The Regional Director stands with Member State representatives in October 2016 at the Regional Committee for the Western Pacific in Manila. At all levels, WHO works to ensure that the Regional Committee’s deliberations and decisions help improve the health of the Region’s people.
The Office of the Regional Director, the Division of Programme Management and the Division of Administration and Finance provide leadership and oversight of WHO work in the Western Pacific Region.

Working in close collaboration, these three branches of management coordinate the work of technical programmes, country support, partner and donor relations, administrative and financial support, and communications.
Introduction

The Regional Director stands together with the Director of Programme Management and Director of Administration and Finance, as well as the Executive Officer of the Regional Director’s Office. These branches of management work in sync to provide leadership, guidance and coordination of WHO’s work across the Western Pacific Region.

The Office of the Regional Director, the Division of Programme Management and the Division of Administration and Finance provide leadership and oversight of WHO work in the Western Pacific Region. Working in close collaboration, these three branches of management coordinate the work of technical programmes, country support, partner and donor relations, administrative and financial support, and communications.

The Regional Director’s overarching vision – to ensure country priorities are always at the centre of WHO efforts – guides the work of senior management. The management team also works collectively to identify ways to improve the Organization’s effectiveness, efficiency and accountability.

In addition, the team leads efforts to align the Region with global reforms, such as managing mobility and recruitment of staff, and reforms to enhance accountability and transparency.

Office of the Regional Director

The Office of the Regional Director (RDO) supports the work of the Regional Director, as well as leadership and coordination efforts within the Regional Office – particularly in the areas of communications, external relations and partnerships, and information products and services. RDO also supports the work of WHO governing bodies.

Strategic, effective and well-coordinated communications are integral to carrying out WHO’s goal of helping build a better, healthier future for all people. The Communications unit within RDO works closely with technical divisions, WHO headquarters and 15 country offices in the Region to provide information, guidance and advice to decision-makers — from individuals to policy-makers and partners — that will prompt action to protect and promote health.

World Health Day on 7 April 2017 demonstrated the power of communications in the pursuit of better public health. The Regional Director marked the observance by inviting the diplomatic community, United Nations agencies and mental health advocates to the Regional Office for an event with the theme: Depression: Let’s talk. It was the highlight of a Region-wide campaign across news and social media that generated widespread discussion of depression and mental illness – helping raise awareness that talking about depression can be the first step towards recovery.
Strong communications also rely on high-quality publications, information products and translation services. The Information Products and Services team (IPS), which includes the Library, the Publications unit and Translation team, assist WHO staff and Member States in creating, translating, disseminating and retrieving health-related information.

In public health, knowledge and information can literally save lives. In low-income countries, especially in remote areas, the latest scientific information is usually difficult to access and costly. Over the past year, IPS led the roll-out of an innovative online system for providing access to the latest health and medical information: the Hinari programme.

This partnership between WHO and major publishers, enables low- and middle-income countries to gain access to one of the world’s largest collections of biomedical and health literature – meaning that distance and budget are no longer barriers to life-saving information. Training conducted by IPS has linked hospitals in remote areas of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Papua New Guinea with the best health and medical information from around the world.

WHO relies on the excellent support of many partners and donors to sustain its work. With the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, partnerships and alliances across sectors – agriculture, education, health, transport and others – are more important for WHO work than ever before. While health resides at the centre of the global development agenda, the forces that impact health are mostly outside the health sector.

The External Relations (ERP) unit within RDO supports WHO’s relationships with a range of health and development partners that provide financial and technical support for WHO, including through the management of some 130 memoranda of understanding and other agreements. In the Western Pacific Region, ERP also coordinates the implementation of the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors, adopted by the World Health Assembly in 2016.

Division of Programme Management

The Division of Programme Management (DPM) coordinates technical cooperation with Member States through programme development and operations, country support and editorial services. The division employs results-based management and cross-cutting approaches in order to ensure results at the country level.

DPM directs strategic and operational planning as well as resource allocation based on priorities identified by WHO governing bodies – the World Health Assembly, the Executive Board and the Regional Committee for the Western Pacific. Its work is guided by the Programme Committee and country cooperation strategies. The division also is respon-
sible for overall coordination of governing body meetings, including the annual session of the Regional Committee.

The Programme Development and Operations unit within the division coordinates implementation of the Programme Budget 2016–2017. The unit also helped develop the draft Programme Budget 2018–2019, which was approved by the Seventieth World Health Assembly in May 2017.

The Country Support Unit (CSU) works closely with WHO country offices to ensure that Member State priorities and needs are at the centre of all work. The unit also coordinates the development, implementation and review of WHO country cooperation strategies – which are jointly developed with Member States to guide WHO work in countries.

