

THE eManager

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING HEALTH SERVICES

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Strengthening Human Resource Management to Improve Health Outcomes

Editors' Note

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (HRM) IS ESSENTIAL IN ANY ORGANIZATION, critically so when public health crises and workforce shortages collide, as they now do in many parts of the developing world. Two MSH experts—Mary O'Neil, senior human resource specialist, and Stephen Reimann, senior human resource advisor—have coauthored this issue of *The eManager*, which can serve interested readers as either an introduction or a path to deeper understanding.

After discussion of the three primary areas of HRM—systems, policies, and management practices; the components within these areas; and the Human Resources for Health Action Framework—the authors review what you, as an individual manager, can do to improve human resource (HR) practices related to five questions of critical importance to your staff. Should you want to learn more about any of these topics, the authors provide links to online resources that include tools and detailed instructions for steps you can take in your organization. Next, the authors introduce the HRM Rapid Assessment Tool, which enables organizations to evaluate the current state of their HRM capacity. To conclude, they describe how you can link management practices and HRM systems to your organization's missions and goals, and encourage you to be an HRM leader. ■



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



Editors

Barbara K. Timmons
Tempe Goodhue

Founding Editor

James Wolff

Distribution

Ryan Pierce

Authors for This Issue

Mary O'Neil
Steve Reimann

Reviewers for This Issue

Ineke Huitema, TB Coalition for Technical Assistance (TBCTA)/Tuberculosis Control Assistance Program (TB CAP) and KNCV Tuberculosis Foundation, The Netherlands
Carl Meyeza, Southern Africa Human Capacity Development (SAHCD) Coalition, South Africa
Jennifer Nyoni, Human Resources for Health Management, World Health Organization, Regional Office for Africa, Republic of the Congo

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Management Sciences for Health
Office of Communications and Knowledge Exchange
784 Memorial Drive
Cambridge, MA 02139 USA
Tel.: +1.617.250.9500
Fax: +1.617.250.9090
Email: communications@msh.org
Website: www.msh.org

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The Importance of Human Resource Management

Human resource management (HRM) is a critical management area that is responsible for an organization's most important asset, its people, and typically accounts for 70% to 80% of its budget. When an organization manages its investment in people wisely, the result is a satisfied and motivated workforce that delivers quality health services and an organization able to fulfill its mission, meet its health objectives, and enhance its competitive advantage.

The Current State of HRM

HRM is perhaps the most misunderstood and poorly utilized system in the health sector today. Many organizations face pressing human resource challenges—for example, staff shortages, attrition and absenteeism, and low morale—all of which can be addressed by an effective HRM system.

Although managers say that their employees are critically important, many organizations frequently neglect the management systems, practices, and procedures needed to support this important resource.

HRM systems in developing countries are weak and fragmented in the majority of health care organizations. Many do not routinely staff human resource (HR) professionals and, as a result, vacancy rates soar, promotions lag, workloads increase with regularity, and morale is low. In addition, without the guidance of an HR professional, managers do not develop adequate HRM skills, a shortfall that reduces their effectiveness. Nearly 500 managers from more than 70 countries worldwide who have participated in MSH virtual seminars on HRM report that their organizations lack professional HR managers and need stronger HRM systems.

In the face of the demands imposed by today's HIV & AIDS crisis, health managers need to be careful to minimize the impact of the pandemic on their organizations' or programs' workforces. Health policymakers and managers must plan well to maintain adequate numbers of staff and to develop employee skills to meet the increased challenge of delivering essential health services.

As Box 1 shows, the positive impact of a strong HRM system can be profound.

The Pillars of Effective HRM

Defining HRM

MSH defines HRM as the integrated use of systems, policies, and management practices to recruit, maintain, and develop employees to support the organization in meeting its desired goals.

Box 1. Benefits of a Strong HRM System

To the Organization

- Increases the organization's capacity to retain staff and achieve its goals
- Increases the level of employee performance
- Uses employee skills and knowledge efficiently
- Saves costs through the improved efficiency and productivity of workers
- Improves the organization's ability to manage change

To the Employee

- Improves equity between employee compensation and level of responsibility
- Helps employees understand how their work relates to the mission and values of the organization
- Helps employees feel more highly motivated
- Increases employee job satisfaction
- Encourages employees to operate in a team

Integrating Three HRM Elements

The definition of HRM stresses the integration of three key elements, none of which is fully effective on its own. They are:

- systems;
- policies;
- management and leadership practices.

A good HRM system needs the support of sound HR policies. Both the HRM system and HR policies require managers at all levels who practice leadership by respecting others, communicating well, and advocating for the needs of staff. In addition, the highest management levels must recognize and reinforce the importance of HRM throughout the organization.

When HRM functions effectively, the policies, practices, and systems will improve staff members' skills, job satisfaction, and motivation to achieve a high level of performance over time.

Table 1 shows the components that are in place within a fully functioning HRM system.

The Role of Individual Managers

Because many organizations have underdeveloped HRM capacity, individual managers often lack policies and organizational systems to guide and support their

work. The absence of strong HRM systems makes individual management practices key to providing structure, supportive supervision, fairness, and advocacy for staff. By focusing on these activities, individual managers can improve employee satisfaction, performance, and retention in their units even if HRM systems and policies are underdeveloped.

