INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

AUDIT REPORT 2013/097

Audit of language services in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda

Overall results relating to the effective and efficient management of language services were partially satisfactory. Implementation of five important recommendations remains in progress.

FINAL OVERALL RATING: PARTIALLY SATISFACTORY

19 November 2013
Assignment No. AA2013/260/01

CONTENTS

AUDIT REPORT

Audit of language services in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda

I.   BACKGROUND

1.   The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of language services in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR).

2.   In accordance with its mandate, OIOS provides assurance and advice on the adequacy and effectiveness of the United Nations internal control system, the primary objectives of which are to ensure (a) efficient and effective operations; (b) accurate financial and operational reporting; (c) safeguarding of assets; and (d) compliance with mandates, regulations and rules.

3.   ICTR was established pursuant to Security Council Resolution 955 (1994) to prosecute persons responsible for genocide and other serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in the territory of Rwanda and Rwandan citizens responsible for genocide and other such violations committed in the territory of neighbouring States, from 1 January to 31 December 1994. Subsequent resolutions extended the ICTR mandate to 31 December 2014.

4.   The Language Services Section (LSS) is part of the Judicial and Legal Services Division under the Registry. LSS provides interpretation, translation and reproductive services to ICTR, especially the Chambers, Defence, Office of the Prosecutor, and Registry. However, translation is the main task performed by LSS, which received large volumes of documents relating to trial and appeals judgments, decisions, briefs, and motions for translation. LSS also provides some assistance to the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals regarding the translation of judicial filings and other official documents.

5.   LSS is headed by a Section Chief at P-5 level and had an authorized regular staffing strength of 92 for the calendar year ending 31 December 2012. The Section had a non-post budget of $158,000.

6.   Comments provided by ICTR are incorporated in *italics*.

II.   OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

7.   The audit was conducted to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of ICTR governance, risk management and control processes in providing reasonable assurance regarding the **effective and efficient management of language services in ICTR.**

8.   The audit was included in the 2013 OIOS work plan because the operational risks for language services were high in the context of the downsizing of ICTR, the large volume of documents from court judgements that remained to be translated, and the need to provide such services in a timely manner particularly since the Tribunal is mandated by the Security Council to complete all its work by the end of 2014.

9.   The key controls tested for the audit were: (a) human resources targets and strategies; and (b) regulatory framework. OIOS defined these key controls as follows:

   (a) **Human resources targets and strategies** - controls that provide reasonable assurance that human resources targets and strategies are set to ensure the recruitment and retention of adequate and competent staff for language services.

(b) **Regulatory framework** - controls that provide reasonable assurance that policies and procedures: (i) exist to guide the operations of the language services; (ii) are implemented consistently; and (iii) ensure the reliability and integrity of financial and operational information.

10.   The key controls were assessed for the control objectives shown in Table 1. Certain control objectives shown in Table 1 as "Not assessed" were not relevant to the scope defined for this audit.

11.   OIOS conducted the audit from 12 February 2013 to 23 July 2013. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2010 to 31 March 2013.

12.   OIOS conducted an activity-level risk assessment to identify and assess specific risk exposures, and to confirm the relevance of the selected key controls in mitigating associated risks. Through interviews, analytical reviews and tests of controls, OIOS assessed the existence and adequacy of internal controls and conducted necessary tests to determine their effectiveness.

III.   AUDIT RESULTS

13.   In OIOS' opinion, ICTR governance, risk management and control processes examined were **partially satisfactory** in providing reasonable assurance regarding the **effective and efficient management of language services**. OIOS made six recommendations to address the issues identified in the audit. ICTR adopted United Nations-established translation rates as predetermined performance targets to measure progress and monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of LSS activities. However, there was a need for ICTR to strengthen internal controls to enhance the performance of LSS by: providing adequate staff with the requisite knowledge and skills to ensure timely provision of translation services; taking measures to comply with the established rates for translation, revision and proofreading; ensuring that LSS records all the necessary data in the translation document management and control system to enhance performance measurement and strengthen monitoring; conducting periodic quality control reviews on a sample basis to assure the quality of services provided; strengthening coordination between LSS and the requesting Sections/Units by establishing lead times and setting target dates for the return of translated documents; and using electronic versions of documents for revision and proofreading activities to enhance the efficient use of resources and quality of work.

