



## **INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION**

### **REPORT 2021/004**

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#### **Audit of quick impact projects in the United Nations Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic**

**To improve the effectiveness and efficiency  
of the implementation of quick impact  
projects, there was a need to provide  
additional guidance for strengthening their  
management**

**26 March 2021**

**Assignment No. AP2020-637-05**

# **Audit of quick impact projects in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of quick impact projects (QIPs) in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the management of QIPs in MINUSCA. The audit covered the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2020 and included governance, project management and evaluation.

MINUSCA, in the most part, had successfully implemented QIPs to address the immediate needs of beneficiaries and were contributing to acceptance of MINUSCA mandated tasks and the credibility of the Mission amongst beneficiaries. Furthermore, through reassigning QIPs funding, MINUSCA had made good efforts in assisting national and regional health authorities in containing and mitigating the impact of COVID-19. However, to further improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of QIPs, there was a need to provide additional guidance for strengthening their management.

OIOS made four recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, MINUSCA needed to:

- Review and revise its standard operating procedures on the management of QIPs to provide additional guidance and direction to all those involved in the projects, and to ensure the programme is implemented effectively and in a timely manner;
- Ensure that the Local Project Review Committees systematically assess and document the capacity of partners to effectively implement proposed projects as part of the selection process;
- Minimize project delays by ensuring that implementing partners are provided clear and timely guidance on the need to submit accurate banking details; and
- Provide project management training to Heads of Offices and QIPs focal points to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities in managing projects.

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

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# Audit of quick impact projects in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

## I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of quick impact projects (QIPs) in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

2. QIPs are small-scale, low cost projects not exceeding \$50,000, that are rapidly implementable and highly visible, and expected to be completed within six months. QIPs are designed to promote acceptance of the mandated tasks of MINUSCA, build confidence in the peace process, generate support for the Mission, and strengthen the link between the Mission and the people of the Central African Republic.

3. Project approval, implementation and monitoring are decentralized through Local Project Review Committees (LPRCs) at each of the 12 field offices. LPRCs are chaired by Heads of Offices (HoOs) or designated representatives and include members from the United Nations Country Team (UNCT). LPRCs are supported by project focal points from various Mission components who are responsible for (i) coordinating with implementing partners, beneficiaries, authorities and other relevant stakeholders; (ii) overseeing the implementation of approved projects from initiation to completion; (iii) preparing project closure reports and handover documents; (iv) evaluating performance of implementing partners; and (v) providing status reports to LPRCs.

4. The QIPs Unit in Bangui, within the Civil Affairs Section, consisted of three international staff, a United Nations Volunteer, and a national professional officer. The Unit oversees the coordination of the QIPs programme and its responsibilities include: (i) reviewing projects identified by the Mission's components prior to LPRC review; (ii) reviewing projects approved by LPRCs and submitting them to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General's (SRSG) for authorization; (iii) preparing and submitting memoranda of understanding (MoU) to the Legal Affairs Section for its review; (iv) facilitating the signing of the MoU between implementing partners and the Director of Mission Support (DMS) and working with Financial Resourcing and Performance (FRP) Section for disbursement of funds to partners; and (v) preparing quarterly and annual reports on the status of project implementation and delays to the SRSG and MINUSCA's senior managers.

5. The budget and expenditure for QIPs for 2018/19 and 2019/20 were \$6 million and \$5.66 million respectively, as shown in Table 1. The approved budget for each project was on average \$35,149, ranging from \$3,465 to \$50,000.

**Table 1: Budgets, expenditures, and status of QIPs from July 2018 to June 2020 (\$ million)**

	<i>Number of projects</i>						
	<i>Budget</i>	<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>Approved</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>Closed by the Mission</i>
2018/19	3.0	2.68	78	66	11	0	1
2019/20	3.0	2.98	83	12	62	9	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>5.66</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>

*Source: Budget document and QIPs Unit records as at 30 June 2020.*

6. Comments provided by MINUSCA are incorporated in italics.

## II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

7. The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the management of QIPs in MINUSCA

8. This audit was included in the 2020 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to importance of QIPs for building the confidence of the people of the Central African Republic in the peace process and the work of the Mission.

9. OIOS conducted this audit from August to October 2020. The audit covered the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2020. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risks areas in the management of QIPs, which included: governance, project management and evaluation.

10. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key staff, and a sample of 30 beneficiaries, (b) review of relevant documentation in all 161 QIP files, and (c) analytical review of selected QIPs data. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, verification of QIPs were mainly conducted through remote auditing techniques, including use of social media.

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

## III. AUDIT RESULTS

### A. Governance

Projects approved were in line with the Mission’s strategic priorities

12. The Mission had established LPRCs at each sector and provided them with terms of reference on their responsibilities. The LPRCs approved 78 and 83 QIPs in 2018/19 and 2019/20 respectively. Projects were generally identified by the Mission’s substantive components for consideration by the LPRCs. Table 2 shows the various Mission components that identified QIPs.

**Table 2: Projects identified by Mission components for 2018/19 and 2019/20**



Source: MINUSCA QIPs Unit records as at 30 June 2020

13. An analysis of the approved QIPs for 2018/19 and 2019/20 showed that all projects were aligned with the Mission’s strategic priorities, which was to support the implementation of the Mission’s mandate, in particular, to improve social cohesion, the restoration of state authority and protection of civilians. Table 3 indicates the percentage breakdown of approved projects and funds allocated per Mission mandate area.

**Table 3:**  
**MINUSCA approved projects per mandate area and percentage of allocated funds for 2018/19 and 2019/20**

Mission Mandate	2018/2019		2019/2020	
	Approved projects	% budget allocated	Approved Projects	% budget allocated
Social Cohesion	29	40	46	50
Restoration of State Authority	29	30	24	33
Protection of Civilians	20	30	13	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: MINUSCA QIPs Unit

14. The QIPs Unit, in coordination with the Gender Affairs Unit, ensured that gender analysis was considered in the implementing partner selection and monitoring process. A review of the approved projects for 2018/19 and 2019/20 showed that 22 of the approved projects had a gender perspective and included income generating activities and construction/rehabilitation of women community centres. Additionally, gender affairs officers at sectors closely collaborated with LPRCs in project design and monitored implementation of projects to ensure compliance with the Mission’s gender mainstreaming and equality policy. They also verified implementing partners’ compliance with gender requirements and helped identify 13 women-owned implementing partners that MINUSCA registered for QIPs.

15. Interviews with beneficiaries acknowledged that QIPs, in the most part, were successfully implemented to address the immediate needs of beneficiaries and were contributing to acceptance of MINUSCA mandated tasks and the credibility of the Mission amongst beneficiaries. However, as outlined in the report further action is needed to improve the management of QIPs from planning to closure.

## **B. Project management**

### Procedures needed to be revised and additional guidance provided to improve the management of the QIPs programme

*Further consultation with beneficiaries of projects was needed*

16. As part of the development of QIPs proposals, MINUSCA components are required to coordinate with authorities, beneficiaries and community leaders to understand their needs to facilitate effective project design and delivery.

17. Telephone interviews with 18 beneficiaries of completed projects found that they were not always adequately consulted in the project design and planning process prior to embarking on the project, as shown in the following examples:

- For project 2018/19 BRI05/Q005 for fencing of the general hospital in Bria - the Director of the hospital interviewed stated that the project design had not considered the need to plaster the brick

wall fencing and place concertina wire on top to make it more robust and avoid unauthorized access. If consulted, the Director mentioned that a request would have been made to include these additions in the project specification;

- For project 2018/19 BOS05/Q062 for the construction of the radio station in Batangafo - the beneficiary encountered technical issues that had to be fixed. This mainly resulted due to inadequate technical specifications being developed at the planning stage of the project; and
- For project 2018/19 NDL02/Q043 for the rehabilitation of the Sous-Préfet office in Ndele - although the project was completed satisfactorily, it could not be immediately used as the purchase of furniture had not been factored into the project plan.

18. Beneficiaries were of the view that if their ideas and suggestions were properly considered, these QIPs would have been more successful in targeting their needs. The QIPs Unit informed that all projects had been designed involving communities. However, this was not supported by evidence in project files and the feedback from beneficiaries interviewed by OIOS. Also, as part of the approval process, there was no evidence that LPRCs were checking whether beneficiaries had been adequately consulted.

