



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2023/075

Audit of reform management in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

**There is a need to improve planning,
implementation and monitoring of change
initiatives to ensure the intended objectives
are achieved**

**20 December 2023
Assignment No. AN2022-590-02**

Audit of reform management in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of reform management in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of OCHA in planning and implementing its change management and staff relocation processes. The audit covered the period from January 2019 to December 2022. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium-risk areas in the reform management, which included: (a) oversight of change process; and (b) relocation of selected Headquarters functions.

OCHA had initiated various reforms and change processes to improve the operational effectiveness of the Office as part of the Secretary-General's reform agenda. However, there was insufficient oversight of these change processes. For instance, certain OCHA committees and groups involved in the changes were not activated to offer strategic guidance. This lack of operationalization was confirmed in responses to the OIOS survey conducted during the audit, where participants expressed uncertainty about whom to consult regarding the relocation process. Similarly, relocation decisions lacked adequate justifications. There was no clarification on why some posts within the same unit were relocated, and the consequences of splitting teams were not thoroughly assessed. In some relocation decisions, logistical support, including administrative capacity and other resources, was not adequately considered. Additionally, OCHA did not undertake a detailed analysis of both short-term and long-term cost implications of the relocation decisions. Finally, OCHA also needed to enhance the security of its staff and premises in The Hague.

OIOS made six important recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, OCHA needed to:

- Develop procedures for approving and overseeing changes in its structure, systems and processes that include provisions for participative decision-making between management and staff regarding decisions that impact staff welfare;
- Conduct a review of the impact of relocating staff who frequently travel to their original duty stations, splitting teams, and staff who were relocated but never moved to their new duty stations;
- Develop guidelines for establishing offices away from headquarters, including assessing the required administrative capacity;
- Review the cases of staff in receipt of settling-in grant entitlements who did not physically remain at the new duty station and take action as necessary, including recovery of any related payments;
- Improve the dotted line reporting requirements including by developing standard operating procedures on the reporting requirements; and leveraging technology to notify heads of offices about staff movements for leave or for flexible work arrangements; and
- Take steps to improve security of staff in The Hague, including following up on the request made to International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals to conduct a security risk assessment and enhance security at the office premises;

OCHA accepted the recommendations and has initiated action to implement them. Actions required to close the recommendations are indicated in Annex 1.

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I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of reform management in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

2. By its resolution 46/182 dated 19 December 1991, the General Assembly created OCHA as part of the United Nations Secretariat to further strengthen and make more effective the collective humanitarian efforts of the United Nations system in responding to complex emergencies and natural disasters in countries in need. OCHA brings together humanitarian actors to ensure a coherent response to emergencies. It is responsible for delivering five core functions: (a) coordination, (b) humanitarian financing, (c) policy, (d) advocacy, and (e) information management. OCHA also manages country-based pooled funds and the Central Emergency Response Fund to help ensure that urgently needed humanitarian assistance reaches people of concern as quickly and effectively as possible.

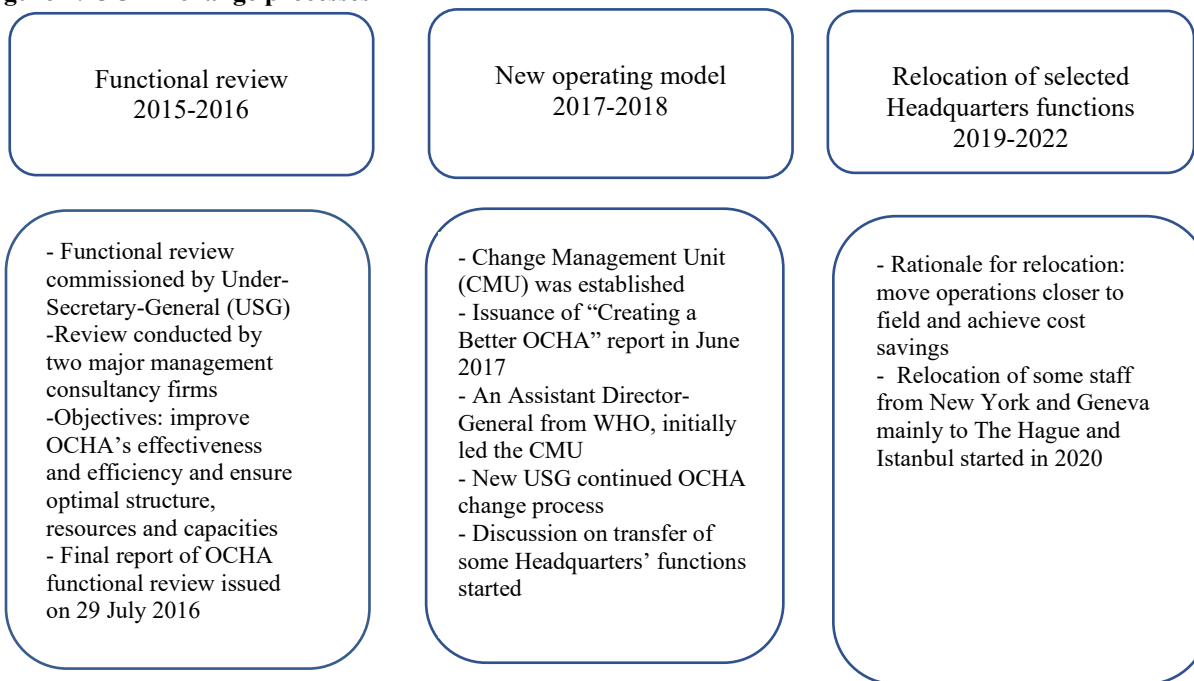
3. OCHA is headed by the Under-Secretary-General (USG) for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator supported by an Assistant Secretary-General (ASG). It is funded by regular budget and extrabudgetary resources, with estimated staffing of 2,132, 2,132 and 2,257 personnel for the years 2021, 2022 and 2023, respectively. OCHA's proposed programme budget for the period under review is shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Overview of OCHA funding from 2018 - 2023
(Thousands of United States dollars)