14.   The overall rating is based on the assessment of key controls presented in Table 1 below. The final overall rating is partially satisfactory as implementation of five important recommendations remains in progress.

Table 1: Assessment of key controls

Business objective	Key controls	Control objectives			
		Efficient and effective operations	**Accurate financial and operational reporting**	**Safeguarding of assets**	**Compliance with mandates, regulations and rules**
Effective and efficient management of language services in ICTR	(a) Human resources targets and strategies	Partially satisfactory	Not assessed	Not assessed	Partially satisfactory
	(b) Regulatory framework	Partially satisfactory	Partially satisfactory	Not assessed	Partially satisfactory

A.   Human resources targets and strategies

LSS was short of staff

15.   Adequate staff with the right level of knowledge and skills are necessary to provide effective and efficient language services. The budget proposal for the 2012-2013 biennium and annual plans emphasized that "it is critical that the Section be adequately staffed in 2012-2013".

16.   Staffing requirements were underestimated as there was a shortage of translators and revisers, particularly for English to French. Although 13 of the current LSS staff were on posts borrowed from other ICTR Sections, there were delays in completing translation work as required. Based on a review of 25 documents selected from a list of documents translated between January 2010 and December 2012, the delays in completing the translation work ranged from weeks to over a year in some instances as detailed in paragraph 20 below. ICTR explained that the translation workload for 2013 was anticipated to be lower as the Tribunal was expected to downsize and transfer some of the translation work to the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals. It was also difficult to accurately project the judicial calendar, and when court documents would be ready for translation. ICTR further explained that it was difficult to use consultants because ICTR translation work was highly specialized and it was thus difficult to obtain external translation services which fully met the required standards of quality and confidentiality.

> **(1) ICTR should ensure that adequate staff with the requisite knowledge and skills are provided to the Language Services Section to ensure timely provision of translation and revision services.**
>
> *ICTR accepted recommendation 1 and stated that it has continued to ensure that the required number of staff allocated to LSS is adequate and with the necessary knowledge and skills. Furthermore, the budget proposal for 2014-2015 has also taken this consideration into account and as a result there are no posts scheduled for abolition in 2014. Provision for temporary assistance is also foreseen should the workload exceed the current projection.* Based on steps taken by ICTR, recommendation 1 has been closed.

B.   Regulatory framework

Policies and procedures for language services were in place

17.   LSS staff were familiar and had access to relevant United Nations editorial manuals and other guidance materials including translation literature such as papers and reports presented at the Inter-Agency meetings on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications. In addition, ICTR adopted United Nations-established translation rates as predetermined performance targets to measure progress and monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of LSS activities.

There were delays in completing translation jobs at various stages in the translation process

18.   LSS received translation requests from various Sections and Units in ICTR. Documents received for translation went through various stages in the translation process, from receiving requests for translation to referencing, translation, revision, and proofreading. There were significant delays in completing translation jobs as required by various Sections and Units in ICTR. These delays (i.e., the

difference between the date by which the requesting offices required the translated document and the date on which the completed documents were actually delivered) ranged from 23 to 948 working days in 18 out of 25 cases reviewed.

19.   ICTR had established translation, revision and proofreading rates of 3.5, 12, and 20 pages per day respectively.   However, these rates were not always achieved. For example, a top priority translation document (Job no: DIII10-0227) containing 36 pages took 71 working days to translate instead of the expected standard of 10 working days based on the established translation rate of 3.5 pages per day. ICTR attributed this situation to shortage of staff with requisite skills, lack of motivation due to ICTR downsizing, and the shifting of priorities assigned to various documents in the translation process, especially in cases where judgements were translated for reference purposes. Delays in translation resulted in delays in starting appeal proceedings and increased the risk that ICTR may be unable to complete its work within the timeframe mandated by the Security Council.

