

# WFP PEOPLE STRATEGY



## Informal Consultation

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World Food Programme  
Rome, Italy



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WFP's greatest strength is its staff. These dedicated people work around the world to provide access to nutritious food and promote lasting development, often in difficult and dangerous conditions.

“Doing more for more for less”<sup>1</sup> means supporting more needy people with scarce resources, using innovations such as cash and vouchers or smartphone apps to connect farmers with markets. It aptly describes a central theme for WFP, and can be used to frame its People Strategy.

- Theme 1: Doing More

Challenge: WFP must continue to fulfil its primary humanitarian response role and simultaneously build its capabilities to address the United Nations Secretary-General's Zero Hunger Challenge.

Action: Deploy the right people in the right roles to deliver this mandate.

Action: Prioritize the allocation of resources and manage short-term and long-term issues.

- Theme 2: For More

Challenge: The number and scale of emergencies – and hence the number and diversity of WFP's beneficiaries – are expected to increase.

Action: Attract, develop, reward and retain the best people.

- Theme 3: For Less

Challenge: Because resources are limited WFP must become more productive, efficient and effective.

Actions: Amplify the influence of managers to continue to enhance performance and optimize processes to drive operational efficiencies.

These changes require four programmes:

1. Shift the focus. Make country delivery the central focus in WFP, and strike a new balance between national and international staff.
2. Equip effective leaders. Provide leaders with the skills and tools to deliver WFP's Strategic Objectives, and hold them accountable.
3. Sustain a performance mindset. Recognize good performance, identify criteria for success and demand individual accountability.
4. Build the talent pool. Provide opportunities for learning and growth to make WFP an organization in which people want to work. Staff must be able to achieve personal aspirations as well as serve our beneficiaries

These programmes constitute a significant enhancement of WFP's management of its people. Putting people at the centre will enable WFP to serve its beneficiaries by delivering more, for more, for less.

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<sup>1</sup> Mashelkar, R. and Prahalad, C.K. 2010. Innovation's Holy Grail. *Harvard Business Review*, 88(7-8): 132-141. Available at: <http://hbr.org/2010/07/innovations-holy-grail/ar/1>

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## CONTEXT

1. The changing external and internal environments in which WFP operates shape the People Strategy and provide the rationale for action.

### Mandate and Strategic Objectives

2. In 2013, WFP began a transformation that will define its mission for the future.<sup>2</sup> The four Strategic Objectives in the WFP Strategic Plan (2014–2017) are:
  - 1) Save lives and protect livelihoods in emergencies.
  - 2) Support or restore food security and nutrition and establish or rebuild livelihoods in fragile settings and following emergencies.
  - 3) Reduce risk and enable people, communities and countries to meet their own food and nutrition needs.
  - 4) Reduce undernutrition and break the intergenerational cycle of hunger.

### Changes in the Environment

3. The identification of required skills and mobilization of staff to support major changes is made more difficult by:
  - political instability and weather extremes, which are likely to result in more emergencies requiring food assistance and logistical support;
  - increases in the number and diversity of beneficiaries: WFP is likely to operate more in urban environments and middle-income countries; and
  - an economic environment in which governments and donors are under increasing public pressure to husband resources in the most effective way.<sup>3</sup>

### Organizational Implications

4. To address these challenges, WFP must develop four characteristics:
  - i) Agility. WFP must be efficient in providing maximum benefit at the lowest cost, and effective in achieving the best possible outcomes for the people it serves.
  - ii) Resourcefulness. WFP must be able to expand its skill base to include nutrition, resilience, change management and partnership management by using current tools and knowledge and by establishing centres of expertise.
  - iii) Scalability. WFP must deploy the right people in the right roles and remain sensitive to local needs.
  - iv) Adaptability. WFP must continue to change and renew itself continuously while maintaining its core values.

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<sup>2</sup> The WFP Strategic Plan (2014–2017) provides the framework for WFP's operations and its role in achieving a world with zero hunger.

<sup>3</sup> Accenture. 2014. Global Non-profits: Operating Model Blueprints for Going Global and Doing Good. Research report (unpublished).

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## CURRENT SITUATION: STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

5. This section outlines the findings and implications of the People Strategy Capability Assessment, describes the vision for WFP in 2025 and indicates the changes in the workforce that will be required.

### Vision: Where WFP Should Be in 2025

6. A series of workshops and interviews with over 200 of WFP's senior managers, Country Directors and other leaders identified three changes WFP will need to make in its operations:

- i) Collaboration and partnership with United Nations agencies, governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, and others must be strengthened.

