

Prioritization and realignment in WHO South-East Asia

Update 25 November 2025

What is the rationale for WHO SEARO's Restructuring?

WHO conducted a major restructuring in 2025 to ensure the Organization remains fit for purpose amid constrained and uncertain resources. The new structure aims to be sustainable, strategically aligned, and operationally coherent across all WHO offices, enabling efficient delivery of WHO's mandate and responsiveness to emerging health priorities.

Key Drivers

•Sustainability Under Financial Constraints

Reallocation of human and financial resources, optimized staffing models, and reduced inefficiencies to maintain delivery of core functions.

•Eliminating Duplication & Fragmentation

Streamlined roles and workflows across HQ, regional, and country offices to reduce overlap, strengthen accountability, and improve performance.

•Member State–Driven Reprioritization (SEAR)

Structure redesigned to reflect SEAR Member States' guidance—especially maintaining at least 75% of staffing at country offices and reinforcing country-focused support.

•Alignment With Strategic Direction

Clearer links between priorities, workplans, and resource allocation to enable faster, more coherent public health response.

What was the process followed by SEARO?

HR process conducted across all WHO offices using HQ corporate guidance to ensure global consistency, structural alignment, transparency, and adherence to corporate principles. **4 Phases:**

Phase 1: Structure Definition

- Organizational design developed based on strategic priorities and budget envelopes.
- Deliverables: approved organigrams (titles/grades/position types/locations), position lists, and position descriptions.

Phase 2: Mapping & Matching

- Positions filled through Mapping: positions unchanged or changing <50%. And Matching: positions changing ≥50%.
- Matched positions were prioritized for staff with >10 years fixed term.

Phase 3: Individual Communication

Phase 4: Reassignment Process

This process commenced as soon as written notification was sent to eligible staff members. The communication confirmed their eligibility to participate in the reassignment process set out under SR 1050. Details of international professional staff members eligible for reassignment, under SR 1050, were sent to the **Global Reassignment Committee** (GRC) at HQ, for consideration. Further, details of locally recruited staff members eligible for reassignment, under SR 1050, were sent to the **SEARO Local Reassignment Committee** for consideration.

Ad-hoc Review Committees (ARCs) as central mechanism to ensure fairness and transparency across all phases:

- Membership: Chair, Co-Chair, HR Specialist, Staff Association Representative, Independent Member.
- Directors/WRs presented organigrams and mapping/matching proposals to ARCs.
- ARCs reviewed proposals, assessed eligibility, and formulated recommendations based on corporate criteria.
- ARC recommendations formed the basis for final approval of staff placement in the new structure.

