



**Chief Executives Board
for Coordination**CEB/2012/HLCM/HR/8
13 February 2012

Meeting of the CEB HR Network
24th Session, 21-23 February 2012
United Nations, Geneva
Palais des Nations, Room IX**UN Staff/Stress Counsellors Special Interest Group (UNSSCG)***Report on activities, 2011*

1. Since its formal recognition by the Human Resources Network in 2010, the focus of the UNSSCG has been on strengthening the group, its members' participation as well as relations with relevant counterparts. The purpose of this paper is to record the activities and the advancement of the UNSSCG for the HR Network. Below are some of the highlights.

Strengthening of the UNSSCG

2. While the original Mandate of the UNSSCG has largely remained the same degree, a slight amendment has been made to the Advisory Committee to include the Chief of UNDSS. The Advisory Committee is currently reviewing the management structure with a view to increase participation by field based counsellors.

3. The Confidentiality Guidelines for UN Staff/Stress Counsellors adopted by the HR Network in its summer session of 2010 are yet to be adopted by the HLCM. This has been signaled to the CEB Secretariat for their action.

4. An e-survey on profile of the UN Staff and Stress Counsellors was launched in August 2011 with a purpose of getting a better idea of this function in the UN system. Out of about 100 members, 71 people responded to the survey and here are some interesting details:

- Around 60% were supervised by the HR or admin structures, in comparison with 16% supervised by the medical structures and 14% by the security structures;
- The most common title is Staff Counsellor, followed by the Stress Counsellor, Staff Welfare Officer, Psychologist;
- Over 50% have qualifications in psychology, 15 % in counseling, 7% in social work and 15% psychiatry;
- Most (50%) have master's degree and 30% have a doctoral degree;
- 31% is at the P3 level, 23% at the P4 level and just a couple of positions are at the P5 level. There are a few P2 positions and a significant number of posts (27%) are at some kind of "other" status;
- Amongst the respondents, 20% worked as a Staff Counsellor for more than 10 years, 15% for 6-9 years, 27% for 3-5 years.

Partnerships with other Networks and working groups

5. Following an exchange of the delegations in each other's annual meetings, the Medical Directors Working Group and the UNSSCG agreed on the creation of a joint working group to examine the long term psychosocial support to staff following a traumatic event. This is still an on-going activity.
6. One representative from the Medical Directors Working Group participated in a session of the 12th annual meeting, and the contact with the Medical Directors Working Group is maintained.
7. UNSSCG provided input to the Joint Inspection Unit's report on the Joint Medical Service. The report that was published included a section on UNSSCG and counsellors.
8. Contacts with the Office of the Ombudsman in NY were established in order following an expressed interest from the UNSSCG to have a training in mediation. As a result, a one-day training on mediation was organized as a part of the 12th annual meeting of the UNSSCG with Mr. Nicholas Theotocatos, UNON Ombudsman and Mr. Ralf Gruenert, UNHCR Special Advisor on Conflict Resolution training, as trainers. The possibilities for further collaboration were defined especially in areas where counseling skills could enhance the mediated situation.
9. Contact was furthermore made with the Turkish members of an internationally renowned trauma research team, who have developed a self-help manual for trauma victims, based on research done in several earthquakes in their region. This team will deal with the request of UNSSCG members for feedback on research, regarding new professionally proven trauma support guidelines, during the annual meeting.

Expert interventions

10. The UNSSCG Coordinating Committee lead the preparations of the presentation on the importance of R&R for mental health of staff in hardship duty stations. This was requested by the HR Network in the context of the discussions of R&R framework in the meeting of the International Civil Servants Commission (ICSC) in July 2011 in Paris. This intervention was a good example of how the UNSSCG could be of use to the HR Network. The work of the Staff/Stress Counsellors is essentially about enhancing the well-being of individual staff and teams as well as about creating a positive environment in which these individuals and teams could be most productive. Therefore, a discussion on other relevant areas where UNSSCG could provide an input to the HRN for the benefit of staff and organizations, should take place.

UNSSCG 2011 Annual meeting

11. The 12th annual meeting of the UNSSCG took place on 11-14 October 2011, in Istanbul, Turkey. It was attended by 32 members from 24 organizations, which is the second highest number of participants ever. The agenda included: the debriefing on the Nigeria psychosocial response, half a day session on Recent advancements in brief treatment of mass trauma survivors by the Turkish experts, Dr. Metin Basoglu and Dr. Ebru Salcioglu; one day training in Conflict resolution and mediation techniques and sharing practices on psychological preparation for hardship assignments, prevention of burnout, supporting staff during downsizing and supporting families. The feedback to the satisfaction survey indicated a very positive feedback from the participants.

Challenges and plans for 2012

12. Throughout 2011, there was a significant amount of communication and exchange amongst the members of the group on various topics related to our function and it is important that we sustain and even increase that.

13. UNSSCG in principle functions without a budget which limits a number of possible activities. For that reason, it is highly critical that the UN system organizations support the work of the UNSSCG through the support of their counsellors to participate in the established working groups and in the annual meeting. Some of the organizations have been so far providing “in-kind” support which is also highly appreciated.

14. In addition to supporting its members in carrying out their professional functions, UNSSCG aims at further investigating the agenda relevant for our main partners, and principally the HR Network to which the UNSSCG could make a significant contribution.

15. The priorities identified for 2012 are:

- Revision of the management structure of the UNSSCG with a view to increase participation of the field based counselors;
- Follow-up on the implementation of the Confidentiality Guidelines for the UN Staff Counsellors through a survey and establishment of best practices;
- Preparation of the Code of Ethics for the UNSSCG including the Guidelines on Counseling Function in the UN for the presentation to the HR Network;
- Further strengthening of collaboration with the Medical Directors Working Group, Office of the Ombudsman and other key partners;
- Preparation of the 13th annual meeting of the UNSSCG.

* * *

Members of the Advisory Committee:

Moussa Ba, UNDSS
Charles Barringer, WFP
Nathalie Casalis, WHO
Penelope Curling, UNICEF
Dawn Straiton, UN Secretariat
James Striker, World Bank
Dubravka Suzic, UNHCR

Members of the Coordinating Committee:

Charles Barringer, WFP
Kevin Cullen, ICTY
Henriette de Vries, WFP
Dubravka Suzic, UNHCR - focal point for the contact with the HR Network for 2012