Decentralization: Advantages and Challenges

WHO EB: Side Event
Decentralization

Decentralization is the distribution of financial resources and transfer of delegation of authority and accountability for results among different levels of a government or organization.
Advantages

- bringing closer to the needs resulting in increased sensitivity for the organization as a whole

- tailored programmes and initiatives

- closer relations and networking with government

- stronger ownership of beneficiaries

- alleviating bottlenecks in decision making
Challenges

- proper allocation of resources is difficult
- involvement into decision making is complex and have impact on ownership of decisions
- coherent implementation of the organization-wide decisions
- coordination among the decentralized entities
- increased costs, potential lost of economy of scale
- effective operation for execution of routine administrative services
Decentralization in WHO

- enshrined in constitution and is a practice from its foundation
- never has been questioned but its efficiency and effectiveness have been subject of discussion
- it is an asset but its degree and form of operation should be reviewed periodically against the changing demands of mandate and circumstances
Regional Structure

- Criteria for countries’ assignments to regions are not clear,
- Structure was never reviewed but evolved through ad hoc decisions

Present Structure:

- Uneven size (11-53 countries)
- Delineation of regions more politically motivated
- Lack of alignment with other existing regional groupings of the UN

Source of operational constraints and high costs

Special case of AMRO: shows progress but limited

Conclusions:
1. Redefinition of current regional design is desirable
2. Further integration of AMRO in administrative area is encouraged
Resource Allocation

- It is issue between HQ and ROs, among ROs, ROs and COs
  - shift in planning figures to regions but the actual allocations below planned
  - no clear / transparent rules
  - basis for regional allocations are not updated ("validation")
  - no transparent rule for allocation to COs

- Criticism in ROs for lack of inclusiveness of Regions in the allocation process
- Practice of ROs towards COs is very similar to the HQ vs. ROs situation

Message to the ongoing financial discussion:
Inclusiveness is a key issue and should cover the ROs’ and COs’ involvement too
Policy Development & Decision-Making

Governing Bodies
- “one way relations” among global and regional governing bodies
- weak oversight role

Executive management
- Role of the Global Policy Group should be increased and to be strengthened its institutional status
  - better frequency and more time
  - to make it less vulnerable

- DAF plays an important role to develop a corporate administrative and managerial culture in administrative area
  - increases ownership
  - RO should pay attention to use their administrative network

More feedback needed for GPG from DAF on administrative issues
Implementation of Policies

- Decentralization resulting difficulties in a coherent implementation in HQ across clusters and in ROs

- RDs due to their constitutional status has wide freedom of action and it is a potential “challenge” consistent implementation across the organization

- Tools to handle the challenges:
  1. Coordination mechanisms in different areas
  2. DAF networks
  3. Internal oversight

Great differences among ROs and among administrative areas
(Eg.: HR or IT )
Delegation of Authorities

- General, transparent and wide from DG to RDs and to ADGs,
- Less general and different region to region and area to area in the field,
- Not well differentiated according the size and capacity of COs,
- Potential area for further delegation of authority:
  - recruitment process
  - procurement
  - travel
  - resource mobilization
- Accountability and resources should go together with delegation of authority
- Accountability of RD by RC and DG: both to be strengthen
Country Offices

- no clear criteria for WHO presence in a given country, size and resources of COs are not linked to objective criteria,
- country support offices in ROs are organized differently, which may be justified by regional specifics but it is a challenge for coherent role to be played by them,
- present delegation of authority to WRs should be more differentiated,
- more empowerment and flexibility for WRs enabling them to be active player in UN Country Team
- use of potentials of inter-country or interregional cooperation needs more flexible administrative tools and financial resources