



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2022/064

Audit of communications and public information programme in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

UNMISS needed to update its communication and digital media strategy, improve audience engagement on digital media platforms, expand the geographical coverage of Radio Miraya and outreach activities, and conduct a comprehensive evaluation of programme activities

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Audit of communications and public information programme in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of communications and public information programme in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS). The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the communications and public information programme in supporting the implementation of the UNMISS mandate. The audit covered the period from July 2020 to April 2022 and included a review of areas related to the communication strategy, production and dissemination of public information, and programme impact evaluation.

Through Radio Miraya, digital media platforms and outreach campaign activities, UNMISS reached out to the South Sudanese with key mandate messages on inclusive and accountable governance, respect for human rights, and equal and meaningful political participation. By ensuring active participation of the Communications and Public Information Section in various management and information-sharing meetings with other Mission components and United Nations Country Team members, UNMISS also managed risks related to possible information gaps or contradictions. In addition, UNMISS conducted various capacity-building activities for staff and local journalists to improve their ability to produce and disseminate impartial, fair, and objective communication products in advance of elections.

However, UNMISS needed to update its communication and digital media strategy to align it with the Mission's 2021-2024 strategic vision and the recent Security Council resolution 2567 of March 2021 on the Mission's mandate. To strengthen the effectiveness of its strategic communication activities, UNMISS also needed to improve audience engagement on digital media platforms, expand the geographical coverage of Radio Miraya and outreach activities, implement recommendations of the Radio Miraya review, and conduct a comprehensive evaluation of programme activities, including media relations, multimedia and outreach.

OIOS made 12 recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, UNMISS needed to:

- Update the communication strategy to align it to the Mission's 2021-2024 strategic vision, develop appropriate key performance indicators to facilitate measurement of progress, and ensure that the strategy is approved by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General;
- Align expected communication and public information outputs in the results-based budgets and section work plans and develop an implementation, monitoring and reporting mechanism that is supported by a portfolio of evidence;
- Compile and utilize social media platform statistics to improve digital media audience reach and engagement, update its digital media strategy and ensure videos and photos are saved in secured searchable libraries;
- Track relevant content generated by the military component for publication on the Mission's digital platforms;
- Deploy technical staff to ensure radio transmitters in communities impacted by inter-communal violence are installed and regularly maintained;
- Resume airing of substantive programmes that were suspended at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure substantive programmes are aired live, or repeated during prime listening

times for a wider reach, and develop programme concept notes to guide staff in producing distinctive and impactful substantive radio programmes;

- Strengthen the implementation of outreach and campaign activities, and implement measures to ensure concept notes and after-action reports are systematically prepared and centrally maintained;
- Address delays in processing vendor payments; and
- Address issues and recommendations raised in the annual perception surveys and the review of Radio Miraya and prioritize resources to evaluate other programme activities including media relations, multimedia and outreach activities.

UNMISS accepted all recommendations and has initiated action to implement them. Actions required to close the recommendations are indicated in Annex I.

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Audit of communications and public information programme in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of communications and public information programme in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS).
2. The Communications and Public Information Section (CPIS) is responsible for developing and delivering the Mission's communication strategy, which aims to foster political and public support for implementing the Mission's mandate. The military and police components have public information officers that work closely with CPIS to implement the communication strategy. CPIS headquarters is in Juba, with regional offices in the nine field office locations. The Section has four units, including spokesperson and media relations, Radio Miraya, outreach and multi-media. It is headed by a Director at the D-1 level who reports to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG).
3. CPIS has 108 authorized staffing posts comprising 21 international staff, 15 United Nations volunteers and 72 national staff. UNMISS budgets for communications and public information for 2020/21 and 2021/22 were \$1.5 million and \$1.2 million, respectively, while the actual expenditures were \$1.1 million in both years.
4. Comments provided by UNMISS are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

5. The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the communications and public information programme in supporting the implementation of the UNMISS mandate.
6. This audit was included in the 2022 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the programme's critical role in fostering political and public support for the effective implementation of the Mission's mandate.
7. OIOS conducted this audit from April to June 2022 and covered the period from July 2020 to April 2022. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered high and medium risk areas in the communications and public information programme, which included communication strategy, production and dissemination of public information, and programme impact evaluation.
8. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key personnel; (b) reviews of relevant documentation; (c) analysis of the website and social media engagement data; (d) a random sample of 30 of 101 outreach and campaign activities, and (e) review of publications related to 30 of 217 randomly selected civil-military coordination activities.
9. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Communication strategy

Need to update and approve the communication strategy

10. To ensure coherent and consistent strategic communications in support of the Mission's mandated activities, CPIS developed a draft communication strategy in January 2018. The strategy outlined the communication objectives, target audiences, essential programme implementation tasks, performance indicators, programme risks and related mitigation measures. However, the strategy had not been approved by the SRSG and did not include overview narratives on the Mission's context, the communication media or tools to be used to reach identified audiences and roles and responsibilities of the substantive, police and military components in advancing public support for the Mission's activities. In addition, the key performance indicators were not properly defined to facilitate the measurement of progress. For instance, one of the measurement criteria was to track and analyze story outputs and their impact across all platforms; however, there was no specific target or indication of how the impact would be assessed.

11. The strategy was not updated and aligned with the Mission's 2021-2024 strategic vision and the recent Security Council resolution 2567 of March 2021 on the Mission's mandate. As a result, it did not address key priority areas of the Mission, including the support to inclusive and accountable governance and facilitating the conduct of free, fair and peaceful elections in accordance with the revitalized peace agreement on the resolution of the conflict in South Sudan.

Need to strengthen the work planning process and performance monitoring

12. Despite the outdated communication strategy, CPIS developed annual work plans and results-based budgets to guide its activities. It updated the 2021/22 work plan in November 2021 to align with the Mission's strategic vision of July 2021 and the Mission's revised mandate of March 2021. However, planned outputs in the work plan were not always consistent with those reflected in the results-based budget, as shown in table 1. This discrepancy created confusion amongst some staff members regarding their respective Unit's responsibilities for outputs, which could result in some activities not being implemented.