To respond to this requirement, WFP is concurrently developing a Corporate Partnership Strategy that seeks to promote excellence in partnering by building on the known strengths of WFP as a partner and addressing areas where improvements are required. The strategy will establish the principles and practices that will govern WFP's partnering arrangements and guides the selection and development of partnerships to maximize the impact of WFP's activities for the children, women and men it serves.

- ii) WFP must remain a leader in responding to emergencies, hunger and nutrition needs.

The Cyclone Haiyan response is an excellent example of WFP's capability and versatility to quickly scale up and down to address emergencies. By April 2014, 300 WFP staff will have been deployed to support the Haiyan response operation at various stages, while local capacity harnessed through rapid recruitment and redeployment was a major contributor to its success.

Staff perceive WFP as too modest about its achievements and expertise, so there is a need to promote WFP's ideas for eradicating world hunger and to establishing it as the "can do" organization.

- iii) Beneficiaries will play a greater part in the design and delivery of programmes as modern technology gives them access to more and better information.

### Workforce

7. WFP has 14,000 talented employees in 75 countries. This workforce must evolve; workshops and discussions defined 20 roles as foundational, including those relating to:

- field-based nutrition;
- donor relations;
- human resources (HR);
- logistics; and
- emergency coordination.

8. The assessment of the workforce shows that: i) roles need to be considered more broadly – an emergency coordinator, for example, should have an understanding of nutrition, resilience and programming; and ii) the focus of the roles needs to change: the identified roles span all four Strategic Objectives, but it is easier to develop those associated with food commodity programming – WFP’s traditional role – than to acquire skills needed to deliver food assistance.

**Capability Assessment Findings**

9. To deliver the People Strategy WFP needs certain organizational capabilities. A human capital capability assessment in January and February 2014 considered 14 capability areas in terms of their importance and of current and future requirements. This was a self-assessment by WFP’s leaders using a tool that is best practice in thousands of organizations. A comprehensive range of analytics was produced based on the result of this assessment, which formed a solid ground for presenting opportunities for WFP to empower its leaders, drive employee performance and rebuild its talent pool.



**FOUR PEOPLE IMPERATIVES**

10. WFP will implement its People Strategy by focusing on four People Imperatives.

**Figure 1: The four People Imperatives**



## Shift the Focus

11. National staff account for 82 percent of WFP's workforce. There are ongoing projects that aim to balance the need for flexibility in light of funding volatility with the goal of providing more equitable contractual arrangements for national staff. The People Strategy will define long-term projects to ensure that national staff are motivated. To place national staff at the heart of WFP, three initiatives are envisaged.

⇒ *1. Build the skills and capacities of national staff*

12. The team that will manage all People Strategy projects will focus first on identifying opportunities for skills development for national staff and second on ensuring delivery of projects that directly or indirectly affect national staff.<sup>4</sup>

⇒ *2. Review and implement Fit for Purpose contractual arrangements*

13. Consistent and equitable contractual arrangements and conditions of employment are being developed through the Service Contract Review and Local Staff Transfer Project.

⇒ *3. Create a supportive and healthy workplace*

14. Given that the global context in which WFP operates is rapidly changing, most staff are serving in difficult, dangerous and/or remote locations. WFP's operational environment can have profound impacts on the well-being of staff. WFP needs to create a supportive and healthy workplace, with medical and counselling services to address psychological and physiological stresses associated with the work: medical services and counselling are available, but more can be done. Standard services should be developed for staff on assignment in hardship duty stations and for national staff members. Managers are accountable for the well-being of their staff and training should be provided to help them with this requirement.

## Equip Effective Leaders

15. The foundation of the People Strategy is leadership. Systems must be developed for identifying emerging leaders and for ensuring that all leaders have the experience, skills and tools to be accountable for the work of WFP. Three initiatives are envisaged:

⇒ *1. Mobilize senior leaders*

16. WFP's leaders must be committed to driving change throughout the organization by:

- creating a common understanding of the People Strategy among senior leaders and establishing their roles in communicating and delivering the various people programmes;
- engaging the Executive Management Group and stakeholders in Headquarters and the field in planning for WFP's future leadership requirements;
- defining a unified system for developing the required capabilities; and
- defining a standard approach for evaluating leaders' performance.

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<sup>4</sup> This will be developed in association with the current learning and development transformation project.

⇒ 2. *Develop leadership and management capabilities*

17. A rigorous and motivating programme needs to be defined that targets:

- emerging leaders: staff with leadership potential, who will be prepared for leadership positions through training delivered through a sustainable combination of virtual tools and hands-on activities; and
- supervisory skills training for frontline leaders such as heads of sub-offices and Country Directors.

