



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2021/072

Audit of occupational safety and health in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

**The occupational safety and health
programme was not yet fully operational, with
increased senior leadership involvement and
capacity development needed for the Mission
to address identified risks to personnel**

**23 December 2021
Assignment No. AP2021-633-01**

Audit of occupational safety and health in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of occupational safety and health (OSH) in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS). The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of the OSH programme in UNMISS. The audit covered the period from March 2018 to September 2021 and included a review of the OSH framework and implementation of the OSH programme.

To facilitate the implementation of the OSH programme, UNMISS developed an OSH policy statement and risk management plan. However, the OSH programme was not yet fully operational with increased senior leadership involvement and capacity development needed for the Mission to address identified risks to personnel.

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

- Strengthen its OSH programme by ensuring there is an OSH committee led by senior management to oversee its activities; clearly assigning responsibilities for the implementation OSH activities; instituting a comprehensive OSH risk management; and optimizing the capacity of existing resources to conduct OSH inspections and implement recommendations arising thereof;
- Task Mission components to promptly report OSH related incidents and accidents to the Environmental and Occupational Safety and Health Unit and ensure that all work-related incidents and accidents are promptly recorded in the incident reporting database;
- Strengthen awareness raising of all Mission personnel, including by observing a health and safety day at work, to promote a health and safety culture among Mission personnel; and (b) provide OSH training to personnel with core OSH responsibilities;
- Develop an action plan for the implementation of the United Nations Mental Health and Well-being Strategy based on a mental health and psychosocial needs assessment;
- Take steps to mainstream gender perspectives and disability inclusion into its OSH programme, including developing policies and guidelines to address gender and disability issues; and
- Establish mechanisms to collect relevant data to enable monitoring and reporting performance on the implementation of the OSH programme.

UNMISS accepted the recommendations and has initiated action to implement them. Actions needed to close the recommendations are included in Annex 1.

CONTENTS

I. BACKGROUND	1
II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY	2
III. AUDIT RESULTS	2-8
A. Occupational safety and health framework	2-5
B. Occupational safety and health programme	5-8
IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	8
ANNEX I	Status of audit recommendations
APPENDIX I	Management response

Audit of occupational safety and health 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 occupational safety and health (OSH) in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS).
2. In the Global Monitoring Report dated September 2021, the World Health Organization and the International Labour Organization jointly estimated that 1.9 million people die annually from exposure to occupational risk factors in the workplace, with diseases accounting for 81 per cent of the deaths and work-related injuries accounting for 19 per cent. Exposure to long working hours¹ was the top occupational risk factor with the largest number of attributable deaths (40 per cent), followed by occupational particulate matter, gases, and fumes (24 per cent), occupational injuries (19 per cent), and exposure to asbestos (11 per cent). Exposures to diesel engine exhaust and chemicals such as nickel, arsenic, silica and asthmagens were attributed to 6 per cent of the deaths.
3. The United Nations Secretariat has recorded 1,067 occupational accidents, including 67 work-related fatalities in peacekeeping missions between 2018 and 2020. Of these, UNMISS accounted for 96 occupational accidents, including four fatalities. Aside from loss of human life and harm to the well-being of Mission personnel, work-related deaths, injuries, and illnesses have a financial impact to the Organization (such as increased medical care, medical evacuation, repatriation and compensation), and may in certain areas lead to reduced workforce capacity. The Organization estimates incurring \$50 million annually to cover the cost of injuries and diseases of personnel in peacekeeping missions. To reduce exposure to work-related injuries and diseases and contribute towards achieving the United Nations 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development Goals which aims to ensure healthy life and promote well-being and maintain decent work environment, it is imperative that effective prevention strategies are implemented.
4. The overall responsibility for the management of OSH within the Mission rests with the Chief of Operations and Resource Management (ORM), who chairs the Mission's OSH Committee with membership comprising representatives of all Mission components. The committee was established to provide strategic guidance on the management of the Mission's OSH programme.
5. The Environmental and Occupational Safety and Health (EOSH) Unit is responsible for the OSH programme. The Unit is headed by a Chief at the P-4 level who reports to the Chief of ORM through the Chief, Business Analytics and Compliance Section (BACS). The Chief of the EOSH Unit is supported by one international staff, two national staff and one United Nations Volunteer. In addition, the Unit is assisted by a liaison officer from the United Nations Police, and a national staff from BACS who dedicates 50 per cent of his time to OSH matters.
6. The Mission's OSH activities are governed by: the United Nations Common System OSH Framework; the Secretary-General's bulletin on the introduction of an OSH management system (ST/SGB/2018/5); the Field Occupational Safety Risk Management Policy; Field Occupational Safety Incident Reporting standard operating procedures (SOPs); the UNMISS OSH policy statement; and the UNMISS OSH risk management programme.