Table 1: Comparison of outputs in the 2021/22 results-based budget and section work plan

Item	Activity	Expected output as per result-based budget	Expected output as per the work plan
1	Multimedia products	435	400
2	Location to expand Radio Miraya coverage	0	5
3	Awareness/outreach activities	87	25
4	Target increase in social media followers for Facebook and Twitter	0	3,000
5	Press conferences	6	0
6	Publish or re-publish two stories in local newspapers or websites	0	312
7	Broadcast 40 one-hour humanitarian perspectives to promote the work of UN Agencies, Funds, and programmes	0	40
8	Broadcast 40 one-hour crime watch show	0	40

13. CPIS did not maintain the relevant portfolio of evidence to support programme activities and prepare status reports on work plan implementation. As a result, OIOS could not validate the accuracy of outputs reported by the Section in the budget performance reports. There was no evidence that the Section's performance was monitored and implementation shortfalls identified and addressed, as noted later in the report.

14. The above resulted from inadequate management oversight in ensuring effective programme planning and monitoring.

(1) UNMISS should: (a) update the communication strategy to ensure alignment with the Mission’s 2021-2024 strategic vision, and provide clarity on appropriate media/platforms and tools for targeting specific audiences and on the roles and responsibilities of Mission components; (b) develop relevant key performance indicators to facilitate measuring progress in implementing the communication strategy; and (c) ensure that the strategy is approved by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 1 and stated that the Communications and Public Information Section would hold a strategic retreat aimed at updating the existing strategy to ensure alignment with the Mission’s 2021-2024 strategic vision. The updated strategy will be approved by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and envisages providing clarification on appropriate media/platforms and tools and creating key performance indicators.

(2) UNMISS should align expected communication and public information outputs in the results-based budgets and work plans of the Communications and Public Information Section.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 2 and stated that the Communications and Public Information Section had recruited an Administrative Officer who would work closely with the Chief of the Section and the Strategic Planning Unit to incorporate the expected communication and public information outputs in the Mission’s results-based budget for 2023/24 and section work plans.

(3) UNMISS should develop a work plan implementation, monitoring and reporting mechanism supported by a portfolio of evidence to timely identify and address performance shortfalls.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 3 and stated that the Communications and Public Information Section was coordinating with the relevant sections to finalize the existing draft work plan. The plan will outline key deliverables, taking into account the monitoring and reporting mechanisms, including how performance shortfalls should be addressed.

Efforts to address the legal status of Radio Miraya have not been successful

15. Radio Miraya is a radio station owned and operated by UNMISS since 2005, the objective of which is to support the implementation of the Mission’s mandated activities through its programming. However, through the Media Authority Board, the host government does not recognize Radio Miraya as a legitimate radio station because it is not registered and licensed by the Board. As a result, Radio Miraya had not been able to use its outside broadcasting van to cover live events, and its reporters were often denied access and recognition to cover government functions, although government ministers and functionaries often appear on Radio Miraya’s programmes.

16. The Office of Legal Affairs and UNMISS have engaged the host government to recognize the legal status of Radio Miraya, on the ground that the operation of a radio is included in the status of forces agreement between the Government of South Sudan and the United Nations. The unresolved situation restricts Radio Miraya’s operations and negatively impacts the Mission’s mandate to assist the host government in voter education and the expansion of civic space by disseminating impartial, fair and objective information ahead of national elections.

17. The Mission informed OIOS that they were pursuing new avenues to resolve the matter. As the Mission was taking action to address the issue, OIOS did not make a recommendation.

B. Production and dissemination of public information

Resources could be prioritized to monitor local and community radio stations

18. To keep senior management and staff abreast of the latest developments affecting the Mission, the Media Relations Unit (MRU) monitored local and international print, digital and social media news for topics related to UNMISS and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes. In addition, MRU circulated weekday broadcasts of news summaries to all staff and prepared media analysis reports of topical issues for senior management to assess how the media and public resonated with the Mission's messages.

19. However, the Unit was not monitoring interactive radio programmes on all the 24 local and community radio stations across the Mission area. This created a gap in capturing and assessing public sentiments and security-related trends that could help in situational awareness, early warning, and forward-looking planning of intervention activities to protect civilians. CPIS explained that this was due to staffing constraints, especially in field office locations. Although monitoring the local radio stations is an important source of information, OIOS also noted that the Mission had alternative intelligence sources, including the Joint Operating Centre and Joint Mission Analysis Centre. Given the alternative sources of information that support the protection of civilian programming and intervention efforts, OIOS did not make a recommendation. Nonetheless, CPIS committed to considering prioritizing resources to ensure interactive programmes on local and community radio stations are regularly monitored.

Mechanisms for information-sharing and engaging the media were adequate

20. To effectively gather and disseminate accurate and timely information and avoid any contradictions or gaps, CPIS attended various management and information-sharing meetings. These included weekly management meetings chaired by the Head of Mission, editorial meetings with Military and Police public information officers and fortnightly United Nations Communications Group meetings with the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) members. CPIS also participated in meetings of the Mission's Crisis Management Team, Crisis Working Group and Security Management Team and held regular meetings with other sections to offer service and support as required.

21. In liaison with other Mission components, CPIS issued timely and regular press releases to local and international media houses and other stakeholders, including embassies, non-governmental organizations and the Department of Global Communications, on various aspects of the Mission's operations and initiatives. A review of all 24 press releases during the audit period and other communication with the media showed that they were cleared per UNMISS established guidelines. UNMISS also proactively engaged the local and international media by holding regular press briefings for national and international journalists; however, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the frequency of these briefings. Nevertheless, MRU effectively responded to press queries during this period.

22. OIOS concluded that UNMISS had adequate processes for information-sharing and engaging the media.

UNMISS took appropriate measures to enhance the handling of sensitive information

23. To ensure staff are aware of their responsibility not to disclose classified information that could endanger the safety and security of staff members and premises, create a contradiction, or damage the reputation of the United Nations, UNMISS promulgated various directives and guidelines. The directives and guidelines also identified persons authorized to speak on behalf of the Mission. OIOS review of 24

press releases and other UNMISS news items showed that staff complied with the communication directives and guidelines.

24. In addition, staff were required to complete two mandatory courses on information sensitivity in peacekeeping and the information security awareness foundation. Even though completion rates were 54 and 63 per cent as of February 2022, respectively, UNMISS issued periodic reminders to staff, and the Integrated Mission Training Centre sent monthly course completion statistics to managers to ensure staff compliance. Given the action taken by the Mission, OIOS did not make a recommendation.

