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World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
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Regional Bureau for **Eastern Africa**

Staff Wellness

2022 Regional **Achievements and Outlook**

April 2023

A year of unprecedented needs in the Eastern Africa Region led to unprecedented demands on WFP staff. In response to this, the Region's Wellness team took action to increase its presence and reach to ensure that employees have better knowledge of how to care of their physical and mental health, and that access to healthcare services continues to improve.

The Wellness team in the Region now comprises **30 medical and mental health professionals**, with some of the largest country operations having their own emergency medical team, and national and international Staff Counsellors available. 134 WFP staff were trained as Wellness Support Volunteers. Under the guidance of Staff Counselling, these volunteers champion Wellness in their duty stations by initiating and implementing well-being activities and projects activities and projects.

Services provided for staff in the Region in 2022 included more than **2000 medical clearances** and **23 medical evacuations**. With the shadow of COVID-19 shrinking, staff counsellors were able to get back out to the field to bring in-person psychosocial support to more than 40 field offices. A wide range of trainings, webinars and psycho-education sessions were rolled out both remotely and in-person, on topics ranging from stress management, and building resilience, to basic life support training. Wellbeing App pages have been published for every country in the Region with a wealth of information to empower staff to care for their mental and physical health.

In order to know where the gaps in health care services lie, the medical team carried out **health risk assessments in Kenya, Burundi, and Somalia**. Meanwhile, body mass index (BMI) machines were installed in the Regional Bureau and in a number of country offices. In addition, COVID-19 antigen tests were provided for staff in the Regional Bureau. In South Sudan, funding from the Headquarters Wellness Fund allowed for the new Wellness activity/training spaces in 3 Area Hubs as well as in Juba.

Leading the Way in Staff Wellness

In 2022, the Eastern Africa Regional Bureau became the first Bureau to recruit a dedicated Family Liaison Officer to assess and respond to the needs of families. Family focus groups in Kenya and Sudan provided fresh insights into the challenges that often face WFP staff and their families, such as geographical separation. New **Family Liaison Outreach Communities (FLOCK) groups** were set up in a range of locations, providing opportunities for families to meet for fun activities and gatherings where they could feel welcomed and supported. A UN Celebration Day in Khartoum, led by the Sudan FLOCK, was attended by 400 staff, partners and children from WFP and other agencies.

Supporting and promoting the needs of women in WFP was also a focus of 2022 with innovative group sessions for women set up in Ethiopia and Somalia, and women's spaces created in Somalia Field Offices. Staff Counselling co-facilitated Women's Safety and Awareness Training in South Sudan and other country offices, providing a unique opportunity for women to come together in a female-only space to learn and share in a safe environment.

Responding to **New Challenges**

Increasing sensitization to emerging health risks was an important activity for Wellness in 2022. In addition to reviewing the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Wellness team also responded to the Ebola outbreak in Uganda, focusing on preparedness and psychological coping skills, not just in Uganda, but also in neighbouring countries.

In the light of conflicts in the Region and the absence of health care facilities in some locations, Pre-hospital Trauma Life Support Training in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, was funded by the Regional Bureau in order to equip 34 UN medical staff from Headquarters and across East Africa with the skills to provide critical care for patients before they can reach medical facilities.

Challenges

Inadequate medical facilities in some locations where WFP staff work remain a key challenge and may require further expansion of emergency medical assistance teams and roving medical officers. As the Eastern Africa Bureau Wellness team looks to promote health-seeking behaviours in 2023, through campaigns on cardiovascular disease and on pre-cancer screening, creative solutions will need to be found to ensure all staff have access to screening facilities and to specialist support, when necessary, wherever they are located.

While the number of staff utilizing Wellness services, including staff counselling, continues to grow, ensuring all employees know about the support that is available and how to access it remains a priority.



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