Office of Internal Oversight Services

INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2025/056

Audit of corrections support in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

UNMISS needed to enhance the effectiveness of its support activities, while also reassessing the strategic role of the Malakal Detention Facility

25 November 2025
Assignment No. AP2025-633-04

Audit of corrections support in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of corrections support in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS). The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of UNMISS corrections support activities, and its compliance with United Nations policies, and international human rights standards. The audit covered the period from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2025 and included (a) planning; (b) implementation of support activities; and (c) monitoring and evaluation.

UNMISS made strides in advancing prison reform in South Sudan, notably through the delivery of training sessions to more than 700 National Prisons Service of South Sudan (NPSSS) personnel, implementation of seven Quick Impact Projects to improve prison infrastructure, and support for the development of national standing orders for prison management. However, the audit identified a few gaps, including the absence of a systematic framework for prisons assessments, lack of a functional inmate data system, uneven deployment of Government Provided Personnel, and weak governance of Prisons Development Committees.

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

- Establish a joint prison assessment framework with the NPSSS, focusing on annual baseline assessments in high-risk or strategically selected facilities.

- Take measures to enhance its training effectiveness, including conducting training needs assessments, adapting training modules to South Sudan's context, and introducing consistent post-training evaluations.

- Institutionalize the Training of Trainers model across all states.

- Update and institutionalize a prison risk map and use it to guide Government Provided Personnel deployment, and prioritize support for high-risk, underserved, and inaccessible NPSSS prisons.

- Reassess the strategic role of the Malakal Detention Facility in light of political sensitivities and operational constraints, and make a formal decision regarding its future.

- Assist the NPSSS to standardize manual reporting formats and establish a centralized data validation and consolidation mechanism using available resources.

- Support the standardization and strengthening of Prisons Development Committees by facilitating the adoption of clear Terms of Reference, promoting permanent membership from key ministries, and encouraging the inclusion of county-level custodial facilities in coordination efforts.

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

CONTENTS

Audit of corrections support in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of corrections support in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS).

2. South Sudan's correctional infrastructure comprises 105 facilities (92 central prisons and 13 county-level prisons), spread across the country's ten states and three administrative areas. The incarcerated population exceeds 12,000 individuals. The prison system in South Sudan is characterized by extensive structural and operational deficiencies that undermine compliance with national legislation and international standards: (i) many facilities lack basic amenities such as secure perimeters, sanitation, electricity, and access to healthcare, while inmates are frequently subjected to overcrowding, insufficient nutrition, and the absence of rehabilitative services; (ii) staffing levels are inconsistent and often unqualified, with shortages in welfare and medical personnel; (iii) records management systems are either non-existent or grossly inaccurate, contributing to unlawful detentions, some of which are authorized by traditional authorities, while others occur without any legal process; and (iv) judicial oversight remains limited, with prolonged pretrial detentions and minimal access to formal courts, particularly in rural areas.

3. In this context, UNMISS is mandated to support the National Prisons Service of South Sudan (NPSSS) by promoting humane detention, strengthening legal due process, and advancing sustainable prison reform. This support includes technical assistance, training and colocation to build institutional capacity, improve prison governance and security, and advocate for fair trial guarantees and alternatives to detention. UNMISS also conducts inspections of prisons to monitor compliance with international standards, including the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), and prioritizes responses to sexual and gender-based violence through victim-centered approaches and coordinated engagement with national stakeholders.

4. The Corrections Unit within UNMISS oversees all corrections-related support activities and is a core component of the Rule of Law and Security Institutions Section (RoLSIS). Led by a Senior Corrections Officer (P-5 level), who reports to the Chief of Section - RoLSIS, the unit includes a Corrections Officer (P-4), an Administrative Assistant (FS-4), and 36 Government Provided Personnel (GPPs) seconded from member states. GPPs play a role in strengthening the national corrections system by delivering on-the-ground mentorship, practical training, and technical guidance to their NPSSS counterparts as well as supporting institutional capacity building.

5. UNMISS corrections support activities are governed by multiple frameworks, including: (i) The Policy on Prison Support in United Nations Operations; (ii) UNMISS Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs); (iii) the Nelson Mandela Rules; and (iv) relevant international human rights conventions. The Corrections Unit uses secure, cloud-based platforms (Organizational SharePoint and OneDrive), to manage and store documentation, including reports and planning inputs for Results-Based Budgeting (RBB) and the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System (CPAS). Access to these platforms is strictly restricted to authorized staff within the Corrections Unit to ensure confidentiality and data integrity. A dedicated application and dashboard are also under development to enhance data-driven decision-making, though this system has not yet been deployed.