Implementation of digital media strategy needed improvement

25. To promote a coherent and consistent Mission narrative and messages across its digital platforms, UNMISS developed a digital media strategy in 2017 that identified target audiences and objectives for five social media platforms¹. The strategy outlined performance measurement criteria, including audience reach, the extent of engagement and positive influence on the audience, and the Multimedia Unit was responsible for implementing the strategy. In line with the digital media strategy, the Multimedia Unit posted content which supported and promoted the key priority areas of the Mission, such as human rights, the protection of civilians and political and peace processes. Furthermore, UNMISS was the leading content contributor to global peacekeeping digital platforms.

26. However, there was low reach and engagement on social media platforms. For instance, only an average of 5,722 (5 per cent) of the 127,000 followers on Facebook visited the page monthly, and the Twitter account with about 45,000 followers had a monthly average of 14,419 (32 per cent) follower engagements. The Multimedia Unit did not analyze performance trends to identify areas for improvement. The Unit was unable to extract statistics of visitors to the UNMISS website, and as such, it could not get audience feedback and assess the extent of digital news reach. CPIS stated that the website had configuration issues which precluded statistics from being captured; however, a new website planned to be launched in January 2023 would address this issue. In addition, the followers of the Mission's YouTube channel could not post comments on published content for effective feedback to the Multimedia Unit. This was because the Unit staff were unable to change the account settings of the channel due to technical validation issues.

27. Although not identified as one of the approved social media platforms in the Mission's digital strategy, UNMISS had an Instagram account with 249 posts made by the Multimedia Unit between July 2020 and February 2021. The Unit has not made any posts since February 2021 because the staff were not granted access to Mission WiFi; however, this issue was resolved during the audit. There was also a need to update the digital strategy as some approved digital platforms such as Pinterest, Tumblr and Vimeo were outdated, and no posts were made on these platforms during the audit period.

28. Despite being a requirement by the United Nations Information Management Policy, there was no searchable video/photo archiving system for storing digital outputs. Digital outputs were saved on external hard drives that were kept in the multimedia office, and photos and videos generated by military, police, and field office public information officers were saved on the work laptops of staff and personnel. As a result, previous staff videos and photos were unavailable for reference. CPIS advised that a recruitment exercise for a P-3 staff responsible for archiving, graphics and technical support was ongoing at the time of the audit.

29. The above weaknesses were attributed to staffing constraints and inadequate management oversight in implementing the digital strategy. As a result, UNMISS was losing the opportunity to produce more

¹ Facebook, Twitter, YouTube/Vimeo, Tumblr, and Flickr

audience-centered digital content with higher audience reach and engagement to influence support for the Mission's operations.

(4) UNMISS should: (a) compile and utilize social media platform statistics to improve digital media audience reach and engagement to influence public support for the implementation of its mandate; and (b) update its digital media strategy to ensure it reflects approved platforms.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 4 and stated that it would develop a clear process to utilize social media statistics to enhance public outreach. Further, the Communications and Public Information Section will optimize its social media platforms and proactively conduct public outreach to inform local communities about the Mission's mandate implementation and related impact.

(5) UNMISS should implement a mechanism to ensure videos and photos are saved in secured searchable libraries.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 5 and stated that the Chief of the Communications and Public Information Section would work closely with the Multimedia Unit to develop secure and searchable multimedia libraries for storing videos and photos.

Need to better utilize content generated by the military component

30. The military component generated public information, including photos and video stories from their daily patrol and civil-military coordination (CIMIC) activities. However, the military focal points in the sectors did not share relevant content with the Military Public Information Officer in Juba for publication, which could have been useful in fostering local community support for the Mission's operations. For instance, 23 (77 per cent) of the 30 CIMIC activities reviewed by OIOS were not publicized on the Mission's digital platforms, and there was no evidence that they were submitted to Multimedia Unit for publication. There was also no mechanism within the military component to track the publication of critical stories, videos, and photos. As a result, public information efforts by the military component aimed at garnering local population support may not be effectively utilized on digital platforms for a broader impact.

31. The Head of the Multimedia Unit also stated that some outputs, such as photos submitted by the military for publication, did not adequately convey the performance of mandated activities and therefore, they could not be published. However, there were plans to sensitize the police and military public information officers on guidelines for taking photos and videos that adequately conveyed mandate implementation.

(6) UNMISS should implement a mechanism to track relevant content generated by the military component for publication on the Mission's digital platforms.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 6 and stated that notwithstanding the challenges posed by the frequent rotation of military personnel in tracking relevant content for publication, the Communications and Public Information Section would continue holding discussions with the military public information officers for them to develop a standard operating procedure and ensure continuity.

Need to extend Radio Miraya coverage

32. Radio Miraya was the main platform used by UNMISS to reach the local population to promote the Mission's mandated activities. Annual perception surveys conducted by an independent consultant from

2019 to 2021 found Radio Miraya to be the most popular radio station in South Sudan, and this was supported by a South Sudan National Audience Survey² in 2021.

33. To increase the transmission of critical messages on the need for peaceful co-existence in communities that experience inter-communal violence, CPIS installed new radio transmitters in Rumbek, Jamjang, Tambura and Ibba during 2020 and 2021. The local telecommunication companies allowed UNMISS to use their towers at no cost to mount the Radio Miraya transmitters to support the Mission's effort to expand radio coverage to places where UNMISS had no camps. At the time of the audit, 14 of the 28 transmitters were mounted outside the Mission's camps. However, there were no radio transmitters in some locations that experienced persistent and high levels of inter-communal violence. Comparison of the geographical coverage of Radio Miraya frequency as of December 2021 with the 2021 annual report of the UNMISS Human Rights Division on violence affecting civilians showed that several communities/locations³ that were densely populated with perennial inter-communal conflict did not have Radio Miraya coverage as shown in appendix II. For instance, the Human Rights Division report for the period from January to August 2020 showed that at least 1,058 people were killed, and at least 686 women and children were abducted in communities in Jonglei state that had no Radio Miraya coverage. Also, on 25 February 2021, several villages in Koch, Mayendit and Leer reported inter-communal violence that resulted in civilian killings, injury and fleeing homes.

