

CL 153/3 Adjustments to the Programme of Work and Budget 2016-17

Information Note no. 2 – November 2015

Technical Capacity of the Organization

I. Introduction

1. Several Members raised questions during the November 2015 sessions of the Programme and Finance Committees regarding a possible decline in the technical capacity of the Organization through a shift in posts and/or staff from technical divisions at headquarters to decentralized offices or to other non-technical duties. This relates to possible impact from the mobility policy, the creation of the Strategic Objective Programme Management Teams, the decentralization of headquarters posts not yet announced, and the effect of vacancies. The purpose of this Information Note is to reassure Members that the technical capacity of the Organization is being maintained, provide details on the changes that have or are expected to take place, and explain why Management believes these changes are important to achieve results.

2. Before turning to the details, it is important to recognize that technical staff at headquarters and decentralized offices all perform similar functions, with the quality and standard of work ensured through the Technical Networks. The technical staff in offices outside of Rome work on FAO's knowledge products in the same way that headquarters staff do. For example, the regional office teams of economists and food security officers produce regional versions of the SOFIs¹ and, from this year, Regional Panoramas on the agriculture and food security situation. The work of officers in decentralized offices on transboundary animal diseases, to cite another example, is of the same technical relevance and quality as that of their headquarters counterparts. In fact, for issues of global importance where regional aspects need to be incorporated, there is no other way to ensure the quality of FAO's knowledge contributions without this regional/global combination. More examples are given in Information Note no. 3.

3. This decentralized expertise is augmented by project staff, most of whom are based in country offices, and who are also part of the Technical Networks. There are around 260 of these professional project staff, in addition to the 611 Professional and above posts in decentralized offices budgeted in the PWB.

4. Similarly, it is important to recall that the mobility policy and other moves of staff to and from headquarters, or between other duty stations, all relate to people and not to posts. No posts are moved through mobility, only individuals, who are replaced either through other transfers or through vacancy announcements. The same holds true for technical staff from either headquarters or decentralized offices who are assigned as FAO Representatives. None of these moves *per se* imply a shift in posts from one duty station to another.

II. Evolution of posts in recent PWBs and current adjustments

5. All PWB documents for some time have contained a table on the evolution of budgeted posts by location and category. The Adjustments to the PWB 2016-17 shows no change in either headquarters or decentralized offices among Professionals and above or General Service staff (CL 153/3 Table 1). The PWB 2016-17 (C 2015/3 Table 3) showed a loss of two Professionals from headquarters and a gain of 35 in decentralized offices, offset by a loss of 30 General Service staff at headquarters and three GS posts in decentralized offices (resulting in no change in overall post count). The two Professional posts that left headquarters were Statistics Officers assigned to Subregional

¹ States of Food Insecurity in the World (SOFIs)

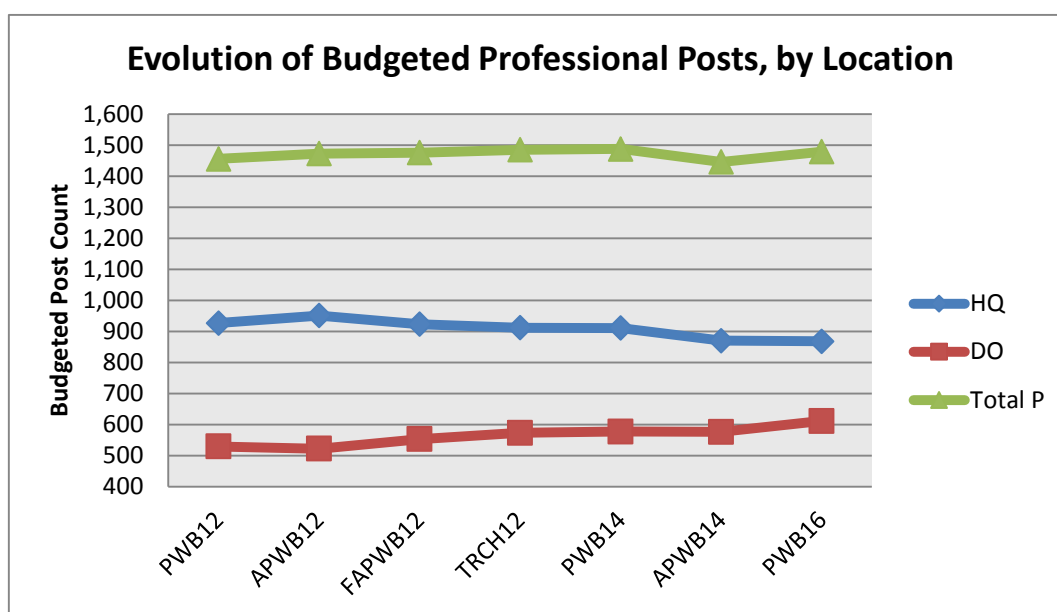


Offices in Africa and the Caribbean. These changes are in line with the general policy of absorbing cost increases through a reduction in General Service posts and “non-technical” P-level posts, while increasing the number of technical posts where possible.

