



Office of Internal Oversight Services

## **INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION**

### **REPORT 2016/174**

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#### **Audit of the operations of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Sudan**

**While the operations of the country office in Sudan were generally effectively managed, improvements were needed to [REDACTED] [REDACTED] strengthen business continuity planning and medical evacuation processes**

**20 December 2016**

**Assignment No. AN2016/590/04**

# **Audit of the operations of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Sudan**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) governance, risk management and control processes over the operations of its country office in Sudan. The audit covered the period from January 2014 to June 2016 and reviewed: (i) host country relations; (ii) implementation of management goals in the 2014-2016 work plans of the country office; and (iii) management of staff and other resources allocated to it.

The operations of the country office in Sudan were generally effectively managed. However, OCHA needed to remain engaged with the Humanitarian Country Team to improve relations with host country authorities. Also, the country office did not have business continuity plans for its field offices, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In addition, recent incidents in Sudan highlighted the need to provide additional guidance to country offices regarding emergency medical evacuations.

OIOS made three recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, the OCHA country office in Sudan needed to:

- Expand its business continuity plans to cover all operations in Sudan, instead of limiting it to the capital; and

■ [REDACTED].

In addition, OCHA needed to provide additional field guidance for the medical evacuation of staff.

OCHA accepted the recommendations and has initiated steps to implement them.

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# Audit of the operations of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Sudan

## I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the operations of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Sudan.
2. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/182 dated 19 December 1991, OCHA is responsible for bringing together humanitarian actors to ensure a coherent response to emergencies.
3. The primary driver for humanitarian needs in Sudan is armed conflict which, in turn, drives displacement and food insecurity. As of May 2016, there were 3.2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), including 2.6 million in Darfur. Of the IDPs, 1.6 million lived in camps. However, the government of Sudan announced plans to close the IDP camps in Darfur during 2016. Sudan is also hosting 695,000 refugees, including 220,000 South Sudanese who have fled to Sudan since December 2013.
4. Total requirements for the 2016 humanitarian response plan (HRP) in Sudan amounted to \$952 million, of which \$390 million (41 per cent) had already been funded by September 2016. The 2016 HRP was only approved in June 2016 in part due to disagreements with the host government on the extent of needs within the country. In 2015, the HRP appeal amounted to \$1.0 billion, of which \$592.6 million or 57 per cent was funded.
5. The OCHA country office in Sudan is based in Khartoum, and has seven sub-offices in the five Darfur states as well as in Blue Nile and South Khordofan states. OCHA also has a sub-office in Abyei that reports to New York, with administrative support from Khartoum. For 2016, OCHA Sudan had an authorised staffing table of 129 posts and a budget of \$11.1 million, which represented a decline from the previous two years as illustrated in Table 1.

**Table 1: OCHA Cost Plans 2014 – 2016 (amounts in United States dollars)**

Year	Total Cost Plans	Number of Staff
2016	11,121,730	129
2015	12,574,467	130
2014	12,193,131	153

6. In Sudan, OCHA operates in the context of an integrated United Nations presence with the United Nations–African Union Mission in Darfur based in El-Fasher and the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei based in Abyei town. The integration followed the “two feet out” model where the Humanitarian Coordinator and OCHA maintained complete independence from the mission structures. However, the peacekeeping missions have a key role in protecting civilians, ensuring security for aid operations in the regions in which they operate and facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance.
7. Comments provided by OCHA are incorporated in italics.

## **II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY**

8. The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of OCHA governance, risk management and control processes over the operations of its country office in Sudan.

9. This audit was included in the 2016 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the risk that management of staff and other resources allocated to the OCHA country office in Sudan may not be in compliance with United Nations Regulations and Rules and agreements with the host country and local service providers.

10. OIOS conducted this audit from June to September 2016 in Khartoum and New York. The audit covered the period from January 2014 to June 2016. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risks in: (i) host country relations; (ii) implementation of management goals within the 2014-2016 work plans for the country office in Sudan; and (iii) management of staff and other resources allocated to the OCHA country office in Sudan. The audit methodology included: (i) interviews of key personnel, (ii) reviews of relevant documentation, and (iii) analytical reviews of data.

11. The management of pooled funds (Sudan Common Humanitarian Fund and Central Emergency Response Fund) and the inter-agency coordination architecture were excluded from the scope of the audit because they were included in a recently completed audit conducted by the United Nations Board of Auditors.