¹ Long working hours is defined as working for more than 55 hours per week. Stroke and ischemic heart diseases have been attributed to this occupational risk factor.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

7. The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of the OSH programme in UNMISS.
8. This audit was included in the 2021 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the operational, reputational and financial risks relating to work-related accidents and diseases arising from the Mission's operations.
9. OIOS conducted this audit from August to October 2021. The audit covered the period from March 2018 to September 2021. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risks areas, which included: OSH framework; and implementation of the OSH programme.
10. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key personnel, (b) review of relevant documentation, (c) analytical review of OSH related data: 17 minutes of OSH Committee and sub-Committee meetings; 34 inspection reports; 96 incident reports; 112 inspection recommendations; 4 training records; 33 fact-finding reports; and 2 self-assessment evaluation reports, and (e) site visits to 4 of the 10 field offices (Bentiu, Bor, Malakal and Wau).
11. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Occupational safety and health framework

12. United Nations OSH Framework adopted by the Chief Executives Board², establishes core elements for an effective OSH management system for optimizing the working conditions and environments of the United Nations system's workforce, and minimizing preventable staff harm.

Senior leadership involvement was needed to strengthen the OSH programme

13. To provide strategic guidance and direction for the implementation of the OSH programme, UNMISS established an OSH Committee chaired by the Chief of ORM. The Committee comprised the Chief of Supply Chain Management and Service Delivery, chiefs of relevant sections, representatives from the Field Staff Union and representatives from substantive, military and police components. To support the work of the OSH Committee, there were sub-committees in 6 of the 10 field offices. Sub-committees were yet to be established in the four other field offices. Chairs of the sub-committees were on the UNMISS OSH Committee.

14. The OSH Committee and sub-committees were not fully effective in overseeing OSH matters in the Mission, with the Committee meeting only 6 out of the recommended 14 times. Also, the OSH focal point for the Engineering Section had not been appointed, and representatives from the substantive and military components had yet to be nominated. Therefore, there was no representation from these components at meetings. Existing sub-committees were not meeting regularly as participation in OSH activities was considered voluntary and additional work to staff's main duties.

² CEB/2015/HLCM/7/Rev.2

15. A review of available minutes of the meetings noted that a standard agenda was not established, with deliberations predominantly reactive to issues and concerns brought forward by attending members. As a result, the Committee had not: (a) established overall incident/accident reduction targets; (b) reviewed the results of OSH inspections conducted by the EOSH Unit to identify significant risks or assess whether adequate mitigating measures were in place; and (c) established mechanisms to monitor and review the implementation of the Mission's OSH programme. Therefore, the following was noted:

- a. There were delays in developing effective actions to prevent or reduce the occurrence of occupational injuries and illnesses. For example, as of 30 September 2021, most (84 per cent) of the 112 OSH inspection recommendations had not been implemented and were outstanding for an average of more than two years from their target implementation date. These included issues relating to electrical and fire safety and installation of safety signs to make personnel aware of possible hazards. OIOS site visits in Juba and four field locations confirmed that inadequate measures had been taken to address OSH observations in both office and accommodation areas. OIOS also observed tall grasses, ditches, stagnant water, and piles of garbage that increased insects and rodent infestations, which could result in infectious diseases such as malaria. Malaria was already prevalent in the Mission, with over 1,404 cases recorded during the period October 2019 to September 2021.
- b. Some severe safety and health incidents/accidents were not investigated in UNMISS. For instance, in the audit period, only 6 (18 per cent) of the 33 severe injuries were investigated by the EOSH Unit and the Board of Inquiry, with the remaining still to be reviewed. This, together with the slow implementation of OSH recommendations to mitigate hazards, increased health and safety risks to Mission personnel.

16. Therefore, for appropriate and timely action and overall improvements in reducing health and safety risks, OIOS is of the opinion that there was a need for robust involvement of senior leadership in the OSH programme.

OSH policy statement and guidelines needed to be updated

17. In July 2019, UNMISS promulgated the OSH policy statement committing the Mission to provide a safe and healthy work environment to all Mission personnel. The Mission also developed the OSH programme detailing activities to prevent/reduce work-related injuries and occupational illnesses. For high-risk activities, UNMISS issued technical guidelines outlining mitigating measures to minimize the risk of workplace accidents. However, detailed guidance on general operations and managing OSH processes, such as frequency and scope of OSH inspections and content of training and awareness raising activities was not yet available. Also, based on lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, the OSH policy statement and programme could be reviewed and updated to reflect subsequent changes in work arrangements. The Mission informed that it plans to update its portfolio of OSH documentation on a rolling basis throughout 2022.

Need for a comprehensive OSH risk management

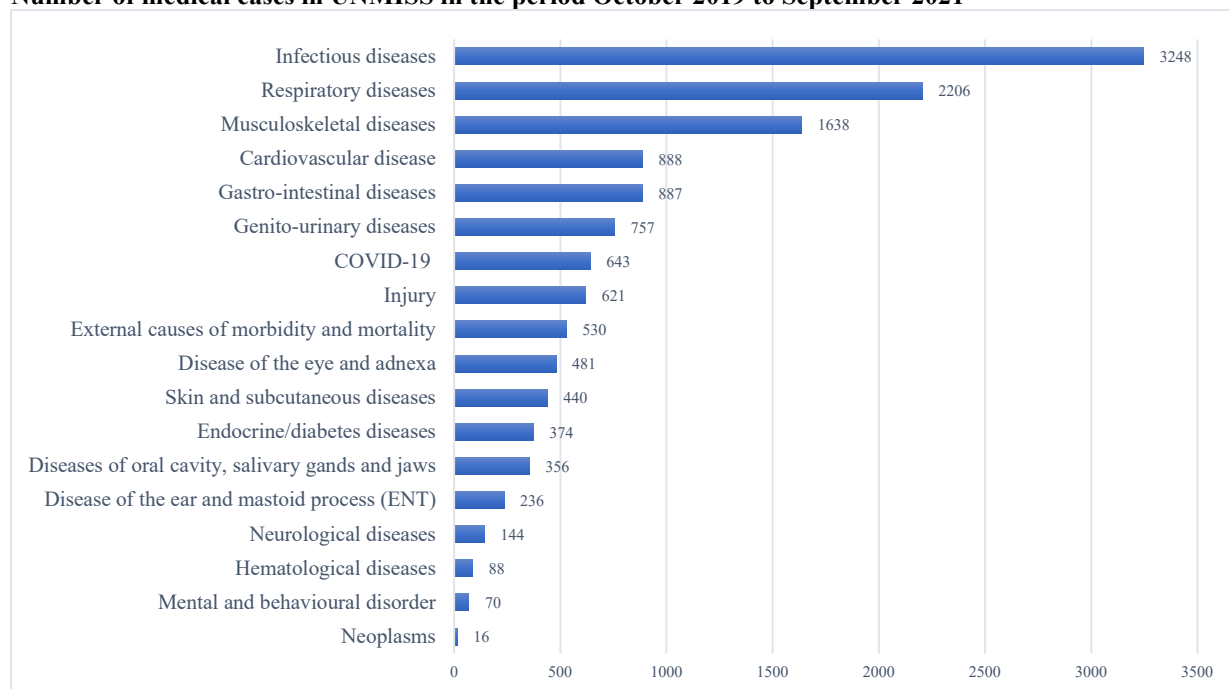
18. Insufficient management of OSH has been identified as a "very high" organizational risk in the Secretariat-wide risk register. The 2021 UNMISS risk register also rated OSH as a high-risk area needing significant improvement. However, a mapping of organizational workplace safety and health risks, rating and prioritizing of these risks, and the development of risk management plans for the highest risks had not been fully undertaken.

