

ESWATINI WHO COUNTRY OFFICE ANNUAL RETREAT REPORT 2022



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1. BACKGROUND

The World Health Organization (WHO) Country Office in Eswatini has over the years conducted staff retreats to assess its contribution towards the attainment of the organization's global goals. This is done through an annual progress review of both technical and support services performance in compliance with the rules and regulations of the organization. The retreat helps staff members to improve service delivery, organizational efficiency, and strengthen teamwork. It further provides an opportunity to align staff thinking and maximise efforts towards achieving set annual objectives.

In the last two years (2020 and 2021), the world was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic brought about insurmountable challenges that caused socioeconomic and social disruption. Members of staff were not left unscathed as they were affected directly and indirectly. Due to the demands of responding to the pandemic, staff had to be repurposed to work under the different response pillars. Staff continued to work tirelessly with some experiencing a compounding of personal stress, exhaustion, and burn-out. Other stressors experienced was with respect to the implication of the implementation of the functional review of the country office with the possibilities of job losses. In addition, the country experienced sporadic episodes of civil unrest in June, July and October 2021 causing uncertainties and added stress amongst staff and dependents. The country is yet to fully return to its normalcy.

The last WHO Country Office (WCO) retreat was held in 2017. The 2022 retreat provided an opportunity for the country office to rebuild and reinspire the team. Not only was it a critical time to evaluate and strategise on how to build a stronger and more resilient WCO, but it was also a time to bolster the team spirit and boost morale. The retreat was led by the Country Representative from 21 to 24 June 2022.

1.1 Objectives of the retreat

The main objective of the WCO Staff Retreat was to provide strategic vision for staff members on how best to position the Country Office to deliver on the WHO mandate. Delivering the mandate effectively entails working together with the Ministry of Health while taking into consideration the ongoing organizational transformation agenda, implementation of the General Programme of Work 13 (GPW13), the outcomes of the functional review, sustainable development goals in the context of UN reforms etc. Aligning national health priorities with WHO global strategies was also of paramount importance.

1.2 Specific objectives

1. To review the past performance for country office in the last two years (2020 and 2021) and identify challenges, key successes, and opportunities to ensure outcomes are reached in a most effective and efficient manner for the coming years.
2. To discuss interlinkages between the alignments of functions, organizational arrangements, funding utilization, partnership approaches as well as the capacity of the Country Office to support the Ministry of Health by reflecting on the impact of the functional review, transformation agenda and sustainable development goals.
3. To boost overall staff productivity through learning how to manage their time, set priorities and gain more focus on the key areas of their work.
4. To motivate change at collective and individual level to ensure that the Country Office is well positioned to deliver results through best utilisation and optimisation of the country office resources including during periods of emergencies as seen during the Covid-19 pandemic where staff were repositioned to other portfolios other than the ones, they do on normal basis.
5. Propose recommendations and options for example enabling environments to ensure that the Country Office can support the Member State; and
6. To enhance staff teamwork by providing an enhanced enabling environment and strengthen collaborations in all spheres of service delivery in support of the Member State.

1.3 Methodology

The staff retreat was held at St. Lucia, South Africa. An external facilitation company, Swazi Trails provided a full package arrangement including transportation, team building sessions, venue, accommodation, and meals for the 25 staff members for four days. The program was structured to allow sufficient time for WHO in-house programmes and operational reviews including team building sessions. Time slots allowed for WCO in house reviews of both 2020/2021 progress and challenges, outcomes of the functional review as well as positioning for the implementation of the GPW13.

The sessions included presentations, group work, plenary sessions, informal interactions, and recreational activities. There were also indoor and outdoor team building activities organized by the facilitator.

2. OFFICIAL OPENING

The WCO retreat was officially opened by the WHO Country Representative, Dr. Cornelia Atsyor. The WHO Representative (WR) thanked the organizing team, staff, and Swazi Trails for organizing and attending the much-awaited retreat. The WR emphasized the importance of coming together after 2020 and 2021 to not only look at the office's performance in the last years, but to also cast vision for the WHO that meets the expectations of the Kingdom of Eswatini.