CSU helps drive WHO reform in the Region, including alignment with global reform efforts, and implements WHO evaluation policies in the Region. The unit also coordinates WHO’s work with other United Nations agencies and global health initiatives.

The Editorial Services team (EDT) ensures the quality of WHO official documents and information products by providing editorial guidance and support across the Organization. The team coordinates all documentation for the Regional Committee from all divisions in the Region, as well as supporting the communications needs of the Regional Director.

In general, EDT supports quality control for all publications and communications products at the Regional Office. The unit has produced templates and guidance for all types of writing – from speeches and mission reports to working documents and regional frameworks. The team’s cross-cutting initiatives also include an updated manual on Regional Committee processes and protocol, as well as a separate guide to facilitate Member State roles and functions during the session.

Division of Administration and Finance

The Division of Administration and Finance (DAF) is comprised of three units – Budget and Finance, Human Resources Management, and Information Technologies and Administration. The division ensures accountability and transparency in the use of funds through diligent reporting and oversight.

The Country Support Unit coordinates the development, implementation and review of WHO country cooperation strategies that guide WHO support to address Member State priorities and needs in health.
Effective procedures for recruiting and retaining skilled staff, as well as support for equipping and empowering staff, help WHO deliver meaningful results in the Western Pacific Region. The DAF teams work at the regional level in Manila and support country offices, helping strengthen cooperation with technical divisions for solutions at the country level.

The Budget and Finance unit within the division provides guidance, policies and reporting procedures that strengthen internal financial control for compliance and quality assurance. The Human Resources Management unit is tasked with recruiting world-class experts and local support staff, and getting them on board in the shortest time possible.

The Information Technologies and Administration unit provides services for daily administrative work, ensuring the Organization operates efficiently in the areas of procurement, travel, meeting management, information and communication technology, registry and logistics, office management, and staff safety and security. The group also helps deliver logistical support to emergency response services, including facilitating travel, procurement and shipment of equipment, and ensuring staff safety.

In 2016, the Regional Office for the Western Pacific became the first major WHO office to achieve full on-time compliance in personnel evaluations. Formally known as Performance Management and Development System reviews, all personnel reviews were completed within the global deadline.

Similarly, Direct Financial Cooperation (DFC) – payments made by the Organization for the cost of items that would otherwise be borne by governments – remained at 100% compliance for reporting. These funds help governments to strengthen their health development capacity, simultaneously enhancing the benefits from WHO technical cooperation. To monitor progress, quality-assurance activities were conducted in every WHO country office in the Region.

The Administrative Services Unit (ASU) was reorganized to boost efficiency, and administrative functions in country offices were strengthened. Beyond enhancing the network, increasing security, and deploying new standard technology, the Information Technology Group continued to develop solutions for Member States, such as: a new civil registration and vital statistics biometrics-based system in the Federated States of Micronesia; the WHO global deployment of the Internal Control Framework self-assessment application; and continued leadership in the development of the Global Engagement Management system.

In addition, the division is assisting office relocations in Malaysia and Samoa in order to operate more efficiently and meet the requirements of the United Nations Minimum Operating Security Standards.
1. Greater compliance, accountability and transparency

The fundamental principles of accountability and transparency underpin all WHO work. The Organization always must be accountable to Member States, first and foremost, as well as to the donors and partners who support WHO work. And the Organization must be transparent in all it does. Work on strengthening accountability, transparency and compliance in the Western Pacific Region has continued over the past year.

The Regional Office now has a full-time Compliance and Risk Management Officer, reporting directly to the Regional Director. The Regional Office also is taking a leadership role globally in spearheading greater accountability, transparency and compliance.

For example, the Regional Office led the conversion of the Internal Control Framework, a self-assessment checklist, to a more user-friendly, web-based tool for worldwide use. In November 2016, the Western Pacific Region hosted the first-ever global meeting of compliance and risk management officers.

The Regional Office continues to promote a strong culture of compliance and risk management, including full on-time compliance of DFC reports and staff evaluations. The Regional Office also takes accountability to our donors very seriously, ensuring that high-quality reports to donors are submitted on time. The Compliance and Risk Management Officer produces a quarterly compliance report for the Regional Director to ensure continued focus on and sustainability of compliance with key organizational accountability measures and reforms.

In November 2016, WHO joined the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) – a voluntary, multi-stakeholder initiative that seeks to improve the transparency of aid, development and humanitarian resources in an effort to increase their effectiveness in tackling poverty. Members include donor and recipient countries and also organizations representing civil society and the private sector, as well as national and international nongovernmental organizations.