<i>Source</i>	<i>Proposed programme budget period</i>	<i>Regular budget</i>	<i>Extrabudgetary</i>	<i>Total</i>
A/72/6 (Sect.27)	2018-2019	38,153.9	707,025.0	745,178.9
A/74/6 (Sect.27)	2020	17,896.9	333,751.6	351,648.5
A/75/6 (Sect.27)	2021	18,078.2	332,447.6	350,525.8
A/76/6 (Sect.27)	2022	18,544.1	396,993.7	415,537.8
A/77/6 (Sect.27)	2023	18,544.1	387,739.7	406,283.8

4. Since 2015, OCHA has embarked on various reforms and change processes to enhance the operational effectiveness of the Office and as part of the Secretary-General's reform agenda. A summary of these changes is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: OCHA change processes



5. In 2015, OCHA commissioned a functional review that was conducted by two major management consultancy firms. The objective of the review was to identify opportunities to improve OCHA's effectiveness and efficiency and to ensure that the Office had an optimal structure, resources and capacities to deliver its mandate and to make it fit for the future. The outcome of the functional review was articulated in a blueprint dubbed the Creating a Better OCHA report and adopted by OCHA's executive management committee in 2017. This resulted in OCHA's new operating model, which aimed at: (a) excellence and coherence across the Office, where functions would learn from each other by sharing best practices; (b) streamlining the activities and structure of OCHA's five core functions where each function and output would be placed under the responsibility of a specific organizational unit, i.e., division, branch or section; and (c) enhancing collaboration between OCHA Headquarters and field-based offices.

6. OCHA began discussions to relocate some of its Headquarters' functions for both operational and financial reasons in 2018. Selected Headquarters functions from five organizational units were moved mainly to The Hague and Istanbul starting in 2020. This initiative aimed to pursue working modalities that were more cost-effective.

7. Comments provided by OCHA are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

8. The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of OCHA in planning and implementing its change management and staff relocation processes.

9. The audit was included in the 2022 risk-based work plan because OCHA had gone through a series of change processes, which needed to be properly managed to ensure continued effectiveness in delivering its mandate.

10. OIOS conducted this audit from October 2022 to May 2023. The audit covered the period from January 2019 to December 2022. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and

medium risks relating to OCHA reform process regarding the following: (a) oversight of change process; and (b) relocation of selected Headquarters functions.

11. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key personnel; (b) review of relevant documentation; (c) analytical review of data; and (d) sample testing of activities in OCHA's staff relocation planning and outcomes. OIOS also conducted a confidential survey to collect more information on the experiences and views of the 373 staff of the five functional areas, including 11 former OCHA staff (retirees or separated), who were directly or indirectly involved in the relocation process. Responses were received from 115 respondents (31 per cent) and have been incorporated in the report as necessary.

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

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Oversight of change processes

Inadequate oversight of OCHA change processes.

13. OCHA's change processes began with the commissioning of a functional review, which was undertaken in 2016. The results were presented under five main headings, namely: (a) role and operating model; (b) management model; (c) organizational design; (d) people and staffing; and (e) culture. Based on the outcome of the functional review, OCHA management made a case for change, which articulated the goal of making OCHA a more focused, agile and unified organization. The resulting report, *Creating a Better OCHA*, articulated changes in OCHA's operations and proposed a new operating model, as well as changes in how OCHA manages people that resulted in proposing the development of a new People Strategy.