34. CPIS, in coordination with the Civil Affairs and Political Affairs Divisions, had identified locations that needed radio transmitters, but their installation was pending due to the inadequate number of technical staff. As of April 2022, Radio Miraya Technical Unit had 10 staff members; however, staff were not effectively deployed and utilized: seven were assigned to studio operations duties; and only three to new transmitter installations, in addition to repairing and maintaining the existing 28 transmitters across the Mission. Between January 2021 and 31 March 2022, these staff members could only complete 75 of 130 (58 per cent) planned maintenance activities. CPIS also stated that movement restrictions to remote transmitter sites sometimes hampered planned installations and maintenance.

35. Inadequate Radio Miraya coverage limits the Mission's ability to broadcast key messages of peace, reconciliation and peaceful co-existence in conflict-prone communities/locations and encourage communities to actively participate in civic and political engagements.

(7) UNMISS should ensure that the available technical staff are effectively utilized to install Radio Miraya transmitters in communities impacted by inter-communal violence and ensure timely repair and maintenance of all installed transmitters.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 7 and stated that the Communications and Public Information Section was reviewing and assessing its existing capacity to optimize and ensure staff strength was properly and fully deployed and assigned to strategic areas.

Need for more substantive programmes on Radio Miraya

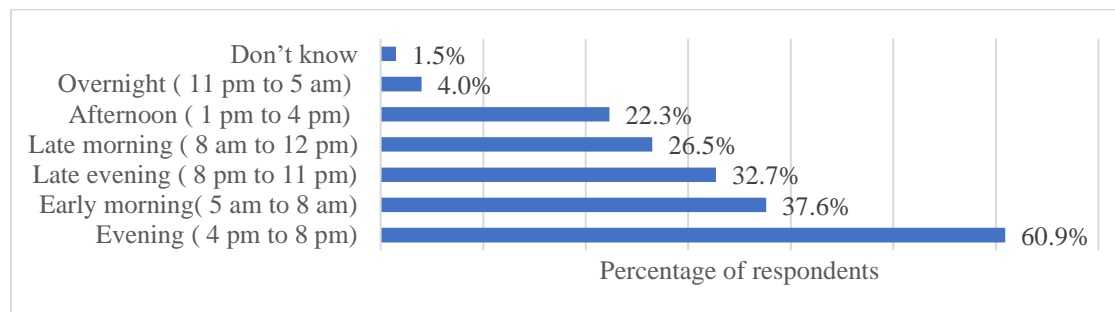
36. CPIS, in collaboration with substantive sections such as political affairs, police, human rights and civil affairs, developed interactive radio programmes that supported key mandated tasks, including inclusive and accountable governance, respect for human rights, and equal and meaningful political participation. Radio Miraya had a dedicated phone-in line for women and girls to promote inclusivity.

² 2021 South Sudan National Audience Survey titled "understanding listener behaviour" was conducted by USAID, Internews and Forcier Consulting

³ Nasser, Kajo-Keji, Koch, Mundri, Mayendit, Leer and places around, Kuajok and Torit and most parts of Jonglei State

37. OIOS review of archived Radio Miraya programmes and the schedule of radio programmes from January to April 2022 showed that programmes such as ‘roundtable’, ‘your right’, ‘crime watch’, and ‘youth forum’ were aired as scheduled and featured various interest groups. However, three programmes, ‘democracy in action’, ‘working together’ and ‘the women (*Kalam Neswan*)’ were suspended in April 2020 due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and did not resume despite the Mission’s relaxation of pandemic-related restrictions in 2022. CPIS stated that although the cited programmes had not resumed, some aspects of these programmes were incorporated into the morning breakfast show and featured various guest speakers. Furthermore, as shown in table 2, only three (roundtable, media and youth forums) of the eight substantive radio programmes were aired either live or repeated during the top three prime radio listening time from 5 am to 8 am, 4 pm to 8 pm, and 8 pm to 11 pm, limiting the programmes’ reach.

Table 2: Radio usage on a typical day by South Sudanese



Source: 2021 South Sudan National Audience Survey by USAID Internews and Forcier Consulting

38. There was a need for better coordination between Radio Miraya and relevant substantive sections to resume interactive programmes that support the implementation of the Mission’s mandated activities. In addition, available credible survey results should be used to inform the appropriate timing for airing substantive programmes.

39. Moreover, CPIS had not prepared concept notes that identified the objectives and target audiences of the various substantive programmes to ensure they were impactful. For example, there was no apparent distinction between the target audience and objectives for the roundtable and democracy in action programmes. If not well conceptualized, this could result in the programmes not achieving their intended objectives.

(8) UNMISS should: (a) resume the airing of substantive programmes that were suspended at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic; (b) use the results of credible audience/listenership surveys to revise radio programme schedules to ensure they are aired or repeated during prime listening times for a wider reach; and (c) ensure programme concept notes with clear objectives and target audiences are prepared to guide staff in producing distinctive and impactful substantive radio programmes.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 8 and stated that several programmes were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, but key elements of them had been incorporated into other radio programmes. The Communications and Public Information Section would conduct a strategic retreat and deliberate on resuming suspended programmes and allocation of timeslots for primetime listening. It will also systematically integrate the concept notes with clear objectives and target audiences to ensure all radio programmes provide impactful information to a wider community.

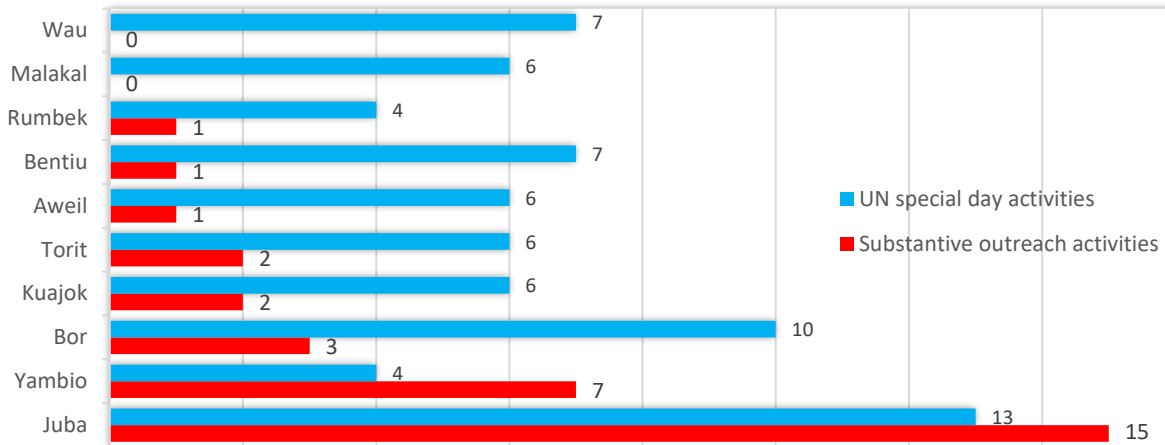
Management of outreach and campaign activities needed improvement