6. Comments provided by UNMISS are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

7. The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of UNMISS corrections support activities, and its compliance with United Nations policies and international human rights standards.

8. This audit was included in the 2025 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the operational risk that weaknesses in corrections support management could severely hinder the implementation of UNMISS' mandate to assist national authorities in strengthening the country's corrections system.

9. OIOS conducted this audit from May to September 2025. The audit covered the period from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2025 and included: (a) planning; (b) implementation of support activities; and (c) monitoring and evaluation.

10. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key personnel; (b) review and analysis of workplans, activity reports, and performance frameworks; (c) physical inspection of the Malakal Detention Facility (MDF); and (d) administration of structured questionnaires to the NPSSS to evaluate institutional perspectives, challenges, and capacity gaps.

11. To assess the reliability of the databases used by the Corrections Unit, OIOS reviewed data provided by the Corrections Unit in SharePoint. The completeness and accuracy of this data was assessed by reconciling to situational reports, published RBB and CPAS reports. Based on these assessments, OIOS determined that the data was sufficiently reliable for the purpose of addressing the audit objectives, while making observations on improvements that could be implemented.

12. The audit was conducted in accordance with the Global Internal Audit Standards.

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Planning

Need to strengthen prison assessments as a basis for effective corrections support planning

13. To assist evidence-based corrections support planning, UNMISS is mandated to conduct regular, standardized assessments of NPSSS-managed prisons to monitor human rights compliance, identify operational gaps, and inform targeted interventions such as infrastructure upgrades, training, and Quick Impact Projects (QIPs). These assessments (referred to as "baseline assessments") should be conducted in collaboration with NPSSS preferably on an annual basis, using a structured methodology that includes direct observation, interviews with prison staff and inmates, and documentation of compliance with international standards.

14. Both the 2023/24 and 2024/25 Corrections Unit work plans include activities requiring GPPs to carry out baseline assessments and prison visits, with reporting to headquarters as a performance indicator. Each work plan specifically states: *"Corrections GPPs to carry out baseline assessment in priority prisons to identify gaps in administrative, record/filing system, access to justice, operational and security using UNMISS' prison assessment tool,"* with the performance indicator *"Assessment reports submitted to Corrections Headquarters."* However, neither plan specifies the number or frequency of assessments to be conducted, leaving expectations vague.

15. OIOS review of assessment reports revealed that only five reports were available for the audit period. Specifically, one report was submitted for Akobo Prison between 1 July and 31 December 2023,

and four reports were submitted in 2024 (covering Yei, Renk, Maridi, and Akobo). Reports from many states and counties were absent. OIOS noted that additional prison visits and assessments were conducted across multiple locations (including Bentiu, Rumbek, Yei, Torit, Bor, Kuajok, and others) for purposes such as case reviews, health assessments, infrastructure inspections, and juvenile justice advocacy, which, however, did not result in formal assessment reports. The Corrections Unit noted that, given the slow pace of change in the national prison system, they did not perceive value in conducting more regular assessments.

16. The 2023/24 and 2024/25 Corrections Unit work plans also identified the activity *"Support the NPSSS to promote internal oversight through revitalization of the Prison Inspectorate Unit"*, with the performance indicator defined as *"Prisons Inspectorate is revitalized and started functioning."* The importance of strengthening oversight was underscored during the 8th NPSSS Leadership Conference (11–13 June 2024), where a collective call was made to equip and empower the Inspectorate and to enhance collaboration with external oversight actors. Yet, the lack of systematic and regular assessments jointly with the NPSSS has prevented the NPSSS Inspectorate from gaining the practical, in-service experience needed to conduct credible, independent inspections and to progressively assume responsibility for internal oversight.

17. The absence of such assessments carries implications for prison oversight and reform. Systemic shortcomings in national prisons remain under-reported and unaddressed, while accountability mechanisms are weakened due to the ineffectiveness of the Inspectorate. The above occurred because UNMISS had not institutionalized a systematic framework for regular, standardized, and jointly conducted prison assessments with NPSSS.

18. On the other hand, OIOS noted that the UNMISS prison assessment template is a comprehensive and well-structured tool, capturing operational, administrative, and human rights indicators across domains such as infrastructure, prisoner treatment, staffing, health services, legal access, and rehabilitation programming. If consistently applied and linked to the Corrections Dashboard under development, this tool has the potential to provide real-time insights into operational gaps, human rights compliance, and intervention outcomes. The Corrections Unit considered the use of the assessment tool in select locations as a step toward addressing the issue of baseline assessments.