Role of the OIC

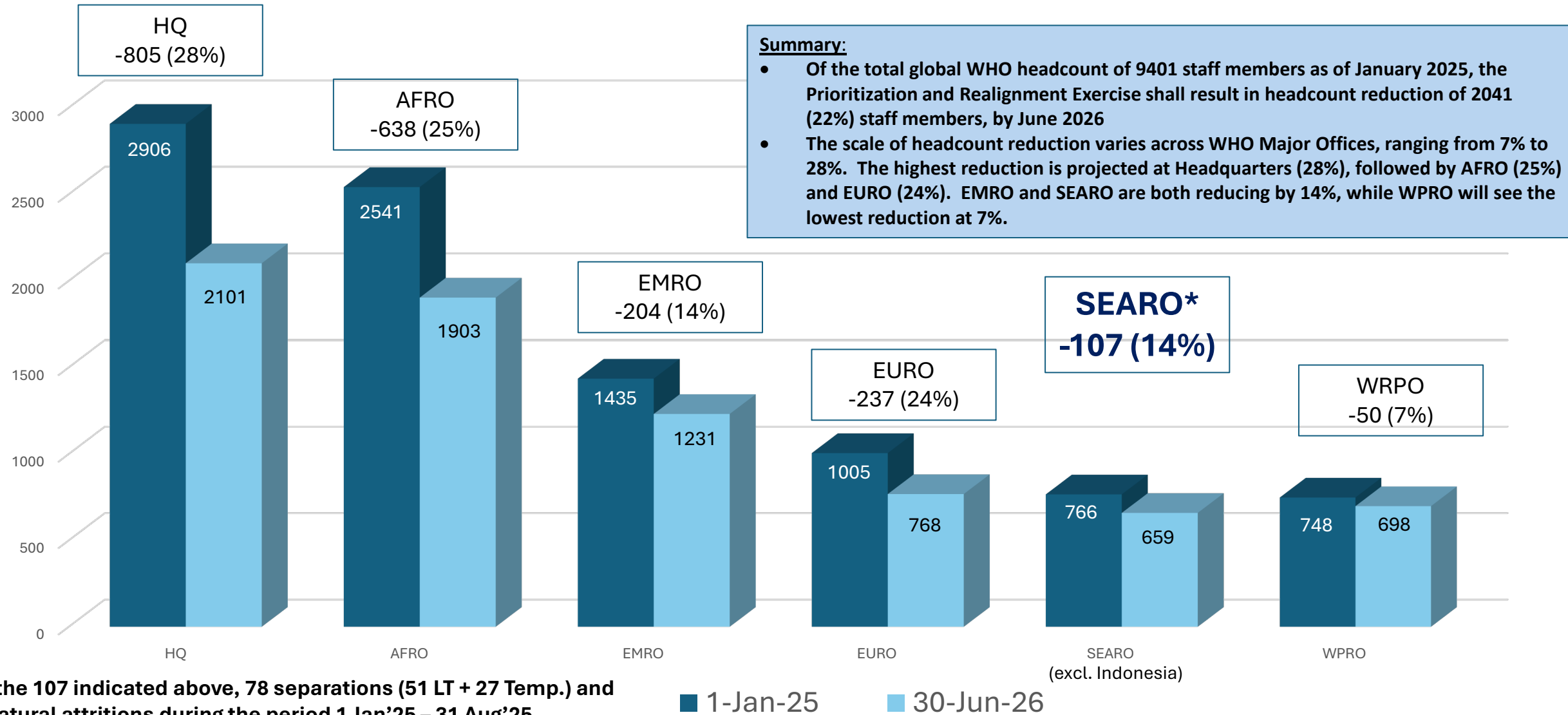
Provided strategic oversight & approved ARC recommendations following consultations with ARCs and Budget Center Heads.

What were the support services provided to staff in SEARO during restructuring?

- **Dedicated webpage** developed on SEARO Intranet site on the Prioritization process and Transition support.
- SDL/HRM Announcements sent out regularly, inviting staff members to participate in the **career transition activities**, launched by WHO/HQ.
- **Transparency and Fairness Committee (TFC) established** to provide rapid and accessible mechanism dedicated to reviewing and addressing concerns. Composition: Chair, HR Representative, Staff Association Representative, OIC Representative. Individual meetings with staff members as per request. Reviewed entire restructuring process, including ARC documents, to ensure that due process was followed. Discussed with concerned Directors/WRs to explore solutions to address the issues raised
- **Staff Counseling Service**, through SCARF India, established to provide virtual counseling services.
- **HR support cell** established for face-to-face interactions.
- The **Ombudsman** service established with EMRO on an interim and sharing basis.
- **HR Support Clinic** organized to assist staff in providing guidance related to separation formalities/SMAs.
- Monthly **Town-Hall meetings** and HR sessions on Pension etc, followed by individual consultation sessions for staff members.

What is the Global Headcount Reduction - by Major Offices?

(January 2025 vis-a-vis June 2026)



*Of the 107 indicated above, 78 separations (51 LT + 27 Temp.) and 29 natural attritions during the period 1 Jan'25 – 31 Aug'25.

