



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2018/131

Audit of public information in the United Nations Support Office in Somalia and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia

**There was a need for both entities to
improve the formulation of their public
information strategies and adequately
evaluate the impact of their public
information activities**

**13 December 2018
Assignment No. AP2017/638/04**

Audit of public information in the United Nations Support Office in Somalia and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of public information in the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM). The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of public information activities in UNSOS and UNSOM. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2016 to 30 June 2018 and included strategy and coordination, archiving public information outputs, performance management and impact assessment, and contract management.

UNSOS and UNSOM developed their respective public information strategies and plans, and actively managed the contractor's performance to produce television and radio programmes and manage social media operations. However, there was a need for both entities to improve the formulation of their public information strategies and adequately evaluate the impact of their public information activities.

OIOS made five recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, UNSOS and UNSOM needed to:

- Improve the formulation of their public information strategies and implementation plans to include all necessary elements such as resource requirements, indicators of achievement, as well as improve their analysis of target audiences to be reached and public information platforms to be used taking into consideration the security restrictions;
- Develop a common public information strategy with the African Union Mission in Somalia and the United Nations Country Team to bring synergies and efficient use of resources, and improve public information coordination efforts;
- In developing their results-based budget performance reports for their public information programmes, clearly identify public information activities to be conducted, related outputs, expected results and performance indicators to measure effectiveness;
- Evaluate their public information activities to assess their impact and to be able to identify measures that need to be implemented to improve activities going forward; and
- Assign archiving responsibilities to public information officers and train them on archiving and records management.

UNSOS and UNSOM accepted the recommendations and have initiated action to implement them.

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Audit of public information in the United Nations Support Office in Somalia and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of public information in the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM).
2. The Departments of Public Information, Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support policy on Strategic Communications and Public Information (the public information policy) and the Operational Policy and Guidance for Public Information in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (the operational policy) govern the public information activities in UNSOS and UNSOM.
3. The Information Support Management Section (ISMS) in UNSOS and the Strategic Communications and Public Affairs Group in UNSOM, in collaboration with the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), are responsible for carrying out public information activities for the United Nations operation in Somalia. A contractor provided support services which included: holding press conferences; monitoring media; conducting research and analysis; producing multimedia products such as radio and television programmes and distributing them to be broadcasted over paid local radio and television stations; and managing social media operations. The 4-year contract, covering the period from September 2014 to September 2018, had a total Not-to-Exceed amount of \$39 million including fees paid to television and radio stations.
4. ISMS was headed by a Chief at the P-5 level and as at 31 December 2017 had seven authorized posts comprising five internationals and two nationals. The Strategic Communications and Public Affairs Group in UNSOM was headed by a Director at the D-1 level and had 11 authorized posts comprising five internationals and six nationals.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

5. The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of public information activities in UNSOS and UNSOM.
6. This audit was included in the 2018 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to operational risks related to the management of public information activities in UNSOS and UNSOM.
7. OIOS conducted this audit from January to September 2018. The audit covered UNSOS and UNSOM public information activities for the period from 1 January 2016 to 30 June 2018. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risk areas, including strategy and coordination, archiving public information outputs, performance management and impact assessment, and contract management.
8. The audit methodology included interviews of key personnel, reviews of relevant documentation, and analytical reviews of data.
9. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Strategy and coordination

Formulation of the communications and public information strategies and plans needed to be improved

10. UNSOS and UNSOM are required to develop communications strategies and implementation plans to inform the public about their mandated activities. The communications strategies and plans should include identification of the target audiences to be reached and platforms to be used, including radio, television, social media, web dissemination and outreach activities.

11. UNSOS and UNSOM had developed respective communications strategies and implementation plans and included a brief description of the target audiences of the information products such as the local population, Somalis in the diaspora, government officials, troop/police contributing countries, donors and international community. The strategies and plans were closely aligned to mandated activities such as support to broad-based and representative Government institutions; strengthening the security sector, as well as the justice and correction institutions; and establishing effective human rights institutions at regional and national levels. In addition, the two entities conducted surveys of citizens' perceptions of peace and stabilisation initiatives in Somalia and incorporated the survey results when developing their communications strategies and plans. However, the strategies and plans neither indicated resource requirements necessary for their implementation nor indicators of achievements.