## **III. OVERALL CONCLUSION**

12. The operations of the country office in Sudan were generally effectively managed. Controls over protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) were adequately designed and the United Nations Procurement Division was in the process of establishing a contract for mobile phone services, which had previously been procured without a contract. However, OCHA needed to remain engaged with the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) to improve relations with host country authorities. OCHA also needed to provide additional field guidance for the medical evacuation of staff, incorporating lessons learned from recent incidents in Sudan. In addition, OCHA Sudan needed to [REDACTED] [REDACTED] expand the business continuity plan (BCP) to cover all operations in Sudan, instead of limiting them to Khartoum.

## **IV. AUDIT RESULTS**

### **A. Host country relations**

OCHA continued to be engaged in improving its relations with the host country

13. OCHA operations in Sudan were covered by an agreement between the host country and United Nations Agency A, and it outlined United Nations privileges and immunities and other legal provisions guiding the relationship between the two parties. The agreement was signed in 1978. In addition, the Government of Sudan's Humanitarian Aid Commission issued various directives governing the relationship between the government and humanitarian organizations.

14. The OCHA country office in Sudan experienced difficulties in its relationship with the host country as demonstrated by:

- (i) Long travel clearance process for travel within the country, which primarily affected international staff in sub-offices;
- (ii) Shortened residence permits of United Nations international staff in field locations, for example, to one month in Abyei and three months for El Fasher;
- (iii) Non-renewal of the OCHA Sudan Head of Office's stay permit; and
- (iv) Delays in customs clearance for imported equipment.

15. Similar challenges were faced by other United Nations agencies and international humanitarian organizations operating in Sudan. Consequently, the efficiency and effectiveness of programme implementation was adversely affected by, for example, delays in approval of the 2016 HRP. This was partially mitigated through mapping of 2016 needs to the 2015 HRP and mobilizing resources on that basis.

16. Delays in issuance of permits also cost OCHA money in additional daily subsistence allowances for field staff who were forced to wait in Khartoum as processing time took up to three weeks, instead of the standard three days. Between October 2015 and July 2016, staff spent a total of 115 days in Khartoum waiting for permits to be processed, costing OCHA more than \$25,000 in daily subsistence allowances. The average wait time was 19 days per case.

17. OCHA, in collaboration with the Humanitarian Coordinator and the United Nations Country Team, has adopted various initiatives in an effort to manage and improve relations with host country authorities and enhance implementation of its mandate. The initiatives have included: (i) strengthening the evidence base of its advocacy; (ii) engaging more systematically with non-humanitarian arms of government such as national security to explain OCHA mandate; and (iii) strengthening cooperation with other key United Nations agencies in order to develop a common approach to improving relations with the government.

18. As a result of the sustained diplomatic efforts that management is undertaking, OIOS made no recommendation on this issue at this time.

## **B. Implementation of management goals**

### Key performance targets were partially achieved

19. The OCHA Sudan country office results framework for 2015, which was tied to the strategic plan and work plan, had a total of 36 key performance indicators based on the OCHA standard set of performance indicators. Thirty of these indicators were related to strategic objectives while six were tied to management objectives.

20. Of the management objectives in 2015, one was not measured because it was linked to a core curriculum that had not yet been rolled out by OCHA headquarters, while three were not achieved. For example, [REDACTED]. Also, no BCP simulations were conducted. These issues are dealt with below.

BCP needed to be expanded to cover all OCHA operations in Sudan

21. Within the framework of the United Nations Organizational Resilience Management System, OCHA country offices are expected to prepare BCPs to maintain the continuity of critical functions in emergencies or other disruptive events, while ensuring the health, safety and security of staff and protecting assets.

22. The OCHA Sudan BCP took into account country Programme Criticality Assessments [REDACTED]. However, it was focused on OCHA's Khartoum office only, whereas there are higher risks of disruptive events occurring in field offices, including Darfur, South Khordofan and Blue Nile states. This was because the country office adopted a piecemeal rather than comprehensive approach to business continuity planning, and in the process did not give priority to higher risk areas. In addition, no simulations were conducted to test the BCP, which could compromise the country office's readiness to respond to critical events. Consequently, the effectiveness of the BCP remains uncertain in the event of an emergency or a disruptive event.