14. To implement the change process, OCHA established: (a) an internal operations committee, whose objective was to ensure the functioning of internal processes and systems and the smooth running of the new operating model; (b) five global functional teams responsible for functional excellence; (c) five regional support teams that would allow cross-functional collaboration in support of the field; and (d) common interest groups intended to support peer-to-peer learning of heads of OCHA offices.

15. As part of the new operating model, OCHA consolidated its regional presence into five locations to optimize alignment with key operational partners and key regional actors. In addition, OCHA's 2018-2021 strategic plan was aligned with the vision set out in the *Creating a Better OCHA* document. The relocation of posts and related staff in the five functional areas from Headquarters locations to The Hague and Istanbul encountered several difficulties as detailed in Part B of the report.

16. OIOS review of the implementation of the change processes in OCHA identified the following:

- (a) Various OCHA committees and groupings were involved in the change processes, including the executive management committee (EMC),¹ change management unit,² OCHA change agents,³

¹ Advisory body that ensures OCHA senior leadership receive necessary information to take strategic decisions effectively

² Established to move forward the findings and recommendations of the functional review

³ Liaison between staff and OCHA senior management on feedback regarding proposed decentralization

internal operations committee,⁴ global functional teams and regional support teams⁵, and the Organizational Development Unit (ODU) which was responsible for reviewing OCHA's systems, processes and structures on a continuous basis. The internal operations committee and EMC had formal terms of reference and met periodically to deliberate on OCHA's operations including the new operating model. However, there were no documents to show that the other groupings were operationalized and the outcome of their work on OCHA's change processes, including the planning and follow-up on the expected benefits.

- (b) The inadequacy of the governance mechanisms over the change processes was corroborated in responses to the OIOS survey conducted during the audit, in which respondents indicated that they did not know who to consult regarding the relocation process (68 per cent). A task force was established to mediate between staff identified for relocation and management, but it did not have clear terms of reference and only 26 per cent of surveyed staff indicated that they were aware of its existence and role.
- (c) ODU was disbanded in 2022 due to a reprioritization of OCHA's operational needs. However, procedures to formalize requests for changes in structure and processes had not yet been developed. In addition, there was a lack of clarity on the roles and responsibilities in implementing OCHA change management processes, which increased the risk of gaps and overlaps and reduced accountability. The 2020 MOPAN⁶ assessment of OCHA also noted that there was no formal requirement to ensure that lessons learned are adopted in future change management processes.

(1) OCHA should develop procedures for approving and overseeing changes in its structure, systems and processes that include provisions for participative decision-making between management and staff regarding decisions that impact staff welfare.

OCHA accepted recommendation 1 and stated that the Senior Leader Group (SLG) would issue a decision requiring that all changes in OCHA structure, systems and processes need prior approval, including provisions for participative decision-making between management and staff regarding decisions that impact staff welfare. The Strategy, Planning, Budget and Finance Section in the Executive Office will be responsible for reviewing any documentation for changes to the organization structure and making necessary recommendations to SLG.

B. Relocation of selected Headquarters functions

17. Beginning 2020, 89 posts and the related staff were relocated to mainly Istanbul and The Hague from the following five organizational units (a) the Coordination Division (CD); (b) Information Management Branch (IMB); (c) Strategic Communications Branch (SCB); (d) Humanitarian Financing and Resource Mobilization Division (HFRMD); and (e) OCHA's Executive Office (EO). Figure 2 shows the geographical distribution of posts in the five organizational units as of December 2022.

⁴ Established to oversee the implementation of the new operating model

⁵ Constituted to support predictable, cross-functional collaboration in support of the field operations

⁶ The Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) comprises 21 countries that share a common interest in assessing the performance of the major multilateral organizations they fund. MOPAN assessments provide a multidimensional snapshot, of an organization performance, within its mandate.

Figure 2: Distribution of posts as of December 2022 in the organizational units impacted by relocation.



Note: Other locations are Nairobi, Bangkok, Panama and Dakar

Relocation decisions were not supported by adequate rationale

18. The OCHA guidance on relocations and decentralization indicated that the rationale for relocation included: (a) expanding presence to areas where operations were being conducted; (b) generating cost savings; and (c) broadening opportunities for staff career development and movement. The business cases prepared by OCHA for relocation of staff to Istanbul and The Hague indicated the strategic objectives of the relocation and highlighted the expected outcomes thereof. While the business cases indicated the posts that would be relocated, the decisions were not supported by documentation of the rationale and appeared to be arbitrary in some instances, as shown in the examples below. This was partly due to the absence of guidance on change management that is addressed in recommendation 1.