*Need to conduct a short risk assessment on feasibility of the project prior to selection*

19. A review of approved project files showed that a risk assessment was not systematically done to identify challenges that may negatively impact the timely and effective delivery of projects. OIOS noted that well-known challenges were not properly considered or factored in when determining the timelines of projects from their start to completion, such as: (a) delays in obtaining materials and equipment for projects due to the poor infrastructure in the country and transportation problems during the rainy season; (b) the expertise and capacity of implementing partners to deliver; and (c) the volatile security situation. While all challenges cannot be foreseen in a conflict situation, it is necessary to conduct a short risk assessment prior to the approval stage to ensure potential risks are adequately captured and mitigated where possible.

*The process for selecting implementing partners needed to be improved*

20. The selection of implementing partners is decentralized to each field office. Prior to selection, the QIP focal point and LPRC are responsible for assessing partners' financial capability, reputation, credibility and experience. They are also responsible for obtaining information on partners previous performance from members of the UNCT and other external parties such as authorities and communities. The QIPs Unit maintained a spreadsheet of implementing partners who had previously implemented projects for the Mission to assist LPRCs in the selection of partners for new projects.

21. A review of project files noted that QIP focal points were not always: (a) conducting adequate evaluation of partners performance in implementing projects such as checking their prior performance history; and (b) assessing whether an implementing partner had the expertise and capacity to effectively and efficiently implement proposed projects. For example: (i) for the 2019/20 period, no checklists were found in project files or information in LPRCs reports referring to an assessment of partners' capabilities; and (ii) for the 2018/19 period, for those field offices that completed the checklist there were insufficient details provided on the partners capabilities. Moreover, there was no evidence that LPRCs retrieved information on past performance of partners prior to their selection.

22. OIOS was informed that the lack of a documented assessment of partners skills and experiences was mainly because it was not a requirement of the current standard operating procedures (SOP). OIOS takes note, but there were indicators that QIP focal points and LPRCs were also not systematically deliberating on partners expertise and ability to implement projects. The following are examples of projects

that were administratively closed without being completed, or were completed with significant delays due to failure of partners to deliver within a reasonable period (some extending beyond 18 months) and/or due to poor quality work:

- The fencing of Mbres Sous-Préfet in Kaga Bandoro with funds disbursed of \$23,142 (representing 80 per cent of the approved funds) was administratively closed. The LPRC is in the process of identifying another partner to finalize the work with the remaining 20 per cent of the funds; and
- The rehabilitation of a primary school in Bangassou and the rehabilitation of the Nola prison in Berberati were delayed by 17 and 19 months from the initially planned completion date, respectively. This was due to the failure of the partners to deliver the work in a timely manner and in accordance with the project specifications.

*Significant delays were encountered in initiating the 2019/20 projects*

23. As QIPs are expected to be initiated and completed within six-months, it is important that LPRCs hold meetings early on in the fiscal year, and once the project is approved, the MoU with the implementing partner is expeditiously signed and funds disbursed. Such an approach will ensure QIPs are initiated and completed in the year in which the budget is approved.

24. The audit noted that some LPRCs meetings were delayed in reviewing project proposals and in selecting and approving them. For instance, (a) in 2018/2019, 5 of the 12 field offices held their project review meetings between September and December 2018; and (b) in 2019/20, 9 of the 12 field offices held them between October 2019 and February 2020.

25. Once the project was approved, the process of completing the MoUs was timely and they were generally completed and signed by the DMS on average 12 days after receipt. However, once signed, there were often delays in the release of the first installment. For example, for 34 of 83 projects approved in 2019/20, the funds were provided on average six weeks after the MoU was signed. The MINUSCA FRP Section explained that delays occurred as implementing partners were not providing correct banking details or were delayed in providing them. Further guidance to implementing partners is therefore necessary to improve the disbursement process to minimize delays in initiating projects. For instance, as of December 2020, of the 78 projects that were approved in 2018/19, 71 were completed, 6 were ongoing and 1 was administratively closed. For 2019/20, out of 83 projects approved, 43 were completed, 32 were ongoing, 5 had not started, and 3 were administratively closed.

*QIPs focal points need to enhance their review and monitoring of projects under their responsibility*

26. Project files for all completed and on-going QIPs did not contain adequate evidence that QIP focal points were systematically monitoring projects and documenting their progress, as well as the challenges encountered. For example, there were no project management plans, or information on site visits or details of well-known constraints experienced by implementing partners such as delayed delivery of materials and equipment. This mainly resulted as HoOs and QIP focal points had not been provided adequate project management training. The QIPs Unit informed that focal points were provided with a presentation, SRSG guidance memorandum on QIPs and quarterly video teleconferences to inform and guide them on the status of QIPs and on recommendations to improve their implementation. However, interview with QIPs focal points noted that more specific training was needed on project management to enable them to better manage and monitor projects, including instructions on reviewing financial reports submitted by implementing partners.