12. The strategies and plans were not always supported by sufficient analysis. For example, there was insufficient details of target audiences to identify their characteristics, and the types of communication channels each audience group have access to. For instance, the strategies and plans recognised¹ that radio and television were the most effective media platforms for disseminating information in Somalia. However, 7 out of 12 million (58 per cent) Somalis are nomadic, rural, or internally displaced people, and television is limited to urban areas, and radio stations contracted to broadcast UNSOM programmes were in 8 out of 18 regions (44 per cent) in Somalia. This meant that a significant percentage of people who live in nomadic and rural areas have limited or no access to television and radio.

13. The above resulted due to the security situation and resources constraints which left gaps in the development and implementation stages of the strategies and their implementation plans. As a result, there is an increased risk that the public information components' strategies and implementation plans would not be effective in supporting the mandate implementation of UNSOS and UNSOM.

(1) UNSOS and UNSOM should improve the formulation of their public information strategies and implementation plans to include all necessary elements such as resource requirements, indicators of achievement, as well as improve their analysis of target audiences to be reached and public information platforms to be used taking into consideration the security restrictions.

UNSOS and UNSOM accepted recommendation 1 and stated that management has since 2015 convened annual planning workshops to develop communication strategies aligned to evolving mandates, annual work plans and key performance indicators together with allocation of resources and analyses of target audience that were followed up with internal consultation with stakeholders. Management will submit revised public information strategies and implementation plans by February 2019. Recommendation 1 remains open pending receipt of revised public information

¹ Somalia Media Landscape report 2017

strategies and implementation plans that include all necessary elements and improved analysis of target audiences and public information platforms.

Need to improve public information coordination efforts in Somalia

14. To ensure regular consultation to determine public information priorities and tasks and speak with one voice, UNSOS and UNSOM should coordinate effectively. Further, the two entities should collaborate with AMISOM and the United Nations Communications Group which comprised public information units from the United Nations agencies.

15. UNSOS and UNSOM established several coordination mechanisms to ensure synergies in their communication efforts and alignment with those of other stakeholders in Somalia. These included weekly information coordination meetings, monthly performance review meetings and annual planning meetings that were also attended by AMISOM and the contractor.

16. However, these mechanisms were mostly for information sharing and were not used to formulate common public information messages and pool scarce resources to maximize synergy with AMISOM and the United Nations Communications Group. Although these entities have separate mandates, the primarily objective is to restore peace and security in Somalia and the goals of their strategic communications to support mandated activities were the same.

17. Additionally, the United Nations Communications Group was not functioning during the audit period. The Strategic Communications and Public Affairs Group in UNSOM, from August 2018, started actions to institute regular monthly meetings of the United Nations Communications Group.

18. The above was because there was no common public information strategy, where each entity takes the lead on agreed strategic communication and public information activities, with AMISOM and the United Nations Country Team. As a result, there was insufficient assurance that public information activities adequately considered key messages of all public information stakeholders in Somalia in a harmonized manner and resources were used in the most efficient and economical manner.

(2) UNSOS and UNSOM should develop a common public information strategy with the African Union Mission in Somalia and the United Nations Country Team to bring synergies and efficient use of resources, and improve public information coordination efforts.

UNSOS and UNSOM accepted recommendation 2 and stated that they will facilitate the development of a common public information strategy through planning meetings, project review meetings and participation in the United Nations Communication Group. At the 2019 annual planning workshop, management will avoid duplication of efforts and facilitate efficient use resources in areas of common interest wherever possible. However, the United Nations Country Team traditionally prefers separate messaging because of their humanitarian mandate and a common strategy will be feasible in areas of common interest. Recommendation 2 remains open pending receipt of a common public information strategy with AMISOM and where appropriate, with the United Nations Country Team.

B. Performance management and impact assessment

Need to develop appropriate indicators and implement monitoring mechanisms for the effective implementation of public information activities

19. UNSOS and UNSOM are required to prepare results-based public information programme budgets using a mechanism that links public information programme activities to resources requirements, outputs, expected results and related objectives. UNSOS and UNSOM are also required to establish performance indicators to measure the progress of the programme in reaching its expected results.

