



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2018/067

Audit of liquidation planning in the United Nations Mission in Liberia

The Mission adequately planned and coordinated liquidation activities and camp closures but needed to speed up disposal of records

22 June 2018
Assignment No. AP2017/626/03

Audit of liquidation planning in the United Nations Mission in Liberia

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of liquidation planning in the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the measures put in place to manage the liquidation activities related to camp closure, archives and records management and other liquidation processes during the drawdown and liquidation period of UNMIL. The audit covered the period from 1 July 2017 to 23 May 2018 and included: oversight and reporting on liquidation activities, camp closure and archives and records management.

The Mission coordinated with various departments and divisions regarding liquidation planning and implementation, adequately reported on liquidation activities, effectively planned and closed camp sites and ensured that digital records were backed up. Nevertheless, there was need to speed up the disposal of paper records.

OIOS made one recommendation. To address the issue identified in the audit, UNMIL needed to allocate resources to speed up the disposal of its paper records through either destruction or transfer to the Archives and Records Management Section in Headquarters.

UNMIL accepted the recommendation and has initiated action to implement it.

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Audit of liquidation planning in the United Nations Mission in Liberia

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of liquidation planning in the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).
2. UNMIL was established in October 2003, in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolution 1509 (2003) upon the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. As outlined in Security Council resolution 2333 (2016) of 23 December 2016 the mandate of UNMIL ended on 31 March 2018, and as determined by the General Assembly in resolution 71/304 of 18 July 2017, funding for the liquidation of UNMIL ends on 30 June 2018.
3. The UNMIL Director of Mission Support (DMS) is responsible for overseeing the preparation and execution of the liquidation plan. The Senior Administrative Officer in the office of the DMS is responsible for liaising with various section chiefs to ensure successful execution of the liquidation plan. The Information Management Unit is responsible for implementing records management standards by applying a set of guidelines and procedures, including the United Nations Archives and Records Management Toolkit and the Peacekeeping and Political Operations Retention Schedule. The Mission Support Centre and the Water, Sanitation and Environment Unit are jointly responsible for ensuring that camp closures are well coordinated and the necessary inspections are done and certifications received.
4. Comments provided by UNMIL are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

5. The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the measures put in place to manage the liquidation activities related to camp closure, archives and records management and other liquidation processes during the drawdown and liquidation period of UNMIL.
6. This audit was included in the 2017 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to scheduled drawdown and closure of UNMIL and related operational and reputational risks to the Organization.
7. OIOS conducted this audit from March to May 2018. The audit covered the period from 1 July 2017 to 18 May 2018. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risk areas in the financial and other administrative aspects of UNMIL liquidation, which included: planning, oversight and reporting on liquidation activities, camp closure and archives and records management.
8. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews of key personnel, (b) reviews of relevant documentation, (c) analytical reviews of data, (d) physical inspection of records and archives, and (e) observation during the inspections in the camps.
9. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Planning, oversight and reporting on liquidation activities

Liquidation plan was developed

10. UNMIL prepared its liquidation plan as required by the Department of Field Support (DFS) Liquidation Manual (the Manual), which states that successful completion of liquidation tasks implies development of a written plan containing parameters of the United Nations office to be liquidated based on the Security Council's declaration to terminate the mandate of that office.

11. The liquidation plan was initially developed in August 2017 and continued to be updated with the final version being approved on 26 January 2018. The liquidation plan detailed various components including: (a) staff downsizing; (b) asset disposal and handover of premises; (c) liquidation steering committee and liquidation working group; (d) financial closure; (e) records disposition; (f) camp sites closure; (g) communication with United Nations Headquarters; (h) interaction with non-United Nations authorities; and (h) liquidation activities reporting. The UNMIL liquidation plan also included: risks and mitigation strategies; and provisions necessary (including the budget) to carry out all liquidation tasks in coordination with Headquarters. In addition, the plan identified target milestones and key performance indicators/benchmarks to complete necessary tasks prior to closure of UNMIL. OIOS concluded that UNMIL had developed an adequate liquidation plan that incorporated the necessary components.

UNMIL coordinated with various departments and divisions on liquidation activities

12. The instructions on the administrative closure of UNMIL requested UNMIL to have close consultations with the various divisions within DFS and other departments in the United Nations. Also, the Manual requires UNMIL to arrange pre-liquidation assistance visits to review, among others, issues related to archiving, personnel drawdown plans, phasing out of outstanding procurement activities, environmental state of camps and withdrawal schedule for repatriating military and police elements.