What is the impact on Gender balance in SEARO and SEAR WCOs ? (January 2025 vis-a-vis Post Restructuring - June 2026)

January 2025

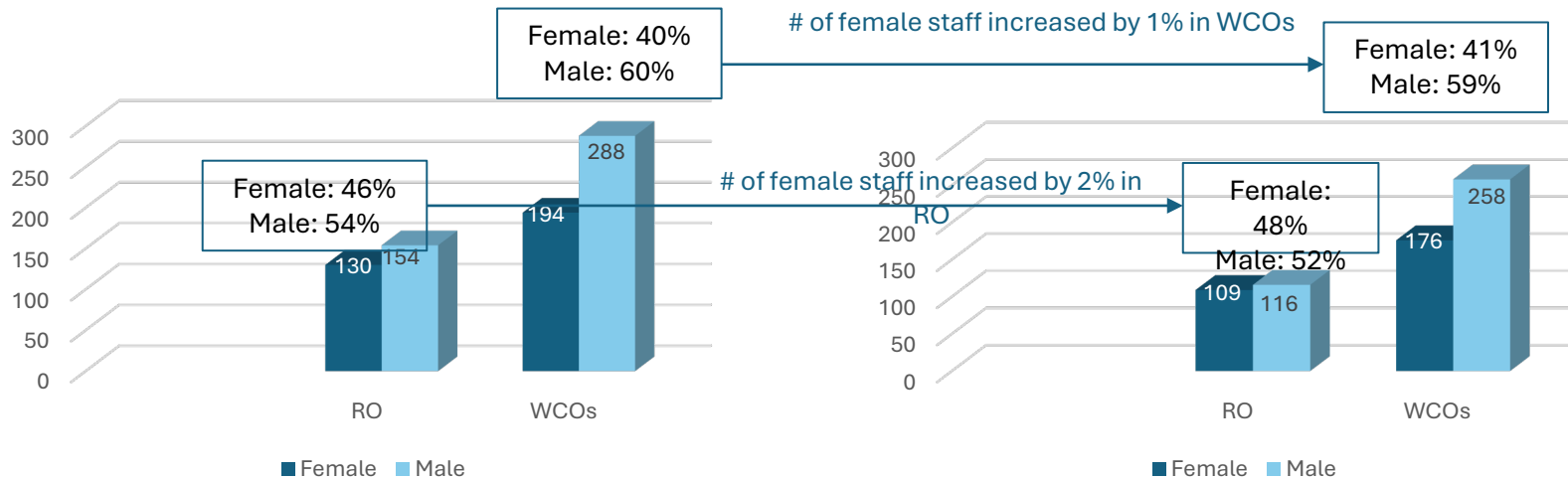
Office	Female		Male		Total
	Staff	%	Staff	%	
RO	130	46	154	54	284
WCOs	194	40	288	60	482
Total	324	42	442	58	766

Post Restructuring (June 2026)

Office	Female		Male		Total
	Staff	%	Staff	%	
RO	109	48	116	52	225
WCOs	176	41	258	59	434
Total	285	43	374	57	659

Summary:

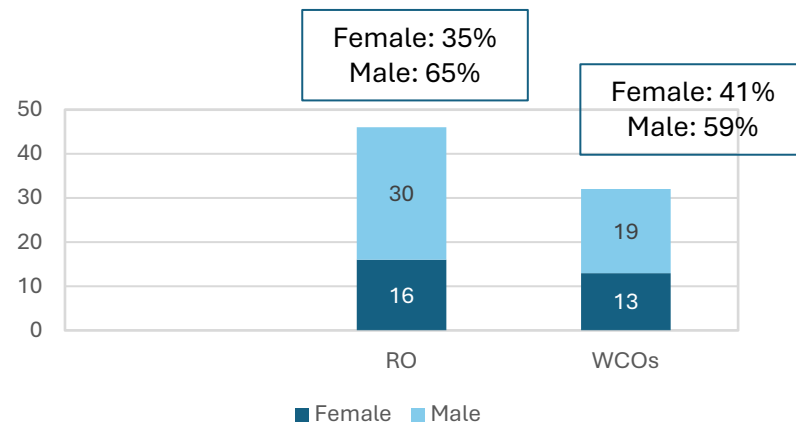
- The Prioritization & Realignment Exercise in SEARO did not have any negative impact on the gender balance in the Region.
 - As of January 2025, female representation in the Professional & higher category in the South-East Asia Region was 42%. This has increased by 1% (i.e. 43%) following the restructuring exercise.
 - Post restructuring, female representation in SEARO & SEAR WCOs stands at 48% & 41% respectively, compared to 46% & 40% as recorded in January 2025.