The Human Resources for Health Action Framework

Because many stakeholders influence HR strategy, especially in the public sector, it is important to identify them and their interests as they relate to the workforce. While HRM is at the center of improving retention and performance, a quality, sustainable workforce also depends on the following:

- good employment policies;
- adequate financial resources;
- pre-service education/training institutions to train adequate numbers of health workers;
- partnerships with local communities, the private sector, donors, and other key stakeholders;
- leadership and advocacy for strengthening HR practices at all levels.

Table 1. Human Resource Management Components

HRM capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HRM budget ▪ HRM staff
HRM planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organizational mission and goals ▪ HR planning
Personnel policy and practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Job classification system ▪ Compensation and benefits system ▪ Recruitment, hiring, transfer, and promotion ▪ Orientation program ▪ Policy manual ▪ Discipline, termination, and grievance procedures ▪ Other incentive systems ▪ Union relationships ▪ Labor law compliance
HRM data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employee data ▪ Computerization of data ▪ Personnel files
Performance management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Job descriptions ▪ Staff supervision ▪ Work planning and performance review
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff training ▪ Management/leadership development ▪ Links to external pre-service education

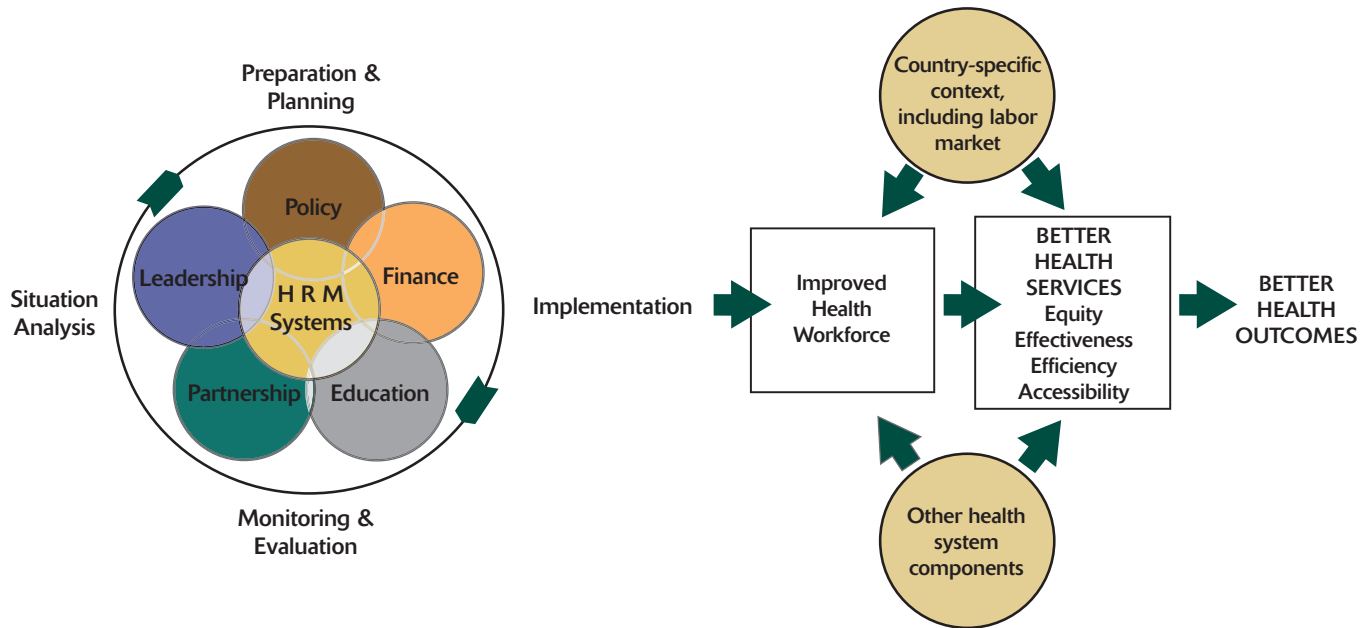
Figure 1 shows a framework that provides a pathway for developing a comprehensive Human Resources for Health (HRH) strategy that leads to improved health outcomes. The starting point is strong HRM systems, the focus of this *eManager*. A consortium of HR stakeholders from USAID, the World Health Organization, the Global Health Workforce Alliance, partner countries, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), donors, and the academic community developed the HRH Action Framework in 2005.

The HRH Framework provides a pathway for governments and health managers to develop a strategy that will help managers sustain a supply of

adequately trained health staff. It examines six components of planning and managing the workforce to ensure that appropriately trained staff are available in the right place and at the right time. The framework also suggests actions managers and policymakers can take to address issues in five areas: policy, finance, education, partnership, and leadership. Human resource management systems are at the center of the diagram because of their importance in integrating all the other components.

To learn more about the Human Resources for Health Action Framework, go to <http://erc.msh.org/mainpage.cfm?file=2.1.Onew.htm&language=english&module=hr>.