Figure 1 The WHO Country Representative, Dr. Cornelia Atsyor

Much was to be learnt from the previous biennium (2020/2021) as the team is at the initial stages of the new biennium (2022/2023). Finally, Dr. Atsyor encouraged the team to use the retreat productively and return to the office as a stronger team.

The United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) representative proceeded to give a presentation on safety and security. The briefing highlighted the need to be always vigilant during the retreat. It also extended to the UNDSS security and safety framework, the pillars of security in Eswatini, and capacitated staff on preventing, mitigating, and reporting incidents.



The United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) representative (r) and WHO staff member in conversation

For the efficiency and effectiveness of the team-building sessions, the facilitators divided the team into three groups: green, yellow, and blue.

3. REVIEW OF 2020-2021 WCO PERFORMANCE

3.1 Achievements

3.1.1 The Country Support Unit

Achievements recorded were in the areas of Accounts and Financial Management; Administrative Services; Compliance; Human Resources Management; Information Technology Management as well as Procurement and Supplies Services. These were as follows:

- Closing the 2020-2021 biennium
- Utilization of the organizational SOPs on eManual
- Virtual GSM refresher training

- Enforcement of monthly travel ban week resulting in improved planning and coordination with the technical unit
- Increased financial resources availed to the country office since COVID 19
- Use of support availed through AFRO (African Region)
- Revival and consistency of the Country Support Unit (CSU) weekly meetings
- Efficiency and effectiveness of the team in supporting a larger technical unit team which was beefed up by the deployment of external consultants who assisted the country in the fight against the covid-19 pandemic

3.1.2 The Technical Support Unit

The technical officers discussed the achievements as highlighted in the Eswatini WCO Biennium Report. The discussions were structured under the GPW (General Programme of Work) 13 outcome areas. Some of the major achievements were:

UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE

- Strengthening of the Primary Healthcare delivery system through defining the Essential Healthcare Package and development of a strategy for the continuity of Essential Health Services during the COVID 19 pandemic.
- Strengthening of maternal and child health service delivery including catch up vaccination campaigns.
- Provision of normative guidance in the delivery of diseases specific prevention, diagnosis and management services leading to achieving national and global targets like achievement of the '95-95-95' global HIV fast track target an entire decade ahead of the 2030 deadline.

MORE PEOPLE BETTER PROTECTED FROM HEALTH EMERGENCIES

- The focus was mainly on the COVID 19 response which was guided by International Health Regulations and Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response. The actions followed actions on the voluntary joint external evaluation, Intra Action-action review for COVID 19 response, and simulation exercises.

MORE PEOPLE ENJOYING BETTER HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- The focus was on addressing social determinants of health and disease risk factors with key achievements were in Tobacco control and raising awareness and empowering of communities through commemoration of special health days.

3.2 Challenges

3.2.1 The Country Support Unit

- Lack of Human Resources to support the unit in case of absences
 - Lack of business continuity plan in cases of incapacitation
- COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions
- Political unrest disturbing usual business processes
- Poor coordination between admin and technical unit
 - Ineffective utilization of resources on programme workplans
 - Lack of ownership of WHO policies and procedures (transport planning and booking, PTA, security clearance)
- Increase in deployment of TA from Afro for technical staff was not complemented by additional TA for admin/operations

3.2.2 The Technical Support Unit

- Routine immunization coverage went below 80% because of national stockout
- Increased workload on technical team due to COVID-19
- Repurposing of technical team to COVID-19 response
- Functional review led to anxiety and uncertainty amongst staff
- Limited Human Resources (HR) as compared to the demand for technical support
- Political unrest disturbed planned activities
- Team unaware of guidance to collaborate with non-state actors

3.3 Enabling factors

The following were noted as enabling factors for implementation of the WCO workplans:

- Strategic guidance from all levels of WHO
- Support from Programme Management Officer (PMO) and MOH
- Collaboration with office staff
- Good working relationship with stakeholders
- Stewardship role of MOH to implement health interventions
- Collaboration and support from Regional Audit Team in South Africa and the Regional Office in Brazzaville
- Adequate IT (Information Technology) support to facilitate working from home during COVID 19 restrictions (ensuring safety of staff while delivering work)
- Availability of global guiding documents

- Support from surge capacity to facilitate COVID 19 response

4. PERFORMANCE ON KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Administration Unit presented on the Managerial Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the country office. WHO AFRO developed a results framework to measure the organization's contribution to Africa's health. This includes KPIs which are divided into managerial and programmatic. Managerial KPIs are intended to measure WHO/AFRO compliance with procedures and standards, and these include finance and accounts, procurement, human resources, security, information technology and management, travel, and asset management.

Programmatic KPIs on the other hand are intended to measure results and efficiency. The country office performance on managerial KPIs for the biennium 2020/2021 was highlighted with Information Technology and Management identified as one area needing more attention. It was clarified that the country was not using the digital incident reporting system on the intranet. It was revealed that while an improvement in this area was noted in the second quarter of 2022, the IT department would send a step-by-step reminder for all and not attend to incidents without a digital ticket as a way of taking corrective action and improve the rating in this area.

Overall, it was highlighted that the country office can do better and improve on the ratings by putting in place appropriate mitigation strategies for greater outcomes and improved ratings on the KPIs.

Lastly, the admin unit gave a refresher presentation on the WHO Transport Booking System (TBS) reminding that the system was available as a web-based platform and a Phone App. The meeting was reminded to download the app on their respective phones, make transport bookings at least 24 hours in advance, ensure that logged trips are two-way to ensure completeness of the journey by the driver after dropping the passenger(s) in their respective destinations to remember all bookings made and ensure that they show up on time. It was resolved that all staff would familiarize themselves with the app including how to edit requests when last minute changes arise.

5. STAFF ASSOCIATION



Figure 2 President of the Staff Association making his presentation

A discussion was held regarding matters of the Staff Association. The Staff President passed on his appreciation to WCO staff for attending the retreat and using it as an opportunity to strengthen their ability to work as a team. He highlighted that the staff appreciated WCO leadership in ensuring that staff is allowed to work from home during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and for providing stress-management and support through psychological support webinars for staff to better deal with organizational changes and personal matters. New members of staff were also oriented to the functions of the association.

Other key highlights included that:

- a) The Staff Association (SA) Chair successfully conducted a consultation (*Vusela*) to solicit staff ideas on resumption of subscriptions, considerations for workplan activities, etc.

- b) Inputs from international staff to possibly reduce their financial contributions were recorded and presented. Staff agreed that the issue would be reverted to the SA Executive to come up with a clear criterion for adjusting subscriptions. The criteria will consider all the levels from General Staff (GS), NPOs and International Staff. Also, the team will come up with proposed reviewing periods for subscriptions. It was revealed that UN Staff Federation subscriptions will resume as normal.
- c) The Association was reminded to resolve issues related to the operationalization of the association's bank account through updating signatories and know-your-customer documents accordingly.
- d) The Executive will draft a workplan for the Association and consider some of the activities suggested including but not limited to: Group Funeral Insurance Presentation, Farewell functions, Christmas Party/Vouchers, Birthdays (proposed for monthly), quarterly adventure tours etc.
- e) Review of the Constitution – The Association reported that the Constitution is currently based on guidance from AFRO and needs to be adapted to the WCO context and needs. Some of the issues to be discussed include the period and number of consecutive terms each Executive member can serve.
- f) SA needs to consider means of engaging with staff that don't pay subscriptions but benefit from the associations planned activities.
 - i. Resumption of subscription payments for Staff Association. To expedite catching up of Staff with their subscriptions following adverse impact of Covid-19. Staff agreed to consider phased payment approach as follows: Period from beginning of last payment made to December 2019 – Normal Subscription. From January 2020 to December 2021 staggered. From January 2022 staff will pay subscriptions in accordance with the agreed reviewed subscriptions as to be determined upon further deliberations in the SA Executive.
- g) The Executive was tasked to also investigate resource mobilization opportunities i.e., office promotional materials and availability of Loans.
- h) The Staff Association President concluded the discussions by emphasizing that Staff was welcome to share ideas with the SA Executive on issues that can improve the association.