40. To build trust and gain local support for the Mission's operations and promote a culture of sustainable peace, CPIS conducted 101 outreach and campaign activities at a total cost of \$366,362 and distributed various promotional items related to the Mission's programmes. However, OIOS analysis of all outreach and campaign activities and a detailed review of 30 randomly selected activities with a total cost of \$105,572 showed the following weaknesses:

- There was limited use of local languages in outreach and campaign activities as only 17 of the 101 concept notes required using Arabic or local languages. The predominant use of English in outreach activities limited the ability to target some audiences successfully. For example, an International Women's Day panel discussion in Kuajok was challenging because the women participants could not speak English or Arabic. Similarly, a radio quiz in Juba to raise awareness of the Mission's mandate experienced challenges as some participants did not understand English.
- All promotional materials were in English except for the revitalized peace agreement, which was in Arabic and five local languages. The Mission mandate leaflet used in a workshop for the Equatorial State Legislative Assembly in Torit, where most members could only read Arabic, had not been translated into Arabic. The Head of the Outreach Unit stated that local staff deployed in field offices sometimes helped to translate outreach messages into local languages due to the lack of language assistants.
- CPIS did not leverage lessons learnt from previous activities to improve the effectiveness of planned and ongoing activities. These included challenges in getting the cooperation of government officials and UNCT due to short notices and liaising with unauthorized officials, as observed in 20 activities. Also, OIOS noted communication gaps and delays in the approval of purchase orders for outreach activities vendors, which resulted in delays in the delivery or shortage of promotional materials.
- Concept notes and after-action reports for the activities were not centrally filed for ease of reference. As a result, CPIS could not provide OIOS with 21 concept notes and 13 after-action reports for review.
- There was an uneven distribution of outreach and campaign activities across field office locations. Some locations such as Malakal and Wau did not undertake substantive activities, as shown in table 3. Furthermore, target locations for outreach and campaign activities were generalized at the state or regional level rather than indicating specific localities, creating a risk of duplicative messages to the same audiences through various outreach efforts. For instance, locations with low Radio Miraya signal availability and listenership such as Aweil, Kuajok, Rumbek and Yambio⁴ also had low substantive mandate outreach and campaign activities, as shown in table 3.

⁴ UNMISS 2021 perception survey

Table 3: Distribution of substantive outreach activities and UN special days activities across the field office locations



- UNMISS delayed processing payments for services provided by outreach vendors by an average of 66 days due to a lack of a mechanism to track payments. At the time of the audit, two invoices totaling \$7,590 had not been paid for an average of 308 days. However, CPIS subsequently facilitated the payment of all outstanding vendor invoices.

41. The above weaknesses, which were attributed to inadequate management oversight, lack of language assistants and dedicated staff in field offices to effectively carry out and document outreach activities, compromised the effectiveness of outreach activities. Delays in vendor payments also exposed UNMISS to reputation risk.

- (9) UNMISS should strengthen the implementation of outreach and campaign activities by ensuring: (a) appropriate use of languages for targeted audiences; (b) adequate coverage and distribution of outreach and campaign activities in areas with low Radio Miraya signal availability and listenership; and (c) incorporation of lessons learnt from previous activities into planning and execution of future activities.**

UNMISS accepted recommendation 9 and stated that the Chief of the Communications and Public Information Section would hold a meeting with staff of the outreach unit to gather inputs on the implementation of this recommendation. In addition, during the strategic retreat, the Section will identify ways to address the appropriate use of language for target audiences and adequate coverage. It will also leverage and implement lessons learnt from previous activities.

- (10) UNMISS should implement measures to ensure concept notes and after-action reports for outreach activities are systematically prepared and centrally maintained.**

UNMISS accepted recommendation 10 and stated that the Chief of the Communications and Public Information Section, in coordination with the Head of Outreach Unit, will develop measures to ensure that concept notes and after-action reports are systematically prepared and centrally maintained.

- (11) UNMISS should implement a payment monitoring mechanism to address the delays in processing vendor payments.**

UNMISS accepted recommendation 11 and stated that the Communications and Public Information Section had initiated a process to facilitate all outstanding payments. The Section also intends to

strengthen staff knowledge of Umoja for effective monitoring of outstanding commitments and their timely settlement.

Capacity-building activities were undertaken

42. Security Council resolution 2514 on the independent strategic review of UNMISS dated 15 December 2020 tasked UNMISS to gradually increase the capacity of CPIS staff in field offices to assist the Political Affairs and Civil Affairs Divisions with voter education and efforts to expand civic space and improve their ability to produce and disseminate impartial, fair and objective communication products in advance of elections.

43. UNMISS, using independent consultants and internal expertise, conducted the following capacity-building activities:

- Radio training for 35 CPIS staff in news gathering techniques, writing, editing, presentation, content design and conflict-sensitive journalism/communication.
- Outreach and advocacy training for 25 CPIS staff to build capacity in events management, public speaking, strategic communication and managing online advocacy campaigns.
- Workshop on ethics and responsible journalism in Bor for 30 local journalists from four media houses and officials from the Jonglei State Ministry of Information. The objective of the workshop was to increase participants' awareness of the UNMISS mandate, sharpen their skills in ethical/responsible journalism, introduce them to peace and human rights messaging as part of their reporting, highlight the role of the media in creating a free, fair, peaceful elections and introduce aspects of gender-based sensitive reporting.
- Presentations on the work of the press office, presentation skills and media relations to 30 journalists in Yambio.

44. However, a two-week advocacy campaign and electoral reporting course for 55 CPIS staff were not conducted as planned due to COVID-19 related restrictions. Nevertheless, OIOS concluded that UNMISS had taken adequate steps to build the capacity of its staff and local journalists.