20. While UNSOS results-based public information programme budget for the fiscal years 2016/17 and 2017/18 included the provision of administration services for implementation of the AMISOM, UNSOM and UNSOS strategic communications programme as an output, there were no detailed specific planned outputs, and therefore the expected results and related performance indicators were also absent. Similarly, UNSOM budgets for 2017 and 2018 included activities such as: (a) the development of a communications campaign in support of the 2016/17 electoral process in Somalia; (b) the production of radio programmes on topics central to the UNSOM mandate; and (c) conducting training/workshops for stakeholders on how to address the root causes of radicalisation. However, as with UNSOS, these budgets did not specify the target outputs, expected results and related indicators of achievements. This mainly resulted as both UNSOS and UNSOM had not developed comprehensive public information strategies and plans, incorporating appropriate indicators as described in Part A above. As a result, UNSOS and UNSOM were unable to effectively measure whether they were using their resources efficiently and monitor the progress made to desired changes and outcomes.

(3) UNSOS and UNSOM should, in developing their results-based budget performance reports for their public information programmes, clearly identify public information activities to be conducted, related outputs, expected results and performance indicators to measure effectiveness.

UNSOS and UNSOM accepted recommendation 3 and stated they will improve their budget formulation and performance tracking by linking public information activities and outputs to expected accomplishments and ensure its effectiveness are measured by using performance indicators in the 2019/20 budget cycle. Recommendation 3 remains open pending receipt of results-based budget performance report, which clearly identify public information activities, related outputs, expected results and performance indicators to measure effectiveness.

Need to evaluate the impact of public information activities

21. The public information policy on strategic communications and public information requires UNSOS and UNSOM to evaluate the impact of their communications and use results of the evaluations and audience engagement to review and enhance their programmes and products.

22. UNSOS and UNSOM had, through the contractor, evaluated the impact of some of their public information activities. They also reviewed and analysed visits to social media and web platforms. In addition, UNSOS hired a consultant to assess the coverage of some of the public information activities where there was access to target audiences. However, this was not sufficiently comprehensive to evaluate the impact of their public activities, as the consultant covered social media and web platforms but not the outreach activities, television and radio programmes. The survey also covered 8 out of 18 (44 per cent) regions in Somalia. In addition, UNSOS did not verify the reliability and accuracy of the primary data collected for the survey.

23. This was because of the security situation to access target audiences and budgetary constraints, and also as UNSOS and UNSOM had not prioritized the development of an action plan to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of public information activities. As a result, UNSOS and UNSOM could not demonstrate how effective the overall public information activities was in supporting the implementation of mandated activities.

(4) UNSOS and UNSOM should evaluate their public information activities to assess their impact and to be able to identify measures that need to be implemented to improve activities going forward.

UNSOS and UNSOM accepted recommendation 4 and stated they will introduce on-going project assessment through the introduction of a dedicated monitoring and evaluation service for all public information activities. Recommendation 4 remains open pending receipt of evidence of an evaluation of the public information activities conducted assessing their impact and identifying areas of improvement.

C. Archiving of public information outputs

Need to implement archiving procedures

24. The public information policy requires UNSOS and UNSOM to archive public information materials throughout the life of the entities. The public information policy also states that third-party social media channels, such as YouTube, are not adequate platforms for archiving United Nations materials. In addition, the operational policy requires UNSOS and UNSOM to maintain a fully catalogued public information product including video, publications, and photography.

25. UNSOS and UNSOM did not have an effective system in place to systematically archive public information materials. As a result, there was no catalogue for public information products, and because there was inadequate backup of public information data, considerable data was lost after the file storage server they used crashed in November 2017. Additionally, there was a risk that other information was lost, as individual third-party contractor staff were maintaining public information products and documents on their computers or external hard drives, and public information materials were stored in public platforms such as YouTube, Vimeo, and SoundCloud.

26. The above resulted as UNSOS and UNSOM did not assign archiving responsibilities to public information officers or provide the necessary training on properly archiving public information products. As a result, UNSOS and UNSOM did not have a complete repository of all their public information outputs to preserve materials that document the history of the entities and provide easy access for future reference.

(5) UNSOS should assign archiving responsibilities to public information officers and train them on archiving and records management.