(1) UNMISS should establish a joint prison assessment framework with the National Prisons Service of South Sudan, focusing on annual baseline assessments in high-risk or strategically selected facilities.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 1 and stated that it has supported the establishment of an Inspectorate within the National Prisons Service of South Sudan. Coordination with partners such as the International Committee of the Red Cross is ongoing to align efforts. Regular joint assessments will be implemented, subject to operational resources.

UNMISS took steps to enhance its annual work plans

19. The Corrections Unit is required to develop annual work plans for its corrections support activities that are intended to advance prison reform, strengthen the rule of law, and promote compliance with human rights standards. To be effective, they should integrate prison monitoring, capacity-building, gender-responsive and conflict-sensitive approaches, and coordination with national stakeholders. Additionally, activities should support judicial oversight, enhance accountability, and ensure the strategic and sustainable use of resources while addressing operational risks.

20. A comparative review of the 2023/24 and 2024/25 work plans revealed that objectives, activities, and indicators were largely repeated across both years. The work plans show strong similarity from year to

year, with few adjustments evident. For example, the 2024/25 work plan includes a performance indicator requiring an *"Assessment report submitted to Corrections Headquarters by March 2024."* This deadline was outside the fiscal year (1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025) and appears to have been copied from the previous year's plan. This oversight underscores the need to enhance the review and quality assurance process. While the Corrections Unit cited the relative stability of the operating environment as justification, this continuity reflects a static and non-adaptive planning approach.

21. Also, some activities in the work plans are expressed in broad or non-measurable terms such as "priority prisons" or "capacity building," without specifying the number of facilities, the scope of interventions, or the targets to be achieved. In a relatively stable operating environment, greater specificity at the planning stage would have been possible and would have strengthened accountability for delivery. The plans could also have benefitted from the inclusion of elements commonly recognized as good practice in results-based planning, such as clearer sequencing of activities, defined lines of accountability, transparent prioritization of facilities or thematic areas, and systematic integration of oversight and gender-responsive considerations.

22. The above occurred because UNMISS had not established a robust results-based planning and quality assurance process to ensure that annual Corrections Unit work plans were adaptive and specific. After the audit fieldwork, UNMISS RoLSIS initiated collaboration with the Justice and Corrections Service Standing Capacity of the Department of Peace Operations to refine the integrated planning framework, ensuring that activities are aligned with clear and measurable objectives. The revised structure is expected to further strengthen monitoring, accountability, and results-based implementation.

B. Implementation of support activities

UNMISS training of the National Prisons Service of South Sudan needed improvement

23. UNMISS is required to provide strategic support to the NPSSS in line with its mandate, through structured capacity-building (including specialized training). Such support must align with NPSSS priorities, be based on documented requirements and validated needs, and, where feasible, utilize national infrastructure and trainers. All activities (including training) must be guided by international and domestic standards, and designed to be inclusive, sustainable, and grounded in operational reality.

24. In 2024, UNMISS facilitated 19 (RBB requirement was 3) training and capacity-building sessions targeting over 700 NPSSS personnel, including more than 200 women, across South Sudan. Topics included prison security, records management, gender-responsive detention, health and hygiene, and vocational skills.

25. A review of the training records highlighted several strengths. Most training content aligns with international frameworks such as the Nelson Mandela Rules and Convention on the Rights of the Child, and references were made to national laws including the Transitional Constitution and the Prisons Act. The focus on gender equality and juvenile reintegration reflects a forward-looking approach. Trainings were also delivered in multiple regions and prioritized high-risk roles, such as officers working with women and children. Cases where NPSSS officers facilitated or delivered content (e.g. Bor in March, Torit in August, and Terekeka in November) show a deliberate shift toward national ownership. However, the following was also noted for improvement:

(a) Training delivery methods were not adapted for South Sudanese contexts

26. The content of the training, while taken directly from the relevant laws, was often theoretical and lacked practical application. There was insufficient localization of content to facilitate direct impact given the low literacy rates - as low as 40 per cent among NPSSS personnel in some prisons. Case studies or scenarios based on South Sudanese contexts were largely absent. For example, training did not reference the incident in Bentiu where UNMISS intervened after a pregnant female detainee was found shackled in leg irons, a violation of international standards and a clear indicator of capacity gaps in gender-sensitive detention. Similarly, training materials did not include lessons from prison escapes in Unity State, where incidents in Koch and Mayom counties highlighted serious weaknesses in security risk assessment and infrastructure management. Such omissions reduce the relevance of training for frontline personnel.