> **(2) ICTR should ensure that the Language Services Section takes measures to reduce delays and complete translation work within the established rates.**
>
> *ICTR accepted recommendation 2 and stated that LSS has adopted measures to reduce delays in translation work. These include maintaining the required number of translators, outsourcing translation and acquiring a document management and control software.* Recommendation 2 remains open pending receipt of evidence that translation work is being completed within the established rates.

Need to ensure that data recorded in the document management and control system is complete

20.   ICTR had a centralized Document Control Unit (DCU) within LSS which was responsible for managing and controlling all documents received by LSS for translation, and passing them through different stages in the translation process.

21.   DCU used a combination of electronic and paper-based document management and control systems. Hard copy registers were used to record the details relating to documents to be translated including: date of request, document title, source and target languages, and target date for translation as required by the requesting Section/Unit. Job numbers and priority levels (top, very urgent, urgent, and low) were assigned to each document for control and monitoring purposes. Upon delivery of the completed translation, the requesting Section/Unit collected the document and signed the register. In addition, LSS used an internally developed document management and control database system. This database was used for recording the translation process as well as providing statistical data on individual translation, revision and proofreading activities. The ICTR Information Technology Services Section also allocated shared folders to LSS staff on the networked information system with different access levels for information security and to facilitate the translation work.

22.   A review of the document management and control system indicated that the system was not adequate to provide effective control over documents at different stages as it was a general purpose package that had not been customized according to the needs and processes of LSS. The database could not be used to efficiently schedule and produce accurate document volume forecasting. Also, the database was not complete as a review of translation activities showed incomplete records in 21 out of 25 documents (84 per cent) translated from January 2010 to December 2012. Performance measures such as the start and end dates for referencing, translation, revision, and proofreading were missing for some documents. In addition, copies of original documents translated were not attached in the database, and there were several instances where translation, revision, and proofreading activities were not recorded in the database. As a result, ICTR could not effectively monitor and control its documents and assess the efficiency of its translation services.

> **(3) ICTR should ensure that the Language Services Section records all the necessary data in the translation document management and control system to strengthen monitoring and enhance performance measurement.**
>
> *ICTR accepted recommendation 3 and stated that the Head of Documents Control Terminology and Reference Unit is undertaking a weekly verification of all data entry systems. More suitable software is being acquired to improve on the document management and control system capable of capturing all important steps of translation process. A proposal has already been received from the vendor and the necessary procedure is being followed.* Recommendation 3 remains open pending receipt of evidence that all the necessary data is being recorded in the translation document management and control system.

Need to strengthen translation quality control and management practices

23.   Establishing a robust quality control system and appropriate management practices in translation services is necessary to meet the required professional standards and ensure the completeness, substantive accuracy, use of appropriate terminology, and consistency with previously translated materials on the subject matter.

24.   ICTR had established proactive quality control practices, including use of technology tools, which were integrated into the various stages of the translation process. The documents for translation were received electronically at LSS by DCU, which enhanced readability and minimized ambiguities in the original language. The documents were then sent to the Reference Unit to prepare a reference and terminology folder. The referencing process was automated and the availability of electronic reference and terminology resources increased productivity and helped in ensuring satisfactory levels of consistency with previously translated materials on the same subject, thereby contributing to enhanced quality.

25.   After the referencing step, the job was assigned to translator(s). The translated document was then assigned to one or two revisers to ensure substantive accuracy and to verify that no divergences existed between the original and translated versions. An OIOS review of 25 documents, which were processed during the audit period, indicated that the documents reviewed were generally assigned to one or two revisers. Subsequently, revised documents went to a pool of secretaries to incorporate the reviser's corrections before being assigned to a proof-reader to ensure that the spelling and form were accurate. Finally, the fully translated, revised and proofread documents were returned to the requesting Section/Unit through Court Management Services.