6. TEAM BUILDING ACTIVITIES



Figure 3 Facilitator explaining the new challenge to the teams

The staff were divided into three colour coded teams including blue, red and green. The teams were given tasks to work together. In the picture above, the team coordinator sharing tips on the importance of teamwork.

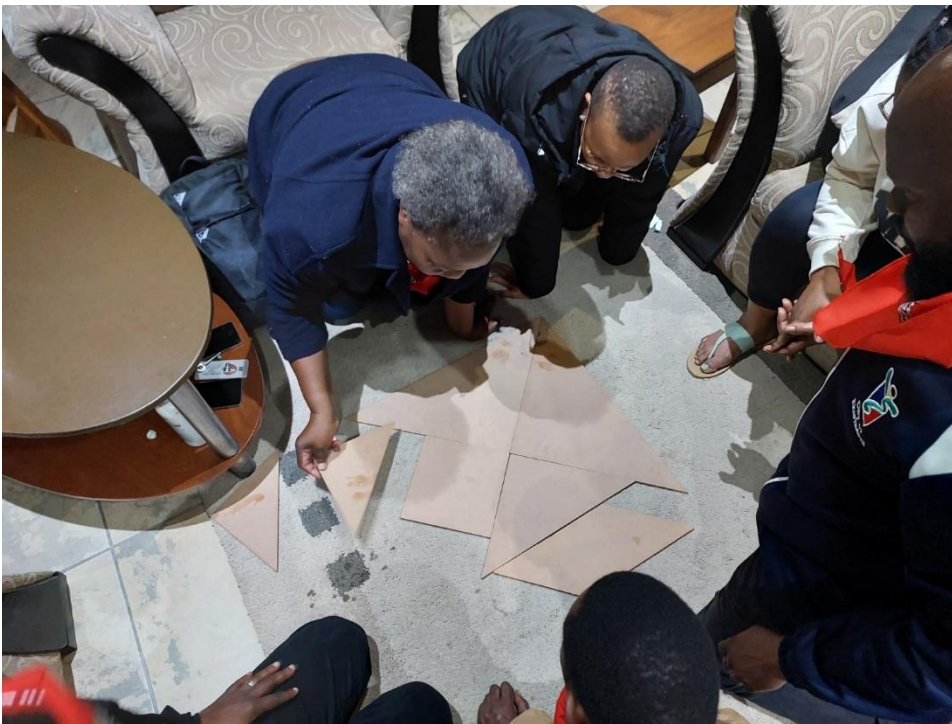


Figure 4 The red team attempts to piece together a disassembled square

The teams were requested to put together pieces of wood that were cut from a square shape. The teams worked together to figure out how the pieces fit together. Two of the three teams struggled to put the pieces together and one managed. The team that managed to put the square shape assisted the other teams which promoted team work even among the teams.



Figure 5 The team leader addresses the red team as they strategize for the next task

The teams were given a rope to come up with shapes while blindfolded. Team members relied on one another and intuition to come up with the shapes.