Figure 1. Human Resources for Health Action Framework



HRM Practices That Improve Employee Satisfaction

Many factors influence an employee's satisfaction with his or her job. People need fair compensation, but research has shown that money alone does not necessarily improve performance or job satisfaction. However, a fair salary combined with work that contributes to the goals of the organization, has the respect of fellow employees, and provides opportunities for skill development can result in a sustained level of employee satisfaction. This satisfaction, in turn, is a critical factor in improving health worker performance and staff retention.

Employees generally ask five basic questions about their work environment:

1. Am I treated fairly?
2. What am I supposed to do?
3. How well am I doing it?
4. Does my work matter to the organization?
5. How can I develop myself within the organization?

An effective HRM system and managers who practice good HRM can help ensure that the answer to each question is positive and contributes to improved employee performance and retention. A brief discussion of each question and concrete actions that you can take to improve the work environment follow.

1. Am I Treated Fairly? Establishing Fairness in the Workplace

Several factors contribute to employees' perception of fairness, primarily how they feel they are treated in regard to the following:

- salary and compensation (especially important);
- the hiring process;
- day-to-day application of personnel policies;
- distribution of work among employees;
- support for, and recognition of, employees.

Establish equitable salaries. When developing an integrated HRM system, review your organization's job classifications and related salary scales to ensure

that salaries are appropriate to the level of responsibility and are competitive in relation to local economic conditions. There might be little you can do to increase overall salary levels, but you should make every effort to take corrective action internally to ensure that all staff are receiving fair and equitable compensation within the guidelines of the existing policy.

It can be difficult to control the impact of the salaries of staff working for programs funded by large donors, such as the Global Fund and the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), among others. Often, these programs hire staff at much higher rates than their counterparts. This imbalance has the potential to drain staff from your organization, or it can cause serious morale problems if your staff are working side by side or in teams with people on a higher pay scale. If you are faced with this situation, it is important to advocate strongly for an equitable arrangement, even if it is temporary and lasts only for the life of the program.

Support fair application of policies. Another important managerial responsibility is ensuring that all managers and staff apply personnel policies fairly on a day-to-day basis and distribute tasks and responsibilities equitably among employees. With issues of equity, always communicate appropriate information to all employees, work on their behalf, and act in a transparent manner.

Learn more about fairness. For more information about developing job classification systems, go to <http://erc.msh.org/mainpage.cfm?file=2.8.0.htm&language=english&module=hr#top>. To learn more about developing compensation systems, go to <http://erc.msh.org/documents/hr/HCD4.doc/>.

2. What Am I Supposed to Do? Setting Job Responsibilities and Work Priorities

People want a specific answer to this question. In many cases, job descriptions are too vague or even nonexistent, supervisors have not specified their expectations, or managers hire people for a particular job but ask them to perform other duties.

If employees do not understand their work priorities, or if their supervisors change the priorities on a regular basis, it is difficult for staff to maintain a consistent level of productivity and a sense of self-worth.

Maintain good job descriptions. One step you can take in strengthening an HRM system is to make sure that you have up-to-date job descriptions for all positions that provide information about general duties and responsibilities as well as supervisory relationships. Job descriptions can provide supervisors with starting points for developing work plans with employees.

Clarify current responsibilities. Job descriptions are typically general, and most employees do not perform all the duties listed in their job descriptions all the time. In addition, job descriptions do not identify which specific responsibilities or performance objectives are a priority in a given period.

Supervisors and their direct reports should meet and agree on what are currently the most important duties. This meeting can also serve as the basis for an annual performance review, and it gives both parties a chance to identify any training that might be needed.

Use task shifting wisely. Clarifying staff roles is critical in light of "task shifting," which is now seen as a promising intervention to strengthen health coverage. Task shifting is proposed as a way to shift "tasks" from one cadre to an existing lower-level cadre or to a new cadre developed to meet specific health care goals. It is commonly used in many settings, especially in delivery of antiretroviral therapy. Although this approach can greatly expand the level of services provided, it can also result in staff feeling overburdened if they are asked to assume new tasks without clarification of their overall role. To avoid this stress, clarify roles and take into account competing demands for employees' time.

Learn about job descriptions. For more information about developing job descriptions, go to <http://erc.msh.org/toolkit/toolkitfiles/file/pmt33.pdf>.

3. How Well Am I Doing My Job? Encouraging Good Performance with Feedback

Employees need feedback about their job performance on a regular basis. Anxiety about not performing as well as expected can have a direct impact on motivation, performance, and productivity, and often results in denial and avoidance of responsibilities.

Encourage ongoing feedback. Employees should receive feedback at an annual performance review, but recognition of performance should occur regularly, not

just on an annual basis. As a manager, you should encourage supervisors and all staff to recognize coworkers for their efforts and thank them for a good job. It is amazing how recognition and appreciation can increase motivation and performance among staff.

People also need to know if they are not performing up to expectations. Although supervisors may be hesitant to hold these conversations, they do not have to be confrontational or critical. Instead, they can be an opportunity for coaching, providing support, resolving misunderstandings, clarifying mutual expectations, and setting goals.