⇒ 3. *Review leadership talent*

18. WFP needs to create a means of identifying leadership potential. The first step is to define the critical leadership positions and the competencies required. Then:

- Decision criteria must be developed for assessing the readiness of staff to assume new roles and responsibilities.
- Staff assuming new roles must have context-specific development opportunities to ensure that they are ready for promotion; the process must be integrated with the Junior Professional Officer programme.<sup>5</sup>

19. The review must be anchored in the organizational capabilities required for the Strategic Plan: the output will be a system for identifying and preparing candidates with high potential for leadership posts and planning their career development.

## **Sustain a Performance Mindset**

20. Focusing on practices and processes that reward and recognize performance/results for success and support accountability will create an environment that fosters the best outcomes for WFP's beneficiaries.

21. Changing the WFP mindset will require definition of what is involved and development of a clear collective understanding of why and how it is to be achieved. The transformation will shape understanding of WFP's purpose, its operational modalities and outcomes, and its management of performance. Two initiatives are envisaged:

⇒ 1. *Embed common WFP values and behaviours*

22. The employee value proposition (see below) will identify the nature of work at WFP and the required values and behaviours to give a picture of what it means to be part of WFP.

23. WFP's values must be seen as the foundation of its work: leaders and staff must embody these values in their behaviours and interactions with other staff.

24. The two phases of this project are: i) communicate WFP's values and behaviours to all employees: leaders must be accountable for what their staff deliver and how they act; and ii) review the relevant organizational processes once these values and behaviours are embedded. The shift will not be rapid, but a matter of gradual momentum towards a new way of working.

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<sup>5</sup> The programme identifies future leaders by hiring the best young people, develops the talent pipeline for critical roles, builds an inclusive talent management programme and provide additional staffing in a difficult funding environment.

⇒ *2. Refresh performance and management processes*

25. A change is required to alter the perception of performance management: it must become part of the organizational culture rather than a process. The principle that all decisions imply that someone is accountable for delivery must be further strengthened.
26. A culture focusing on results and outcomes is required to ensure that every dollar spent is for the benefit of beneficiaries. The current performance management process is seen as limited, with few employees sanctioned for poor performance and with high performance going unrewarded. A strong performance culture would provide WFP with motivational benefits.
27. Positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement and, as a last resort, sanctions can help to drive appropriate behaviours. This hinges on the principle of equity: high performers must be recognized, and poor performers must have an improvement plan to support future development. Staff are not consistently able to connect their performance with a response from managers.
28. A review of WFP's performance management processes should be carried out to identify areas for improvement. A major consideration will be the links with other processes such as reassignment and training. Performance management must include goal setting, development planning, informal feedback and coaching. There must be clear actions for managing good, average and unsatisfactory performance.
29. Following the review, the performance management process and practices should be redesigned to embed the defined values and behaviours. A pilot should be run to test the new approach.

**Build the Talent Pool**

30. WFP needs to expand its talent pool to address future staffing requirements. Three initiatives are envisaged.

⇒ *1. Develop career frameworks and develop skills*

31. The WFP workforce is highly diverse. WFP needs to establish a strategic framework that underlines the principles for identifying the competencies and skills required for all roles and appropriate career paths. Priority should be given to mission-critical roles.
32. These career paths should be supported by an employee value proposition that takes into account differences in roles, geography and function.
33. The path to leadership positions must be flexible and must promote breadth of experience in WFP's food assistance modalities. WFP must ensure that international staff experience as far as possible the full spectrum of its work: they should operate in a variety of situations including some hardship duty stations. Mobility has been a clear strength for WFP in achieving its mandate. This approach will enable staff to acquire a variety of skills, with two major benefits: i) more staff will have the skills needed to deliver food assistance; and ii) staff will be well placed to communicate WFP's work to external stakeholders.
34. A significant output of clearly defined career frameworks is a learning needs analysis. Once the required capabilities are identified for key roles, WFP will be able to identify the interventions required to support its staff on their career journey.

⇒ 2. *Refine WFP's employee value proposition and talent acquisition strategy*

35. The employee value proposition defines what it means to be employed at WFP in terms of work, opportunities and rewards; it must be individualized in terms of role, location and function at international – and more importantly, national – levels. The employee value proposition must reflect the particular nature of WFP as compared with other United Nations agencies or NGOs. This involves the development of a clear statement of what it means to work at WFP, which must be publicized in the media and websites likely to be seen by potential recruits.
36. Hiring managers must be trained so that there is a consistent message for potential employees. The ways in which current employees relate to the employee value proposition should be analysed to ensure that it reflects current reality.
37. The talent acquisition strategy must be re-shaped to reflect the refined employee value proposition. It defines the three options for enhancing the workforce: i) build – developing from within; ii) buy – hiring externally, outsourcing and contracting services; and iii) borrow – leveraging partnerships, internships and rotations.
38. The talent acquisition strategy will be designed to match the roles identified in the career framework with the skills and potential of applicants for WFP positions. Monitoring and analysis of the process will help to maximize its effectiveness.