7. WAY FORWARD AND CLOSING

The WCO took the time to reflect on a way forward and reflected on some of the elements that enable the team to work well. The following areas were highlighted, and staff were encouraged to continue the following:

1. Prenotification to UNDSS – providing the list of participants for meetings to be held at the UN House in advance.
2. Flexibility in the use of UN Conference room within WHO and with other UN entities.
3. Good team spirit within the WCO was observed and encouraged.
4. A request to hire staff with access to GSM to support programme implementation and the Administration Unit. Currently and because of segregation of duties the Procurement Assistant cannot perform the functions of the Budget and Finance Assistance and vice versa during their critical absence from the office. The organogram has only the WR

- Secretary as a revolving staff with access to GSM which is inadequate for the office to function optimal in the absence of the Procurement and Budget and Finance Assistants.
5. Prenotification of the agenda for travel ban week is appreciated and encouraged. Additionally, it was observed that blocking the last two days of the travel ban week for a combined session on the deliberations of the country office program and administrative issues was a good practice.
 6. A proposal was put forth that the bimonthly technical meetings' format needs to be reviewed. It was further proposed that due to the decline in covid-19 cases and the full return to office of staff, subsequent technical meeting would now be held face-to-face. Moreover, a small team comprising of Dr. Nomthandazo, Shirley, Phakama and Phetsile would propose a new format for the meetings for improved outcomes.
 7. The WCO demonstrated flexibility and agility during the covid-19 response.
 8. Good updates on technical meetings.
 9. Continued and consistent support to MoH was encouraged.
 10. Drivers reported neither accidents nor incidents and were encouraged to keep up the good job.
 11. Psychological care and wellness sessions provided through the office were appreciated by staff.



Figure 6 A Staff member leads the discussions on retreat recommendations

The team then looked at the recommendations from the retreat consolidating them for follow up. The recommendations are highlighted in the next section. This was then followed by the closing session. The country representative gave closing remarks, noting that the retreat was refreshing, insightful and a team building exercise. The WR thanked Swazi Trails for facilitating the sessions and ensuring that all activities needed teamwork and urged colleagues to take the lessons learnt from the activities back to the office. She also thanked the organisers of the event and urged them to keep up the good work and wished the team safe travels back home.



Figure 7 WCO Staff listen as a facilitator leads the workshop

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

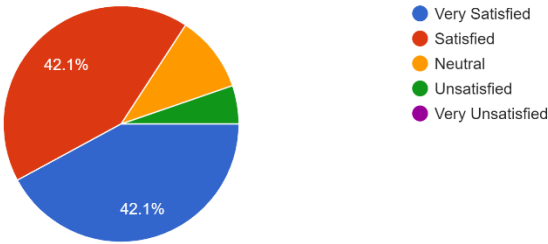
Activity	Responsible person	Timeline
SHORT TERM		
Procure 2 scanners for administrative staff	Admin	August
Present managerial KPI's	Gcina	Quarterly
Check with AFRO on outdated/unrated KPI results	Gcina	July
Accountability and Internal Control Framework "OWNERSHIP"	All	Daily
Incorporate transport during planning stage (Raising of TBS)	All	Daily
Hire a WHO Strategic Information/M&E focal point	WR	Asap
Hire short term staff for the admin unit. However, the WR was requested to consider the hiring of full-time staff (Programme Assistants) who will have GSM access in the administration unit to relieve the Procurement and the Budget and Finance Assistants during their absence. The Unit has only the WR Secretary with access to GSM.	WR/Admin	August
Revive MoH and WHO monthly meetings	WR and Shirley	July
Log IT incident reports	All	June
Keep abreast of WHO recommendations and new information	All	July
Enhance communication between technical officers that are doing complementary programs	All	Immediately
Look into ways to communicate role changes to lower-level technical officers	WR and HPU	July
Reorient staff on WHO protocol regarding engagement of consultants and briefing MoH	WR	July Travel Ban Week
Make presentations on topical issues during travel ban week	All	Monthly
Revive the different task Committees: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Procurement Committee ○ Risk Management Committee ○ Selection and Recruitment Committee ○ Asset management and disposals 	WR/Admin	July
MEDIUM TERM		