Ensure annual employee reviews. HRM plays a key role in the more formal annual employee review system. It is the manager's responsibility to ensure that a supervisory system is in place, and that all supervisors understand and follow the policy and procedures related to the annual review. An important element of a work planning and performance review system is holding joint meetings on a regular basis, as noted earlier.

The supervisor and employee agree on specific performance objectives and job priorities during these meetings. These agreed-upon objectives provide concrete benchmarks and become the basis of the next performance review (usually in 12 months). If you also use the performance review system as the basis for creating development plans, it will help you align staff development efforts more closely with your organization's goals.

The absence of an HR department and/or a formal annual employee review system should not prevent individual managers from holding regular work planning and performance review meetings with their staff. Develop your own practices and systems; other managers can use them, too, and over time they can become part of an organization-wide HRM system.

Tie performance reviews to incentives. People often do not like performance reviews, and sometimes do not take them seriously. Regardless, performance reviews need to be tied to an incentive, preferably monetary. Everyone should receive a cost-of-living increase, but a small, additional percentage increase should be available only for people who meet their performance standards. The incentive system is a key aspect of HRM; it informs staff that their work is taken seriously, that they will be held accountable, and that their contributions to the goals of the organization are valued.

Learn more about review systems. For more about setting up work planning and review systems, go to <http://erc.msh.org/documents/hr/HCD8.doc/>.

4. Does My Work Matter? Making Work Meaningful

When employees can answer this question with an emphatic "Yes," they are more productive. For many people, having skills and competencies and performing well are not motivating. They need more—they need to know that their work is important to the people they serve, meaningful to the organization, and related to its success.

Spread the word about employees' contributions. Communicating to employees that their work matters is an important element in HRM strategy. Informally, this can be accomplished in staff meetings where the director or department heads acknowledge the accomplishments and contributions of everyone. It can also be done at more public meetings, in organizational newsletters, or in the media. Acknowledging the noteworthy performance of a team or specific individuals can be a strong motivational tool.

Offer developmental opportunities. Opportunities to pursue training and development, represent the organization or work unit at special events, or contribute to special initiatives can also be powerfully motivating.

In addition, involving staff in work planning and evaluation activities will instill in them a feeling of ownership in their work and pride in being part of the organization and its successes.

Help shape the organization's strategic goals. More formally, HRM plays a key role by contributing to the overall strategic planning of the organization. Understanding the priorities of the organization and the various skills employees bring to help achieve these priorities will enable everyone to complete work plans that link each person's work to these goals. Furthermore, this process will foster an understanding of each person's contribution to the goals of the organization.

Pay attention to the work climate. These strategies and actions contribute to what is called "work climate." Work climate is defined as the prevailing workplace atmosphere as experienced by employees.

It is what it feels like to work in a place. Leadership and management practices that provide clarity, support, and challenge contribute to a positive work climate. A positive work climate increases the level of effort that employees exert above and beyond job expectations and leads to and sustains employee motivation and high performance.

Learn more about work climate. For more information about creating a meaningful work climate, go to [http://erc.msh.org/leadernet/assets/files/MWL_ch3\(1\).pdf](http://erc.msh.org/leadernet/assets/files/MWL_ch3(1).pdf).

5. How Can I Develop Myself? Offering Staff Opportunities to Grow

People feel motivated and challenged when they have opportunities to learn, develop new competencies, assume new responsibilities, and believe that their efforts will strengthen their careers. It's important to provide these development opportunities, which can also be an important way to recognize employees. Participating in training and other activities where people share learning and value one another's experiences encourages staff collaboration and teamwork and can increase overall performance and productivity.

Incorporate training into the HRM system. Often training is separate from the HR function, and department managers make decisions about training when opportunities arise, rather than having an ongoing plan for training. To ensure that staff development is well managed, it should be part of the HRM system.

When training is mismanaged, some common problems are staff being away from their duty stations too long, having the wrong staff in the wrong training, and excluding some staff from these development opportunities.

An HRM office can introduce new approaches that minimize the time staff are away from the office, such as:

- on-the-job learning through mentoring relationships;
- assignments in different work settings;
- membership in task forces and committees;

- technical presentations and discussions at staff meetings.

Rather than have an ad hoc system with little transparency, the HRM office should organize a system based on the real needs of the organization and its personnel. This system should be based on clear eligibility and selection criteria. Posting and advertising job and training opportunities within the organization and supporting internal candidates will send a message that the organization values staff's current experiences. A well-managed training and staff development program based on organizational needs and clear eligibility can broaden the skills and competencies of your staff and produce many benefits.

Learn more about staff development. For details about organizing staff development systems, go to <http://erc.msh.org/mainpage.cfm?file=2.5.0.htm&module=hr&language=English/>.

Incentive Programs Build Employee Satisfaction and Motivation

Research into the factors that contribute to employee satisfaction and motivation has provided powerful evidence that organizations should provide a mix of financial and nonfinancial incentives. Studies show that well-designed and administered financial incentives are likely to prevent employee dissatisfaction, but do not necessarily lead to employee motivation. Financial incentives paired with nonfinancial incentives, however, can both prevent job dissatisfaction and motivate employees.

