



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2022/003

Audit of management of human resources processes in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

The Mission needed to improve the management of human resources to reduce delays in the process and the number of posts filled on a temporary basis

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Audit of management of human resources processes in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of management of human resources processes in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). The objective of the audit was to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of controls over human resources administration in UNIFIL. The audit covered the period from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2021 and included: (i) workforce planning; (ii) recruitment; (iii) performance management and development; and (iv) learning management.

UNIFIL considered gender perspectives in its recruitments and most selections during the audit period were of women candidates. The Mission also considered staff from downsized missions. UNIFIL established assessment panels, which in coordination with the Human Resources Section (HRS), assessed candidates. However, a number of posts were filled through temporary job openings (TJOs) causing administrative burden to repeatedly process recruitment activities. Additionally, some recruitment cases were delayed, and established procedures were not fully complied with.

OIOS made seven recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, UNIFIL needed to:

- Develop and implement recruitment plans to limit the use of TJOs and timely fill key positions;
- Train hiring managers on building job openings and promptly communicate concerns over any highly restrictive evaluation criteria;
- Secure and restrict access to interview and online test questions and ensure assessment panel members complete the competency-based interviewing training and comparative analysis reports are endorsed by members of the assessment panel;
- Ensure hiring managers review candidates and submit evaluation results to HRS within the stipulated 40-day timeframe to enable the Mission to complete recruitments timely; and review the national staff recruitment process, including the use of rosters, and issue new guidelines as necessary;
- Ensure full integration of the training function by incorporating the military training cell into the structure of the Integrated Mission Training Centre, establish a centralized training database and harmonize the training calendar to facilitate evaluation of the training function;
- Enhance identification of training needs, monitor and report on the implementation of the training plan, evaluate the impact of high-cost training programmes and clarify the approving authority for the Mission Training Plan and ensure its timely approval; and
- Develop terms of reference for training focal points, train them and ensure their workplans include a goal to effectively implement the training programmes in their respective sections.

UNIFIL accepted the recommendations and has initiated action to implement them.

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Audit of management of human resources processes in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of management of human resources processes in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).
2. The Head of Mission and Force Commander (HoM/FC), assisted by the Human Resources Section (HRS), is responsible for the management of human resources including recruitment; classification and post management; performance management and development; and administration of entitlements. Management of human resources in UNIFIL is governed by the Staff Regulations and Rules and various administrative instructions, circulars and standard operating procedures.
3. HRS is headed by a Chief Human Resources Officer at the P-5 level who is supported by 13 international staff and 7 national staff. The UNIFIL 2021/22 budget totaling \$480 million provided for 889 authorized posts, of which 808 were encumbered. During the audit period, UNIFIL completed 46 recruitment actions: 48 per cent were from the roster and 52 per cent were position specific job openings (PSJOs). In addition, 24 staff were appointed through temporary job openings (TJOs).
4. Overall, UNIFIL recorded a vacancy rate of 9.1 per cent for its civilian staff as indicated in Table 1. This consisted of 10.8 per cent for national staff in the general services category, 10.4 per cent for national professional officers (NPO) and 5.1 per cent international staff. The vacancy rate for international staff was marginally below the approved vacancy rate of 5.5 per cent.

Table 1: Military and civilian staff in UNIFIL as of 30 June 2021

Category	Authorized posts 2020/21	Encumbered posts	Vacant posts	Actual vacancy rate 2020/21	Authorized vacancy rate 2020/21	Cases under recruitment
Military	13,000	9,818	3,182	24.5%	32.3% ¹	-
International	256	243	13	5.1%	5.5%	6
National	585	522	63 ²	10.8%	7.2%	12
NPO	48	43	5	10.4%	10.4%	2
Total	889	808³	81	9.1%		20

5. Comments provided by UNIFIL are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

6. The objective of the audit was to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of controls over the management of human resources processes in UNIFIL.

¹ In August 2020, the Security Council reduced approved troop strength to 13,000 from 15,000. The 32.3 per cent vacancy rate was determined based on the 15,000-troop strength while the actual vacancy rate of 24.5 per cent is against the current reduced ceiling of 13,000 troops. For 2021/22, the proposed vacancy rate is 22.9 based on the planned deployment of 10,022 personnel within 13,000 ceiling.

² Some of these positions were abolished during the civilian staffing review.

³ Total staff on board at the Mission as of June 2021 was 803, as five members of staff were seconded to two missions.

7. This audit was included in the 2021 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the critical contribution of human resources to the implementation of the Mission's mandate.

8. OIOS conducted this audit from April to October 2021. The audit covered the period from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2021. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risks areas in human resources administration, which included: (i) workforce planning; (ii) recruitment; (iii) performance management and development; and (iv) learning management. The administration of staff entitlements by HRS will be covered in a separate assignment in the future.

9. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews of key personnel; (b) reviews of relevant documentation; (c) analytical reviews; and (d) sample testing of 30 recruitment actions conducted in the audit period.

10. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Workforce planning

The Mission identified measures to enhance future civilian staffing review exercises

11. In September and October 2020, UNIFIL conducted a civilian staffing review (CSR) in line with Security Council resolution 2359 (2017), to review and align the workforce with the Mission's priorities, needs and mandate. The CSR working group was led by the Head of Mission and comprised senior mission leadership including the Principal Coordinator (Chair), Chief Legal Advisor, Chief Finance and Budget Officer, Chief Supply Chain Management and Chief Transport Officer. The review was conducted with the assistance of experts from the Human Resources Support Division in the Department of Operational Support.

12. Following the review, UNIFIL created strategic planning capacities within the Office of HoM/FC, validated Mission support structures, and examined long standing internal loaned positions and vacancies with a view to retaining only critical functions. The Mission abolished 45 positions deemed excessive due to long term vacancy, synergy from centralization or optimization of internal mission capacity. Seven positions were repurposed to implement other priority mandated activities, while 18 positions were redeployed to cover comparable or related functions. Three positions were upgraded. These recommendations were incorporated in the 2021/22 UNIFIL budget.

13. To raise awareness of the objectives of the CSR, HoM/FC held a townhall meeting with staff in September 2020. The CSR working group consulted with stakeholders such as staff unions and service/section chiefs. However, union heads and section chiefs informed that they were not fully consulted in the exercise and were only briefed after conclusions had been reached by the working group. There were no ongoing broadcasts or updates to frequently asked questions while the exercise was underway as had been planned. These lapses were documented by the working group in their after-action reviews, in which they pointed out the need, in future similar exercises, to coordinate a campaign to communicate the CSR exercise and conduct thorough analyses in collaboration with section chiefs to resolve staffing gaps. The Mission developed action points to address the above concerns and therefore, OIOS is not making any recommendations.

Need to develop and implement a recruitment plan

14. The Mission did not always initiate recruitments in a timely manner. For example, recruitment actions for 13 vacancies arising from the incumbent reaching the mandatory age of retirement were initiated, on average four months prior to the retirement date, instead of at least six months as required. In addition, 33 per cent of national posts and 54 per cent of international posts that were filled during the audit period had been vacant for over a year. Due to the late initiation of recruitment actions, 10 out of 24 (42 per cent) PSJOs were published for the minimum 15 days as opposed to the recommended 30 days (PSJOs may be exceptionally advertised for 15 days to meet immediate operational requirements).

15. In addition, the Mission did not develop and implement a recruitment plan but utilized TJOs to meet operational needs. Of the 70 appointments made during the audit period, 24 of them (34 per cent) were TJOs, and at least 12 posts filled by TJOs had been occupied by the incumbents beyond 12 months with no documented justifications provided. These included key positions such as Chief Procurement Officer (P-4), Chief Life Support (P-5) and Finance and Budget Officer (P-4), while that of Chief of Service, Delivery Management (D-1) was equally vacant for over a year and managed by different staff on a rotational basis. In HRS, both the Chief Human Resources Officer and Deputy Chief Human Resources Officer were on temporary job assignments at the same time with different officers filling the positions on temporary basis. In its 2020/21 workplan, HRS had committed to providing a comprehensive workforce and recruitment plan for the next two budget cycles, but this had not been done due to disruptions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

(1) UNIFIL should develop and implement recruitment plans to limit use of temporary job openings and ensure that key positions are filled timely.

UNIFIL accepted recommendation 1 and stated that it would continue working with Mission management and programme managers to establish proper plans and timely fill key positions. HRS was also preparing the workforce plan for UNIFIL.

B. Recruitment

Improvements needed in developing job specifications

16. In 9 out of the 30 recruitment cases reviewed, the job specifications were highly specific without corresponding justifications for including such restrictive specifications. In five job openings, experience was limited to that obtained in only a few or specific duty stations or required a unique combination of experience that does not generally occur in peace operations. In three job openings, duties were significantly changed from the standard job description while in one job opening, qualification requirements included certifications that were only desirable at higher positions. Such narrowly defined requirements may eliminate otherwise suitable applicants and lead to concerns that the job opening had been tailored to suit a particular applicant. In one case, the transmittal memo to HRS requesting filling of a vacancy mentioned the name of a preferred candidate prior to publication of the job opening.

17. While guidelines on building job descriptions allow for changes of up to 30 per cent of generic job profiles, hiring managers had not been trained on the extent of changes that could be made. Also, UNIFIL's controls to approve such changes were not effective and there was no evidence that they had been approved by senior level staff. Most of these cases happened when HRS did not have a substantive Chief.