C. Programme impact evaluation

There was a need for action on the results of the perception surveys and to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of communication and public information programme activities

45. The annual perception survey by an independent consultant highlighted local population views on important topics, including peace and security, protection of civilians, sexual exploitation and abuse, access to information, and the Mission's performance in protecting civilians and building durable peace. However, CPIS, in collaboration with other mission components, had yet to develop action plans to address areas of concern in the survey results. This was also requested by the Security Council in its resolution 2514 on the independent strategic review of UNMISS.

46. Furthermore, through an independent consultant, UNMISS reviewed Radio Miraya structure, strategy and culture to identify opportunities to rebrand and refresh the station in November 2021. However, the Mission had not developed an action plan to implement the recommendations in the review report, which included the need to: merge news and production units, create a planning editor role, prepare

programme specifications and develop a clear policy for on-air language mix. Other programme activities such as media relations, multimedia and outreach had not been evaluated to determine how they supported mandate implementation.

47. CPIS management did not prioritize programme evaluation-related tasks due to the limited number of staff in the Mission during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, UNMISS has not been able to address negative public perceptions of the Missions' activities in some locations and improve the effectiveness of Radio Miraya in supporting mandate implementation.

(12) UNMISS should develop action plans to address issues and recommendations raised in the annual perception surveys and the review of Radio Miraya, and prioritize resources to evaluate other programme activities, including media relations, multimedia and outreach activities.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 12 and stated that the Communications and Public Information Section would develop action plans to address the recommendations and issues raised in the perception surveys and independent evaluation of Radio Miraya. The Section will also prioritize resources to evaluate programme activities.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

Internal Audit Division
Office of Internal Oversight Services

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of communications and public information programme in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁵ / Important ⁶	C/ O ⁷	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁸
1	UNMISS should: (a) update the communication strategy to ensure alignment with the Mission's 2021-2024 strategic vision and provide clarity on appropriate media/platforms and tools for targeting specific audiences and on the roles and responsibilities of Mission components; (b) develop relevant key performance indicators to facilitate measuring progress in implementing the communication strategy; and (c) ensure that the strategy is approved by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that the Mission's communication strategy has been updated to align it to the Mission's 2021-2024 strategic vision, includes key performance indicators and has been approved by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.	31 December 2023
2	UNMISS should align expected communication and public information outputs in the results-based budgets and work plans of the Communications and Public Information Section.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that the expected outputs in the Mission's results-based budget and CPIS work plans are aligned.	31 December 2023
3	UNMISS should develop a work plan implementation, monitoring and reporting mechanism supported by a portfolio of evidence to timely identify and address performance shortfalls.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that CPIS has developed a work plan implementation, monitoring and reporting mechanism that is supported by a portfolio of evidence.	31 December 2023
4	UNMISS should: (a) compile and utilize social media platform statistics to improve digital media audience reach and engagement to influence public support for the implementation of its mandate; and (b) update its digital media strategy to ensure it reflects approved platforms.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that social media statistics are being used to improve digital media audience reach and engagement and that the digital media strategy has been updated.	30 September 2024
5	UNMISS should implement a mechanism to ensure videos and photos are saved in secured searchable libraries.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that videos and photos are being saved in secure searchable libraries.	30 September 2024
6	UNMISS should implement a mechanism to track relevant content generated by the military component for publication on the Mission's digital platforms.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that content generated by the military component is being tracked for publication on the Mission's digital platforms.	30 September 2024

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of communications and public information programme in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁵ / Important ⁶	C/ O ⁷	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁸
7	UNMISS should ensure that the available technical staff are effectively utilized to install Radio Miraya transmitters in communities impacted by inter-communal violence and ensure timely repair and maintenance of all installed transmitters.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that action has been taken to ensure that technical staff are effectively deployed for the installation of radio transmitters in communities impacted by inter-communal violence, and for timely repair and maintenance of the transmitters	31 December 2024
8	UNMISS should: (a) resume the airing of substantive programmes that were suspended at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic; (b) utilize the results of credible audience/listenership surveys to revise radio programme schedules to ensure they are aired or repeated during prime listening times for a wider reach; and (c) ensure programme concept notes with clear objectives and target audiences are prepared to guide staff in producing distinctive and impactful substantive radio programmes.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of review of the suspended substantive programmes with a view of resuming the airing of distinct and targeted substantive radio programmes and that the programmes and airing schedules are guided by concept notes and prime radio listening times.	30 September 2023
9	UNMISS should strengthen the implementation of outreach and campaign activities by ensuring: (a) appropriate use of languages for targeted audiences; (b) adequate coverage and distribution of outreach and campaign activities in areas with low Radio Miraya signal availability and listenership; and (c) incorporation of lessons learnt from previous activities into planning and execution of future activities.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that the implementation of outreach and campaign activities has been strengthened through the appropriate use of languages for targeted audiences, adequate coverage and distribution of outreach and campaign activities in areas with low Radio Miraya signal availability and listenership, and incorporation of lessons learned into future activities.	31 December 2023

⁵ Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

⁶ Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

⁷ Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

⁸ Date provided by UNMISS in response to recommendations.

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of communications and public information programme in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁵ / Important ⁶	C/ O ⁷	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁸
10	UNMISS should implement measures to ensure concept notes and after-action reports for outreach activities are systematically prepared and centrally maintained.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that concept notes and after-action reports for outreach activities are systematically prepared and centrally maintained.	31 December 2023
11	UNMISS should implement a payment monitoring mechanism to address the delays in processing vendor payments.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that CPIS has implemented a monitoring mechanism for the timely payment of vendors.	30 September 2023
12	UNMISS should develop action plans to address issues and recommendations raised in the annual perception surveys and the review of Radio Miraya and prioritize resources to evaluate other programme activities, including media relations, multimedia and outreach activities.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that CPIS has developed an action plan to address issues and recommendations raised in the annual perception surveys and review of Radio Miraya, and undertake evaluations of media relations, multimedia and outreach activities.	30 September 2023