What is the outcome of the Restructuring in SEARO & SEAR WCOs by Gender & Categories of Staff?

All Separations (LT and Temp. - combined)

Office	Female	Male	Total
RO	16	30	46
GS	11	25	36
IP	5	4	9
NO		1	1
WCO	13	19	32
GS	6	7	13
IP	2	2	4
NO	5	10	15
Grand Total	29	49	78



Separations (Longer-Term)

Office	Female	Male	Total
RO	14	29	43
GS	10	24	34
IP	4	4	8
NO		1	1
WCO	2	6	8
GS		1	1
IP	2	1	3
NO		4	4
Grand Total	16	35	51

Separations (Temporary)

Office	Female	Male	Total
RO	2	1	3
GS	1	1	2
IP	1		1
WCO	11	13	24
GS	6	6	12
IP		1	1
NO	5	6	11
Grand Total	13	14	27

Summary:

- Of the total 78 staff members who are separating:
 - 46 staff members are based in SEARO while 32 are based in SEAR WCOs.
 - Of the 46 staff members based in SEARO, 16 (35%) are females & 30 (65%) are males.
 - Of the 32 staff members based in SEAR WCOs, 13 (41%) are females & 19 (59%) are males.
- Of the total 78 staff members who are separating:
 - 51 are holding longer-term (LT) contracts & 27 are holding temporary contracts.

Category	Female	Male	Grand Total
RO	16	30	46
GS	11	25	36
G2		11	11
G3		1	1
G4	3	4	7
G5	4	7	11
G6	2	2	4
G7	2		2
NO		1	1
NO-B		1	1
IP	5	4	9
P2	2	1	3
P3	1		1
P5	2	3	5
WCO	13	19	32
GS	6	7	13
G3		1	1
G4	3	1	4
G5	3	5	8
NO	5	10	15
NO-A	3	5	8
NO-B	2	2	4
NO-C		3	3
IP	2	2	4
P2		1	1
P3	1		1
P4	1		1
P5		1	1
Grand Total	29	49	78

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What is the headcount reduction for locally recruited staff in SEARO & WCO-India?

- Of the 107 separations, 78 are separations (51 LT + 27 Temp.) followed the restructuring exercise and 29 natural attritions during the period 1 Jan'25 – 31 Aug'25.
- Of the total 78 staff members being separated:
 - 29 are Female (37%)
 - 49 are Male (63%)
- Of the total 78 staff members being separated:
 - 39 out of 78 (i.e. 50%) staff members are Indian nationals holding GS/NPO contracts. This includes 37 based in RO and 2 in WCO-India
 - It should be noted that **all locally recruited staff in RO and WCO-India are nationals of India.**

Geographical Representation for International Professionals (IP) in the Region (January 2025 vis-a-vis June 2026)

January 2025 - 41 nationalities represented

Nationalities	Longer-Term	LT (%)	Temporary	Temp. (%)	Total
Other Nationalities	49	33%	8	27%	57
SEAR Nationalities	98	67%	22	73%	120
Bangladesh	5	3%	1	3%	6
Bhutan	6	4%	2	7%	8
DPR Korea	1	1%	2	7%	3
India	57	39%	13	43%	70
Maldives	3	2%	0	0%	3
Myanmar	2	1%	0	0%	2
Nepal	11	7%	2	7%	13
Sri Lanka	11	7%	1	3%	12
Thailand	2	1%	1	3%	3
Grand Total	147		30		177