18. The restrictions were also not questioned by the field central review board (for international staff) or the mission review panel (MRP, for national staff), although they had reviewed the cases. Currently,

there is no dedicated training for MRP members, although they are briefed by HRS. While the competency-based interviewing (CBI) training was not mandatory for MRP members, they could benefit from the training and the Mission should encourage these members to take it. Five out of 12 members of the previous MRP and 3 out of 12 members of the current MRP had not done the training. Even though the work of the MRP involves reviewing the integrity of the entire recruitment process, the bulk of the review revolves around assessing how candidates had been evaluated through the online tests and competency-based interviews, which are also the focus of the CBI training. A thorough understanding of these processes would add value to MRP members' assessments of them. UNIFIL undertook to review the current training and briefing requirements for MRP members.

(2) UNIFIL should provide training to hiring managers on building job openings and promptly communicate concerns over any highly restrictive evaluation criteria to the hiring managers.

UNIFIL accepted recommendation 2 and stated that it would provide training to hiring managers while HRS would continue to communicate with hiring managers on evaluation criteria.

Need to improve evaluation and substantive assessment of applicants

19. Hiring managers prepared online test questions and interview questions in collaboration with line managers at the Mission level and managers at United Nations Headquarters (UNHQ), who were consulted on recruitments for P-5 positions and above. On the date of the online tests, a link was sent to candidates to enable them to access the test. However, the transmission of draft and final technical questions for online tests and interviews between the hiring managers, HRS and UNHQ was via emails or files that had not been password protected. Transmission of confidential information via email increases information security risk. Further, the interview questions in HRS were not restricted to the recruiter but could be accessed by other members of the Recruitment Unit on the shared drive, thereby increasing the risk of unauthorized disclosure.

20. There were some weaknesses in the evaluation of candidates that had the potential of increasing the risk of not selecting the best candidates. These included the following:

- The comparative analysis report⁴ did not always provide adequate support for the conclusion/ratings. Seven comparative analysis reports rated some candidates as partially meeting the selection criteria without providing details of the areas where those candidates did not meet the requirements. Also, there were inconsistencies in rating candidates' competencies during interviews as candidates who did not meet or partially met some requirements were deemed as successfully meeting requirements in one job opening but were disqualified in another. For instance, one candidate was deemed not to have demonstrated competency and mastery of the subject matter under "professionalism" but was rated as successfully meeting the requirement, while other candidates with the same assessment were rated as partially meeting and disqualified.
- In two cases, candidates who had superior performance in the online assessments and interviews and superior academic records were not selected. For instance, a candidate who scored 65 per cent in online assessments and interviews and holding a diploma was selected over a candidate who scored 91 per cent in online assessments and interviews and holding a bachelor's degree. The basis for not selecting the better performing candidate was not adequately documented. The hiring manager stated the former candidate had more relevant work experience but there was not sufficient evidence in the respective personal history profile to justify that conclusion.

⁴ The comparative analysis report provides a record of the performance of the candidates at the competency-based interviews and specify individuals' responses against each of the competency assessed.

21. While a review of the composition of 15 assessment panels indicated that the panels were appropriately constituted, 8 of the 33 panel members had not completed the mandatory CBI training. This was due to inadequate oversight by human resources officers to ensure that all panel members complete the training prior to being selected as a panel member. This increased the risk of not properly assessing and rating candidates. Also, there was no evidence that other panelists reviewed the comparative analysis report after the hiring manager had prepared it to confirm accuracy and as such, errors or misrepresentations on the performance of candidates could go unnoticed leading to increased selection risk.

(3) UNIFIL should strengthen the assessment process by: (i) restricting access to interview and online test questions and increasing security measures such as password protection over the transmittal of documents; (ii) ensuring assessment panel members have completed the United Nations competency-based interviewing training; and (iii) ensuring the comparative analysis report is endorsed by members of the assessment panel after compilation by the hiring manager.

UNIFIL accepted recommendation 3 and stated that it would, in consultation with the Office of Human Resources at UNHQ, look into the feasibility of utilizing the online testing platform available. The Mission would ensure that all panel members are CBI certified, effective immediately, and that all interview panel members endorse the contents of interview results elaborated in the comparative analysis report before being uploaded in Inspira.

UNIFIL was taking action to maintain adequate records of recruitment actions

22. For the 30 recruitments reviewed, HRS did not include necessary information in recruitment files as follows: (a) in 13 case files, there were no comparative analysis reports; (b) in 11 case files, there were no personal history profiles; (c) in 12 case files, there were no classified job descriptions; (d) in 28 files, there were no conflict of interest declaration forms signed by members of the assessment panel; and (e) in 15 cases, there were no performance evaluation reports that internal candidates were required to submit along with their applications. In addition, there was no dedicated secretariat for the MRP, and records of their meetings were not adequately maintained. These issues will be reviewed in a separate audit.