27. The above was because there was no evidence of a formal Training Needs Assessment (TNA), increasing the risk that training content may not consistently reflect the actual priorities, challenges, or skill gaps faced by NPSSS personnel. The Corrections Unit stated that a TNA had been conducted prior to the review period, and no significant changes had occurred since then to warrant new TNA. Furthermore, training modules were not piloted for mixed literacy environments. There was also no evidence of a standardized feedback mechanism across all training activities. The absence of structured post-training feedback collection restricts opportunities for continuous improvement, adaptation of training content, and responsiveness to participant needs.

(2) UNMISS should take measures to enhance its training effectiveness, including conducting training needs assessments, adapting training modules to South Sudan's context, and introducing consistent post-training evaluations.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 2 and stated that it has integrated National Prison Service of South Sudan officers into facilitation teams to ensure accessibility. Engagement with Justice and Corrections Service Standing Capacity is ongoing to contextualize training modules, with completion expected in the 2025/26 fiscal year. Continuous improvement in training design and evaluation will remain a priority.

(b) The "training of trainers" model was not institutionalized

28. The Training of Trainers (ToT) model equips selected NPSSS officers to train others, decentralizing learning and promoting institutional ownership. Some successful examples were found in Torit, where ToT cascaded into local refresher trainings for over 140 staff, including 68 women (August 2024). Other states, such as Juba, Rumbek, and Yei, have initiated internal sessions using UNMISS materials. Similarly, in Bor (March 2024), prison officers themselves delivered training, while in Terekeka (November 2024), NPSSS trainers were deliberately positioned as facilitators to reinforce sustainability.

29. However, UNMISS has not yet institutionalized the model across all states. Under this model, reliance will be placed on NPSSS personnel for training, with UNMISS Corrections Advisors shifting increasingly into facilitation and advisory roles. This approach would allow UNMISS to provide targeted technical input, monitor quality, and advise on improvements while empowering NPSSS to deliver training independently.

(3) UNMISS should institutionalize the Training of Trainers model across all states.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 3 and stated that it trained 36 NPSSS officers in 2023 to form a foundational trainer pool. Expansion of the Training of Trainers model remains a strategic priority

and will proceed progressively based on available resources and operational conditions. State-level rollout is planned under the 2025/26 work plan.

Need to strengthen the support for prisons management

30. UNMISS is expected to deploy GPPs strategically across South Sudan to support justice sector reform, enhance prison operations, and ensure international human rights standards are upheld. This requires a deployment model that prioritizes high-risk and underserved facilities, guided by an institutionalized prison risk map.

(a) Need to deploy Government Provided Personnel based on updated prison risk map

31. OIOS analysis of GPPs deployment revealed that half of the GPPs are concentrated at the MDF ensuring that the MDF has sufficient complement of staff to run the facility. The rest of the GPPs are then spread across various facilities. This does not take a risk-based approach to ensure that very high-risk facilities are appropriately identified and staffed. The misalignment undermines the effectiveness of GPPs in delivering reform-oriented support and increases the risk of operational failures in high-risk areas. The national prisons face significant challenges, including limited mentorship capacity, inconsistent coverage, and under-resourcing. Recent prison breaks in Koch, Mayom, and Yambio for example, highlight heightened operational risks, yet each location is staffed with only one GPP.

32. UNMISS has not institutionalized an updated prison risk map to guide strategic deployment decisions. The absence of a comprehensive and current risk assessment tool has led to deployments that may not reflect actual facility needs and risks.

(4) UNMISS should update and institutionalize a prison risk map and use it to guide Government Provided Personnel deployment and prioritize support for high-risk, underserved, and inaccessible National Prisons Service of South Sudan prisons.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 4 and stated that it will coordinate with the Geospatial Information Section (GIS) Unit to develop a roadmap for updating the prison risk map. Completion is targeted by the end of the 2026/27 fiscal year, subject to resources and operational considerations.

(b) Need to reassess role of Malakal Detention Facility

33. In June 2025, OIOS conducted a physical verification and inspection of the MDF to assess the facility's compliance with relevant SOPs and benchmark it against international detention standards. MDF is the only prison facility run by UNMISS as part of its Protection of Civilian (PoC) mandate. According to UNMISS mandate and its internal SOP on Detention Management, mission-operated detention facilities must be established in accordance with international standards as temporary, risk-informed facilities designed to address security gaps in high-risk contexts and intended to support broader justice and security sector reforms.

34. OIOS observed that the detention facility is well-maintained, procedurally robust, and operationally compliant. However, the inspection noted that the MDF was not holding any detainees at the time of the inspection. This was because of instructions from the Head of Field Office (HoFO) to directly send suspects arrested in the PoC camp to the South Sudan National Police Service (SSNPS), that had a police post situated in close proximity to the MDF. In addition, Malakal also has a prison run by the NPSSS which is supported by UNMISS GPPs. This was in response to an incident that occurred in June 2023, where a local youth leader was arrested by UNPOL and subsequently handed over to MDF, which triggered widespread unrest, including riots and a breach of the UNMISS compound by individuals from the PoC site. The HoFO

was of the view that the continued holding of prisoners in the MDF was hindering rather than improving the situation in the PoC camp. However, Corrections Unit SOP still directs that prisoners from the PoC camp should be held in the MDF.