⇒ 3. *Establish an overall workforce planning capability*

39. This must be done in alignment with the talent acquisition strategy to ensure that WFP has suitable staffing in the medium term and long term. It should be delivered through an initial pilot that: i) identifies anticipated workforce deficits of assets such as skills in nutrition or vulnerability analysis and mapping; ii) fills any gaps by hiring or through partnerships; iii) delivers the strategy at the country and regional levels; and iv) tracks performance. The process should be monitored and re-piloted if necessary.
40. This approach will expand WFP's workforce planning skills and enable managers to see the benefits for their units; workforce planning should become part of all staffing and structure reviews.
41. It will also help WFP to forecast and plan on ways to build a diverse and high performance workforce, as well as to achieve the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan (UN SWAP) gender performance standards.<sup>6</sup> Research demonstrates the importance of having both men and women in leadership as they often bring complimentary skills critical to organization performance.<sup>7</sup> In WFP women hold 36 percent of leadership positions; with regard to hardship duty stations, women account for 33.3 percent of employees in level C stations, 26.3 percent at level D and 16.6 percent at level E. Diversity needs to be embedded as a factor in all parts of employee lifecycle, from recruitment to exit.

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<sup>6</sup> In terms of gender parity in staffing, the UNSWAP target is to achieve the equal representation of women for GS staff and also at the P4 level and above by 2017.

<sup>7</sup> McKinsey & Company. 2008. Women Matter2, [Female leadership, a competitive edge for the future](#)

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## IMPLICATIONS OF THE PEOPLE STRATEGY FOR THE HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION

### Enhance the Human Resources Function

42. The People Strategy defines the changes needed to enable WFP to achieve its Strategic Objectives; it is not the same as a human resources strategy. But the role of HR in delivering the strategy is significant, and it will need to adapt its current operating model to drive change.
43. This will involve:
  - *Definition of a new operating model.* Eighty percent HR staff time is devoted to transactional activities such as administering contracts and benefits. These are fundamental activities, but improvements in processes and automation can reduce the time required for them, which will in turn enable HR to focus on value-added activities such as workforce planning, learning and development, performance management and coaching. The three phases will be: i) defining the HR vision for Headquarters and the field; ii) identifying work – primarily transactional – that can be consolidated across WFP; and iii) developing a field-focused HR operating model with clear governance and structure, enhancing the role of regional bureau HR teams.
  - *Identification of the changes required for the new operating model.* This will involve gap analysis and identification of cost implications such as investments in new technology. A centre of excellence should be established to support managers at all levels with expertise, advice and quality checks.
  - *Delivery of the new operating model.* The changes required must be communicated throughout WFP so that every unit is engaged in the changes to the operating model as it is rolled out.

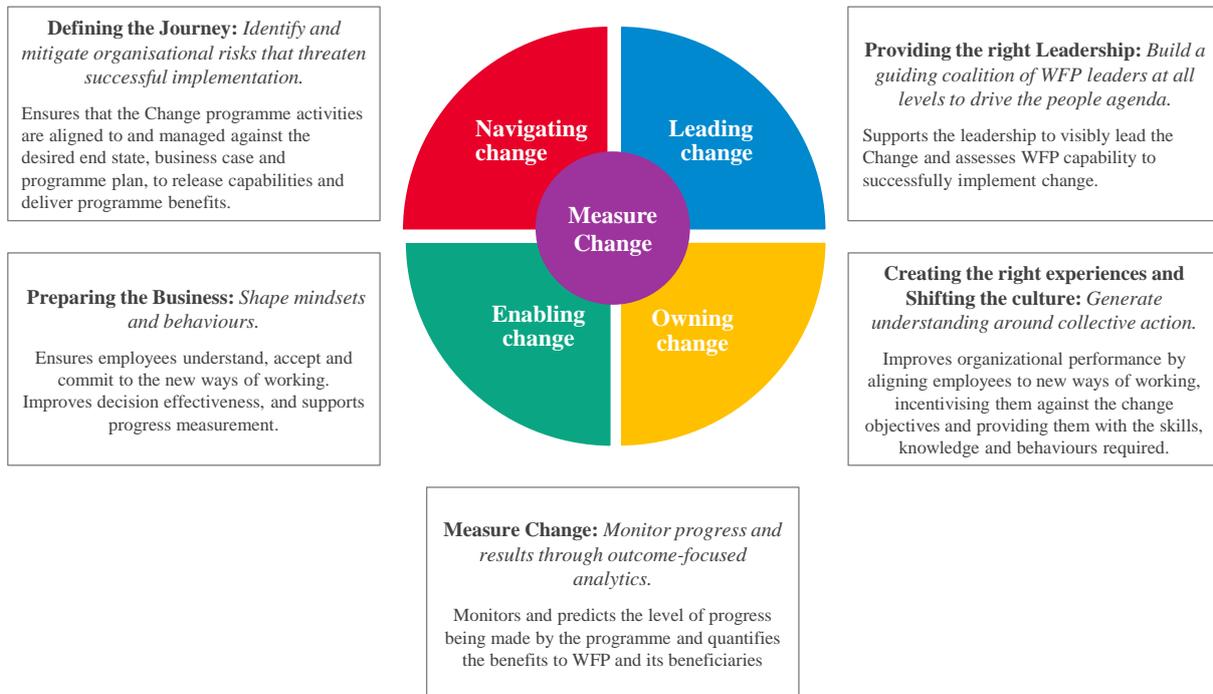
### Define and Implement the Human Resources Business Partner Capability Development Programmes