27. In OIOS view, the lack of training and thus insufficient management of projects by QIP focal points contributed to the long delays in project implementation. For instance, on average the completion date for 37 of the 66 projects completed in 2018/19 was delayed by about 14 months, with only 29 completed within the required six-month period. These projects included renovation/construction of prisons, schools, a maternity ward, bridges and boreholes.

*Need to review and revise the Mission's SOP on the management of QIPs*

28. MINUSCA had a SOP for the management of QIPs that defined the roles and responsibilities of LPRCs, the QIPs Unit and QIP focal points. However, as demonstrated throughout the report, the SOP needed to be further developed to provide clear procedures on key steps in the process, including ensuring information regarding the various assessments conducted are documented and maintained in project files. For example, the SOP did not include:

- Standard timeframes related to the QIPs process (development of proposals, approval, monitoring, reporting and closedown) to ensure QIPs are approved and implemented in a timely manner and are initiated and completed, as far as possible, within the fiscal year in which the funds are provided;
- A requirement that as part of the project review and approval process, LPRCs confirm that beneficiaries of projects have been adequately consulted and risks to ineffective project implementation are properly assessed and mitigating measures implemented from the outset; and
- Procedures for periodic reporting from field offices to the QIPs Unit on status of QIP implementation and challenges being encountered.

29. OIOS feedback from some LPRC Chairs, members and HoOs interviewed indicated that they were not aware of the SOP and they had not been provided a copy. They were also of the view that additional training and guidance was necessary for them to perform their functions more effectively.

**(1) MINUSCA should review and revise its standard operating procedures on the management of quick impact projects (QIPs) to provide additional guidance and direction to all those involved, and to ensure the QIPs programme is implemented effectively and in a timely manner.**

*MINUSCA accepted recommendation 1 and stated the SOP had been revised in July 2020. However it will be revised again to reflect: (i) procedures on key steps in the process, including information to be documented in project files; (ii) standard timeframes related to QIPs process to ensure projects are approved and implemented in a timely manner; and (iii) LPRCs confirmation that beneficiaries of projects have been adequately consulted and risks to effective project implementation are properly assessed and mitigated. MINUSCA will design and share terms of reference (TOR) with responsibilities for clear directions and guidance to those involved in the QIPs programme for effective and timely implementation. Recommendation 1 remains open pending receipt of a copy of the revised SOP and TOR and evidence that it has been disseminated to all staff involved in the management of QIPs.*

**(2) MINUSCA should ensure that the Local Project Review Committees systematically assess and document the capacity of partners to implement projects as part of the selection process.**

*MINUSCA accepted recommendation 2 and stated that while it has always conducted adequate review of implementing partners, the assessment results and justifications were not always systematically and officially documented. The Mission has instructed HoOs and LPRCs' Secretariat to include a specific segment on the justification of the implementing partner selection into the project documents and LPRC reports. Also, assessment forms will be completed and submitted by QIPs focal points before projects are approved by LPRCs and attached to the project document at the end of the project. In addition, there will be, on a quarterly basis, regular assessment of all implementing partners working with the QIPs Unit. Recommendation 2 remains open pending receipt of a copy of the instruction issued to HoOs and LPRCs' Secretariat and the revised project document and LPRCs report that shows the added segment on justification of the implementing partner selection.*

**(3) MINUSCA should minimize project delays by ensuring that implementing partners are provided clear and timely guidance on the need to submit accurate banking details.**

*MINUSCA accepted recommendation 3 and stated that although there are some other causes of delays such as unstable environment, pillaging and armed groups destruction, which are beyond the control of the Mission, LPRCs will implement a checklist stating the administrative and financial documentation that is required for proceeding with the project, including the submission of accurate banking details. This will avoid delays when the completed project file is submitted to the SRSG for final approval and then to MINUSCA FRP Section for processing. Recommendation 3 remains open pending receipt of evidence that appropriate guidance is provided to implementing partners on the need to provide accurate banking details in a timely manner.*

**(4) MINUSCA should provide project management training to Heads of Offices and focal points to assist them in fulfilling their responsibility to manage quick impact projects effectively.**