A new policy on information disclosure is being rolled out over the next two years as part of WHO’s commitments to IATI.
2. Enhancing WHO country work with better technology

The WHO Western Pacific Region is vast and covers multiple time zones. For a long time, these prevented many countries in the Region from easily accessing a wide range of expertise available across the three levels and six regions of WHO.

Improving the ways of working across WHO’s global, regional and country levels has been a priority of reform in the Region. Upgrades in our information and communication technology infrastructure across the Region have provided a better field of play for collaborative mechanisms.

While stable Internet connections remain an issue in some remote locations, a range of platforms now allows the Regional Office to connect better with country offices, and country offices to connect more easily with each other. Advances in digital technology also help the Regional Office connect with Member States.

Improvements began in 2012 with country offices switching wherever possible from costly satellite connections to better, less expensive alternatives, such as cloud-based videoconferencing. In 2013, desktop phones were also enabled with cameras, allowing video calls to most country offices in the Region and other WHO offices.

During the sixty-seventh session of the Regional Committee in October 2016, all 15 country offices in the Region were connected by videoconference to a side event showcasing WHO work in countries. Member State representatives applauded the initiative.

These technological solutions have enhanced WHO work, making it easier for staff to work together without the expense and inconvenience of face-to-face meetings. Better connectivity also enhances WHO’s work with Member States – providing an alternative to travel for consultations with the Regional Office in Manila. For example, Member State consultations in 2017 on several upcoming Regional Committee items were conducted by videoconference.

The videoconferencing approach allowed for multisectoral and higher-level participation given the small opportunity cost of attendance. There was more meaningful country-level discussion and review of draft strategies, with WHO country office staff facilitating translation and discussion in local languages. The result is a more country-focused approach to development of regional strategies.
3. Taking stock of reforms that ensure WHO is fit for the future

When the Regional Director took office in 2009, he embarked on a series of reforms to improve WHO performance in the Region and to ensure Member State priorities were being addressed. The Regional Office conducted a yearlong analysis of reform initiatives, gauging their effectiveness and benefit for Member States and identifying additional steps for reforms to take full effect.

“Our success relies on our capacity to deliver results,” explains Regional Director Dr Shin Young-soo. “It is paramount to any Organization to take stock of what has been done and learn from those experiences to work more effectively in the future.”

With the stocktaking exercise, WHO put previous reform efforts under a magnifying glass to see what works best, in the end operationalizing tried and tested ways to improve support at the country level. In all, the exercise identified more than 800 reform actions – some addressing specific challenges and others tackling deeper structural and systematic needs.

Actions were grouped into six domains. They focused on strengthening WHO support to Member States based on their needs and priorities, and enhancing accountability, efficiency and capacity-building to ensure that progress could be sustained.

In the Region’s continuing drive to improve performance, the review highlighted the need to avoid project-based...
approaches to maintain a strong reform structure that incentivizes performance and encourages the participation of all staff members and stakeholders.

To ensure success, reform mechanisms must be strengthened, the review found. Particular attention must be paid to strengthening performance in three areas: effectively engaging partners, placing the right people in the right places and enhancing communications. Work in these three areas – which will be priorities over the next two years – is already yielding results.

Across the Region, WHO has increased engagement with partners and stakeholders, from improving donor reporting to organizing forums to engage parliamentarians for health. The Regional Office continues to build networks to improve partner participation in support of Member States, such as collaborating centres that provide expertise on all aspects of public health.

To get the right people in the right places, the recruitment process has been reviewed to improve efficiency and reduce on-boarding times. A diverse working group was formed to critique processes and challenges. Senior management has endorsed the group’s recommendations, which include applying a project management approach to candidate selection, developing a roster of independent panel members to ensure the best panel for every selection, and leveraging functions of the Organization’s new recruitment and on-boarding system, Stellis.

To enhance communications, the Regional Director’s Office launched the new Strategic Communications Framework for WHO in the Western Pacific Region in June 2017. A weeklong workshop was also conducted with communications specialists from across the Region and the Organization. The need for clear strategic communications is greater than ever, given today’s increasingly crowded and complex global health and development space.

A comprehensive survey of staff and stakeholders confirmed the strong trust people place in WHO. The survey also suggested ways to reinforce appreciation of the Organization’s work, including a long list of health achievements in the Region.

That relationship of trust will be more imperative than ever as the new era of Sustainable Development begins. Health has finally assumed its rightful place at the centre of the global development agenda, with WHO as the authority entrusted to build cooperation and consensus on health in global development.

For WHO in the Western Pacific, that trust means leaving no one behind in efforts to attain the highest level of health and well-being possible for the Region’s nearly 1.9 billion people.