13. Since October 2017, UNMIL has had 15 assistance visits from various departments and offices such as the Office of Staff Legal Assistance, the Regional Support Centre in Entebbe (RSCE), the Division of Policy, Evaluation and Training in the Field Personnel Division, and the Environmental Technical Support Unit of the United Nations Global Service Centre (UNGSC). These missions have helped UNMIL on various aspects related to the drawdown and liquidation such as: assessment of the Mission's assets in preparation for handover of the asset management database to UNGSC; assessment and assistance in preparing records for archiving or destruction; collection of documents relating to pension benefits for separating staff; testing of formerly contaminated soil that had been treated; and preparation of lessons-learned reports for UNMIL transition. UNMIL staff immensely benefitted from the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund's visit as a review of the pension documents was conducted at the Mission and issues corrected before submission to the Fund. It is envisaged that there will be fewer outstanding issues regarding pension payments as a result of this.

14. The pre-liquidation visits helped to anticipate possible challenges related to the liquidation and to develop strategies to deal with them. UNMIL management also drew heavily from lessons learnt in recently liquidated missions such as United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti to prepare for various possible scenarios.

15. OIOS therefore concluded that UNMIL had adequately coordinated with the various divisions and departments in preparation for the liquidation of the Mission.

Reporting of liquidation activities was adequate

16. Section 4 of the Liquidation Plan for UNMIL provides for the formation of a Liquidation Steering Committee (to guide the liquidation process) and a Liquidation Technical Working Group (to implement the liquidation plan). According to Section 5 of the Plan, progress on the liquidation activities is communicated in a number of ways such as liquidation reports, video conferences and meetings.

17. UNMIL prepared monthly liquidation reports from August 2017 to March 2018. Since April 2018, UNMIL has been preparing weekly liquidation reports that keep the recipients, both within the Mission and at Headquarters abreast of the activities of the liquidation process. Some of the issues covered in the reports include archiving and records management, personnel drawdown, assets disposal, integrated transition plan, risk and mitigation measures, closure of camps and financial and administrative closure.

18. UNMIL held four Liquidation Steering Committee meetings and 10 Technical Working Group meetings. A review of the minutes showed that emerging challenges regarding the liquidation were discussed and possible solutions suggested. During the Working Group meetings, various section chiefs made presentations on activities in their areas of responsibility.

19. Various broadcasts were also made regarding downsizing activities such as those sent out on 14 and 27 February 2018. UNMIL also held three video teleconferences with RSCE, UNGSC and United Nations Headquarters to brief the participants on progress of liquidation activities.

20. OIOS concluded that UNMIL had adequately reported on liquidation activities internally and to other divisions and departments in UNGSC, New York Headquarters and RSCE.

B. Closure of camps

21. Section 4.2 of the Manual provides that environmental issues must be prioritized by performing a liquidation environmental baseline study at all mission sites to evaluate and identify all environmental issues that need to be addressed during the liquidation. Missions are required to conduct initial and final inspections, obtain environmental clearance certificates, obtain release of liability and sign agreements to surrender the land as appropriate.

22. UNMIL closed 34 sites and 28 sites in fiscal years 2015/16 and 2016/17, respectively. At the beginning of 2017/18, UNMIL had 24 sites still open and had to slightly change the original schedule for closing sites to fit the revised repatriation dates of military and police units. Between 13 December 2017 and 18 May 2018, UNMIL closed 22 sites with only two sites (Starbase and Camp Abuja) remaining open as at that date. The two sites will be handed over on 28 June 2018 before the final liquidation date of 30 June 2018.

23. OIOS review of documents related to the 22 sites closed since 13 December 2017 indicated that there were initial and final inspection reports, environmental clearance certificates, release of liability, certificate of temporary possession and agreement of surrender of premises for all the sites. OIOS also checked that issues raised in the initial inspection reports had been rectified as per the final inspection reports.

24. OIOS observed the final inspection and handover of Roberts International Airport UNMIL offices and noted that all United Nations barcodes were removed from the assets left in situ and any United Nations signage removed or painted over. OIOS also noted the ongoing environmental cleanup and rehabilitation in Starbase such as the generator sites, drainage trenches, and sewer sites.

25. OIOS concluded that UNMIL had implemented adequate measures to guide management of the camp closure activities.

C. Archiving and records management

Need to improve preparation of documents for disposal

26. As per the Liquidation Plan for UNMIL, by 30 April 2018, 75 per cent of all non-transferable records should have been destroyed and 50 per cent of transferable records packed in leased sea containers that were positioned in Starbase ready to receive records. The Manual requires that the standard archives transfer documentation, (RMS 34) and (RMS 36/A) should accompany records transferred to the Archives and Records Management Section (ARMS) at Headquarters, which should be sent only in leased containers, not United Nations-owned containers.