*MINUSCA accepted recommendation 4 and stated that it has planned a series of training sessions on project management for focal points and implementing partners which was halted due to COVID-19. The QIPs Unit conducted the first training in Obo for QIPs management effectiveness. MINUSCA is already designing a training plan on project management for HoOs and other components involved in the QIPs management. Recommendation 4 remains open pending receipt of a copy of the project management training plan and evidence that HoOs and QIPs focal points have taken the project management training.*

The Mission adequately publicized all completed project

30. On the successful completion of QIPs, MINUSCA organized closing and inauguration ceremonies, at which the Strategic Communication and Public Information (SCPI) Section invited the national press in order to promote the work of the Mission. At these events, authority and community leaders were in attendance, as well as Mission leadership. If SCPI was unable to arrange for the national press to attend, the Mission videoed the ceremony and shared the event through social media. Following the SRSG's recommendation, the QIPs Unit was developing a magazine and video clips to promote the Mission's involvement in the QIPs implemented. OIOS concluded that MINUSCA adequately publicized and promoted its QIPs for improved acceptance of the Mission's mandate by the people of the Central African Republic.

## The Mission identified and started implementing projects to mitigate COVID-19

31. Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had led to increased health risks and thus vulnerability of the population, the SRSG in April 2020 approved the use of 2019/20 unspent QIPs funds to be re-allocated to provide support to administrative and health authorities in their efforts to promote and safeguard the health of the people of the Central African Republic.

32. Based on the Mission's strategic plan to assist the people of the Central African Republic during the COVID-19 crisis, Mission components, in collaboration with communities, health authorities and UNCT members, identified 21 QIPs across the 12 sectors. The 21 QIPs, together with 7 that already were approved and came under the Mission's COVID-19 strategic activities, totaled \$925,950. It was planned that these QIPs would be implemented within a shorter timeframe of three months. The implementation of 21 of the 28 QIPs were generally successful, despite challenges being faced including: (a) closure of the borders with surrounding countries delaying receipt of some materials ordered by implementing partners; (b) price increases of products in the local market due to the crisis situation; and (c) the existing volatile security situation. As at 30 June 2020, MINUSCA fully delivered on 8 projects, with another 13 at different stages of implementation. The challenges experienced had delayed the implementation of the remaining seven projects.

33. The support provided included distribution of handwashing kits to vulnerable households in large cities, villages and high-risk areas, beds and hospital mattresses for health centers, and provision of community mobilization officers to provide protective equipment and to raise awareness in communities.

34. OIOS concluded that good efforts had been made by MINUSCA to assist national and regional health authorities in containing and mitigating the impact of COVID-19.

### **C. Project evaluation**

#### Evaluation recommendation was being implemented

35. MINUSCA arranged for an external evaluation of its QIPs programme to assess its impact of the projects implemented from the Mission's inception in 2014 to June 2019. The evaluation report, dated 6 May 2020 made eight recommendations, including for MINUSCA to: (a) ensure raw material price database is established to cross-check the implementing partner's financial statements and budget proposals; and (b) monitor quality of work, performance rating, financial capability of implementing partners, and beneficiary's satisfaction and allow best performing implementing partners execute more QIPs. The QIPs Unit had taken action and established a mechanism to initiate their implementation. These together with the implementation of OIOS recommendations included in this report will improve the QIPs programme going forward.

### **IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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

*(Signed)* Eleanor T. Burns  
Director, Internal Audit Division  
Office of Internal Oversight Services

## STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

## Audit of quick impact projects in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical <sup>1</sup> / Important <sup>2</sup>	C/ O <sup>3</sup>	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date <sup>4</sup>
1	MINUSCA should review and revise its standard operating procedures on the management of quick impact projects (QIPs) to provide additional guidance and direction to all those involved, and to ensure the QIPs programme is implemented effectively and in a timely manner.	Important	O	Receipt of a copy of the revised standard operating procedure and terms of reference and evidence that it has been disseminated to all staff involved in the management of QIPs.	30 June 2021
2	MINUSCA should ensure that the Local Project Review Committees systematically assess and document the capacity of partners to implement projects as part of the selection process.	Important	O	Receipt of a copy of the instruction issued to HoOs and LPRCs' Secretariat and the revised project document and LPRCs report that shows the added segment on justification of the implementing partner selection	31 May 2021
3	MINUSCA should minimize project delays by ensuring that implementing partners are provided clear and timely guidance on the need to submit accurate banking details.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that appropriate guidance is provided to implementing partners on the need to provide accurate banking details in a timely manner.	30 April 2021
4	MINUSCA should provide project management training to Heads of Offices and focal points to assist them in fulfilling their responsibility to manage quick impact projects effectively.	Important	O	Receipt of a copy of the project management training plan and evidence that HoOs and QIPs focal points have taken the project management training.	30 June 2021

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

<sup>4</sup> Date provided by MINUSCA in response to recommendations.