- (a) Justification for the decision to relocate some posts and not others in the same units or with similar functions was not provided in the cases shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of relocation as per the business case for decentralization of OCHA Headquarters posts to Istanbul

<i>Unit</i>	<i>Total staff</i>	<i>Staff to be relocated</i>	<i>Comment</i>
IASC (Inter-Agency Standing Committee) Secretariat and Thematic Team	8	1	Only the P5 in charge of preventing sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment was selected for relocation.

<i>Unit</i>	<i>Total staff</i>	<i>Staff to be relocated</i>	<i>Comment</i>
Needs and Response Section	13	2	Inconsistent treatment of staff conducting the same functions. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section had two P-4 Humanitarian Affairs Officers/Needs Analysis Officers; however, only one was relocated. • Section had three P-3 Humanitarian Affairs Officers, only one was relocated.
System-Wide Approaches and Practices Section	12	4	Posts with similar functions but only select posts were relocated: two P-4 Humanitarian Affairs Officers/Monitoring; two G-6 positions.

- (b) Contrary to the Creating a Better OCHA report, which had proposed that information management be led by Geneva due to IMB’s strong reliance on partner collaboration, the head of the Branch as well as all IMB staff previously based in Geneva and New York were relocated to Istanbul.
- (c) The relocation had resulted in splitting the teams in CD, SCB, HFRMD and EO previously located in Geneva or New York. However, the impact of splitting the teams was not adequately assessed. Most of the staff in the OIOS survey (67 per cent) indicated that they faced professional challenges on being relocated to either Istanbul or The Hague. Sixty-nine per cent of staff whose teams were split disagreed with the statement that splitting of teams had positively affected staff morale.

19. Justifications for selecting The Hague and Istanbul as the relocation destinations included that they already hosted several international organizations that specialized in international humanitarian and human rights laws; had diverse partnerships with global south partners, research and academic centres, and digital experts; or were part of the United Nations system. Moreover, OCHA already had an office in The Hague with an existing host country agreement, a factor which made it suitable as a place for relocation. OCHA presence in Istanbul was also opportune as it was in a position to lead one of the two task forces that developed a coordinated approach on the shipment of Ukrainian grain under the Black Sea Grain Initiative.⁷

20. However, the principal interlocutors of some OCHA staff in The Hague and Istanbul continue to be international agencies and partners in Geneva. This has resulted in frequent travel of staff mainly from the Civil-Military Coordination Section (CMCS) and Information Services Section. In addition, none of the three staff from the Humanitarian Development Collaboration Section whose posts were relocated to Istanbul moved, as they stated that most of their interlocutors were based in their original duty stations.

21. Logistical support was also not adequately considered in some relocation decisions. Two staff members whose functions primarily involved configuring and deploying network equipment and providing technical support to Geneva-based teams were relocated to Istanbul. One staff member was unable to perform their functions in Istanbul because the equipment was stored in Geneva and could not be transferred to Istanbul due to lack of storage space and logistics challenges, while the other had to travel to offer support to the teams in Geneva. Consequently, one of the staff members travelled to Geneva 11 times in the 15-

⁷ Initiative is aimed at improving the agricultural sector in the Black Sea region involving countries such as Ukraine, Russia and Kazakhstan. OCHA coordinates the initiative to bridge the global food supply gap and reduce pressure on high prices.

month period from 1 October 2021 to 31 December 2022, while the other travelled 7 times in the 12-month period he was in Istanbul. OCHA did not document the rationale to relocate these posts.

22. In addition, OCHA did not prepare a detailed analysis of both the short-term and long-term cost implications of the relocation decisions. The USG's memo to OCHA staff dated September 2019 stated that the relocation of 65 posts would result in one-off costs of approximately \$4 million. Projected savings from relocation of these posts was estimated at \$4.8 million, which were anticipated to be reinvested into recruiting additional staff, enabling more field missions and procuring services/infrastructure for field offices. While the cost plans for IMB, SCB, EO and HFRMD increased following the relocation exercise, OCHA continued to incur costs that were not anticipated or otherwise preventable, such as the above travel costs amounting to approximately \$490,000 between July 2021 and November 2022.

(2) OCHA should conduct a review of: (a) the impact of the relocation of staff whose functions require them to travel frequently to their original duty stations to carry out their duties; (b) the impact of splitting teams; and (c) staff who were relocated but never moved to their new duty stations, and take corrective action as needed.

OCHA accepted recommendation 2 and stated that CD and IMB had been reviewing and addressing the specific cases listed in the report. CMCS had developed a regionalization strategy and also proposed to establish two liaison positions in Geneva and Brussels to strengthen and bolster partnership with Member States and key stakeholders such as North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union. A multi-year connectivity project that had necessitated frequent travel between Geneva and Istanbul was nearing completion, which will reduce travel between the two locations to one to two times a year. In addition, the Human Resources Section (HRS) will review cases of all staff who were relocated to Istanbul and The Hague and ensure corrective action is taken, if/when needed.