Developing Incentive Programs

A good HRM system should contain an incentive system that provides the following:

- basic financial incentives, such as wages, salaries, and conditions of employment;
- additional financial incentives, if appropriate (e.g., for achieving certain targets or being posted to a remote location);
- nonfinancial incentives (e.g., a positive work environment, flexible employment arrangements, professional development, and intrinsic job rewards).

Types of Incentives

Box 2 lists the types of incentives that should be included in a comprehensive incentive system.

Box 2. Types of Incentives

Financial Incentives

Terms and conditions of employment

- Salary/wage
- Pension
- Insurance (e.g., health)
- Allowances (e.g., housing, clothing, transport, parking, child care)
- Paid leave

Performance payments

- Achievement of performance targets
- Length of service
- Location or type of work (e.g., remote locations)

Other financial support

- Fellowships
- Loans

Nonfinancial Incentives

Positive work environment

- Work autonomy and clarity of roles and responsibilities
- Recognition of work and achievement
- Supportive management and peer structures
- Manageable workload and effective workload management
- Effective management of occupational health and safety risks, including a safe and clean workplace
- Effective employee representation and communication
- Enforced equal opportunity policy
- Maternity/paternity leave
- Flexibility in employment arrangements
- Flexible work hours
- Planned career breaks

Support for development

- Effective supervision
- Coaching and mentoring structures
- Access to and support for training and education
- Sabbatical and study leave

Access to services, such as

- Health
- Child care and schools
- Recreational facilities
- Housing
- Transportation

Intrinsic rewards

- Job satisfaction
- Personal achievement
- Commitment to shared values
- Respect of colleagues and community
- Membership of team, belonging

Source: *Global Health Workforce Alliance/WHO. 2008. Guidelines: Incentives for Health Professionals.* Geneva: WHO. (Adapted from Buchan et al., cited in: Adams & Hicks 2001; Caldwell & Kingma 2007; Dambisya 2007)

In addition, the incentive system should:

- have clear objectives;
- be realistic and deliverable;
- reflect health professionals' needs and preferences;
- have well-designed strategies that fit the purpose;
- be contextually appropriate;
- be fair, equitable, and transparent;
- be measurable.

Consider your volunteers and nonpaid staff. In many health systems, paid staff are not the only people who provide services; community health workers, community volunteers, and other nonpaid staff are also involved in health care delivery. Some do receive a small salary or allowance, but many are unpaid. The use of volunteers can be a controversial issue; nonetheless, volunteers and nonpaid staff are present in many situations, and they must be supported by good HRM practices and systems in the same way as general paid staff. Nonfinancial incentives such as a positive work environment, support for development, and intrinsic rewards are especially relevant for nonpaid staff.

Learn more about incentive programs. To see extensive guidelines about incentives for health professionals, go to http://www.ichm.com/publications/guidelines/Incentives_Guidelines%20ENG%20low.pdf.

Using a Survey to Improve HRM Policies and Practices

The questionnaire that follows measures employee satisfaction using the five components of the work environment described earlier, namely:

- fair treatment;
- clarity of job expectations;

- feedback on job performance;
- work that is meaningful and valued;
- opportunities for career development.

Defining Employee Satisfaction

“Employee satisfaction” refers to the employee’s sense of well-being within his or her work environment and is closely linked to performance and retention in the workplace. It is the result of a combination of extrinsic rewards, such as pay and benefits, and intrinsic rewards, such as respect and appreciation. Positive changes in HRM systems and the way in which managers and supervisors interact with staff on personnel issues can increase the level of employee satisfaction. Although a high level of employee satisfaction cannot be absolutely tied to higher levels of retention, motivation, and performance, a low level of employee satisfaction is definitely linked to low levels of performance.

How to Use the Satisfaction Survey

Managers can use the questionnaire in Box 3 to establish baseline data prior to implementing improvements to an HRM system. The same questionnaire can be used approximately one year later to measure the impact of actions taken to improve conditions.

Give the questionnaire to a randomly selected sample group of staff representing 15% to 20% of the total workforce. It is simple, and employees will be able to complete it in 10 minutes or less. It is important to include staff from all levels and departments and to ensure that all responses are kept strictly confidential.

You might want to try the questionnaire with your work unit. If you do, use a minimum of six staff members and a maximum of 8% to 10% of your total staff. Explain the purpose of the questionnaire and reassure staff that their responses are completely confidential. The results can provide insight about the areas of the work environment with which your staff are most dissatisfied.

Box 3. Employee Satisfaction Survey

Dear Staff Member,

The Director and HRM Department are interested in better understanding your level of satisfaction as an employee of our organization. Your feedback and comments on this questionnaire will help us make improvements in our HR policies and practices. We appreciate your taking a few minutes to respond to these 10 questions. Your responses will be kept confidential. Please return the completed questionnaire to _____ by _____.

Thank you.

Instructions: For each of the statements below, please circle the number that best represents your opinion.