23. HRS attributed the lapses to operational challenges during the pandemic as staff worked remotely and filed documents on their individual computers. UNIFIL stated that it would ensure that recruitment files are part of the digitalization project that HRS is undertaking to be completed by 30 June 2022. Therefore, OIOS did not make a recommendation on this issue.

Need to address delays in recruitment

24. The recruitments undertaken by UNIFIL during the audit period are analyzed in Table 2. Sixty-eight per cent of recruitments were from the roster (RfR), and 11 per cent and 13 per cent of PSJOs for international and national staff, respectively were completed within the 120 days threshold. In addition, UNIFIL made offers to four staff on the Horizon platform that circulates profiles of staff affected by downsizing or restructuring in the United Nations Secretariat or field missions. Two of the offers were accepted. However, six PSJOs (24 per cent) for international positions were completed after more than a year and 87 per cent of PSJOs for national staff were completed late.

Table 2: Analysis of recruitment timelines for national and international staff

Modality	International		National		Total	Percentage completed timely	
	Completed on time	Completed late	Completed on time	Completed late		International	National
						%	%
PSJO	1	8	2	13	24	11%	13%
RfR	15	7	0	0	22	68%	0%
Total	16	15	2	13	46		

25. UNIFIL met the target timeline for most of the steps in the recruitment process including job posting dates, release of applicants' names to hiring managers, endorsement by the field review board or MRP, compliance review by HRS and selection by the Head of Mission. Nonetheless, recruitment data showed that 90 per cent of the delays were at the stage of evaluating candidates by hiring managers, taking an average of 220 days instead of the required 40 days.

26. The delays in recruitment occurred because technical sections did not prioritize the completion of evaluations as in most cases the positions had been filled temporarily. Further, UNIFIL was not using the RfR recruitment modality for national staff and therefore, not fully utilizing opportunities to expedite the filling of vacancies for national staff. Additionally, while 22 out of 31 international staff selections were from the roster, the Mission issued PSJOs for all job openings.

27. The Mission did not maintain a comprehensive roster database, which it attributed to inadequate guidelines on RfR for locally recruited staff. While HRS maintained rosters of candidates, they were fragmented and not timely updated or harmonized into relevant job families. The Mission acknowledged additional challenges with recruiting staff from rosters, such as outdated profiles, and highlighted the need to review the guidelines for selection of locally recruited staff. However, the review had not started.

(4) UNIFIL should address delays in the recruitment process by: (i) implementing mechanisms to ensure that hiring managers review candidates and submit evaluation results to the Human Resources Section within the stipulated 40-day timeframe; and (ii) reviewing the national staff recruitment process, including use of rosters and issue new guidelines as necessary.

UNIFIL accepted recommendation 4 and stated that it will implement mechanisms to support hiring managers to review and submit evaluation results to HRS within the stipulated timeframe. The Mission would also review the national staff recruitment process, including the role of rosters and issue new guidelines as necessary.

The Mission could improve involvement of the gender focal point in recruitment activities

28. All assessment panels included at least one female panelist as required. However, the Mission gender focal point was not involved in reviewing all applications from women candidates, prior to submission to the respective central review bodies, contrary to Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2008/12. The focal point also did not attend MRP meetings in an advisory capacity as required. The inclusion of the focal point for women is aimed at ensuring that eligible women candidates are given due consideration during evaluation stages of the applications prior to taking the case to MRP.

29. The Mission stated that it decided not to involve the focal point for women in evaluations to preserve the confidentiality of the selection process but there was no documentary evidence to support this. The Mission also held the view that having the focal point for women at all evaluations and MRPs may not

be practically feasible. The Secretary-General’s bulletin on the Global Central Review Board (ST/SGB/2016/4/Rev.1) requires the Board to designate one of its members to serve as a focal point for women. A similar designation of an MRP member could address this matter. UNIFIL agreed to make such a designation with immediate effect.

30. HRS was coordinating with the Gender Unit to ensure that job openings were broadcasted widely in local communities to encourage female participation. Of the 70 regular and temporary recruitments during the audit period 40 (57 per cent) were filled by women. As of 30 June 2021, UNIFIL had attained gender parity at the P-3, P-4 and National Officer levels.