**(1) The OCHA country office in Sudan should expand the business continuity plan to cover OCHA sub-offices in high risk areas, giving consideration to all relevant [REDACTED] programme criticality assessments.**

*OCHA accepted recommendation 1 and stated that the expanded BCP was in the final stages of being drafted, after which it would be sent to headquarters for approval. Recommendation 1 remains open pending receipt of a BCP covering all OCHA operations in Sudan.*

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

## C. Management of staff and other resources

### There were challenges with emergency evacuation of a staff member

25. The administrative instruction on medical evacuation (ST/AI/2000/10) governs the medical evacuation of internationally recruited staff in field missions.

26. A key security incident occurred in 2015 that required an OCHA staff member to be medically evacuated from Khartoum to Kenya on the eve of an official holiday. The incident exposed some weaknesses in the implementation of emergency medical evacuation procedures, particularly in a cash based operating environment like Sudan. While representatives of DSS and the Medical Services Division were present to support the evacuation process, a national staff member had to contribute a significant amount of personal cash to allow his colleague to be evacuated through a commercial airline. The injured staff member also travelled without an escort to Nairobi.

27. The OCHA Sudan office conducted a review of the incident and identified lessons learned, which included reinforcing security awareness for staff in the office. Two of the lessons however required action from OCHA headquarters, but had not yet been implemented as of the audit date. These were: (i) a request by the OCHA Sudan country office for the approval of an emergency cash reserve; and (ii) additional clarity to OCHA field offices on the management of emergency medical evacuations. OCHA indicated that an updated section of the Field Administration Manual would address medical evacuations and provide links to additional guidance. In addition, periodic guidance and briefing sessions on medical evacuation procedures would be provided to all country offices to increase awareness.

**(3) OCHA should take action to expedite the development of additional field guidance for emergency medical evacuation of staff, incorporating lessons learned from the security incident involving an OCHA Sudan staff member.**

*OCHA accepted recommendation 3 and stated that guidance had been drafted and was being reviewed within the Administrative Services Branch for final clearance and OCHA-wide promulgation. Recommendation 3 remains open pending issuance of updated guidance to the field on emergency medical evacuation.*

### Controls over PSEA were adequately designed

28. According to the 2013 bulletin of the Secretary-General on PSEA, heads of departments, offices or missions are responsible for creating and maintaining an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and abuse. Additional guidance was provided in the OCHA standard operating procedures on PSEA.

29. The head of the OCHA country office in Sudan as the PSEA focal point, led the implementation of the OCHA PSEA programme that was aligned with the HCT Protection and Gender Strategies. An interim Gender Task Force had been in place since April 2016 to support the HCT in implementing its gender strategy. Its work plan included capacity building activities both in Khartoum and the field. PSEA controls centered around: (i) accountability to local populations; (ii) prevention, particularly through awareness raising; and (iii) response systems. While there were delays in implementing some awareness raising activities within OCHA due to the sudden departure of the Head of Office, plans were in place to reschedule the training of staff.

30. OIOS concluded that controls for PSEA were adequately designed. The operational effectiveness of these controls will be assessed in future audits.



Mobile phone services were procured without a contract

31. United Nations Financial Regulations and Rules require that acquisitions exceeding \$4,000 be supported by a valid contract.

32. Among its procurement activities, the OCHA country office in Sudan acquired mobile phone services at approximately \$39,000 per annum from a commercial provider without a contract. There had been no contract since OCHA operations began in Sudan. In November 2015, OCHA Sudan submitted a request to the Administrative Services Branch to sole source the services from the current vendor. However, a requisition was subsequently submitted to the United Nations Procurement Division, which initiated a formal procurement process for the service and had issued a request for proposals as of the audit date.

33. As the Procurement Division was in the process of establishing a contract for mobile phone services, OIOS made no recommendation on this issue at this time.

The OCHA country office in Sudan had a low vacancy rate

34. A key objective in the OCHA management plan 2014-2017 is to ensure that OCHA is staffed with the right people at the right time, in part through reducing its field vacancy rate.