44. The roles of HR staff are evolving to include strategic business partner, employee advocate and change agent while maintaining the value of being administrative experts.
45. The strategic business partners will be the “account managers” for HR services in all units of WFP. They will be adapted to serve each unit in line with HR strategies, programmes and best practices. The People Strategy needs HR professionals who understand HR processes and the requirements of the units they support.
46. The programmes should be based on a combination of external practice and WFP’s organizational priorities, with priority given to three core competencies: i) consulting skills; ii) facilitation of organizational change; and iii) business orientation and understanding.

## IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

47. Research into organizational change in the public and private sectors suggests that a road map increases the probability of success.<sup>8</sup> The five stages of implementation of the People Strategy are shown in Figure 2 and discussed below.

**Figure 2: Change Approach**



⇒ 1. *Identify and mitigate organizational risks that threaten implementation*

48. Two pervasive threats to implementation must be addressed: lack of attention to leading/managing people, and the perception that the People Strategy is purely an HR matter.

49. If people think that change is an HR issue, it will be difficult to achieve the transformation to a people-centred organization. The People Strategy provides a consistent vision of what it will mean to be a people-centred organization and shows how the objectives can be achieved: this will encourage stakeholders to measure progress in terms of the Strategic Objectives, which will in turn help to set realistic expectations.

⇒ 2. *Set up a group of WFP leaders at all levels to drive the People Strategy*

50. Implementation of the People Strategy involves the whole of WFP. A programme of this scale and duration requires that leaders at all levels are committed to driving change: they must have a clear grasp of the rationale, and must be accountable for actions taken. A change infrastructure must be developed to promote acceptance at all levels and apply the metrics and reporting processes required to promote accountability for driving change.

<sup>8</sup> Beer, M. and Nohria, N. 2000. Cracking the Code of Change. *Harvard Business Review*, 78(3): 133–141; Kotter, J.P. 1995. Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail. *Harvard Business Review*, 73(2): 59–67; Thomas, R.J., Rossi, D. and Poisson, J. 2004. Uncompromising Leadership: How to Drive Performance Through Change. Accenture Institute for High Performance (unpublished).

⇒ 3. *Generate understanding around collective action*

51. WFP must create a core message with which all leaders and stakeholders agree. As with the employee value proposition, it must be adapted to specific functions, locations and staff groups. The People Strategy must become part of the way in which WFP operates. A collective focus is essential to the success of the programme.

⇒ 4. *Shape mindsets and behaviours*

52. All leaders and change agents must be aware of the mindsets and behaviours required to deliver the People Strategy. Staff must have the right to challenge rationales and decisions made if they appear contrary to the goals of the People Strategy.

⇒ 5. *Monitor progress and results through outcome-focused analytics*

53. The impact of the changes should be monitored. All programmes must have measures for success and accountability. The outcome focus applies to the programmes and projects and to the change activities that take place. Continuous monitoring will show the impact of the projects and the enhanced efficiency and effectiveness with which WFP serves its beneficiaries.

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## **METHODS**

The People Strategy was developed in consultation with all units in WFP. The five steps were:

⇒ *1. Desk review*

This included:

- ◇ a sentiment analysis to identify material related to organization, talent, culture, skills and analytics;
- ◇ capability mapping of themes relevant to WFP's competencies and competency gaps; and
- ◇ comparison of themes with a best-practice human capital model.

⇒ *2. Best practices research*

A combination of primary and third-party research, and a review of the people strategies of other agencies.