35. There is a need for the Mission to decide on the operation of the MDF considering the differences in views between the HoFO and the Corrections Unit. This decision should be informed by operational realities, political sensitivities, and the broader peacebuilding and justice reform objectives of UNMISS.

(5) UNMISS should reassess the strategic role of the Malakal Detention Facility in light of political sensitivities and operational constraints, and make a formal decision regarding its future.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 5 and stated that the re-designation of the Malakal POC site, including the detention facility, will be considered at leadership level to determine the most effective and sustainable approach.

UNMISS needed to consider targeted support for credible and up-to-date inmate data and effective Prisons Development Committees

(a) There was no fully functional or standardized prison records management system

36. UNMISS is required to assist NPSSS by developing standardized prisoner databases, reviewing regulations to formalize record-keeping obligations, and using oversight forums like Prisons Development Committees (PDCs) to strengthen accountability. This work directly addresses gaps in administrative practice and aligns NPSSS operations with the Nelson Mandela Rules and UNMISS's mandate.

37. A review of UNMISS Corrections Unit weekly activity reports from January to December 2024, corroborated by consultations with field personnel, indicated that the NPSSS does not operate a fully functional or standardized prison records management system. A key indicator of this deficiency is the repeated replication of identical prisoner population figures across extended periods. From January through September 2024, weekly reports consistently reproduced the same data across critical categories, including gender, juvenile status, mental health, and infants. For example, for three consecutive quarters of 2024, reports recorded: 6,411 male national convicts; 3,940 male national remand detainees; 119 male juvenile convicts; and 21 female juvenile convicts. This pattern continued into the fourth quarter of 2024, with only marginal adjustments. Although the total reported prison population decreased slightly from 12,765 to 12,700, sub-category figures such as 119 male juvenile convicts and 21 female juvenile convicts remained unchanged.

38. The static nature of these figures is inconsistent with multiple operational developments during the reporting period that would normally alter prison populations, which strongly suggests NPSSS reliance on manual estimations or recycled reporting templates rather than systematic, real-time data collection and verification. This practice undermines the credibility, accuracy, and decision-making utility of NPSSS prison population data.

39. To address the database issues, UNMISS had developed an automated prisoner database system for NPSSS in 2018 and provided related training to at least 50 mid-level prison officers. However, full implementation was hindered by infrastructure challenges, particularly the lack of reliable electricity to power the system. Consequently, the system continues to be used only as a backup at Juba National Prison. This experience demonstrates both the feasibility of digital solutions and the importance of addressing foundational barriers to their adoption and scale-up.

40. The absence of credible, up-to-date inmate data severely constrains both operational responsiveness and strategic reform of South Sudan's corrections system. For example, while overcrowding is widely acknowledged as a systemic issue across South Sudan's prisons, the lack of accurate, real-time data prevents authorities from quantifying its severity at specific facilities or tracking fluctuations over time, thereby limiting the ability to prioritize interventions, allocate resources effectively, or respond to emerging risks such as health outbreaks or security incidents. Additionally, the inability to monitor inmate flows (admissions, discharges) and demographic trends constrain the development of evidence-based policies, particularly in rehabilitation, reintegration, and infrastructure planning.

41. Considering resource constraints, it is evident that the most viable path forward lies in enhancing existing record-keeping practices, through standardized cost-effective manual reporting formats, reinforcement of previously trained personnel, and centralized data validation and consolidation using available resources.

(6) UNMISS should assist the National Prisons Service of South Sudan to standardize manual reporting formats and establish a centralized data validation and consolidation mechanism using available resources.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 6 and stated that it continues to support NPSSS through targeted capacity-building in records management. Future support will focus on incremental improvements that promote standardization and efficiency within existing resource frameworks.

(b) There were gaps that limited the effectiveness of the Prisons Development Committees

42. UNMISS is required to support NPSSS in convening and operationalizing the Prisons Development Committees (PDCs) in all States, and to provide technical assistance to strengthen coordination mechanisms among stakeholders through these forums. PDCs serve as coordination and advocacy platforms mandated to advance prison reform, promote compliance with human rights standards, and support the effective management of custodial institutions.