Summary:

Fixed-term International Professional (IP) positions

- Prior to the restructuring exercise, 67% of fixed-term IP positions in the South-East Asia Region were held by nationals of the Region, while 33% were held by nationals from other Regions. Among SEAR nationals, 39% were Indian, followed by 7% each from Nepal and Sri Lanka.
- This distribution remains unchanged following the restructuring**, with 67% of IP positions continuing to be held by SEAR nationals and 31% by nationals from other Regions. Within the SEAR group, Indian representation now stands at 38%, with representation from Nepal and Sri Lanka increasing to 8% each.

Post Restructuring – 38 nationalities represented

Nationalities	Longer-Term	LT (%)	Temporary	Temp. (%)	Total
Other Nationalities	45	33%	7	25%	52
SEAR Nationalities	91	67%	21	75%	112
Bangladesh	5	4%	1	4%	6
Bhutan	6	4%	2	7%	8
DPR Korea	1	1%	2	7%	3
India	51	38%	12	43%	63
Maldives	2	1%	0	0%	2
Myanmar	2	1%	0	0%	2
Nepal	11	8%	2	7%	13
Sri Lanka	11	8%	1	4%	12
Thailand	2	1%	1	4%	3
Grand Total	136		28		164

Temporary International Professional (IP) positions

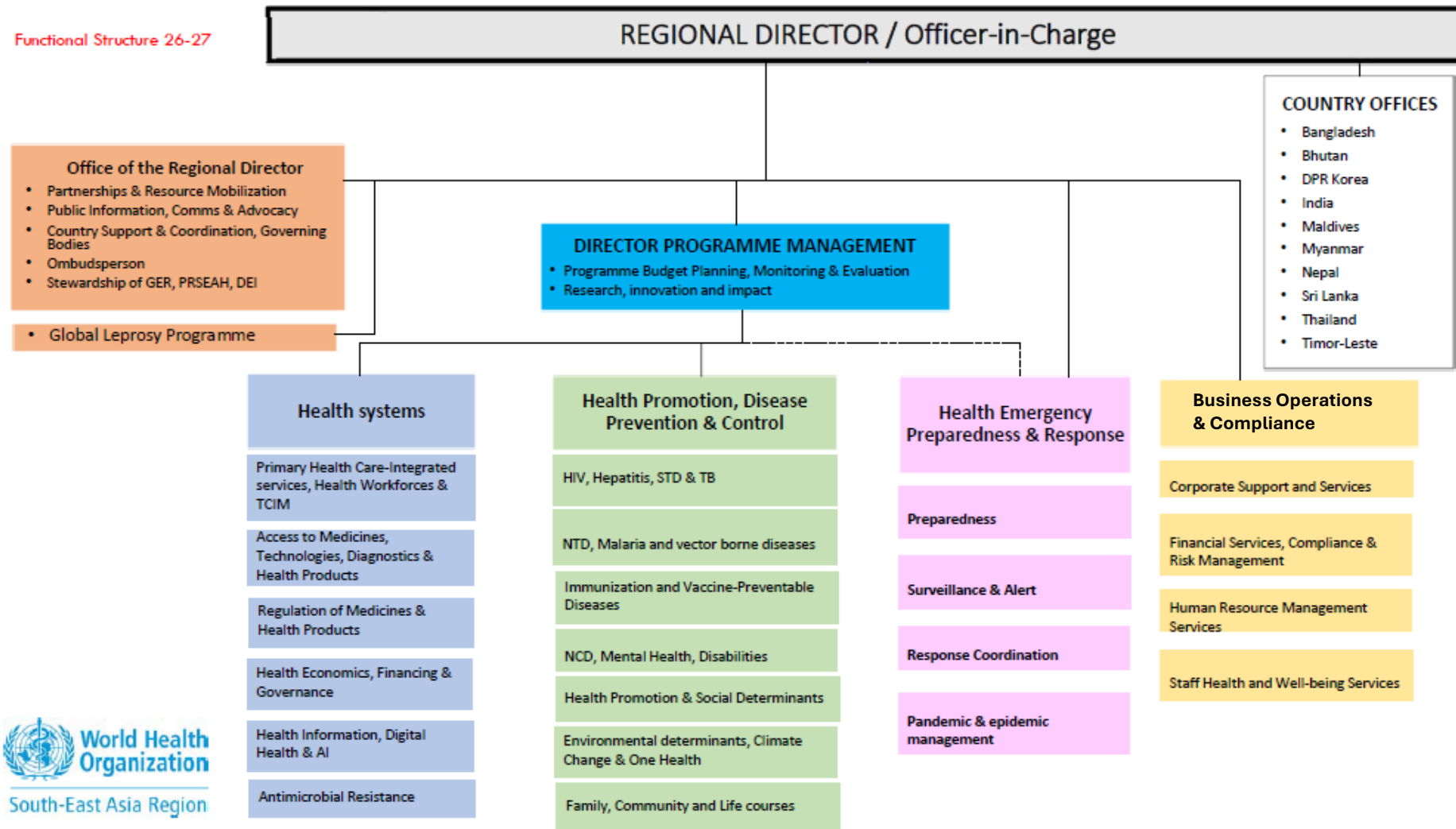
- Prior to the restructuring exercise, 73% of temporary IP positions in the Region were held by nationals of the South-East Region, while 27% were held by nationals from other Regions. Following the restructuring, the distribution stands at 75% and 25% respectively.
- Within the SEAR group, representation previously stood at 73%, comprising 43% Indian nationals and 7% each from Nepal, Bhutan and DPR Korea. Post restructuring, SEAR representation is at 67%, with Indian nationals accounting for 43% (the same as January 2025), followed by 7% from Nepal, Bhutan and DPR Korea.