Duty of care elements were not mainstreamed into staff relocation planning and implementation

23. To uphold its commitment to duty of care during the relocation process, OCHA issued a guidance note on human resources on 30 September 2019, which indicated that staff would be promptly informed of the options available as well as the outcome of human resources realignments in their respective situations. The note further stated that efforts would be made to place staff who did not wish to relocate in other positions. OIOS review of correspondence between OCHA and staff who were identified for relocation indicated that none of the staff who did not wish to relocate was successfully placed in another position. As a result, nine staff who could not move to the new duty station separated from OCHA and five staff relocated but soon after went on flexible working arrangements away from the new duty station. In addition, some staff interviewed stated that they felt targeted to relocate.

24. Staff also cited an aggressive attitude from management, who pushed staff to relocate, even during the COVID-19 pandemic, which made settling in very difficult. Staff surveyed also indicated that they faced personal challenges including high rent deposits and lack of onboarding and settling-in support, due to inadequate administrative capacity. Other personal challenges cited in various communications with staff representatives included that OCHA did not make efforts to keep families together or to support staff and their dependents to assimilate into the society. Staff registered their concerns regarding the relocation outcomes either directly with their functional managers or through OCHA staff representatives. OIOS review of these records indicated that while the staff representatives had escalated the issues to OCHA management, several issues remained unresolved.

25. OCHA may benefit from benchmarking its business transformation processes with other policies, practices and lessons learned from similar entities and adapting proven models and initiatives to enhance decision-making. For example, while the new administrative instruction ST/AI/2023/1 deals with

downsizing or restructuring resulting in termination of appointments, some of its key elements could be useful for managing other forms of restructuring including relocation of staff. Good practices include participative decision-making whereby, the impact of decisions on reform exercises should be considered jointly by staff and management through a group like the staff-management group stipulated in the administrative instruction. Similarly, a mechanism for deciding the order in which staff members are to be considered for either retention or relocation should be established in line with the mechanism articulated in the administrative instruction. This issue has been addressed in recommendation 1.

Operational aspects of staff relocation were not adequately considered

26. Discussions to relocate some Headquarters functions commenced in 2018 and the first staff member moved to Istanbul in July 2021 due to COVID-19-related restrictions on movement and travel and other reasons. Nonetheless, the relocation planning was not adequate as shown in the examples below:

(a) Delays in signing the host country agreement

27. OCHA amended the existing host country agreement between the United Nations and Netherlands in January 2020 to expand its presence in The Hague and subsume the previously existing Humanitarian Data Centre. However, the signing of the host country agreement with the Türkiye government was delayed and eventually signed in January 2021 and ratified by the host government's parliament in June 2021. While OCHA was waiting for the formalization of the legal framework to operate in Türkiye, it repeatedly deferred the relocation dates for staff. Staff interviewed stated that this delay and inadequate communication from management on the process caused them anxiety and stress as they awaited the outcome. This was confirmed by the OIOS survey results as only 10 per cent of respondents agreed that appropriate measures were taken to mitigate the impact of relocation on them.

(b) Inadequate planning for required administrative capacity and other resources

28. There were 18 staff in Istanbul by the end of 2021, which gradually increased to 42 by the end of 2022. However, due to a lack of administrative capacity, initial administrative support was provided by an OCHA staff member based in Gaziantep on a voluntary basis and staff from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) office in Istanbul, complemented by contractors/consultants provided by the United Nations Office for Project Services. OCHA Istanbul eventually recruited a dedicated national staff to cover all administrative activities, including processing of Ministry of Foreign Affairs registrations, identity cards, travel and visa, and finance and human resources management.

29. The administrative workload was burdensome for one person, resulting in burnout and delays in processing some transactions. In addition, neither office in The Hague and Istanbul had dedicated capacity to cover information and communication technology (ICT) related requests, protocol issues, petty cash and various administrative interventions with local authorities and institutions. Other missing resources included inadequate office space, petty cash imprest and storage facilities. In late 2022, the OCHA office in The Hague obtained budget approval to fill the position of an ICT assistant and assigned a petty cash custodian.

30. The inadequate administrative capacity in the Istanbul office was also confirmed by an assessment conducted by OCHA's Executive Office in January 2022 to evaluate OCHA's administrative needs to clarify and update UNDP-OCHA working arrangements. Following the Executive Office's mission, four posts were approved for administrative functions, and a petty-cash custodian was assigned, trained, role-mapped in Umoja and provided with requisite delegation of authority.