43. A review of PDC meeting minutes from Upper Nile (Malakal), Northern Bahr el Ghazal (Aweil), Lakes State (Rumbek), and Central Equatoria (Yei) showed that the committees convened stakeholders and achieved some notable successes. In several states, PDCs provided a forum for corrections, judiciary, and community actors to engage on issues such as rehabilitation programs, juvenile justice, and legal compliance. For example, in Rumbek, the PDC facilitated dialogue on alternatives for juveniles in detention, while in Aweil, action points on asset management and rehabilitation were clearly recorded. The presence of Food and Agriculture Organization-supported prison farm initiatives in Malakal demonstrated the potential of PDCs to mobilize external partners in addressing food security. In Yei, broad stakeholder engagement promoted compliance with legal standards, underscoring the committees' value as coordination and advocacy platforms.

44. At the same time, the review highlighted challenges. Discussions within most PDCs were heavily concentrated on central state prisons, excluding county-level facilities that also face acute operational and human rights challenges. Participation of key ministries such as Justice, Health, and Gender has been inconsistent, reducing opportunities to address cross-cutting issues like healthcare provision, gender-sensitive programming, and judicial oversight. Furthermore, the lack of formal Terms of Reference, standardized reporting practices, and clearly defined membership has resulted in weak governance structures. These gaps limit the committees' ability to provide state-wide oversight, ensure accountability, and influence systemic reform.

45. Overall, the PDCs have shown that they can serve as important vehicles for dialogue, coordination, and mobilization of partner support, with tangible examples of progress already achieved. However, the PDCs require stronger governance arrangements, broader scope beyond central prisons, and more consistent participation from key ministries and stakeholders.

(7) UNMISS should support the standardization and strengthening of Prisons Development Committees by facilitating the adoption of clear Terms of Reference, promoting permanent membership from key ministries, and encouraging the inclusion of county-level custodial facilities in coordination efforts.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 7 and stated that it is supporting NPSSS in developing Terms of Reference to institutionalize PDC functions in line with the Prisons Act (2022) and Regulations (2023). Completion is anticipated by the end of the 2025/26 fiscal year.

Effective support was provided in developing standing orders for Prisons Management

46. International human rights instruments, including the Nelson Mandela Rules, require the establishment of standing orders[1] for lawful, transparent, and consistent prison management, serving as a critical benchmark for assessing compliance with international norms.

47. In April 2025, OIOS observed the opening session of a five-day workshop which marked the launch of a national initiative to review and develop standardized standing orders for implementation across all correctional facilities in South Sudan. UNMISS played a central role in providing technical assistance in reviewing and drafting the standing orders, facilitating coordination among stakeholders, and ensuring that the initiative was aligned with international correctional standards. This initiative represented a foundational pillar of broader institutional reform efforts aimed at enhancing procedural consistency, strengthening custodial governance, and aligning national prison operations with international human rights and correctional standards, including the Nelson Mandela Rules.

48. However, OIOS observed that several draft standing orders contained vague, subjective, and non-operational language. Phrases such as "as soon as possible," "as far as possible," and "as frequently as necessary" were often used, diminishing the clarity, enforceability, and practical utility of the directives. Examples included: (i) Accommodation: "Change bed linen for prisoners as often as possible."; (ii) Personal Hygiene: "Bathe as frequently as necessary for general hygiene."; and (iii) Meals: "Provide food at usual hours with food of nutritional value adequate for health and strength."

49. The Corrections Unit stated that the use of such vague words allows flexibility and practicality, otherwise it would open a gateway for litigation when the management is unable to fulfill the standards. While OIOS acknowledges that prevailing resource constraints such as acute food shortages affecting the NPSSS at the time of this review, may impact the practical implementation of certain directives, it is essential that standing orders are anchored in normative standards rather than defined by temporary limitations. They should articulate what must be done, not merely what can be done. Where implementation gaps exist, they should be transparently documented, acknowledged, and be accompanied by realistic mitigation strategies including determining acceptable timelines, and resource mobilization plans.

50. After the audit fieldwork, OIOS noted that UNMISS had commenced providing technical support for the review of the NPSSS Standing Orders to ensure clarity, operational relevance, and alignment with

[1] Standing orders are formal, binding directives or standard operating procedures issued by a national prison authority. They regulate the day-to-day operations and conduct within prison facilities, ensuring uniformity, accountability, and legal compliance across the correctional system.

international standards. While certain provisions will retain operational flexibility, the revised orders are being structured to uphold consistency with human rights obligations and recognized correctional best practices. Accordingly, OIOS determined that no recommendation was necessary.

Quick Impact Projects were used to support Corrections Infrastructure

51. UNMISS is required to provide strategic support to NPSSS in line with its mandate, including through QIPs. QIPs should directly address urgent gaps within the corrections system, deliver visible and practical improvements, and reinforce broader capacity-building objectives.