Question	Agree					Disagree				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
1. My salary is fair compared to that of other staff with the same level of responsibility.	1	2	3	4	5					
2. My benefits are fair compared to those of other staff at my level.	1	2	3	4	5					
3. My job description is accurate and up-to-date.	1	2	3	4	5					
4. My supervisor and I have agreed on the priorities of my job.	1	2	3	4	5					
5. I get clear feedback from my supervisor about how well I am performing in my job.	1	2	3	4	5					
6. My annual performance appraisal is based on the priorities in my work plan.	1	2	3	4	5					
7. My supervisor seeks my input when faced with a challenge or problem.	1	2	3	4	5					
8. The organization acknowledges and values my work.	1	2	3	4	5					
9. The organization provides me with the essential coaching and training to do my job.	1	2	3	4	5					
10. The organization works (as much as possible) to provide me with opportunities for career growth.	1	2	3	4	5					

For a PDF version of the tool, go to http://programs.msh.org/vhrm/filelib/Employee_Satisfaction_Tool.pdf/.

Working Solutions—Mozambique, Kenya, Egypt, Uganda

The following summaries of interventions in four countries show how improving one or more aspects of an HRM system can lead to improved health outcomes.

MOZAMBIQUE: CREATING A PROACTIVE LEADERSHIP MIND-SET

Eleven health units in Nampula Province of Mozambique participated in the Challenges Program, a leadership and management development program initiated there after an assessment found that the quality of health services was poor. Senior officials determined that the main reason was lack of HR capacity in leadership and management in a rapidly decentralizing health care system.

The Challenges Program created participatory teams and integrated leadership strengthening into how staff at all levels approached day-to-day challenges in the health units. After the program, staff no longer waited to be trained; they proactively requested training in needed areas, and they felt empowered to make a difference. After a year, evaluation showed that 10 of the 11 health centers improved health services.

For more information, go to <http://www.human-resources-health.com/content/6/1/14/>.

KENYA: INVOLVING STAKEHOLDERS TO FAST-TRACK HIRING AND IMPROVE RETENTION

Despite a pool of unemployed health staff in Kenya, staffing levels at most facilities were only 50%, and lopsided distribution of staff left many people who needed it without access to antiretroviral therapy. Even when funding was available, it took one to two years to fill vacant positions. Kenya needed an emergency approach to fast-track the hiring and deployment process.

A stakeholder group was formed to bring together leaders from several sectors to design and implement a hiring and deployment model, and mobilize 830 additional health workers. The recruitment process was shortened to less than three months. By providing job orientation and on-time paychecks, the program increased employee retention and satisfaction.

For more information, go to <http://www.human-resources-health.com/content/6/1/19/>.

EGYPT: ACHIEVING PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT BY CREATING A MEANINGFUL WORK CLIMATE

A Leadership Development Program (LDP) in the Aswan Governorate in Upper Egypt for national-, district-, and facility-level teams aimed to change management practices by promoting a culture of team problem solving and planning, supportive supervision, performance feedback, and personal responsibility and empowerment. Participants embraced the LDP, and more than 100 health facilities took part in the program by the end of its third year.

Some of the positive public health results one year after the initial LDP workshops included an increase in the number of new family planning visits in three districts by 36%, 68%, and 20%. Maternal mortality in the Aswan Governorate dropped in one year from 50 per 100,000 live births to 35.5 per 100,000.

For more information, go to <http://www.msh.org/projects/lms/NewsRoom/Aswan/>.

UGANDA: USING THE HRM RAPID ASSESSMENT TOOL

Staff turnover was increasing, overall organizational performance was declining, and the workplace climate was poor at the Family Life Education Programme (FLEP) of Busoga Diocese. FLEP used the Rapid Assessment Tool to assess its HRM systems and to develop and implement an action plan. After implementing cost-effective measures focused on professionalizing the organization's approach to HRM, increased employee satisfaction led to lower staff turnover, better performance, and increased use of health services.

For more information, go to <http://www.human-resources-health.com/content/6/1/11/>.

Assessing the HRM Capacity of Your Organization

One of the most valuable ways you can move toward a strong, comprehensive HRM system is to gather information that will help you plan for and implement improvements. Determine your organization's areas of strength and the areas that need improvement, prioritize areas for improvement, and then develop an HRM action plan to address your most urgent challenges.

Your assessment should look at your organization's HRM system, specifically the following six broad areas: human resource capacity, human resource planning, personnel policies and practices, human resource data, the performance management system, and training. Table 1, Human Resource Management Components, which appears earlier in this *eManager*, shows the 22 HR components that fall within these six areas.

Carrying out a comprehensive HRM assessment will help you address policy, planning, training, and management in an integrated way.

Using the HRM Rapid Assessment Tool

Organizations of any size or level of development can use the Human Resource Management Rapid Assessment Tool to assess the status of their HRM systems, identify areas they need to strengthen, and take action to improve in those areas.

On the assessment tool, each component shown on Table 1 is followed by a description of four possible stages of development that range from just beginning to fully developed. People completing the survey indicate where they think their organizations are currently functioning relative to each component.