Conduct a partnership survey with stakeholders on WHO's work	HPU/Shirley	TBD
Conduct biannual periodic review of WHO's work with MoH and partners	WR and M&E focal point	2023
Revise the business continuity plan for WHO in respect of the Covid-19 and unrests that were witnessed in recent times	Gcina	September
Monitor the implementation of the UNSDCF (United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework) Joint Workplan and identify opportunities for delivering as one	Dr. Kevin and Dudu	September
Investigate possibilities for reviving the Sector Wide Approach (SWAP) committee	Dr. Ayana	September

9. RETREAT EVALUATION

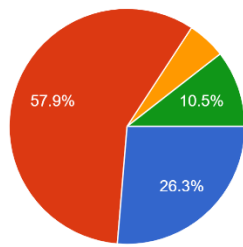
A retreat evaluation was conducted. Some of the macro-level results are captured in the graphics below. Worth noting is that most staff were satisfied with the location of the retreat, the duration of the retreat, and the activities done during the retreat. They indicated that they looked forward to the next retreat.

Location of event
19 responses



Duration of event

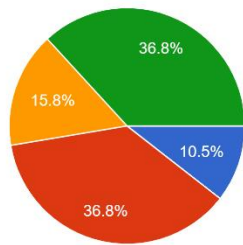
19 responses



- Very Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Unsatisfied
- Very Unsatisfied

Period of Hosting Event in the Year

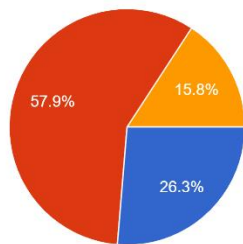
19 responses



- Very Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Unsatisfied
- Very Unsatisfied

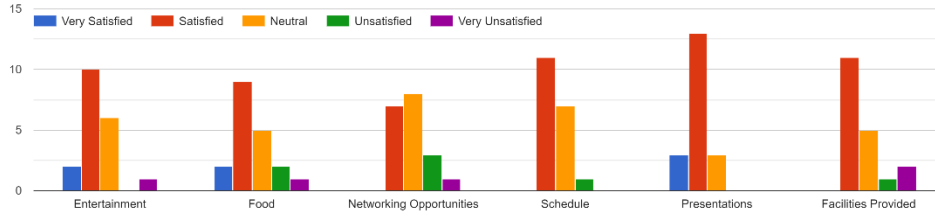
Activities included in the event

19 responses



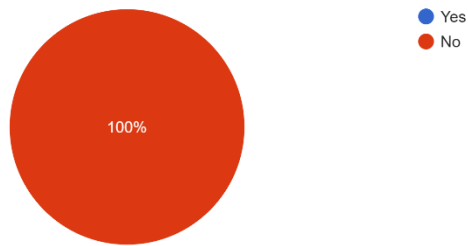
- Very Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Unsatisfied
- Very Unsatisfied

Please rate your satisfaction with the following aspects of the event.

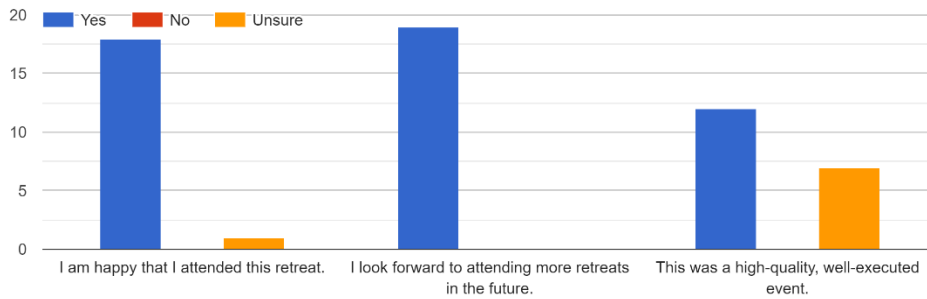


Did you require or request any special accommodations at the event location?

19 responses



Please rate your agreement with the following statements.



Overall, how satisfied were you with your experience at this retreat?

19 responses