⇒ *3. Workshops and interviews*

The workshops involved 200 employees; interviews were held with 80 employees from different groups, geographies and grades and 25 Country Directors. Those attending the workshops represented all levels in WFP and all the regions in which it operates: they included Country Directors, Regional Directors and the directors of Headquarters units. The workshops included sessions to envision future requirements, identify the mindsets needed, review the People Strategy and plan for implementation.

⇒ *4. Field visits*

Regional bureaux and country offices in Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Panama, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic were visited to ensure that opinions from the field were heard.

⇒ *5. Capability assessment*

A best-practice capability assessment measured current capability levels for delivery of the People Strategy. Respondents completed a questionnaire that assessed staff capabilities and levels of importance. The results led to the prioritization of People Strategy projects.

## METRICS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

### The Size, Shape and Location of the Current Workforce

1. WFP has 13,895 employees from 150 nationalities. The 20 largest offices account for 65.7 percent of the workforce; only 10 percent are based in Headquarters. The fact that 90 percent work in the field indicates that the People Strategy should focus on these locations.

Figure A.II.1: Workforce

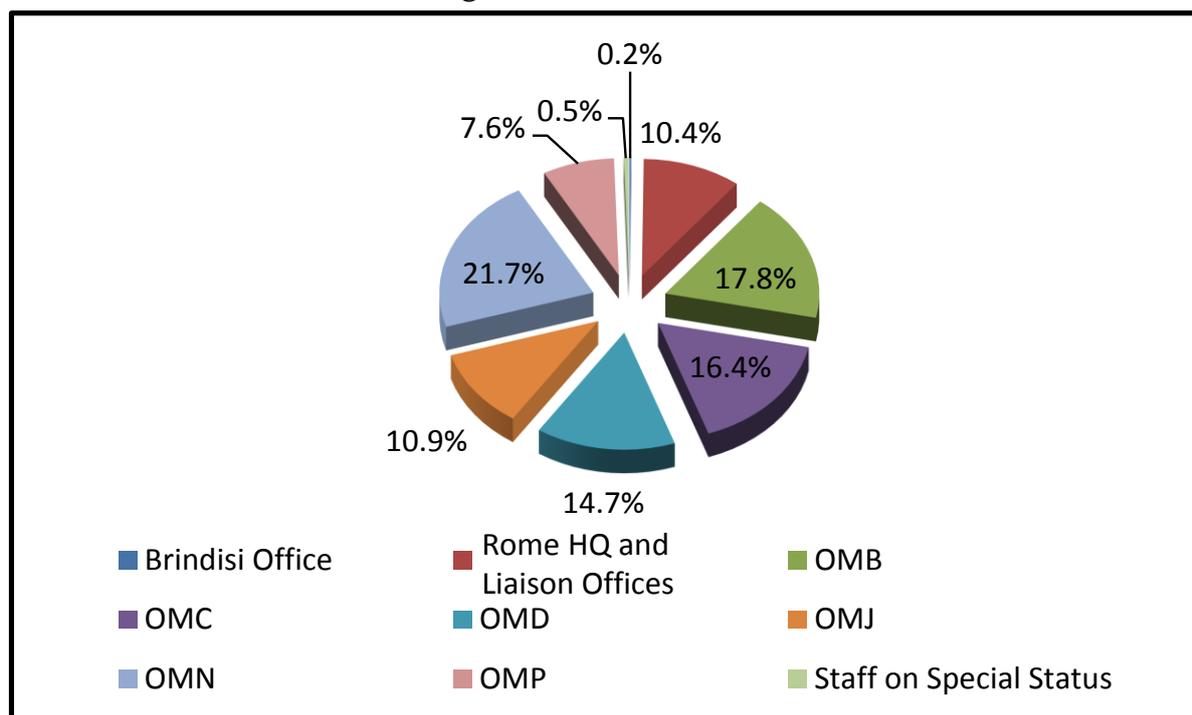
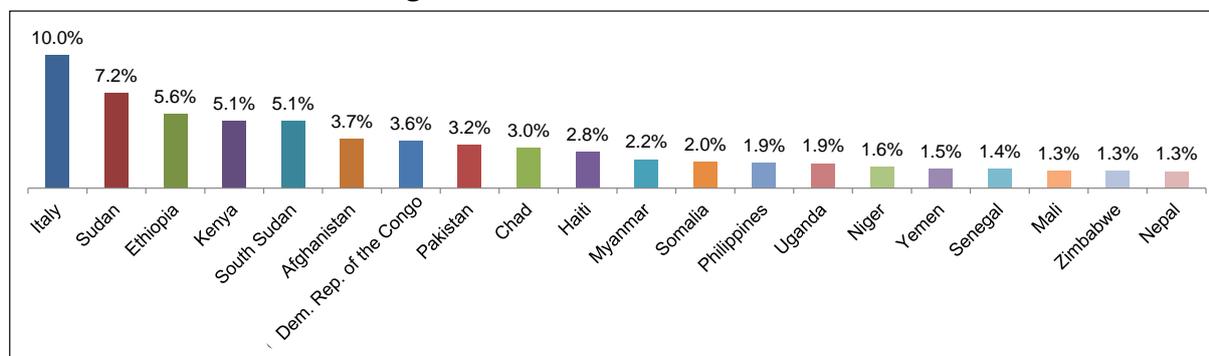