UNSOS and UNSOM accepted recommendation 5 and stated that management will ensure that terms of reference of public information staff will include archiving responsibilities and that staff will be trained to systematically archive public information materials. Recommendation 5 remains open pending receipt of evidence of archiving responsibilities assigned to public information officers and relevant training provided to them.

D. Contract management

UNSOS and UNSOM actively managed the contractors' performance

27. As stated in paragraph 3 above, UNSOS and UNSOM outsourced public information activities to a contractor. For this process to be effective, UNSOS is required to ensure the contract terms clearly indicate the contractor's obligations and output targets to monitor and assess its performance. Task orders issued also needed to provide clear instructions of the work to be completed.

28. The contract established output targets, which the contractor had to deliver. UNSOS and UNSOM also developed standard operating procedures on tasking the contractor; but these procedures were out of date and did not sufficiently identify the roles and responsibilities of the contractor and ISMS staff. UNSOS and UNSOM were aware of this, and were taking steps to correct and implement them with the signing of a new contract in early 2019.

29. OIOS noted that UNSOS and UNSOM also held monthly contractor performance review meetings and assessed the contractor's performance against agreed deliverables within established timelines, such as press conferences held, outreach activities conducted, and radio and television programmes produced. ISMS conducted four vendor's performance evaluations from the July 2016 to June 2018, and the vendor performance was generally rated as satisfactory except the period from July to December 2016. This was due to delays in programme delivery and the use of personnel without the required qualifications. This was corrected in the subsequent performance period. Also, the contractor carried out 134 out of 713 (19 per cent) planned minutes for radio discussion programmes. However, improvements were made in 2018 as 844 minutes for radio discussion programmes were utilized compared to 713 planned (118 per cent) as at 1 November 2018. In addition, ISMS certified payments for the contractor's invoices only based on pre-approved task orders and satisfactory completion of the tasks.

30. Based on these actions taken, OIOS did not make a recommendation on the management of the contractor's performance.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

31. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of UNSOS and UNSOM 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 public information in the United Nations Support Office in Somalia and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ² / Important ³	C/ O ⁴	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁵
1	UNSOS and UNSOM should improve the formulation of their public information strategies and implementation plans to include all necessary elements such as resource requirements, indicators of achievement, as well as improve their analysis of target audiences to be reached and public information platforms to be used taking into consideration the security restrictions.	Important	O	Receipt of revised public information strategies and implementation plans that include all necessary elements and improved analysis of target audiences and public information platforms.	1 February 2019
2	UNSOS and UNSOM should develop a common public information strategy with the African Union Mission in Somalia and the United Nations Country Team to bring synergies and efficient use of resources, and improve public information coordination efforts.	Important	O	Receipt of a common public information strategy with AMISOM and where appropriate, with the United Nations Country Team.	1 February 2019
3	UNSOS and UNSOM should, in developing their results-based budget performance reports for their public information programmes, clearly identify public information activities to be conducted, related outputs, expected results and performance indicators to measure effectiveness.	Important	O	Receipt of results-based budget performance report, which clearly identify public information activities, related outputs, expected results and performance indicators to measure effectiveness.	30 July 2019
4	UNSOS and UNSOM should evaluate their public information activities to assess their impact and to be able to identify measures that need to be implemented to improve activities going forward.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of an evaluation of the public information activities conducted assessing their impact and identifying areas of improvement.	30 June 2019

² 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.

³ 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.

⁴ C = closed, O = open

⁵ Date provided by UNSOS and UNSOM in response to recommendations.

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of public information in the United Nations Support Office in Somalia and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ² / Important ³	C/ O ⁴	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁵
5	UNSOS should assign archiving responsibilities to public information officers and train them on archiving and records management.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of archiving responsibilities assigned to public information officers and relevant training provided to them.	31 December 2019

APPENDIX I

Management Response



Interoffice Memorandum

To: Mr. Daeyoung Park, Chief
Peacekeeping Audit Service
Internal Audit Division, OIOS

Ref: UNSOS/1218/M.077

From: *for* Amadu Kamara, Director
UNSO 

Date: 10 December 2018

Subject: UNSO and UNSOM Response – Draft report on an audit of public information in UNSO and UNSOM (Assignment No. AP2017/638/04)

1. Further to your memorandum of 4 December 2018, reference OIOS-2017/638/04, please find attached the UNSO and UNSOM response to the above-mentioned subject.
2. We thank you for your continued support to the work of UNSOM and UNSO.