26.   However, there was a need for translation quality control and management practices to be strengthened as summarized below:

- LSS did not conduct periodic quality control reviews such as having a predetermined proportion of translated jobs subjected to spot-checks. Also, no client satisfaction surveys were conducted to obtain feedback from Sections/Units to whom LSS provided its services. This prevented LSS from obtaining assurance that its work was performed in accordance with the appropriate quality standards.

- Documents submitted to LSS for translation often had tight deadlines which left little time for preparatory work and necessitated splitting large documents among several translators, which increased the pressure on staff. A review of 25 documents translated during the audit period showed that each of these documents was split between two to 13 translators (on average seven translators per document), thereby giving rise to significant coordination problems and increased exposure to the risk of discrepancies and inconsistencies. This was because ICTR

did not establish adequate lead times to allow the required preparatory time for translation work and to ensure that target delivery dates for requesting Sections/Units were met. In addition, LSS did not provide requesting Sections/Units with updates on the status of the translation work and expected completion date for fully translated documents, which impeded their planning for subsequent tasks.

- Some of the revision and proofreading activities were handwritten on printed documents, instead of making changes and comments directly on the electronic versions of the documents being revised or proofread. This process took more staff time to incorporate revision and proofreading changes made, and increased the exposure to risk of errors and further delays.

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(4) ICTR should conduct periodic quality control reviews at suitable intervals on a sample basis to assure the quality of services provided by the Language Services Section.

ICTR accepted recommendation 4 and stated that *LSS will use consultant revisers to carry out periodic quality control reviews, in addition to the control carried out by in-house revisers.* Recommendation 4 remains open pending receipt of evidence that periodic quality control reviews are being conducted at suitable intervals to assure the quality of services provided by LSS.

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(5) ICTR should strengthen coordination between the Language Services Section and the requesting Sections or Units by establishing lead times and setting target dates for the return of translated documents to facilitate planning and ensure efficient use of resources.

ICTR accepted recommendation 5 and stated that LSS is in the process of requesting all concerned parties to ensure that the Section is contacted in advance so as to have adequate time and clearly agreed deadlines for translation. Recommendation 5 remains open pending receipt of evidence of strengthened coordination between LSS and the requesting Sections or Units.

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(6) ICTR should ensure that revision and proofreading activities are conducted using electronic versions of documents to enhance the efficient use of resources and quality of work.

ICTR accepted recommendation 6 and stated that LSS has started using electronic versions of documents for proofreading and should ensure within the next quarter that revision is also done electronically. Recommendation 6 remains open pending receipt of evidence that revision and proofreading activities are being conducted using electronic versions of documents.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

27.   OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the Management and staff of ICTR for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

(*Signed*) David Kanja
Assistant Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of language services in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda

Recom. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	C/ O[3]	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date[4]
1	ICTR should ensure that adequate staff with the requisite knowledge and skills are provided to the Language Services Section to ensure timely provision of translation and revision services.	Important	C	Action completed.	Implemented
2	ICTR should ensure that the Language Services Section takes measures to reduce delays and complete translation work within the established rates.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence showing that translation work is being completed within the established rates.	30 June 2014
3	ICTR should ensure that the Language Services Section records all the necessary data in the translation document management and control system to strengthen monitoring and enhance performance measurement.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence showing that all the necessary data is being recorded in the translation document management and control system to strengthen monitoring and enhance performance measurement.	30 June 2014
4	ICTR should conduct periodic quality control reviews at suitable intervals on a sample basis to assure the quality of services provided by the Language Services Section.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence showing that periodic quality control reviews are being conducted at suitable intervals to assure the quality of services provided by LSS.	30 April 2014
5	ICTR should strengthen coordination between the Language Services Section and the requesting Sections or Units by establishing lead times and setting target dates for the return of translated documents to facilitate planning and ensure efficient use of resources.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence supporting strengthened coordination between LSS and the requesting Sections or Units by establishing lead times and setting target dates for the return of translated documents to facilitate planning and ensure efficient use of resources.	30 June 2014