What is the ongoing HR process and next steps?

- Staff with reassignment rights, proposed by the Global Reassignment Committee (GRC) for positions within the South-East Asia Region, have been reviewed by the respective position owners/Budget Centre Heads and the ARC. The consolidated recommendations have been reviewed, approved & communicated to the GRC.
- Consultations with positions owners regarding reassignment recommendations proposed by the Local Reassignment Committee (LRC) have been concluded. Following approval, formal communication will be issued to the concerned staff members holding reassignment rights.
- The first and second batch of twelve (12) Separation by Mutual Agreement (SMA) requests have been approved.
- As part of WHO's commitment to its workforce and to retaining valuable institutional knowledge and expertise, Talent Pools have been established to support staff members affected by the abolition of positions or the discontinuation of functions, in the context of the current financial crisis.

What is the new organogram at a glance?

A high-level organogram was shared with all the staff in the region through a SEARO Announcement dated 13 August 2025.



Will WHO SEARO be sustainable in the coming biennium?

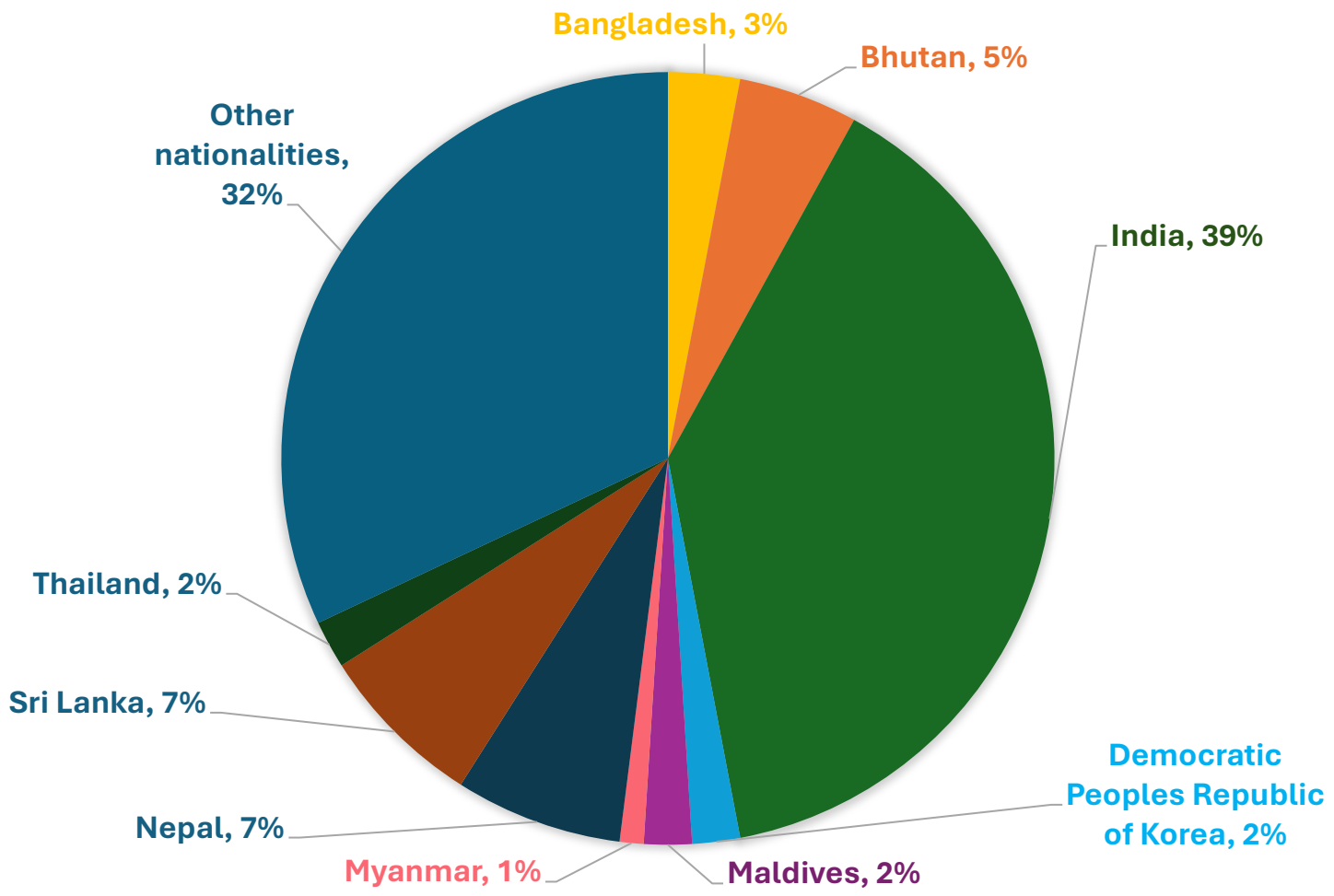
Member states at Regional Committee endorsed the realignment approach and appreciated in particular, that

- SEARO ensured that country priorities were served
- SEARO maintained its country focus; cuts were therefore greater at RO versus CO
- SEARO focused on maintaining technical strengths
- SEARO overall maintained healthy HR : Activity budget ratio.

Overall, the new structure will be sustainable for the next biennium. Remaining risks in some priority areas due to changes in ODA and donor and partner trends.