# **APPENDIX I**

## **Management Response**

**United Nations**

United Nations Multidimensional Integrated  
Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic



**MINUSCA**

**Nations Unies**

Mission Multidimensionnelle Intégrée des Nations Unies  
pour la Stabilisation en République centrafricaine

**INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM**

**MEMORANDUM INTERIEUR**

TO: Ms. Eleanor T. Burns, Director,  
A: Internal Audit Division, OIOS

DATE: 17 March 2021

REFERENCE: MINUSCA/SRSG/43/2021

FROM: Mankeur Ndiaye  
DE: Special Representative of the Secretary-General  
MINUSCA

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mankeur', is written over the 'DE:' field and extends upwards into the 'DATE:' field.

SUBJECT: **Comments on the Draft Report on an audit of quick impact projects in MINUSCA**  
**(Assignment AP2020/637-05)**  
OBJECT:

- 
1. With reference to your memorandum of 15 March 2021 (OIOS/2020/00325) , on the above captioned-subject matter for your consideration, please find attached Appendix 1 with MINUSCA's comments.

## Management Response

## Audit of quick impact projects in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical <sup>1</sup> / Important <sup>2</sup>	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	MINUSCA should review and revise its standard operating procedures on the management of quick impact projects (QIPs) to provide additional guidance and direction to all those involved, and to ensure the QIPs programme is implemented effectively and in a timely manner.	Important	Yes	1. Civil Affairs Officer - National Coordinator for QIPs  2. Chief Civil Affairs	End of June 2021	<p><b>ONGOING:</b> MINUSCA had recently reviewed and improved the Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) on the management of quick impact projects. The new SOP was approved and signed by the SRSG on 5 July 2020. Guidance and direction were clearly provided to presidents of the Local Project Review Committees (LPRCs) of 12 field offices, LPRC secretariats, focal points, and quick impact projects (QIPs) Unit.</p> <p>As recommended by the audit report, MINUSCA will revise the SOP to reflect:</p> <p>i) the procedures on key steps in the process, including information regarding the various assessments conducted are documented in project files.</p> <p>ii) standard timeframes related to the QIPs process (development of proposals, approval, monitoring, reporting and closedown) to ensure QIPs were approved and</p>

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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 quick impact projects in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical <sup>1</sup> / Important <sup>2</sup>	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						<p>implemented in a timely manner and are initiated and completed, as far as possible, within the fiscal year in which the funds were provided as well as:</p> <p>iii) to confirm that beneficiaries of projects have been adequately consulted and risks to ineffective project implementation properly assessed and mitigation measures implemented as part of the formal project review and approval proves for LPRCs.</p> <p>Based on the revised SOP, MINUSCA will design and share Terms of Reference (TORs) with responsibilities for clear direction and guidance to those involved in the QIPs programme for effective and timely implementation.</p>
2	MINUSCA should ensure that the Local Project Review Committees systematically assess and document the capacity of partners to implement projects as part of the selection process.	Important	Yes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Civil Affairs Officer - National Coordinator for QIPs.</li> <li>2. Chief Civil Affairs</li> </ol>	End of May 2021	<p><b>ONGOING:</b> QIPs focal points and LPRCs always conduct adequate review of implementing partners before agreeing and formally selecting the Implementing Partner (IP), based on the IP assessment quarterly report. Exhaustive debates and assessment are always taking place with the objective to reach impact and results.</p>

