New York and Geneva will prepare a rotation plan for OCHA professional staff by the end of 2004 for discussion with staff.

4. Contractual status

OCHA, to the extent possible, shall provide 100 series contracts for its staff performing recurrent functions at headquarters. However, due consideration shall be given to the funding of the post, type of post, duration of assignment and existing staff rules, regulations and policies.

Employment of staff on Special Service Agreements (SSA) for extended periods shall be avoided. Managers shall not offer temporary contracts when the post to be filled can be advertised and regularized in accordance with relevant procedures.

In accordance with current policy (ST/AI/404), OCHA shall reabsorb staff that has been on mission, secondment, loan or special leave without pay up to a period of two years. In exceptional cases, a further extension of six months may be approved. Three months prior to the expiration of the two-year period, concerned staff shall be given advance notice that they should return to their post. In the event staff members decide not to return, their posts shall be advertised immediately.

5. Separation

OCHA Managers shall ensure that all staff leaving OCHA completes the "Questionnaire for separating staff" mandated and required by OHRM.

In accordance with established policy, OCHA managers (First and Second Reporting Officers) shall ensure that a completed PAS is prepared upon staff separation.

6. Transparency

The relevant manager/officer responsible for selection shall inform in writing those OCHA candidates who applied but were not selected.

The OCHA Manager responsible for staff selection shall invite a staff representative and a gender focal point to participate in all Interview Panels in an ex officio capacity. The Staff Representatives shall designate a staff member to participate in her/his place and shall inform the responsible manager accordingly.

Quarterly, the Directors of OCHA New York and Geneva shall provide the Under-Secretary-General and the Staff Representatives with a report listing vacancies, their recruitment status and reasons for delay in recruitment, if any; an update on gender and geographical distribution of staff; a list of staff on secondment, a list of staff recruited against the emergency procedure and an update of PAS compliance.

7. Welfare

Managers shall provide support to staff members in the management of stress. Stress counseling will be provided especially for staff serving in war zone areas.

Managers shall adhere to UN regulations and established procedures governing ORB/Rest and Recuperation.

OCHA shall ensure that all managers at headquarters and field levels undertake a sensitization course in stress management and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Managers shall encourage all staff to respect the ban on smoking.

Managers shall follow the guidelines provided in the Gender Action Plan to create a better work/life balance for staff irrespective of their gender or marital status, addressing the issues of paternity, maternity, planning reassignments, spouse employment, flexible working arrangements and focal point for family related matters.

8. General Service

The existing Guidelines for Managers and Supervisors of General Service staff (attached) shall form an integral part of the present Human Resources Management Guidelines and shall be enforced in their entirety.