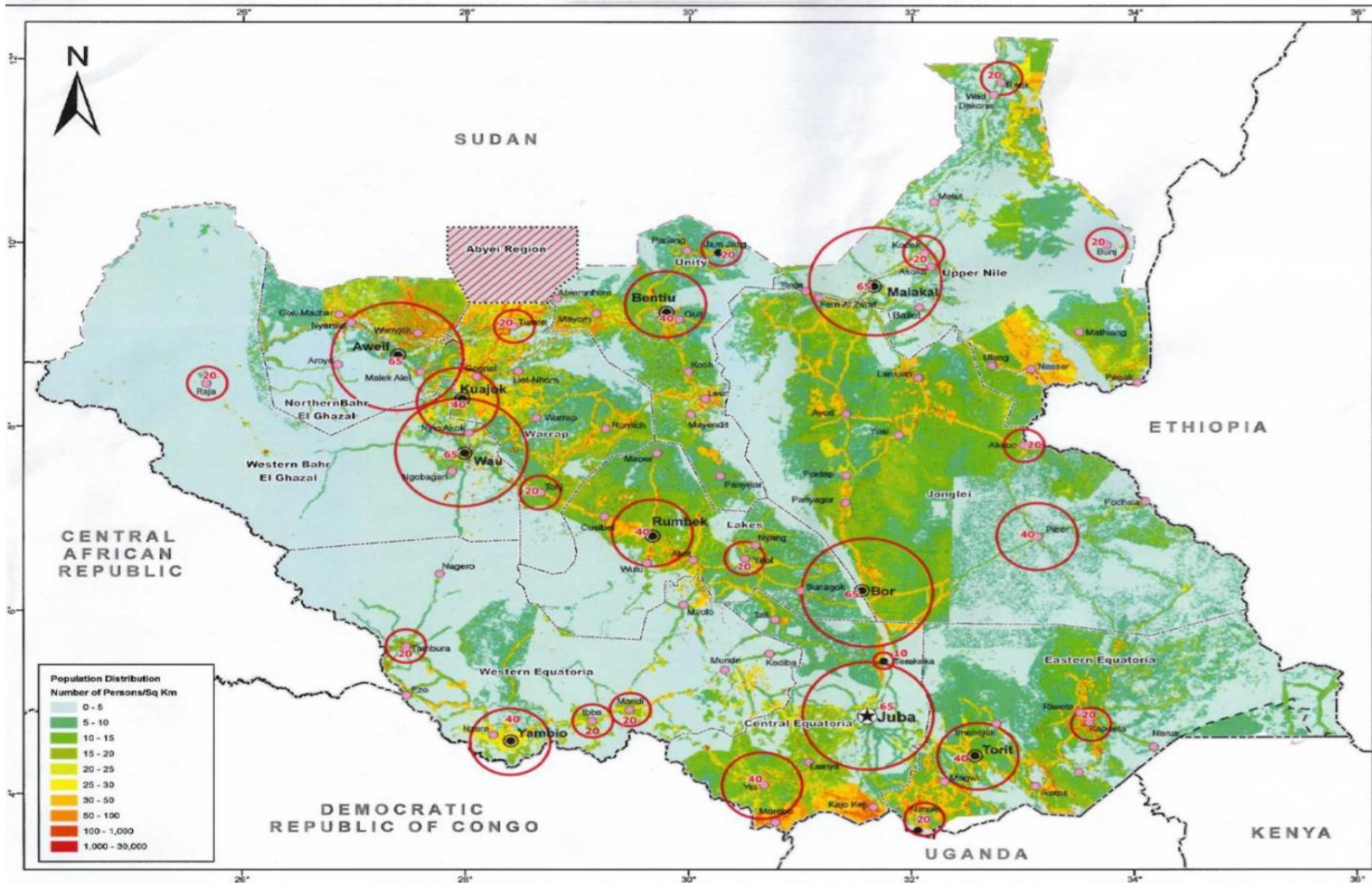
APPENDIX I

Management Response

RADIO MIRAYA FM TRANSMITTER COVERAGE

As of December 2021 - With Population Distribution

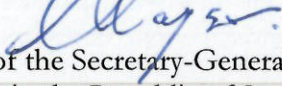
ISS1P0004M2112U17x11RadioMirayaTransmitterCoverage





Date: 2 November 2022

To: Mr. Kemal Karaseki
Acting Chief
Peacekeeping Audit Service
OIOS

From: Nicholas Haysom 
Special Representative of the Secretary-General
United Nations Mission in the Republic of South
Sudan

Subject: **Management Response to the draft report of an Audit of the Communications and Public Information Programme in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (Assignment No. AP2022-633-01)**

1. UNMISS acknowledges receipt of the audit of the Communications and Public Information Programme (Assignment No. AP2022-633-01) dated 19 October 2022.
2. UNMISS accepts the 12 recommendations. An action plan for each recommendation is attached in the Appendix as requested.
3. I would like to thank OIOS for the continued support and consideration provided to the work of UNMISS.

cc: Mr Guang Cong, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (Political), UNMISS
Mr. Paul Egunsola, Chief of Staff, UNMISS
Ms. Victoria Browning, Director of Mission Support, UNMISS
Ms. Elizabeth Gregory, Audit Focal Point, UNMISS
Mr. Jeffrey Lin, Professional Practices Section, Internal Audit Division, OIOS

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Important ¹	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	UNMISS should: (a) update the communication strategy to ensure alignment with the Mission's 2021-2024 strategic vision and provide clarity on appropriate media/platforms and tools for targeting specific audiences and on the roles and responsibilities of Mission components; (b) develop relevant key performance indicators to facilitate measuring progress in implementing the communication strategy; and (c) ensure that the strategy is approved by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.	Important	Yes	CPI	31 December 2023	<p>The Mission notes the recommendation and will take the following actions to implement:</p> <p>The Communications and Public Information Section will hold a strategic retreat aimed at updating the existing strategy to ensure alignment with the Mission's 2021-2024 Strategic Vision. CPI has taken note to provide clarification on appropriate media/platforms and tools, and the creation of performance indicators.</p> <p>Approval from the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General (OSRSG) and full implementation of the Communication Strategy and Workplan will be completed by 31 December 2023.</p>
2	UNMISS should align expected communication and public information outputs in the results-based budgets and work plans of the Communications and Public Information Section.	Important	Yes	CPI	31 December 2023	<p>The Mission concurs with the recommendation and will take the following actions to implement:</p> <p>CPI has recruited an Administrative Officer, who is designated to work closely with the Chief of CPIS and the Strategic Planning Unit to incorporate the expected communication and public information outputs in the Mission's results-based budget for 2023/24 and section work plans.</p> <p>Full implementation is expected by 31 December 2023.</p>