The characteristics of the four stages provide useful information for developing a plan of action for your organization to improve in those HRM areas that need strengthening. Go to [http://programs.msh.org/vhrm/filelib/HRM_Assessment_Tool\(1\).pdf](http://programs.msh.org/vhrm/filelib/HRM_Assessment_Tool(1).pdf) to access materials that provide the assessment tool and guide you through the process of assessing current status, identifying areas needing improvement, and taking action.

Working with a Broad-Based Team

It is helpful to establish a team of staff from different departments and at different levels in your organization to work together to:

- conduct the assessment;
- discuss the findings;
- prioritize areas of need;
- develop an action plan;
- implement the plan;
- generate wider support for ongoing HRM efforts.

Working in a team will also help increase the appreciation of staff in all departments for the human resource concerns, priorities, and possible fears of staff at all levels.

HRM as a Leadership Issue

In the many organizations where HRM is sorely neglected, making improvements begins with leadership. It requires managers to take charge as well as leaders who can develop strategic partnerships with other key stakeholders, influence policy-makers, and forge new directions for HR in the organization.

As a manager committed to improving HRM, you can use the four leadership practices as tools to achieve your organization's HRM goals and priorities:

- **Scan** for up-to-date knowledge about the HRM situation in your organization and current practices, experiences, and trends in the environment.
- **Focus** on HRM issues and actions that will serve your organizational mission, strategy, and priorities.
- **Align and mobilize** stakeholders' and staff's time and energies as well as material and financial resources.

- **Inspire** staff to be committed and to continuously learn to adapt and do things better in the service of achieving HRM goals.

The Challenges Are Fierce

Despite the critical importance of HRM to the functioning of health systems, there have been few concerted efforts to address the severe staff shortages facing the health sector in many developing countries. The HIV & AIDS pandemic has intensified an already serious situation, and the ability of many countries to meet the Millennium Development Goals is further hampered by deficiencies in organizations' HRM systems.

Key challenges in many countries include finding ways to:

- increase employee satisfaction and productivity in the face of understaffing, poor salaries, and lack of resources;
- obtain accurate data and conduct effective workforce planning in the face of underdeveloped employee data systems;
- match the skills and competencies required with those of health workers in the face of reduced staffing levels caused by HIV & AIDS, migration of health professionals, and poor working conditions in remote areas;
- provide efficient and effective HR management and supportive supervision in the face of undeveloped HRM skills and weak organizational advocacy for HRM;
- shift tasks to cadres of workers who have, or can easily develop, the needed skills.

Leadership at All Levels Is Essential

These challenges will only be met, and the current HRM crisis resolved, with visionary and inspirational leadership from health sector leaders, particularly HR practitioners and managers. Leadership is not the exclusive domain of a small and select group of exceptional men and women. All people can learn

to be leaders by confronting the challenges that force them to stretch their limits. To grow in this way, staff need support and feedback from peers, supervisors, family members, and those whom they respect and admire. Leadership skills are not developed in isolation, and people cannot lead in isolation.

Leadership is essential to strengthening organizational HRM systems. Organizations need strong leaders, both those with direct responsibility for HRM as well as senior-level leadership within the organization, to support and integrate the various functional areas of HRM. Leaders can imbue the system with a positive, people-centered philosophy and a set of values in which employees are viewed as assets entitled to equity, respect, appreciation, and support.

Leadership and in-country capacity to determine and implement national priorities in a given political context are central to sustained progress. These critical elements cannot be imported from abroad, but they can be developed and nurtured at the country level.

For a comprehensive overview of strategic HRM leadership issues, go to http://www.capacityproject.org/images/stories/files/techbrief_14.pdf/.

Revitalizing HRM with Your Actions and Example

The dimensions of the HR crisis in health have been reported in stark terms in many articles and publications in the last few years. We have all heard the statistics about how many health staff migrate from Africa each year and how the staff left behind suffer from work overload and low morale. For some people, the answer lies in training more health staff and that, indeed, is important.

However, it is not sustainable to simply train more health staff and send them into poorly managed environments. We do not want to create a "revolving door" with staff constantly entering and leaving.

The HRM system can be a powerful agent of change. It can transform the work climate from one of low morale to one of job satisfaction, motivate people to perform at a higher level, and increase staff retention.

We have also learned that there is resistance to investing in the HRM system when organizations see

only the costs and not the benefits. This is why leadership in HR is so important. A new kind of leader with a vision for the future—one who is committed to moving beyond talking to taking action—is essential to developing quality health services that save lives.

In addition, managers who “walk the talk” and continually use management practices that promote employee satisfaction, performance, and retention in all that they do are role models. They can inspire others throughout the organization to change their behavior.

Every level of the health system lacks a critical mass of managers—both in HR and in general—who know how to lead and influence changes within and outside their organizations and who implement good HRM practices. If you understand that leadership is about taking action to achieve results, then you and your team are among those leaders. As you implement and practice good HR management and achieve results, more and more people in your organization will be moved to support your efforts.

There is still much to be done. We encourage you to use the HRM Assessment Tool and develop and implement an action plan to address the deficiencies you identify. In so doing, you will be creating a posi-

tive climate for human resources and demonstrating that, even with limited resources, things can change.