27. Archiving and records management in UNMIL is under the Information Management Unit (IMU). IMU established a network of focal points in all offices and worked closely with them to ensure that paper records were transferred to IMU's custody and that digital records were saved on their section's shared drives.

28. An Information Management Officer from ARMS was deployed to UNMIL for one week (12-16 March 2018) to ensure that IMU was equipped to manage the disposal and transfer of United Nations records during liquidation in accordance with ARMS Standard Operating Procedures on the Liquidation of Peace Operations. Subsequently, from 23 April to 13 May 2018, a second Information Management Officer from ARMS was deployed to UNMIL to review the progress made in managing disposal of records and offer further guidance.

29. However, as at 11 May 2018, UNMIL was in the process of verifying records that had been packed for transfer to United Nations Headquarters and therefore the archival transfer forms RMS 34 and RMS 36A were still being completed. OIOS observed that as that date, the two archives were still almost full of documents being sorted out either for destruction or transfer.

30. UNMIL had signed a contract with a freight forwarding company to use sea containers for the transfer of records to ARMS as required but the containers were yet to be delivered to UNMIL. The delay in preparing records for destruction or transfer was attributed to delays in receipt of documents from the various sections. OIOS corroborated this through inspection of the mini-archives in the Travel Unit, Human Resource Section and Finance and Budget Section where it was observed that documents were still being sorted out and packed.

31. A physical inspection of various offices by OIOS also revealed that there are still some records lying around, even though staff should only be retaining active records in the offices to avoid a last-minute rush to ship out records. There is a risk that these documents could be left behind and land in the hands of unauthorized persons thereby exposing the United Nations to reputation risks.

(1) UNMIL should allocate resources to speed up the disposal of its paper records through either destruction or transfer to the Archives and Records Management Section Headquarters.

UNMIL accepted recommendation 1 and stated that inactive files had been prepared for shipping and 80 per cent of active files had already been packed for shipment. UNMIL had also received support

from RSCE to assist the Human Resource Management Section with archiving and the transfer of their records to IMU. Recommendation 1 remains open pending receipt of evidence that all UNMIL records have been shipped.

Electronic records were backed up

32. The DPKO/DFS Standard Operating Procedure for Managing Information on Shared Drives requires UNMIL to develop a plan for the migration of records from shared drives to other systems. Additionally, in August 2017, UNMIL developed a standard operating procedure on managing e-mail records.

33. UNMIL electronic records are currently being managed on shared network drives as there is no enterprise electronic content or records management system in use. Both the network drives and e-mail databases are being backed up in UNGSC. Staff have also been sensitized on the need to remove personal data from the shared drives and computer hard drives.

34. OIOS concluded that adequate measures had been taken to ensure timely backups of data on shared drives and the e-mail system.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

35. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of UNMIL 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 liquidation planning in the United Nations Mission in Liberia

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	C/ O ³	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁴
1	UNMIL should allocate resources to speed up the disposal of its paper records through either destruction or transfer to the Archives and Records Management Section Headquarters.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that all UNMIL records have been shipped.	28 June 2018

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.

³ C = closed, O = open

⁴ Date provided by UNMIL in response to recommendations.

APPENDIX I

Management Response

United Nations  **Nations Unies**
MISSION IN LIBERIA MISSION AU LIBERIA
U N M I L

Office of the Director of Mission Support

Ref: ODMS/2018/159

Date: 14 June 2018

To: Ms. Muriette Lawrence-Hume
Chief, New York Audit Service
Internal Audit Division, OIOS

From: David Penklis 
Director of Mission Support
United Nations Mission in Liberia

Subject: Assignment No. AP2017/626/03– UNMIL’s response to the draft report on the audit of liquidation planning in the United Nations Mission in Liberia

1. Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to comment on the above-referenced audit.
2. Our comments on the draft report are contained in Annex I.

cc. Mr. Ioan Grama, Chief, Information Management Unit
Mr. Paul McNeill, Senior Administrative Officer, UNMIL
Ms. Cynthia Avena-Castillo, Professional Practices Section, Internal Audit Division, OIOS

AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of the Liquidation Planning in the United Nations Mission in Liberia

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical/ ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments ³
1	UNMIL should allocate resources to speed up the disposal of its records through either destruction or transfer to the Archives and Records Management Section Headquarters.	Important	Yes	IMU	Implemented	This recommendation has been implemented. UNMIL inactive files have been prepared for shipping by 22 June 2018. 80% of active files are already packed and ready for shipment. UNMIL has received support from RSCE to assist HRMS with archiving, and the transfer to IMU is scheduled for 20 June 2018. All records will be collected by the contractor (shipper) by latest 22 June 2018.

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.

³ Please indicate feasibility and realistic timelines for implementation of the recommendation.