6. Since 2002-03 there has been a steady decline in the overall number of budgeted posts, from 3268 to 2945, a decrease of almost ten percent, with a decline at headquarters from 1922 to 1474 posts (-23 percent) and an increase in decentralized offices, from 1346 to 1471 posts (+9 percent). Over this period the General Service post count in headquarters declined steadily, from 989 to 606, whereas there was only a slight decrease in GS posts in decentralized offices, from 897 to 860.

7. With regard to the number of budgeted Professional and above posts, overall the number increased by seven percent, from 1382 to 1479. This category grew in the decentralized offices by 36 percent, from 449 to 611, while declining at headquarters by seven percent from 933 to 868. In the earliest period there were more than twice as many Professionals and above at headquarters relative to the DOs, a ratio that declined steadily over time to the 2016-17 PWB post count, with headquarters now containing 42 percent more than the DOs.

8. Perhaps more importantly for the context of the changes discussed in this Information Note is the period under the current Director-General, from 2012 onwards. Over that period the overall post count declined by 172, from 3117 to 2945. This reflects the fact that 235 posts were abolished in the context of the Transformational Process and 63 new technical posts were created, including 15 new FAOR positions, as approved by the Governing Bodies.



III. Outposted staff and mobility

9. The PWB documentation also indicates the number of outposted staff. Currently there are 36 officers outposted from headquarters, identified in Table 1 of the Adjustments to the PWB 2016-17. Of these 12 posts are non-technical and 22 are investment officers. There are a further nine staff on temporary mobility assignments of two years or less, where the staff member is working outside of her or his duty station for a limited period of time, in areas directly related to the work of the home unit. One is the Senior Fisheries Officer from the Subregional Office in Harare working in the country office in Mozambique on the development of a large new fisheries programme, while continuing to support other countries in the subregion. Another case is a Knowledge and Information Management Officer from the Regional Office for Africa now working at headquarters. The other seven are headquarters staff working in decentralized offices, based temporarily in South Sudan, Tunisia, Kenya, Ghana, Pakistan, Panama and Trinidad and Tobago. This is a new mechanism being tried out; in the

Kenya case for example, one of the staff of the animal genetic resources team is spending time working with counterparts in East Africa, as part of the larger effort that remains coordinated from headquarters.

10. With regard to mobility, five officers moved under the mobility programme in 2014, all of whom moved from headquarters to other duty stations, along with 49 geographic reassignments of staff on PWB posts that took place last year outside of the mobility policy. Of these, 16 people moved between decentralized offices, 10 moved from DOs to headquarters and 23 moved out of headquarters. As mentioned above, none of these moves entailed shifting of posts, only of individuals.

11. The mobility programme was considerably more successful in 2015 with 40 people being reassigned to other duty stations. Of these, six moved between DOs, nine moved to headquarters, and 25 moved from headquarters to other duty stations. In addition, there were 24 other moves of staff on PWB posts outside of the mobility programme: 12 between DOs, three into headquarters and nine out of headquarters. The net result of these moves for the 2014-15 is 34 reassignments of individuals between DOs, 22 moving from DOs to headquarters and 62 moving from headquarters to other duty stations. Given the fact that the main concern the mobility programme addressed was the lack of movement by headquarters staff who had spent many years in Rome, these results, although relatively small in number, appear to be proportionally in line with the agreed objectives of the new policy.

12. Another aspect of mobility, in the larger sense, and technical capacity relates to the FAO Representatives. There has been significant turnover in FAORs since 2012, designed to boost the managerial and technical capacity of the country offices. Of the current set of FAORs, of those named since 2012, 28 were selected from headquarters staff, ten from regional or subregional offices, nine from FAO projects, one from a liaison office, and one from a country office who had been an Assistant FAOR. These 49 represent a significant volume of technical capacity. Furthermore, as outlined in CL 153/14 paragraph 50, an option for consideration in some countries with a relatively small programme is “to send existing technical staff as FAORs but who would work primarily as technical officers, linked to the subregional multidisciplinary team, while hopefully building up the country programme.”