31. Similar inadequacies in planning the operational administrative aspects of establishing a new office were highlighted in a recent OIOS audit (2022/018).⁸ The audit noted that the policy instruction on the roles and responsibilities of country offices, which indicates the structures of small, medium and large offices, did not articulate the administrative requirements for establishing such country offices. OCHA stated that it would update its operational guidance for establishing country offices by June 2024. Likewise, OCHA may benefit from developing guidelines for establishing its offices away from headquarters.

(c) OCHA did not secure adequate office premises for relocated staff

32. Anticipated savings relating to transferring some Headquarters functions to Istanbul were partly going to be realized through the generous contribution of the host nation. However, while the agreement between the United Nations and the Republic of Türkiye concerning the establishment of the OCHA Office in Istanbul stated that the Government would provide appropriate premises for the OCHA office, the Government had not yet provided the office premises. Consequently, OCHA in Istanbul was renting office premises from the World Food Programme (WFP). Rental costs incurred between 1 June 2021 and 31 December 2022 amounted to \$169,500. The memorandum of understanding between WFP and OCHA for the rental of these premises was extended until 14 December 2023 at a monthly cost of \$10,558. Therefore, the OCHA office will incur a total of \$289,445 on the rent of premises to December 2023 as the agreement with the Republic of Türkiye government had not yet materialized. Moreover, the existing space was able to accommodate only 18 out of 42 OCHA personnel in Istanbul.

33. Several staff indicated that they had to move and start working from their homes, including away from the duty station, since adequate office space was not available. This issue was being followed up by OCHA senior management who also indicated that they would continue to liaise with the host nation, Türkiye to honor their commitment to provide free premises.

(3) OCHA should develop guidelines for establishing offices away from headquarters, including assessing the required administrative capacity.

OCHA accepted recommendation 3 and stated that it was in the process of reviewing its Policy Instruction on Country Offices and would ensure that the relevant parts of the instruction also apply to the establishment of OCHA global hubs in line with the guidance from the Chef de Cabinet on procedures for the establishment of United Nations offices away from Headquarters.

Need to improve management of flexible working arrangements

34. OCHA was implementing flexible work arrangements (FWA) as a strategic staffing management solution. The policy on FWA (ST/SGB/2019/3) indicates that first reporting officers were considered best placed to assess the functions and performance of staff when requests for FWA were made. However, the following anomalies were observed relating to FWA requests, approvals and extensions following the staff relocations:

- (a) Rule 7.11 of the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules of the United Nations (ST/SGB/2023/1) stipulates the payment of a settling-in grant consisting of: (i) 30 days daily subsistence allowance (DSA) and (ii) lump-sum portion for costs of installation incurred at the outset of an assignment. The spirit of this rule therefore is to ease the settling-in of staff and to cover additional costs of taking up residence at a new duty station. Four staff were paid settling-in grants but availed themselves of FWA outside the duty station within less than 30 days of arrival in Istanbul as shown in Table 3. These staff never returned to Istanbul even though they retained the 30 days DSA and

⁸ Audit of the operations of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Venezuela

settling-in grant payments, totaling \$65,736. OCHA functional managers were not monitoring FWA to ensure related entitlements are adjusted when necessary, including recovery of settling-in grant payments when staff do not comply with the intent of the entitlement.

Table 3: Staff settling-in grant

Staff	Installation date	Leaving date	Number of days present in relocation duty station	Entitlements paid	
				30 days DSA	Settling-in grant
				\$	\$
1	1 November 2022	4 November 2022	4 days	7,740	9,658
2	30 January 2022	27 February 2022	28 days	7,050	9,489
3	1 November 2021	28 November 2021	27 days	7,050	9,825
4	18 January 2022	8 February 2022	21 days	7,050	7,874

- (b) A case was noted where a staff member based in Istanbul stated that he was on FWA in Geneva for three months in 2022. However, there was no FWA application/approval to support that.
- (c) Staff members were restarting their FWA outside the duty station every time they were requested to go on mission. This contravenes existing policy, which requires return to the duty station before making a new request.

35. No anomalies relating to FWA were noted in The Hague.

36. OCHA stated that improvements to the OCHA FWA portal will be rolled-out to enhance oversight by managers of staff members' requests for telecommuting from outside the duty station. In addition, guidance on approval authorities and manager considerations will be issued to facilitate decision making related to these requests.

(4) OCHA should review the cases of staff in receipt of settling-in grant entitlements who did not physically remain at the new duty station and take action as necessary, including recovery of any related payments.

OCHA accepted recommendation 4 and stated that all staff who were to be relocated should have already been relocated to their new duty stations and no recovery was required since they still needed the entitlement for their relocation (albeit delayed). HRS will review all staff who were relocated to the Hague and Istanbul as part of decentralization and ensure corrective action is taken, if/when needed.