Table 3: Gender balance as of 30 June 2021

Grade	Females	Males	Total	% Females	% Males	Recruitment of women in the period
ASG	0	1	1	0%	100%	
D1-D2	2	5	7	29%	71%	1
P4-P5	19	27	46	41%	59%	12
P2-P3	18	18	36	50%	50%	10
FS6-FS7	10	25	35	29%	71%	3
FS3-FS5	42	74	116	36%	64%	2
NOA-NOD	20	22	42	48%	52%	
G6-G7	18	31	49	37%	63%	3
G3-G5	114	357	471	24%	76%	9
	243	560	803			40

Source: HRS and OIOS analysis

Onboarding processes were timely but could be enhanced by a checklist

31. The Mission completed onboarding activities timely between one and two months, on average. Selected candidates were informed within the required 14 days of the selection decision. Unsuccessful candidates were also informed. However, the Mission did not provide new staff with a checklist of onboarding activities upon arrival to clarify the process and ensure all key activities are completed. While the Mission provided guidance to new staff, some processes such as application for life assurance within 90 days after arrival in the Mission, were not communicated to staff, who as a result, could not get life insurance. The use of a checklist could have mitigated this risk. This matter was also raised in the 2021 human resources survey by some correspondents. The Mission took note and committed to developing a checklist for new onboarding staff and therefore OIOS is not making a recommendation.

C. Performance management

The Mission tracked timely completion of performance appraisals

32. The Mission tracked completion of staff performance appraisals. For the performance period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, 777 out of 808 staff had completed their appraisals as of September 2021, representing a compliance rate of 96 per cent. HRS has engaged the Chiefs of Pillars to have the remaining 31 appraisals completed.

33. HRS did not have visibility of the performance management documents status/statistics for the 2021/2022 cycle as they were not yet available in the management dashboard. Since a new performance management approach is being rolled out within the Organization with effect from the 2021/2022 cycle, OIOS did not make a recommendation on this issue.

UNIFIL will take action on staff survey results consistently

34. In 2019, HRS conducted a survey of UNIFIL staff at the request of the Office of Human Resources. The survey results indicated several concerns of staff such as inconsistent application of disciplinary action between junior and senior staff members and lack of support in career development. Staff perceived that career development was based more on interpersonal relationships than on merit. Other areas of concern raised by staff included lack of transparency in decision-making processes, delays by HRS in processing client requests, inadequate knowledge by human resources staff, unclear reporting structures, and the need for better understanding of United Nations principles, values and staff entitlements.

35. To help address the concerns, HRS prepared action plans and organized presentations to staff. In April 2021, HRS conducted a follow-up survey. However, as of November 2021, the Mission had not yet analyzed the results or developed an action plan to address the issues or risks arising. UNIFIL stated that it would review the issue and take necessary action.

36. The Mission also undertook additional specific surveys on living conditions to address staff welfare. During the audit period, Lebanon experienced economic and financial crises, followed by the COVID-19 pandemic and an explosion at the Port of Beirut on 4 August 2020. The economic and financial crises have resulted in reduced electricity supply and diminished access to domestic water supplies, essential drugs, and food supplies, all of which have led to increased prices of commodities. The Mission had put some mechanisms in place to assist staff in obtaining basic commodities such as water and fuel. In addition, a counsellor was accessible for staff to help address mental and other health challenges arising from these conditions.

D. Learning management

Need for a fully integrated mission training structure comprising civilian and military personnel

37. Following a review of the training function in 2018, UNIFIL approved the creation of an integrated mission training centre (IMTC) to coordinate the development and implementation of a Mission-wide training plan and budget, harness training resources, prevent unnecessary duplication and enhance mandate implementation. The head of IMTC was reclassified to P-4 from P-3 Head of Training Unit due to the expanded scope. The key features of the integration required co-location of the civilian and military (J-7 Branch) training cells and collaboration and cooperation among all Mission components involved in training, such as the HIV/AIDS, Gender, and Regional Conduct and Discipline. The Chief of IMTC was to be the most senior civilian training officer in the Mission.

38. After the establishment of IMTC, the interaction between the civilian training cells and J-7 Branch improved slightly. For instance, IMTC is now responsible for nominating military officers to attend external courses and, upon request, for developing customized courses for the military component, such as intelligence and civil-military coordination courses. In addition, the civilian and military training cells are in the same building and share the same training facilities.

39. Apart from these changes, however, IMTC had not yet positioned itself as a strategic lead in the Mission's training efforts. The IMTC organogram only included civilian staff and not military staff. IMTC was primarily responsible for civilian training activities, while J-7 Branch independently planned and delivered military training activities with sub-optimal coordination. J-7 Branch reported to HoM/FC through the military Deputy Chief of Staff Operations without any technical reporting⁵ to the Head of

⁵ The head of the military training cells should technically report to the Chief IMTC while the Force Commander retained UN operational command and control.

IMTC, contrary to the United Nations Practical Guide to Training. The training cycle for the civilian component was from April to March, while that of the military was from July to June.