[1] Critical recommendations address significant and/or pervasive deficiencies or weaknesses in governance, risk management or internal control processes, such that reasonable assurance cannot be provided regarding the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

[2] Important recommendations address important deficiencies or weaknesses in governance, risk management or internal control processes, such that reasonable assurance may be at risk regarding the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

[3] C = closed, O = open

[4] Date provided by ICTR in response to recommendations.

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of language services in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda

Recom. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	C/ O[3]	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date[4]
6	ICTR should ensure that revision and proofreading activities are conducted using electronic versions of documents to enhance the efficient use of resources and quality of work.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence showing that revision and proofreading activities are being conducted using electronic versions of documents.	30 April 2014

APPENDIX I

Management Response

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Audit of language services in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	ICTR should ensure that adequate staff with the requisite knowledge and skills are provided to the Language Services Section to ensure timely provision of translation and revision services.	Important	Yes	1. Chief of Language Services Section. 2. Chief of Human Resources & Planning Section. 3. Chief of Finance & Budget	Implemented	ICTR has continued to ensure that the required number of staff allocated to the Language Services Section is adequate and with the necessary knowledge and skills. Furthermore, the budget proposal for 2014-2015 has also taken this consideration into account and as a result there are no posts scheduled for abolition in 2014. Provision for temporary assistance is also foreseen should the workload exceed the current projection.
2	ICTR should ensure that the Language Services Section takes measures to reduce delays and complete translation work within the established rates.	Important	Yes	1. Chief of Language Services Section. 2. The Procurement Officer	30 June 2014	LSS has adopted measures to reduce delays in translation work. These include maintaining the required number of translators, outsourcing translation and acquiring a document management and control software.
3	ICTR should ensure that the Language Services Section records all the necessary data in the translation document management and control system to strengthen monitoring and	Important	Yes	1. Chief of Language Services Section	30 June 2014	The head of documents control terminology and reference unit is undertaking a weekly verification of all data entry systems. More suitable software is being acquired to improve

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[1] Critical recommendations address significant and/or pervasive deficiencies or weaknesses in governance, risk management or internal control processes, such that reasonable assurance cannot be provided regarding the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

[2] Important recommendations address important deficiencies or weaknesses in governance, risk management or internal control processes, such that reasonable assurance may be at risk regarding the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Audit of language services in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
	enhance performance measurement.			2. The Procurement Officer		on the document management and control system capable of capturing all important steps of translation process. A proposal has already been received from the vendor and the necessary procedure is being followed.
4	ICTR should conduct periodic quality control reviews at suitable intervals on a sample basis to assure the quality of services provided by the Language Services Section.	Important	Yes	Chief of Language Services Section	30 April 2014	LSS will use consultant revisers to carry out periodic quality control reviews, in addition to the control carried out by in-house revisers.
5	ICTR should strengthen coordination between the Language Services Section and the requesting Sections or Units by establishing lead times and setting target dates for the return of translated documents to facilitate planning and ensure efficient use of resources.	Important	Yes	Chief of Language Services Section in coordination with other Section or Unit Chiefs	30 June 2014	LSS is in the process of requesting all concerned parties to ensure that the Section is contacted in advance so as to have adequate time and clear agreed deadlines for translation.
6	ICTR should ensure that revision and proofreading activities are conducted using electronic versions of documents to enhance the efficient use of resources and quality of work.	Important	Yes	Chief of Language Services Section	30 April 2014	LSS has started using electronic versions of documents for proofreading and should ensure within the next quarter that revision is also done electronically.