Management Response

Audit of quick impact projects in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical <sup>1</sup> / Important <sup>2</sup>	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						<p>However, the assessment results and justifications were not always systematically and officially documented and attached to LPRC reports.</p> <p>MINUSCA has taken action to correct this and instructed the Heads of Offices (HoOs) and LPRCs' Secretariat to include a specific segment on the justification of the IP selection into the project document and LPRC reports.</p> <p>Assessment forms to be filled by QIPs focal points are being submitted before the approval of the project by the Project Review Committees (PRCs) (attached to the project document) and at the end of the project.</p> <p>In addition, the regular assessment of all implementing partners in partnership with the QIPs Unit on a quarterly basis contributes to a dynamic assessment through the continuous reviewing of the IP's assessment from recommended as reliable to blacklisted.</p>

## Management Response

## Audit of quick impact projects in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical <sup>1</sup> / Important <sup>2</sup>	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
3	MINUSCA should minimize project delays by ensuring that the implementing partners are provided clear and timely guidance on the need to submit accurate banking details.	Important	Yes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Civil Affairs Officer - National Coordinator for QIPs.</li> <li>2. Chief Civil Affairs</li> </ol>	End of April 2021	<p><b>ONGOING:</b> Project delays are attributable to many factors: UN Finance issued new regulations (new SOP on banking information) that imposed constraints and procedures with regards to the exact name of the holder banking account that considerably affected the delivery process.</p> <p>There are other constraints beyond the control of MINUSCA and IPs such as unstable environment, pillaging, violence, armed groups' destructions, limitation of movements, unavailability of materials locally, poor transport facilities, lack of accountable partners, corruption, illegal taxes by armed groups, absence of State authorities, etc. that further the sending of all required administrative and financial documents.</p> <p>A checklist mentioning all required administrative and financial documentation to be provided to the implementing partner, including the submission of accurate banking details, and will be explained by the MINUSCA QIPs focal point and filled by the IP. The checklist will be included into the project file at the field and PRC level with</p>

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						accurate and required information and then verified at HQ level by the quality control coordination before the submission of the complete project file to SRSG's final approval and then its processing by Finance.
4	MINUSCA should provide project management training to Heads of Offices and focal points to assist them in fulfilling their responsibility to manage quick impact projects effectively.	Important		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Civil Affairs Officer - National Coordinator for QIPs</li> <li>2. Chief Civil Affairs</li> </ol>	End of June 2021	<p><b>ONGOING:</b> MINUSCA provides periodical guidance and recommendations to HoOs (Chairs of LPRCs) and to focal points through weekly, quarterly, mid-year and annual reports. Civil Affairs Section (CAS) QIP organizes video tele conference (VTC) with CAS Secretariat / QIP focal points to inform and guide LPRCs and QIP focal points.</p> <p>MINUSCA had planned a series of training sessions on project management for focal points and IPs which was halted due to COVID19. The QIPs Unit conducted the first training in Obo for QIPs management effectiveness.</p> <p>MINUSCA is already designing a training plan on the status of the QIPs program, the implementation of recommendations, and project management for HoOs and the</p>

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						<p>other components involved from March to June 2021, as follows:</p> <p><b>1. 23 March 2021</b> A special introductory session on QIPs (VTC) at the Senior Management Meeting (SMM) with the participation of the SRSG, SMM (12 field offices) and all QIPs components focal points concerned focusing on the following themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Status of the QIPs Program</li> <li>-Reminder of SRSG's corrective measures to be taken, implementation of recommendations to improve the management of projects, and respect of the budget cycle (memo dated on 25 January 2021)</li> <li>-Presentation of the recommendations of the QIPs audit and of the modalities of implementation</li> <li>-The way forward and next steps.</li> </ul> <p><b>2. End of April 2021</b> A technical session on the implementation of the four recommendations formulated by the audit of QIPs (VTC and working groups) with the participation of HoOs (12 field</p>

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						<p>offices) and all QIPs component focal points focusing on the following themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Implementation of the QIPs audit recommendations geared toward the improvement project management and respect of the budget cycle;</li> <li>-Revision of the SOP, reminder of responsibilities (TORs of QIPs focal points), identification and respect of the different approval steps and managerial phases;</li> <li>-Justification of the selection of IPs (checklist and assessment database);</li> <li>-Required documentation and banking information (check list);</li> <li>-Project management and the budget cycle.</li> </ul> <p><b>3. End of May - June</b></p> <p>A concluding session at the SMM with the participation of the SRSG, SMM (12 field offices) and all QIPs components focal points to assess:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The status of QIPs;</li> <li>-Progress made;</li> <li>-Status of implementation of the QIPs audit recommendations;</li> </ul>

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						-Further recommendations to strengthen managerial progress achieved.