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**Review of the Implementation of Performance  
Agreements for Heads/Directors of Field Offices**

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## **Key results**

In 2008 a system of performance assessment for Heads/Directors of Field Offices was introduced. This was an excellent initiative and to date good progress has been made with 44 out of 53 Heads/Directors preparing their expected results. However, more progress needs to be made, including signing off on these performance agreements for the current biennium.

Furthermore, as agreed with HRM and BFC, the process of objectives setting, interim feedback and periodic assessment of these staff needs simplification.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Background, scope and objective**

UNESCO policy recognizes the importance of effective management of staff performance and development. To this end, a comprehensive policy on Performance Assessment (PA) was introduced via the Administrative Circular No. 2205 in March 2004. This policy was applicable to all staff members except for the Deputy Director-General, Assistant Director-Generals, Directors of Bureaux at Headquarters and the Heads/Directors of Field Offices. Considering the scope and level of their responsibilities, these senior managers were to be subject to a separate performance agreement process. In March 2008, UNESCO introduced procedures and tools for establishing expected results and managing the performance of these senior managers.

In field office audits conducted in 2008, IOS noted that expected results for Heads/Directors of Field Offices had not been finalized for the current biennium and, in some instances, there was a lack of clarity on management objectives and priorities. Similarly, there were no performance assessments of Heads/Directors of Field Offices for the 2006-07 biennium. In the context of decentralisation, results based management and an effective senior management accountability framework, this represents a risk to the Organization in the achievement of its goals.

IOS reviewed the status of performance agreements for Heads/Directors of Field Offices and the related structures and processes to determine if improvements were required for it to function effectively.

## **RESULTS OF THE REVIEW**

### **Status of performance agreements**

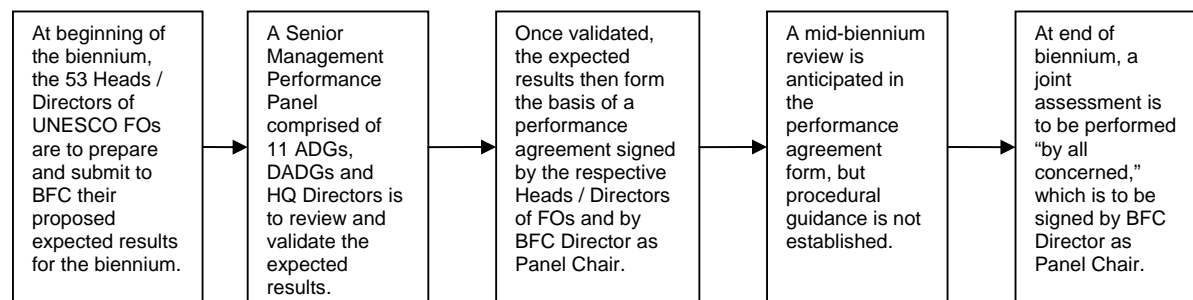
Of the 53 Heads/Directors of Field Offices, 44 prepared and submitted to the Bureau of Field Coordination (BFC) draft performance agreements for the 2008-09 biennium. None of these have been approved by the Senior Management Performance Panel.

With only six months left in the 2008-09 biennium, there is substantial risk that the performance of Heads/Directors of Field Offices will not be evaluated for a second successive biennium. It is therefore important that action is taken in this regard. The Director of Bureau of Field Coordination is best placed to serve as a single rating official, with substantive knowledge of three of the four functional areas to be assessed. Though this would result in performance information gaps – most notably in programme management – greater precision at this late stage of the current biennium is not reasonably achievable.

<p><b>Recommendation 1:</b></p> <p>We recommend that DIR/BFC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalize the expected results for all Heads/Directors of Field Offices for the 2008-09 biennium; and</li> <li>• Serve as the principal rating official for these personnel at the end of the current rating period.</li> </ul>	<p>High risk</p>
<p><b>BFC response:</b> BFC notes that the recommended approach for the current biennium is expedient, though less precise than originally envisioned or needed for future biennia. In light of current time constraints, BFC will finalize and sign expected results by September 2009 and rate Heads/Directors of Field Offices in BFC's areas of competence by February 2010.</p>	

### Simplification of the process

The process for performance management of Heads/Directors of Field Offices as currently designed includes the following:



A Senior Management Performance Panel, composed of the five programme sector ADGs, ADG/ERC, ADG/BSP, Directors of HRM and BFC and the Comptroller (or permissible alternates) was to rate the Heads/Directors. There were therefore ten raters for each Head/Director. The panel was to convene twice in the process to validate expected results and to jointly assess UNESCO's 53 Heads/Directors of Field Offices.

UNESCO guidance on establishing performance agreements includes a total of 24 examples of specific results in the areas of programme management, partnerships and external relations, human resources, finance and budget. Following this guidance, the Heads/Directors of Field Offices each proposed more than 20 expected results for the 2008-09 biennium.

Consideration and agreement on a large number of expected results by a large panel proved to be ineffective. The panel met in July 2008 and concluded that it could not agree to the performance agreements in the current form. Instead, it was decided that revisions to the model would be proposed and considered by the panel. However, these revisions were not forthcoming, and the panel did not meet again.

IOS reviewed a sample of performance agreements drafted by Heads/Directors of Field Offices. While the expected results they proposed generally addressed the management areas cited in the provided guidance, the results often were not specific or measurable.

No briefing or formal orientation was provided in conjunction with the introduction of performance agreements for Heads/Directors of Field Offices, which likely contributed to the challenges encountered in implementing the process.

<p><b>Recommendation 2:</b></p> <p>We recommend that HRM, in coordination with BFC, reconsider and revise the Performance Agreement process for Heads/Directors of Field Offices in light of experience to date by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simplifying the process and reducing the number of raters;</li> <li>• Clarifying the roles and accountabilities of the business process owner, rating officials and others participating in the process;</li> <li>• Revising the model to include fewer and measurable tangible expected results;</li> <li>• Briefing the key players on their roles and responsibilities.</li> </ul>	<p>High risk</p>
<p><b>HRM response:</b> HRM generally agrees with the recommendation but also notes that the process was well researched and designed as a best-practice model from its inception. Refinement of the process based on experience will focus on reducing the role of the panel and introducing a more direct input from each programme sector under a single rater system. Potentially, the panel can serve in a review role after the end-of-period assessment by the principal rater. Programme sector expected results may be concurrent with C/5 work planning and directly assessed by each programme sector as input to the principal rater. We envision having these procedural refinements finalized and introduced by December 2009.</p> <p><b>BFC response:</b> BFC notes its increased level of effort in serving as principal rating official for Heads/Directors of Field Offices and will request additional resources as necessary when the process and workload are more clearly established.</p>	