40. There was also no formal or systematic mechanism for collaboration or reporting between the two components, as well as between IMTC and other civilian training. Although IMTC held meetings with other training providers, these were ad hoc or transactional and not aimed at how best to foster training as a strategic resource in line with the United Nations Learning Strategy 2021-2025. There was no consolidated training database and reporting of training activities to the Integrated Training Services in New York was done separately despite the requirement for a consolidated report. OIOS noted that some military training activities were under-reported, and data was not sex-disaggregated. The need for enhanced planning and reporting of training activities was reiterated by Mission Leadership during the planning meeting conducted by IMTC for 2021/22.

41. Despite establishing IMTC, the Mission did not develop an action plan to achieve full integration of the civilian and military training functions mainly because of concerns of resistance from the military. However, the Military Deputy Chief of Staff stated there were no such misgivings. The lack of operational integration between IMTC and J-7 Branch invalidated the rationale for the creation of IMTC and deprived the Mission from realizing the envisaged synergy with regards to mission-wide needs assessment, delivery, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting of training activities.

(5) UNIFIL should take action to ensure the training function achieves full integration through: (i) realignment of the integrated mission training centre (IMTC) structure to incorporate military training cell (J-7 Branch) in accordance with the United Nations Secretariat policy on training; (ii) establishment of a centralized database for both IMTC and J-7 Branch training data; and (iii) harmonization of the training calendar to facilitate evaluation of training functions.

UNIFIL accepted recommendation 5 and stated that it will establish a centralised database of training data and harmonise the training calendar to facilitate evaluation of the training function. The Mission would also undertake a comprehensive assessment to analyse the operational risks and opportunities of integrated training and present it for management review and decision.

Need to enhance identification of training needs and monitoring of implementation of a training plan and budget

42. Prior to developing their respective training plans⁶, both IMTC and J-7 Branch undertook needs assessment to identify skills and performance gaps that require training interventions. However, the learning needs assessment mechanism was not adequate. For example, it did not compile and analyze the required and existing competencies to identify the gaps as required by the United Nations Practical Guide to Training. Moreover, the prioritization and factors that were considered in preparing the training plan were not documented nor did it incorporate results of the 2020 United Nations Secretariat learning needs assessment⁷ as an input to further refine the learning strategy. Several training activities noted on the training plans for 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22 such as Microsoft Excel (intermediate to advanced), Microsoft Outlook and presentation skills, were for courses that were readily available on platforms such as LinkedIn Learning to which the United Nations already subscribed.

⁶ The military training plan is the Force Commander Training Directive which includes exercises and designated trainings to be undertaken by the military in a given fiscal year.

⁷ The United Nations conducted a global learning needs assessment for the Secretariat in 2020, which identified seven learning priority areas namely, coordination/partnership, monitoring and evaluation, data analytics, knowledge management, gender mainstreaming, capacity building, and advanced information technology and programming skills.

43. The lack of a well-documented needs assessment could have contributed to the high number of planned training activities not being undertaken, while other unplanned training activities such as child protection, cultural sensitivity, presentation skills, managing workplace conflict and facilitation skills were conducted as shown in Table 4. Equally, the United Nations Practical Guide to Training recommends that the head of mission approves the training priorities as contained in the mission-wide training plan to support enhanced mandate implementation. At the time of the audit, (eight months into the training calendar year), HoM/FC had not approved the Mission Training Plan. UNIFIL stated that previous years' mission training plans had been approved by the Chief of the Mission Support Centre and the current one was being reviewed by the Director of Mission Support, Deputy Head of Mission and Principal Coordinator.

Table 4: Number of training programmes planned and conducted

Year	Courses planned	Planned courses conducted	Planned courses not undertaken	Courses not in plan but conducted
2019/20	41	9	32	69
2020/21	43	7	36	28
2021/22	47	7	40	19

44. Further, neither IMTC nor J-7 Branch periodically monitored and evaluated the implementation of their respective training plans, especially for internal courses that did not attract training fees. While course evaluations were completed by participants, post training evaluation⁸ was not done to measure improvements in job performance and productivity after participants have had a reasonable amount of time to apply knowledge, skills, and behavioural changes to the work environment. There was also no mechanism to measure learning outcomes of paid courses of \$576,000 and \$554,000 for 2019/20 and 2020/21 respectively, despite the Mission stating that was done. In 2021, the IMTC developed a mechanism to enable it to manage and monitor the training budget.

45. While IMTC conducted training surveys to identify training needs, there were no documented analyses of these surveys or of the assumptions used in arriving at the Mission's training priorities. There was also a lack of an effective training focal point system. Responses to an OIOS survey of 15 out of 29 training focal points indicated that they had received no training or written terms of reference for the role and the nominations were verbal in many cases. The understanding of the requirements of the role differed widely to achieve a coherent and effective focal point system. Two-thirds of the respondents also stated that they were not evaluated in their performance appraisals for their role as training focal points.