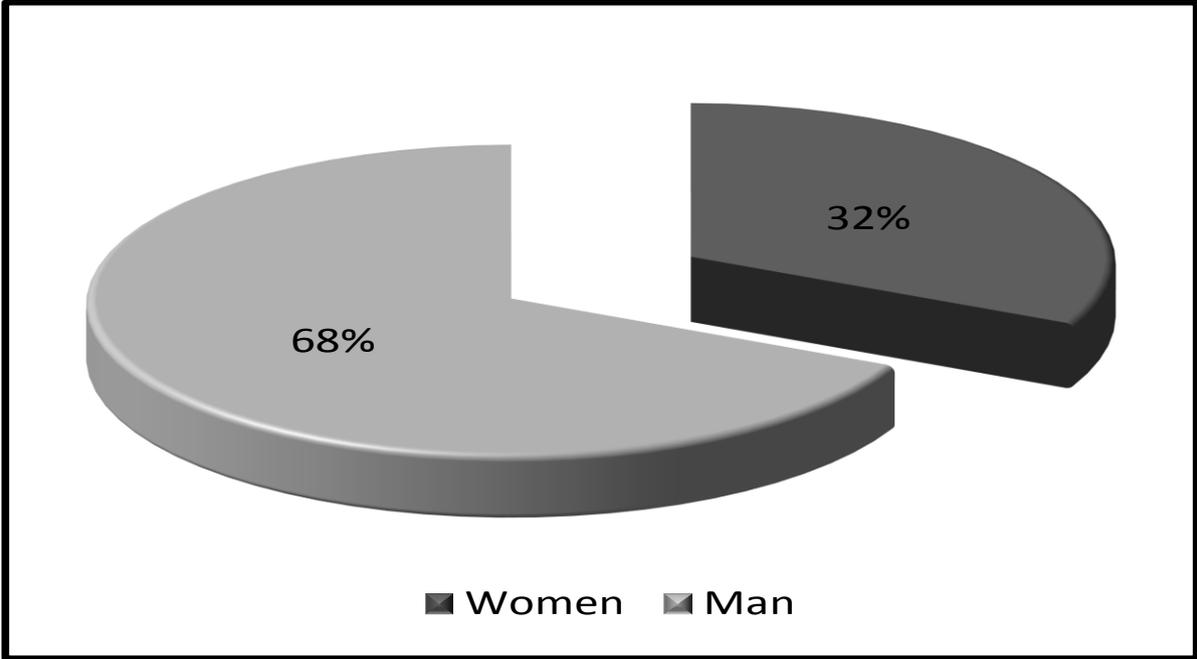
Figure A.II.2: Workforce location



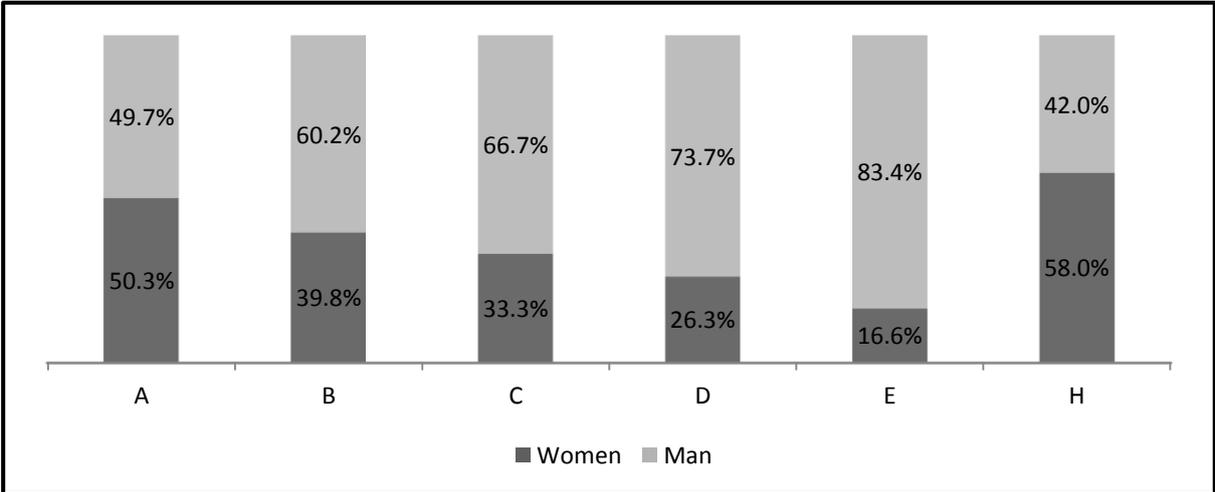
**Diversity of the Workforce**

2. The gender split in WFP is not in line with the 50 percent goal set by the United Nations. Significant shifts are required to addressing the overall number of women, and to increase the number of women working in hardship duty stations.

**Figure A.II.3: Overall gender distribution**



**Figure A.II.4: Gender distribution by hardship duty station**



**Potential Impact of Retirements**

3. Retirement age at WFP varies