For these changes to be sustainable, please remember three key things:

- **The power of teams.** There is more support, innovation, and influence when teams of people work together.
- **Sustainability.** Your team needs to sustain change by grounding solutions in the day-to-day management systems in your organization.
- **Link to health outcomes.** Focus on improvements to the HRM system that will lead to better health outcomes for the people you serve.

Don't underestimate what you can accomplish, especially when you work together with your colleagues and base your recommendations for improvement on concrete data gleaned from within your organization. People are eager to support positive change in human resources, and your leadership can point the way.

Reviewers' Corner

A forum for discussing concepts and techniques presented in this issue

"This document was a pleasure to read. It provides a solid resource for its readers, and makes it is easy to see where you can find additional information. The beginning of the document explains well what the document covers, and it has a good flow."

—Ineke Huitema, TB Coalition for Technical Assistance (TBCTA)/Tuberculosis Control Assistance Program (TB CAP), KNCV Tuberculosis Foundation, The Netherlands

"On the whole, this *eManager* on HRM is very rich yet simply written and practical. The references to additional information about specific topics help to keep the reader from feeling overwhelmed by the number of tools."

—Jennifer Nyoni, Human Resources for Health Management , WHO Regional Office for Africa , Republic of Congo

"This *eManager* stimulates new thinking in addressing challenges facing health professionals worldwide in a HIV/Aids environment. The issue, with its simple jargon and use of case studies, addresses Human Capacity Development in developing countries, and assist us in providing solutions to address the retention of health professional in struggling counties."

—Carl A. Mayeza, Southern Africa Human Capacity Development (SAHCD) Coalition, South Africa

Resources

Bossert, Thomas, Till Bärnighausen, Diana Bowser, Andrew Mitchell, and Gülin Gedik. 2007. *Assessing Financing, Education, Management, and Policy Context for Strategic Planning of Human Resources for Health*. Geneva: World Health Organization.

Joint Learning Initiative. 2004. *Human Resources for Health: Overcoming the Crisis*. Cambridge, MA: Global Equity Initiative/Harvard University Press.

Management Sciences for Health. *Human Resources Resource Kit*. This is among the many resources that MSH provides on its Manager's Electronic Resource Center. Available at <http://erc.msh.org/mainpage.cfm?file=2.5.0.htm&module=hr&language=English/>.

Mansour, Joan Bragar, Sylvia Vriesendorp, and Alison Ellis. 2005. *Managers who Lead: A Handbook for Improving Health Services*. Cambridge, MA: Management Sciences for Health. You can order this book from the MSH website (<http://www1.msh.org/resource-center/ebookstore/product.cfm?p=55>).

Physicians for Human Rights. August 2006. *Bold Solutions to Africa's Health Worker Shortage*. Available at <http://physiciansforhumanrights.org/library/report-boldsolutions-2006.html>.

World Health Organization. 2006. *World Health Report 2006: Working Together for Health*. Available at <http://www.who.int/whr/2006/en/index.html>.

Two websites with extensive information on HRM are provided by the Capacity Project (<http://www.capacity-project.org/>) and Human Resources for Health (<http://www.human-resources-health.com/>).

A Quick Look at Your Current HRM System

HRM is perhaps the most misunderstood and poorly used management system in the health sector today. It may be that determining your organization's current view of its human resources and how it should strengthen its systems can be a challenging task. Whether you work at the national, regional, or local level, taking the following quiz will help you think about some of the issues involved. It is not intended to substitute for a more formal analysis using some of the tools described in this publication, but it can give you a quick sense of how well your organization is managing your health workers. If you answer "yes" or "sometimes" to the questions below, you are to be congratulated. If you find yourself checking off "no" or "don't know" to many of the questions, it is time to rethink your organization's approach to human resource management and how to improve it.

Human Resources Quiz for Managers	No	Sometimes	Yes	Don't Know
1. Do employees understand how their work specifically contributes to the mission and goals of the organization?				
2. Do employees view performance appraisals as an opportunity to learn about their skills and competencies and discuss future plans?				
3. Is the supervisor's role valued and supported by the organization?				
4. Are job descriptions up-to-date and readily available to all employees?				
5. Are employees routinely considered for job vacancies and other opportunities for promotion?				
6. Do employees understand the organization's policies on salaries and benefits and consider them fair and equitable?				
7. Does your organization have a clear system for managing volunteers?				
8. Can your organization engage in long-range planning, knowing it has or can develop the human resources required?				
9. Does your organization have strategies in place to provide meaningful jobs?				
10. Does your organization have a spirit of achievement and high performance?				
11. Do employees come to work on time and work productively for the full workday?				

The eManager is designed to help managers develop and support the delivery of high-quality health services. The editors welcome any comments, queries, or requests for online subscriptions.

Office of Communications and Knowledge Exchange
Management Sciences for Health
784 Memorial Drive
Cambridge, MA 02139 USA

Tel.: +1.617.250.9500
Fax: +1.617.250.9090
Email: communications@msh.org
Website: www.msh.org