IV. Strategic Objective team composition

13. The enhanced internal management arrangements put in place in the Adjustments to the PWB 2016-17 (CL 153/3 paragraph 52) include the creation of five Strategic Objective Programme Leaders (SPLs) each with a small Management Team. The SPLs and their teams will be responsible for: the conceptual development of programmes; the planning and design in collaboration with technical departments and regional offices to achieve results; the organization of required technical inputs; and high level monitoring of programmes. The SPLs and their teams will not be responsible for delivery of the planned activities, which will remain the responsibility of delivery managers assigned in technical departments and decentralized offices. Moreover, as the SPLs are housed within the TC Department but with responsibilities that relate mainly to management aspects outside of technical cooperation, it may be appropriate to consider adjusting the title of the department in the future to reflect this additional role.

14. There are 28 Professionals at headquarters who have been seconded to the Strategic Objective Programme Management Teams. Of these 28, nine professional officers were working in management-related posts or in planning, monitoring and evaluation, including one who is on a non-PWB post within the SO5 team. These nine will carry out similar responsibilities as before, but within the SO programme implementation arrangements rather than in their previous department, division or country office. Another professional officer had been working as the Programme Coordinator in the ES Department and will now lead his area of technical expertise, in food security information systems, within the SO1 team. There is, consequently, no change in technical/knowledge generation capacity of their releasing divisions.

15. Two other staff members, on the SO1 and SO5 teams, are funded by extrabudgetary resources and headed projects closely aligned with the work of the SOs to which they belong. One will continue to work on capacity building and policy relating to the right to food and the other on the development and application of a set of standardized tools that aims at providing a “common currency” for

classifying the severity and magnitude of food insecurity. Likewise there is no shift in technical capacity as these individuals continue their work in a new setting.

16. The remaining 16 officers are specialists from several technical areas and bring that expertise to the work of the SO programme management teams. Almost all of these individuals had been working closely with the Strategic Objective Coordinators in the 2014-15 implementation arrangements and several had been and will continue to lead one of the technical pillars of their Strategic Objective in the new arrangement.

17. In the case of SO2, given the scope of the Objective to “Increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner”, continuous interaction with the technical divisions is required and, hence, there are members on the team from forestry, fisheries, agriculture and animal production. Similarly, in SO3 with the Objective to “Reduce rural poverty”, there are team members with technical expertise in social protection, livestock, fisheries and rural employment. The SO1 team has an Economist, in addition to the others mentioned above, the SO4 team has a Trade Economist and an Investment Support Officer, and the SO5 team has a Natural Resources Officer and an Animal Health Officer, all leading the work of the pillars connected to their respective technical areas. None of these are “lost” to the technical work of the Organization but, on the contrary, their presence on the teams is vital to ensure the technical coherence of the work now organized through the multidisciplinary-based results framework.

V. Additional planned decentralization

18. It is important to clarify the nature and origin of the funding of any additional professional posts planned for re-profiling and transfer from headquarters to decentralized offices. There are 15 new posts to be created, in Nutrition, Climate Change and Statistics. These will be placed in subregional and regional offices where there is high demand and low or non-existent FAO technical expertise. All three of the areas are high priorities for the Organization, in areas where country-level capacity needs particular strengthening.

19. Funding for these new posts follows the policy adopted since 2012, mentioned above, of reducing General Service posts and some Professional posts at headquarters outside the technical divisions, in order to fund more technical posts. In this instance the reallocation of funds will come from the abolition of four professional posts in OCC, DDO and CPA, facilitated through agreed separations, the abolition of 16 General Service posts resulting from agreed terminations, and the decision to outsource printing services in CPA and some IT support services. As the standard costs of posts varies across locations, these changes will result in a lower post count but are budget neutral.

VI. Vacancy management

20. Finally, it is important to clarify the process underway to fill vacant technical posts. To produce the results required, although technical expertise is as important now as it was in the past, it is clear that the Terms of Reference of the staff replacing those who left need to be different than they were when the former incumbents were hired, often 10 or 20 years earlier. The Organization needs staff with experience, skills and an aptitude for inter-disciplinary and results-oriented work, in addition to having an excellent technical background grounded in a discipline. While Management has recognized this for some time, this orientation has not been sufficiently evident, or insisted upon to the requisite degree. In turn, this has contributed in part to the percentage of current vacant posts (see Information Note 5). The process is now underway to rectify this situation.

21. Under the supervision of the two Deputy Directors-General, technical departments and the decentralized offices are working with the SO Management Teams, as well as managers of Corporate Technical Activities, to identify the technical profiles necessary to deliver the results planned. This is an integral part of the work planning process, although with a view, as well to a longer-time horizon. The submissions from the DOs and technical units are now ready as are the gaps identified by the SO Management Teams. What remains is to finalize this match-up and prioritise the posts, in keeping with the policy of retaining 10-15 percent of the posts in a unit vacant (considering the General Service and Professional posts together), in order to allow a degree of flexibility to accommodate changes as they arise over the course of the biennium. It is hoped that this process, including the issuing of the Vacancy Announcements for all but the 10-15 percent, will be completed by the end of the year.