OCHA could enforce the dotted line reporting responsibilities and authorities

37. The memos designating heads of OCHA offices (HoOs) in Istanbul and The Hague indicated that all OCHA staff based in the two locations would have dotted reporting lines⁹ to the HoOs, while maintaining their reporting lines to their functional managers. In this regard, staff and managers in the two offices were required to update the HoOs on any staff movements, FWA and recruitments. While 61 per cent of surveyed staff stated that they were aware of this requirement, interviews with the HoO in The Hague indicated she were having challenges tracking FWA, annual leave and extended mission travel for all staff, consultants and interns because the responsible staff were not promptly updating her. Some staff in Istanbul indicated that they were not reporting their FWA and other absences to the HoO as they were

⁹ A system of mutual accountability between Headquarters and field locations

reporting directly to their functional heads at Headquarters in New York or Geneva. This occurred because guidance for compliance with the requirements of the dotted reporting line relationship had not been defined.

(5) OCHA should improve the dotted line reporting requirements including by: (a) developing standard operating procedures on the reporting requirements; and (b) leveraging technology to notify heads of offices about staff movements for leave or for flexible work arrangements.

OCHA accepted recommendation 5 and stated that it would improve the dotted line reporting requirements in its two global hubs and ensure that the heads of offices are kept updated on staff flexible working arrangements periodically.

Security measures needed to be enhanced at the OCHA office in The Hague

38. There were adequate security measures taken in the OCHA office in Istanbul. However, there was a need to enhance the security in the OCHA Office in The Hague. OCHA in The Hague was sharing leased common premises with other humanitarian partners, and the premises were under the control of a third party. There were no security guards to prevent an attempted intrusion or attack. In addition, there were no controls to detect or deny unauthorized access to the premises and cases of persons entering the premises by piggybacking on those who had physical access fobs were common among staff.

39. The absence of appropriate security procedures and measures was attributable to the Department of Safety and Security (DSS) not assessing security risks at the premises where OCHA was hosted. OCHA participated in the security management team's meetings in The Hague convened by the security adviser for the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT) who was responsible for all aspects of security management in The Hague. Notably, the deputy chief of security in the IRMCT had periodically assessed the OCHA offices in The Hague and made recommendations to install blast foil, issue key fobs for office entry, and improved protocols for building entry which had been implemented. OCHA had requested the IRMCT security team to conduct an assessment of the overall security of its premises, but this was pending.

(6) OCHA should take steps to improve security of staff in The Hague, including following up on the request made to International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals to conduct a security risk assessment and enhance security at the office premises.

OCHA accepted recommendation 6 and stated that the Security Lieutenant at IRMCT conducted a security risk management and physical security assessment exercise on 15 November 2023 and the security focal point for OCHA will be consulted and kept informed of the recommendations and implementation progress, as needed.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

Internal Audit Division
Office of Internal Oversight Services

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of reform management in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹⁰ / Important ¹¹	C/ O ¹²	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ¹³
1	OCHA should develop procedures for approving and overseeing changes in its structure, systems and processes that include provisions for participative decision-making between management and staff regarding decisions that impact staff welfare.	Important	O	Receipt of documented procedures for approving changes in OCHA structure, systems and processes, including provisions for participative decision-making.	31 December 2024
2	OCHA should conduct a review of: (a) the impact of the relocation of staff whose functions require them to travel frequently to their original duty stations to carry out their duties; (b) the impact of splitting teams; and (c) staff who were relocated but never moved to their new duty stations, and take corrective action as needed.	Important	O	Receipt of the results of the review of impact of the relocation of staff and evidence of implementation of any corrective actions needed.	31 March 2025
3	OCHA should develop guidelines for establishing offices away from headquarters, including assessing the required administrative capacity.	Important	O	Receipt of the revised Policy Instruction on Country Offices that includes guidelines for establishing OCHA global hubs.	30 June 2024
4	OCHA should review the cases of staff in receipt of settling-in grant entitlements who did not physically remain at the new duty station and take action as necessary, including recovery of any related payments.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of the relocation of all staff identified for relocation and confirmation of their entitlement to receipt of settling-in grants.	31 December 2024
5	OCHA should improve the dotted line reporting requirements including by: (a) developing standard operating procedures on the reporting requirements; and (b) leveraging technology to notify heads of offices about staff movements for leave or for flexible work arrangements.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that the dotted line reporting requirements have been established.	31 December 2025

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ 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.

¹² Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

¹³ Date provided by OCHA in response to recommendations.