52. During the period audited, infrastructure support including seven QIPs totaling $340,307 were implemented, which included the construction and renovation of prison facilities and projects to enhance water supply, sanitation, and healthcare services in prisons. These infrastructure projects and support initiatives reflect a holistic approach to improving prison facilities, management, and living conditions, benefiting both inmates and prison staff. In addition, the Mission continued to advance the "green corrections" initiative, supporting the NPSSS in establishing and expanding farming projects across several prison facilities to enhance food security and provide inmates and staff with valuable livelihood skills.

C. Monitoring and evaluation

Need to improve monitoring and evaluation

53. UNMISS utilized two primary frameworks to assess the performance of its Corrections Support Programme, namely the RBB and the CPAS. RBB links resource use to measurable outputs, serving as a tool for budget justification and operational accountability. CPAS evaluates how activities contribute to strategic mission objectives, particularly in mitigating conflict drivers such as arbitrary detention and weak rule of law. Together, these frameworks are intended to assist the Mission in assessing both compliance and impact.

54. The 2024/25 Corrections work plan, reviewed earlier in this report, includes more than 20 activity lines such as GPP deployment, prison monitoring, record-keeping reform, and access-to-justice interventions. However, many of these activities were not mapped to RBB outputs or CPAS indicators, which limits their visibility in performance reporting and prioritization.

55. Subsequently, OIOS noted that the UNMISS RoLSIS Planning Cell was actively engaged in supporting all RoLSIS units to align their reporting with RBB outputs and CPAS indicators. This collaborative effort is designed to strengthen performance tracking, enhance accountability, and improve management oversight. In light of these ongoing measures, OIOS did not raise a recommendation.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

Internal Audit Division
Office of Internal Oversight Services

ANNEX I

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of corrections support in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[2]/ Important[3]	C/ O[4]	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date[5]
1	UNMISS should establish a joint prison assessment framework with the National Prisons Service of South Sudan, focusing on annual baseline assessments in high-risk or strategically selected facilities.	Important	O	Receipt of formal joint assessment plan with National Prisons Service of South Sudan and demonstration of implementation.	31 March 2026
2	UNMISS should take measures to enhance its training effectiveness, including conducting training needs assessments, adapting training modules to South Sudan's context, and introducing consistent post-training evaluations.	Important	O	Receipt of contextualized training modules and evidence of their delivery along with post-training evaluations.	30 April 2026
3	UNMISS should institutionalize the Training of Trainers model across all states.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of the expanded Training of Trainers rollout beyond the initial trainer pool, including state-level implementation aligned with the 2025/26 workplan.	31 March 2026
4	UNMISS should update and institutionalize a prison risk map and use it to guide Government Provided Personnel deployment and prioritize support for high-risk, underserved, and inaccessible National Prisons Service of South Sudan prisons.	Important	O	Receipt of a finalized roadmap for updating the prison risk map and evidence that the update has been completed.	31 March 2026
5	UNMISS should reassess the strategic role of the Malakal Detention Facility in light of political sensitivities and operational constraints, and make a formal decision regarding its future.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of a completed strategic review on the re-designation of the Malakal POC site, including a leadership-endorsed decision on the way forward.	30 June 2026
6	UNMISS should assist the National Prisons Service of South Sudan to standardize manual reporting formats and establish a centralized data validation	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of implemented improvements in NPSSS records management,	31 March 2026

[2] 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.
[3] 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.
[4] Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.
[5] Date provided by UNMISS in response to recommendations.

ANNEX I

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of corrections support in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[2]/ Important[3]	C/ O[4]	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date[5]
	and consolidation mechanism using available resources.			demonstrating progress toward standardization and efficiency.	
7	UNMISS should support the standardization and strengthening of Prisons Development Committees by facilitating the adoption of clear Terms of Reference, promoting permanent membership from key ministries, and encouraging the inclusion of county-level custodial facilities in coordination efforts.	Important	O	Receipt of finalized Terms of Reference for the Prisons Development Committees, demonstrating that their functions have been formally institutionalized.	31 March 2026

APPENDIX I

Management Response

UNITED NATIONS
United Nations Mission
in South Sudan

UNMISS

NATIONS UNIES
Mission des Nations Unies
au Soudan du Sud

Date: 10 November 2025

To: Mr. Byung-Kun Min,
Director
Internal Audit Division, OIOS

From: Mr. Graham Maitland,
Deputy Special Representative to the Secretary-General a.i. (Political) and OIC HOM, UNMISS

G Maitland.