(6) UNIFIL should: (i) enhance its learning needs assessment by ensuring that analyses of results and assumptions used in evaluating training needs are documented; (ii) monitor and report on the implementation of the training plan, especially courses that do not attract fees; (iii) evaluate the impact of high-cost training programmes; and (iv) clarify the approving authority for the Mission Training Plan and ensure it is approved timely.

UNIFIL accepted recommendation 6 and stated that, while it conducts learning needs assessment periodically, it needed to improve the analysis and documentation of these assessment results. The Mission would also monitor the implementation of planned no-cost training programmes on a quarterly basis and had already shared with OIOS, an example of the report it intended to prepare. IMTC consistently evaluates participants' satisfaction and learning in every training programme and would conduct higher-order evaluations on the application and impact of a few high-impact

⁸ The evaluation of training programmes during the duration of the training are technically referred to as evaluations at levels 0,1 and 2. Following completion of training, it is necessary to conduct follow up evaluation to determine if the desired outcome and impact have been achieved (levels 3 and 4).

and high-cost courses. The Mission Training Plan 2022-23 was approved by the Head of Mission and promulgated in January 2022.

- (7) UNIFIL should strengthen the training focal point system by developing terms of reference, providing training to focal points, and ensuring that their workplans include a goal for effective implementation of the training programmes in their respective sections.**

UNIFIL accepted recommendation 7 and stated that it will conduct a session for training focal points of various sections to disseminate the Terms of Reference and deliver relevant training. A written communication would also be sent to section chiefs to remind and ensure that their workplans in the new performance year include a goal for effective implementation of training programmes.

Monitoring of mandatory training to be conducted regularly

46. ST/SGB/2018/4 on mandatory programmes outlines courses that all staff are required to take regardless of their level, their duty or functions. OIOS noted that IMTC monitored compliance with the civilian mandatory training applicable for all staff. As of 30 June 2021, an average of 98.2 per cent of staff had completed the mandatory training. While the Mission had a mechanism for monitoring position specific mandatory training such as that required for supervisors, staff at P-4 and P-5 levels, and for management development programmes which are applicable to P-4 and above, and other job-specific training, this was not periodically updated. At the time of the audit, the latest statistics was in November 2020. The Mission undertook to periodically update the statistics and as a result OIOS is not making any recommendation.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

47. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of UNIFIL 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 management of human resources processes in the
United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon**

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁹ / Important ¹⁰	C/ O ¹¹	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ¹²
1	UNIFIL should develop and implement recruitment plans to limit use of temporary job openings and ensure that key positions are filled timely.	Important	O	Receipt of the Mission's recruitment and workforce plans and evidence of implementation.	30 June 2022
2	UNIFIL should provide training to hiring managers on building job openings and promptly communicate concerns over any highly restrictive evaluation criteria to the hiring managers.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of training provided to hiring managers and improved communication between HRS and hiring managers on highly restrictive evaluation criteria.	30 June 2022
3	UNIFIL should strengthen the assessment process by: (i) restricting access to interview and online test questions and increasing security measures such as password protection over the transmittal of documents; (ii) ensuring assessment panel members have completed the United Nations competency-based interviewing training; and (iii) ensuring the comparative analysis report is endorsed by members of the assessment panel after compilation by the hiring manager.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of (i) increased security over interview and online test questions; (ii) measures to ensure all assessment panel members are CBI certified; and (iii) endorsement of the comparative analysis report by members of assessment panels.	30 April 2022
4	UNIFIL should address delays in the recruitment process by: (i) implementing mechanisms to ensure that hiring managers review candidates and submit evaluation results to the Human Resources Section within the stipulated 40-day timeframe; and (ii) reviewing the national staff recruitment process, including use of rosters and issue new guidelines as necessary.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of: (i) mechanisms implemented to ensure completion of evaluation of candidates within the stipulated timeframe; and (ii) results of the review of the national staff recruitment process and any accompanying guidelines.	30 June 2022
5	UNIFIL should take action to ensure the training function achieves full integration through: (i) realignment of the integrated mission training centre (IMTC) structure to incorporate military training cell (J-7 Branch) in accordance with the United Nations Secretariat policy on training; (ii) establishment of a centralized database for both	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that a centralised training database has been established and there is a harmonized training calendar, as well as evidence of the realignment of the IMTC structure to incorporate J-7 branch.	31 July 2022

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

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	IMTC and J-7 Branch training data; and (iii) harmonization of the training calendar to facilitate evaluation of training functions.				
6	UNIFIL should: (i) enhance its learning needs assessment by ensuring that analyses of results and assumptions used in evaluating training needs are documented; (ii) monitor and report on the implementation of the training plan, especially courses that do not attract fees; (iii) evaluate the impact of high-cost training programmes; and (iv) clarify the approving authority for the Mission Training Plan and ensure it is approved timely.	Important	O	Receipt of the analyses and results of learning needs assessments, as well as evidence of monitoring of the training plan and evaluation of high-cost training programmes.	31 October 2022
7	UNIFIL should strengthen the training focal point system by developing terms of reference, providing training to focal points, and ensuring that their workplans include a goal for effective implementation of the training programmes in their respective sections.	Important	O	Receipt of the terms of reference for the training focal points and evidence of training and advice provided on assessing their performance.	30 June 2022

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

¹² Date provided by UNIFIL in response to recommendations.