from age 60 to 62, depending of joining dates and staff type. This means that the retirement risk is predictable. Assuming that low risk is greater than 10 years, moderate risk is 5 to 10 years and high risk is less than 5 years, a risk profile can be developed. With regard to senior management grades, retirement is a more significant issue and WFP must ensure that there is a future cadre of leaders ready to fill these positions.

Figure A.II.5: Retirement risk profile

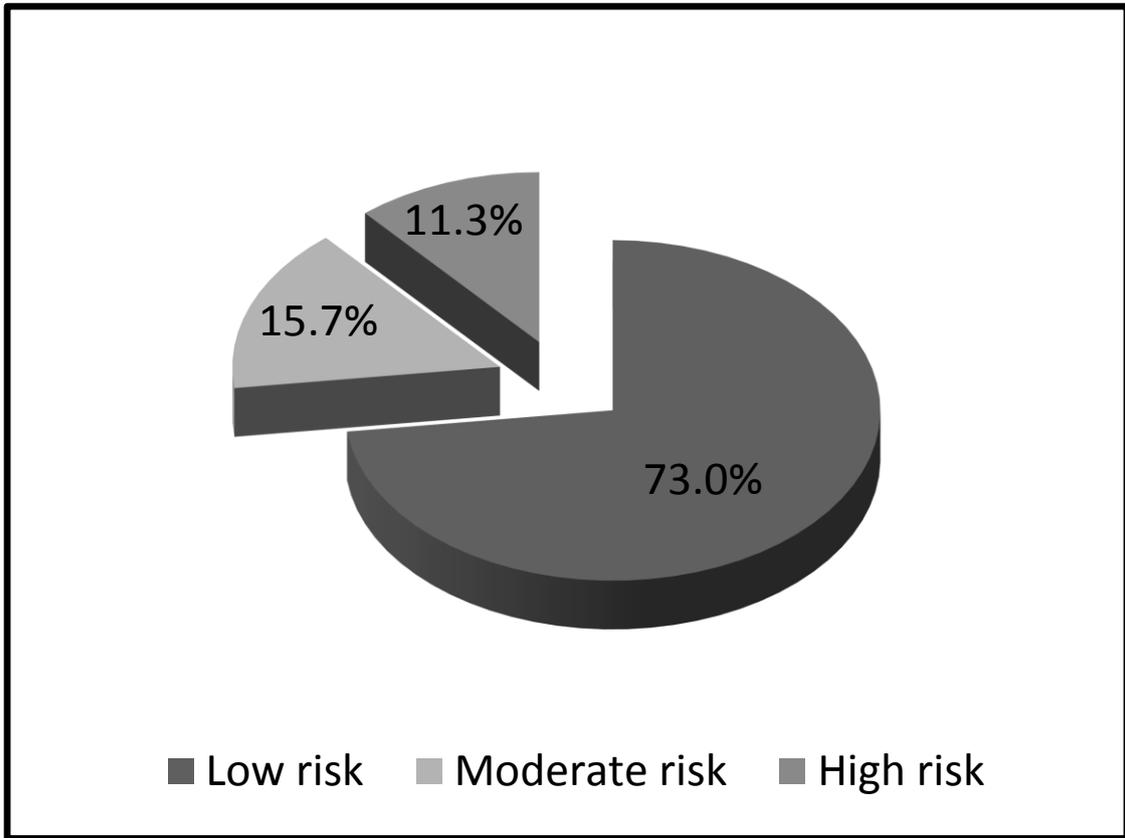


Figure A.II.6: Retirement risk profile by leadership grade