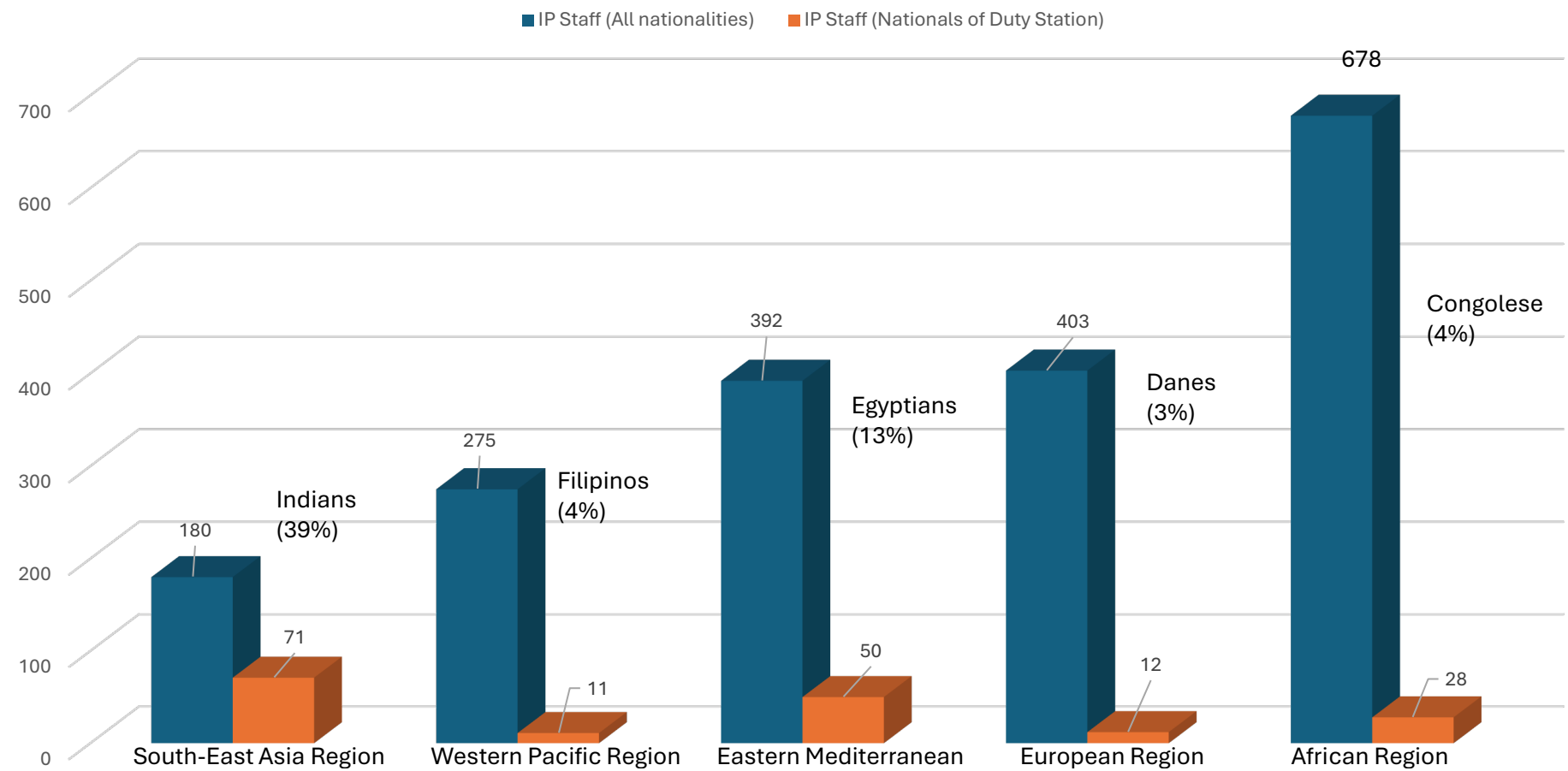
Given the remaining risks, the recruitment freeze will be maintained except for essential positions.

Geographical representation of International Professionals (fixed term + temporary) in WHO South-East Asia (Regional office + 10 country offices) as on 1 September 2025



Nationalities	No of Staff	% of total
Bangladesh	6	3
Bhutan	8	5
India	71	39
Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea	3	2
Maldives	3	2
Myanmar	2	1
Nepal	13	7
Sri Lanka	13	7
Thailand	3	2
Other nationalities	58	32
Total	180	

Representation of nationals of the country where WHO regional offices are based
Number of International Professionals (fixed term and temporary) in Regional + Country offices as on 1 Sept 2025



Which are priority outcomes for MS requiring greatest WHO support?