¹ Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

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3	UNMISS should develop a work plan implementation monitoring and reporting mechanism supported by a portfolio of evidence to timely identify and address performance shortfalls.	Important	Yes	CPI	31 December 2023	<p>The Mission accepts the recommendation and will take the following actions to implement:</p> <p>CPIS is in the process of coordinating with all relevant sections and units to finalize the existing draft workplan. The workplan will outline key deliverables, taking into account monitoring and reporting mechanisms, including how performance shortfalls, if any, should be mitigated and addressed. Upon completion, CPIS will liaise with the OSRSG for final review and approval.</p> <p>Full implementation is expected by 31 December 2023.</p>
4	UNMISS should: (a) compile and utilize social media platform statistics to improve digital media audience reach and engagement to influence public support for the implementation of its mandate; and (b) update its digital media strategy to ensure it reflects approved platforms.	Important	Yes	CPI	30 September 2024	<p>This Mission notes the recommendation and will develop a clear process to utilize social media platform statistics to enhance public outreach. CPIS, through its Multimedia Unit will proactively conduct public outreach, optimizing its social media platforms and informing local communities about the Mission’s mandate implementation and impact being made on the ground.</p> <p>Expected Completion Date: 30 September 2024.</p>
5	UNMISS should implement a mechanism to ensure videos and photos are saved in secured searchable libraries.	Important	Yes	CPI	30 September 2024	<p>The Mission accepts the recommendation and is committed to ensure the development of multimedia libraries.</p> <p>CPIS, through its Multimedia Unit, will work closely to develop libraries with the capability to search and store videos and photos in a secure space. Date of implementation: 30 September 2024</p>

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6	UNMISS should implement a mechanism to track relevant content generated by the military component for publication on the Mission's digital platforms.	Important	Yes	CPI	30 September 2024	<p>The Mission accepts the recommendation and is committed to developing a mechanism to track relevant content generated by military components.</p> <p>The Mission notes that frequent rotation of military communications personnel present an ongoing challenge. As such, CPIS will continue holding discussions with the PIO for UNMISS-Force to develop an SOP and ensure continuity and full implementation of this recommendation by 30 September 2024.</p>
7	UNMISS should ensure that the available technical staff are effectively utilized to install Radio Miraya transmitters in communities impacted by inter-communal violence and ensure timely repair and maintenance of all installed transmitters.	Important	Yes	CPI	31 December 2024	<p>The Mission is committed to ensuring the implementation of this recommendation. CPIS is currently reviewing and assessing its existing capacity to optimize and ensure staff strength is properly and fully deployed and assigned to strategic areas. Discussions with the Chief of Radio Miraya should deliver a set of written commitments on the implementation of this recommendation by 31 December 2024.</p>
8	UNMISS should: (a) resume the airing of substantive programmes that were suspended at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic; (b) utilize the results of credible audience/listenership surveys to revise radio programme schedules to ensure they are aired or repeated during prime listening times for a wider reach; and (c) ensure programme concept notes with clear objectives and target audiences are prepared to guide staff in producing distinctive and impactful substantive radio programmes.	Important	Yes	CPI	30 September 2023	<p>The Mission accepts the recommendation:</p> <p>The Mission notes that several programmes have been affected or suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic, however key elements have been incorporated in other radio programmes.</p> <p>CPIS will conduct a strategic retreat during which time, further stocktaking on the substantive suspended programmes will be addressed. During this stocktaking, CPIS will coordinate</p>

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						<p>with relevant sections to address measures to resume programming, and ensure the appropriate timeslots are designated for primetime listening.</p> <p>CPIS will work to ensure that concept notes with clear objectives and target audiences are systematically integrated, to ensure all radio programmes provide distinctive and impactful information to the wider community.</p>
9	UNMISS should strengthen the implementation of outreach and campaign activities by ensuring: (a) appropriate use of languages for targeted audiences; (b) adequate coverage and distribution of outreach and campaign activities in areas with low Radio Miraya signal availability and listenership; and (c) incorporation of lessons learnt from previous activities into planning and execution of future activities.	Important	Yes	CPI	31 December 2023	<p>The Mission accepts the recommendation and will take the following actions to implement:</p> <p>CPIS, through the Head of our Outreach Unit, commits to strengthening implementation of outreach and campaign activities. A townhall type meeting will be held between the Chief CPIS and the staff of the Outreach Unit to gather input for the implementation of this recommendation.</p> <p>During the Strategic Retreat, CPIS will identify entry points to address the appropriate use of language for target audiences, and adequate cover.</p> <p>CPIS will additionally ensure to leverage and implement lessons learned from previous exercises and activities to ensure full implementation of these recommendations.</p> <p>Full implementation is expected by 31 December 2023.</p>
10	UNMISS should implement measures to ensure concept notes and after-action reports for outreach activities are	Important	Yes	CPI	31 December 2023	<p>The Mission accepts the recommendation. CPIS, in coordination with its Head of Outreach Unit, will develop measures to ensure that</p>

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	systematically prepared and centrally maintained.					concept notes and after-action reports are systematically prepared and centrally maintained.
11	UNMISS should implement a payment monitoring mechanism to address the delays in processing vendor payments.	Important	Yes	CPI	30 September 2023	<p>The Mission accepts the recommendation. CPIS has initiated a process aimed at facilitating all outstanding payments. Furthermore, CPIS intends to strengthen staff knowledge of ERP (Umoja) to allow for effective and efficient monitoring of future outstanding commitments and thus their timely settlement.</p> <p>The target date for implementation of this recommendation is 30 September 2023.</p>
12	UNMISS should develop action plans to address issues and recommendations raised in the annual perception surveys and the review of Radio Miraya and prioritize resources to evaluate other programme activities, including media relations, multimedia and outreach activities.	Important	Yes	CPI	30 September 2023	<p>The Mission accepts the recommendation and will take the following actions to implement:</p> <p>CPIS will develop relevant actions plans to address the recommendations and issues raised in perception surveys, and issues raised during the independent evaluation of Radio Miraya.</p> <p>The Mission notes that due to limited staff capacity during the COVID-19 pandemic, CPIS was unable to address negative public perceptions. CPIS will therefore prioritize resources to evaluate programme activities outlined in the recommendation.</p> <p>Full implementation of the recommendation is expected by 30 September 2023.</p>