APPENDIX I

Management Response

Management Response

Audit of management of human resources processes in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	UNIFIL should develop and implement recruitment plans to limit use of temporary job openings and ensure that key positions are filled timely.	Important	Yes	CHRO	30 June 2022	UNIFIL will continue working with Mission management and programme managers on establishing proper plans in order to timely fill the key positions. Human Resources Section is also working on preparation of the workforce plan for UNIFIL.
2	UNIFIL should provide training to hiring managers on building job openings and promptly communicate concerns over any highly restrictive evaluation criteria to the hiring managers.	Important	Yes	CHRO	30 June 2022	UNIFIL will provide training to hiring managers while Human Resources Section will continue to communicate with hiring managers on evaluation criteria.
3	UNIFIL should strengthen the assessment process by: (i) restricting access to interview and online tests questions and increasing security measures such as password protection over the transmittal of documents; (ii) ensuring assessment panel members have completed the United Nations competency-based interviewing training; and (iii) ensuring the comparative analysis report is endorsed by members of the assessment panel after compilation by the hiring manager.	Important	Yes	CHRO	30 April 2022	UNIFIL will in consultation with the Office of Human Resources at UNHQ look into the feasibility of utilizing the online testing platform available. The Mission would also ensure that interview panel members are CBI certified and that all interview panel members endorse the contents of interview results elaborated in the comparative analysis report before being uploaded in Inspira.
4	UNIFIL should address delays in the recruitment process by: (i) implementing mechanisms to ensure that hiring managers	Important	Yes	CHRO	30 June 2022	UNIFIL will implement mechanisms to support hiring managers to review and submit evaluation results to HRS

¹ 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.

² 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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Audit of management of human resources processes in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

	review candidates and submit evaluation results to the Human Resources Section within the stipulated 40-day timeframe; and (ii) reviewing the national staff recruitment process, including use of rosters and issue new guidelines as necessary.					within the stipulated timeframe. The Mission would also review the national staff recruitment process, including the role of rosters and issue new guidelines as necessary.
5	UNIFIL should take action to ensure the training function achieves full integration through: (i) realignment of the integrated mission training centre (IMTC) structure to incorporate military training cell (J-7 Branch) in accordance with the United Nations Secretariat policy on training; (ii) establishment of a centralized database for both IMTC and J-7 Branch training data; and (iii) harmonization of the training calendar to facilitate evaluation of training functions.	Important	Yes	DMS in coordination with COS	31 July 2022	UNIFIL will establish a centralized database of training data and will harmonize the training calendar to facilitate evaluation of training functions. The mission will also undertake a comprehensive assessment to analyze the operational risks and opportunities of a training integration and present it for management review and decision.
6	UNIFIL should: (i) enhance its learning needs assessment by ensuring that analyses of results and assumptions used in evaluating training needs are documented; (ii) monitor and report on the implementation of the training plan, especially courses that do not attract fees; (iii) evaluate the impact of high-cost training programmes; and (iv) clarify the approving authority for the Mission Training Plan and ensure it is approved timely.	Important	Yes	CIMTC	31 October 2022	(i) The learning needs assessments are currently conducted periodically. The mission will improve the analysis and documentation of these assessment results. (ii) The implementation of fee-paying training courses is already closely monitored and reported. UNIFIL acknowledges the need to monitor the implementation of planned no-cost training programmes and will ensure they are monitored on a quarterly basis. (iii) UNIFIL consistently evaluates training participants' satisfaction and learning in every training programme. UNIFIL will conduct evaluations on the

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						applications and impacts of high-impact and high-cost courses. (iv) Mission Training Plan 2022-2023 was signed by HoM and promulgated in January 2022.
7	UNIFIL should strengthen the training focal point system by developing terms of reference, providing training to focal points, and ensuring that their workplans include a goal for effective implementation of the training programmes in their respective sections.	Important	Yes	CIMTC	30 June 2022	UNIFIL will conduct a session for Training Focal Points of various sections to disseminate the Terms of Reference and deliver relevant training. A written communication will be sent to section chiefs to remind and ensure that their work plans in the new performance year include a goal for effective implementation of training programmes.