Subject: **UNMISS response to the Draft report on an audit of corrections support in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (Assignment No. AP2025-633-04)**

1. UNMISS acknowledges receipt of the draft report from OIOS on an audit of corrections support in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (Assignment No. AP2025-633-04).

2. Please find attached the Mission's comments on the recommendations.

3. Thank you for your consideration and support.

cc: Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, UNMISS
Mr. Graham Maitland, UNMISS
Ms. Leda Limann, UNMISS
Mr. Anees Ahmed, UNMISS
Mr. Abdul Arshad, UNMISS
Ms. Sintija Steinite, UNMISS
Mr. Joachim Ewolo Avoulou, UNMISS
Ms. Daniela Wuerz, UNMISS

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Management Response

Audit of corrections support in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	UNMISS should establish a joint prison assessment framework with the National Prison Service of South Sudan, focusing on annual baseline assessments in high-risk or strategically selected facilities.	Important	Yes	Head of Corrections Unit/ Deputy Head of Corrections Unit	31 March 2026	UNMISS welcomes the recommendation and acknowledges that joint assessment frameworks are integral to enhancing institutional capacity and oversight. While the Mission has supported the establishment of an Inspectorate within NPSSS, further strengthening remains a shared objective. Implementation of regular joint assessments will be pursued subject to the availability of operational resources and in coordination with other partners such as ICRC, who continue to undertake similar activities with NPSSS.
2	UNMISS should take measures to enhance its training effectiveness, including conducting training needs assessments, adapting training modules to South Sudan's context, and introducing consistent post-training evaluations.	Important	Yes	Head of Corrections Unit/ Deputy Head of Corrections Unit	30 April 2026	UNMISS continues to adapt training content to South Sudan's operational and literacy context by integrating NPSSS officers into facilitation teams to ensure accessibility. Engagement with JCS Standing Capacity is ongoing to further align and contextualize training modules, with completion expected within the 2025/26 fiscal year. The Mission remains

[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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Management Response

Audit of corrections support in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						committed to continuous improvement in training design and evaluation.
3	UNMISS should institutionalize the Training of Trainers model across all states.	Important	Yes	Head of Corrections Unit/ Deputy Head of Corrections Unit	31 March 2026.	UNMISS has initiated implementation of the ToT model, having trained 36 NPSSS officers from across the country in 2023 to serve as a foundational trainer pool. Expansion of this initiative remains a strategic priority and will proceed progressively based on available resources and operational conditions. Plans for state-level rollout are integrated into the 2025/26 workplan.
4	UNMISS should update and institutionalize a prison risk map and use it to guide Government Provided Personnel deployment and prioritize support for high-risk, underserved, and inaccessible National Prisons Service of South Sudan prisons.	Important	Yes	Head of Corrections Unit/ Deputy Head of Corrections Unit	31 March 2026	UNMISS recognizes the importance of maintaining an updated prison risk map to guide evidence-based planning and resource allocation. Coordination with the GIS Unit is envisaged to develop a feasible roadmap for updating the risk map, targeted for completion by the end of the 2026/27 fiscal year, subject to resource availability and operational considerations.
5	UNMISS should reassess the strategic role of the Malakal Detention Facility in light of political sensitivities and operational constraints, and make a formal decision regarding its future.	Important	Yes	HoFO/RoLSIS/PMM	30 June 2026	The Mission acknowledges the need for a strategic review of the re-designation of the Malakal POC site, of which the Malakal Detention Facility is an integral component. The matter will be

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Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						considered at the appropriate leadership level to determine the most effective and sustainable approach going forward
6	UNMISS should assist the National Prisons Service of South Sudan to standardize manual reporting formats and establish a centralized data validation and consolidation mechanism using available resources.	Important	Yes	Head of Corrections Unit/ Deputy Head of Corrections Unit	31 March 2026	UNMISS continues to support NPSSS through targeted capacity-building in records management. Recognizing the operational limitations under which NPSSS functions, future support will focus on incremental improvements that promote standardization and efficiency within existing resource frameworks.
7	UNMISS should support the standardization and strengthening of Prisons Development Committees by facilitating the adoption of clear Terms of Reference, promoting permanent membership from key ministries, and encouraging the inclusion of county-level custodial facilities in coordination efforts.	Important	Yes	Head of Corrections Unit/ Deputy Head of Corrections Unit	31 March 2026	UNMISS values the coordinating role of the PDCs in advancing prison reform. In alignment with the Prisons Act (2022) and the Regulations (2023), the Mission will support NPSSS in developing detailed Terms of Reference to further institutionalize PDC functions. This process is anticipated to be completed by the end of the 2025/26 fiscal year