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of reform management in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹⁰ / Important ¹¹	C/ O ¹²	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ¹³
6	OCHA should take steps to improve security of staff in The Hague, including following up on the request made to International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals to conduct a security risk assessment and enhance security at the office premises.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of the implementation of the recommendations from the security risk assessment.	30 June 2024

APPENDIX I

Management Response

Management Response

Audit of reform management in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	OCHA should develop procedures for approving and overseeing changes in its structure, systems and processes that include provisions for participative decision making between management and staff regarding decisions that impact staff welfare.	Important	Yes	Chief of Staff with Chief, Strategic Planning, Budget and Finance Section (SPBFS)	31/12/2024	OCHA's Senior Leadership Group (SLG) will meet to discuss the findings of this audit. The SLG will issue a decision requiring that all changes in OCHA structure, systems and processes need prior approval by the SLG; including provisions for participative decision making between management and staff regarding decisions that impact staff welfare. SPBFS will be responsible for reviewing any documentation for organisation structure change and making necessary recommendations to the SLG.
2	OCHA should conduct a review of: (a) the impact of the relocation of staff whose functions require them to travel frequently to their original duty stations to carry out their duties; (b) the impact of splitting teams; and (c) staff who were relocated but never moved to their new duty stations, and take corrective action as needed.	Important	Yes	Chief of Staff and Chief, Human Resources Section (HRS) with Director, Coordination Division (CD) and Chief, Information Management Branch (IMB)	31/03/2025	(a) and (b) - CD and IMB have been reviewing and addressing the specific cases listed in Table 4, and paragraphs 20 and 21 of the draft report. The Civil-Military Coordination Section (CMCS) in the Response Support Branch (RSB) has developed a regionalization strategy and also proposed to establish two liaison

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.

Management Response

Audit of reform management in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						<p>positions in Geneva and Brussels to strengthen and bolster partnership with Member States and key stakeholders such as NATO and the EU.</p> <p>Prior to the move to Istanbul, there was a multi-year connectivity project taking place in OCHA country and field offices. The project team was based in Geneva and had a special storage room where all the equipment was configured and then deployed to field offices according to a project schedule. When the decentralization was implemented, the team physically relocated to Istanbul but there was no physical space in the new office or a diplomatic pouch for equipment. It also would have been very expensive to move all the equipment to the new location even if there was a space. The project was at 50% completion, and it was more prudent to have the project manager travel to Geneva multiple times a year to configure and ship the equipment. All the field missions were done out of the Istanbul office once the equipment was received in the offices. The project is now in its</p>

Management Response

Audit of reform management in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						<p>final stage and the need for these missions to Geneva has decreased to 1-2 times a year.</p> <p>(c) - All staff who were to be relocated should have already been relocated to their new duty station. HRS will review all staff who were relocated to the Hague and Istanbul as part of decentralization and ensure corrective action is taken, if/when needed.</p>
3	OCHA should develop guidelines for establishing offices away from headquarters, including assessing the required administrative capacity.	Important	Yes	Director, Operations and Advocacy Division (OAD) and Executive Officer	30/06/2024	OCHA is in the process of reviewing its Policy Instruction on Country Offices. OCHA will ensure that the relevant parts of the policy instruction on country offices will also apply to the establishment of OCHA global hubs; in line with the guidance from the Chef de Cabinet on procedures for the establishment of United Nations offices away from Headquarters,
4	OCHA should review the cases of staff in receipt of settling-in grant entitlements who did not physically remain at the new duty station and take action as necessary, including recovery of any related payments.	Important	Yes	Chief, HRS	31/12/2024	All staff who were to be relocated should have already been relocated to their new duty station. No recovery is required since they still need the entitlement for their relocation (albeit delayed). HRS will review all staff who were relocated to the Hague and Istanbul as part of decentralization

Management Response

Audit of reform management in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						and ensure corrective action is taken, if/when needed.
5	OCHA should improve the dotted line reporting requirements including by: (a) developing standard operating procedures on the reporting requirements; and (b) leveraging technology to notify heads of offices about staff movements for leave or for flexible work arrangements.	Important	Yes	Head - OCHA Istanbul Office, and Head – OCHA Office in The Hague	31/12/2025	(a) OCHA will improve the dotted line reporting requirements in its two global hubs. OCHA will request the heads of office of the two global hubs to come up with a joint solution regarding the dotted line reporting requirements. (b) OCHA will ensure that the heads of office of the two global hubs will be kept updated on staff Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA) periodically.
6	OCHA should take steps to improve security of staff in The Hague, including following up on the request made to International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals to conduct a security risk assessment and enhance security at the office premises.	Important	Yes	Head – OCHA Office in the Hague	30/06/2024	The Security Lieutenant, International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT) conducted a Security Risk Management (SRM) and Physical Security Assessment (PSA) exercise for the OCHA office on 15 November 2023. The Security focal point for OCHA OAD will be consulted and kept informed of the recommendations and progress with implementation as needed.