Best regards.

cc: Ms. Cynthia Avena-Castillo, Professional Practices Section, Internal Audit Division, OIOS
Mr. Abdinasir Issa, Acting Chief Resident Auditor, UNSO, Internal Audit Division, OIOS
Ms. Hedwig Maex, Chief of Staff, UNSOM
Mr. Ari Gaitanis, Acting Director, Strategic Communications and Public Affairs Group, UNSOM
Ms. Anne Bwomezi, Chief, Information Support Management Section, UNSO
Mr. Dolapo Kuteyi, Senior Administrative Officer, UNSO
Ms. Rosalie Piezas, Risk Management & Compliance Officer, UNSO



AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of public information in the United Nations Support Office in Somalia and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	UNSOS and UNSOM should improve the formulation of their public information strategies and implementation plans to include all necessary elements such as resource requirements, indicators of achievement, as well as improve their analysis of target audiences to be reached and public information platforms to be used taking into consideration the security restrictions.	Important	Yes	Chief, Information Support Management Section (ISMS), UNSOS Chief of Service, Strategic Communications and Public Affairs Group (SCPAG), UNSOM	1 February 2019	Management has convened annual planning workshops since 2015 which are followed up by internal consultations with all stakeholders. The agenda of the workshops include the alignment of communication strategies to evolving mandates, development of annual work plans, resource allocation, key performance indicators and target audiences. Management will submit the revised public information strategies and implementation plans by February 2019.
2	UNSOS and UNSOM should develop a common public information strategy with the African Union Mission in Somalia and the United Nations Country	Important	Yes	Chief, ISMS, UNSOS Chief of Service, SCPAG, UNSOM	Planning Meetings 1 February 2019	a. UNSOS and UNSOM will facilitate the development of a common public information strategy through engaging United

¹ 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.

² 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.

AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of public information in the United Nations Support Office in Somalia and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia

	Team to bring synergies and efficient use of resources, and improve public information coordination efforts.				<p>Weekly Information Coordination Meetings with the African Union Mission in Somalia (On-going)</p> <p>Monthly United Nations Communications Group Meetings (On-going)</p>	<p>Nations Country Team and AMISOM counterparts in planning meetings, Project Review Meetings, and United Nations Communication Group.</p> <p>b. At the 2019 annual planning workshop, Management will avoid duplication of efforts and facilitate efficient use of resources by highlighting areas of common interest.</p> <p>Management would like the auditors to note that <i>the United Nations Country Team traditionally prefers separate messaging from UNSOM and AMISOM because of their humanitarian mandate. A common Public Information strategy for all partners is only feasible in limited areas where they all have common objectives.</i></p>
3	UNSOS and UNSOM should, in developing their results-based budget performance reports for their public information programmes, clearly identify public information activities to	Important	Yes	<p>Chief, ISMS, UNSOS</p> <p>Chief of Service, SCPAG, UNSOM</p>	30 July 2019	Management will improve budget formulation and performance tracking by linking public information activities (tasks) and outputs

AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of public information in the United Nations Support Office in Somalia and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia

	be conducted, related outputs, expected results and performance indicators to measure effectiveness.					to expected accomplishments. Using performance indicators, Management will ensure its effectiveness are measured in the 2019-2020 budget cycle.
4	UNSOS and UNSOM should evaluate its public information activities to assess their impact and to be able to identify measures that need to be implemented to improve activities going forward.	Important	Yes	Chief, ISMS, UNSOS	June 2019	Management will introduce on-going project assessments with a dedicated monitoring and evaluation service for all UNSOM and UNSOS public information activities.
5	UNSOS should assign archiving responsibilities to public information officers and train them on archiving and records management.	Important	Yes	Chief, ISMS, UNSOS	Terms of Reference July 2019 Training December 2019	Management will ensure Public Information staff Terms of Reference include archiving responsibilities and that they are trained to systematically archive public information materials.