35. As of the audit date, 5 out of 129 approved posts in OCHA Sudan were vacant, representing a low vacancy rate of 4 per cent. However, three out of the five vacancies were at the P-4 level and above, representing a vacancy rate of 25 per cent at that level. The Head of Office post, at the D-1 level, became vacant in June 2016 after the Government of Sudan declined to renew the incumbent's stay permit, while the Darfur Coordinator position, at the P-5 level, became vacant in July 2016 after the incumbent separated from OCHA. At the time of the audit, OCHA had initiated steps to fill these two positions. On the other hand, the P-4 Administration and Finance Officer position had been vacant since December 2015. Interviews with management indicated that an initial attempt to fill the vacancy was unsuccessful as the top three candidates rejected the offer. Consequently, between January and June 2016, the post was filled twice with staff on temporary surge assignments from Geneva and New York. However, as of July 2016, OCHA had re-advertised the post as a temporary job opening.

36. Based on the actions taken by the OCHA country office in Sudan, OIOS did not make a recommendation on this matter at this time.

## **V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

37. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of OCHA for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

(Signed) Eleanor T. Burns  
Director, Internal Audit Division  
Office of Internal Oversight Services

## STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

## Audit of the operations of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Sudan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical <sup>1</sup> / Important <sup>2</sup>	C/ O <sup>3</sup>	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date <sup>4</sup>
1.	The OCHA country office in Sudan should expand the business continuity plan to cover OCHA sub-offices in high risk areas, giving consideration to all relevant security risk assessments and programme criticality assessments.	Important	O	Submission of a completed BCP covering all OCHA operations in Sudan.	30 September 2017
3.	OCHA should take action to expedite the development of additional field guidance for emergency medical evacuation of staff, incorporating lessons learned from the security incident involving an OCHA Sudan staff member.	Important	O	Issuance of updated guidance to the field on emergency medical evacuation.	31 March 2017

<sup>1</sup> Critical recommendations address critical and/or pervasive deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance cannot be provided with regard to the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

<sup>2</sup> Important recommendations address important (but not critical or pervasive) deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance may be at risk regarding the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

<sup>3</sup> C = closed, O = open

<sup>4</sup> Date provided by OCHA in response to recommendations.

# **APPENDIX I**

## **Management Response**

**United Nations**  **Nations Unies**  
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM      MEMORANDUM INTERIEUR

TO: Ms. Muriette Lawrence-Hume, Chief,      DATE: 14 December 2016  
A: New York Audit Service,  
Internal Audit Division, OIOS

THROUGH:  
S/C DE:

FROM: Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for  
DE: Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief  
Coordinator

SUBJECT: **Response to the draft report on an audit of the**  
OBJET: **operations of the Office for the Coordination of**  
**Humanitarian Affairs in Sudan**

1. In response to your memorandum dated 16 November 2016, I am enclosing herewith OCHA's action plan that includes the requested target dates and the titles of the individuals responsible for implementing the recommendations in Appendix I.
2. OCHA noted that the report does not capture a number of administrative challenges faced by the field office relating to the introduction of Umoja during the period under review.
3. Issues with Umoja were catalogued by the office, including significant delays in:
  - (i) approval of purchase orders, including for UNHAS flights which impacted availability of transport, and for a generator for the El Fasher office;
  - (ii) payment of staff entitlements - e.g. assignment grant, education grant, R&R, and staff salary;
  - (iii) processing of mission travel.
4. The Office in Sudan has noted with grave concern that these issues have negatively impacted the operations on the ground towards the implementation of the humanitarian mandate.
5. Thank you for your attention.

cc: B. Jones

## Management Response

## Audit of the operations of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Sudan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical <sup>5</sup> / Important <sup>6</sup>	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1.	The OCHA country office in Sudan should expand the business continuity plan to cover OCHA sub-offices in high risk areas, giving consideration to all relevant security risk assessments and programme criticality assessments.	Important	Yes	Head of Office	Q3 2017	Drafting of the expanded business continuity plan is in the final stages, after which it will be sent to HQ for approval.
3.	OCHA should take action to expedite the development of additional field guidance for emergency medical evacuation of staff, incorporating lessons learned from the security incident involving an OCHA Sudan staff member.	Important	Yes	Executive Officer	Q1 2017	Guidance has been drafted and is being reviewed within the Administrative Services Branch for final clearance and OCHA wide promulgation.

<sup>5</sup> Critical recommendations address critical and/or pervasive deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance cannot be provided with regard to the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

<sup>6</sup> Important recommendations address important (but not critical or pervasive) deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance may be at risk regarding the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.