19. Moreover, to identify OSH hazards as part of the risk assessment process, the Mission is required to conduct regular OSH inspections. While some inspections had been done, the Mission had yet to conduct OSH inspections at its warehouses, and additional coverage was needed over its transport workshops and civilian and contingent unit camps. The Chief of BACS attributed the shortfall in inspections to limited staffing resources dedicated to the OSH programme. Additionally, OSH focal points, although expected to conduct quarterly inspections of their respective field offices, were not systematically carrying them out.

20. While safety hazards and risks related to major activities, such as excavation and construction, were identified and assessed, other risk factors, such as defective appliances, inadequate training on the use of equipment, and not wearing personal protective equipment correctly had not been identified as significant OSH risks. The Mission also did not have a mechanism or necessary capacity to identify occupational health and psychological hazards and risks in the workplace. At the time of the audit, neither the EOSH Unit nor the Health Services Section was identifying occupational health hazards or performing health risk assessments. Furthermore, diseases and injuries recorded in the EarthMed³ system (as shown in figure 1) were not analyzed to identify any possible causality and develop preventive or mitigating measures.

Figure 1

Number of medical cases in UNMISS in the period October 2019 to September 2021



Source: UNMISS EarthMed system

21. The above was because UNMISS: (i) had not provided adequate training to its personnel with OSH-related responsibilities; and (ii) dedicated sufficient capacity to conduct occupational health risk assessment.

Need to establish incident reporting mechanism

22. The United Nations OSH Framework calls for the implementation of an incident reporting system where all occupational safety-related incidents must be reported and documented.

³ The EarthMed system is an electronic medical records and occupational health management system

23. The EOSH Unit maintained records of incidents in the incident reporting database on SharePoint. However, these records were incomplete as incidents and accidents that occurred during the period October 2020 to September 2021 had not been captured. Furthermore, Mission components (e.g., United Nations Department of Safety and Security, Transport Section or Aviation Safety Unit) did not always inform the EOSH Unit of work-related incidents due to the lack of formal coordinated mechanisms and was being done in an ad hoc manner. When incidents were reported, they were not timeously. For instance, it took on average 173 days to report the 96 incidents that occurred during the audit period, and due to lack of awareness, near-misses and minor incidents not requiring treatment at the Mission’s medical facilities were not reported to the EOSH Unit.

24. Incomplete records of work-related incidents impact the Mission’s ability to identify and promptly correct hazardous workplace conditions to prevent recurrences.

- (1) UNMISS should strengthen its occupational safety and health (OSH) programme by ensuring there is an OSH committee led by senior management to oversee OSH activities; clearly assigning responsibilities for the implementation of OSH activities; instituting a comprehensive OSH risk management; and optimizing the capacity of existing resources to conduct OSH inspections and implement recommendations arising thereof.**

UNMISS accepted recommendation 1 and stated that senior management would attend OSH Committee meetings and establish a standing agenda at the quarterly meetings to review the implementation status of all open inspection recommendations. The Mission will also update its 2019 OSH policy statement to clarify the responsible sections and units leading different elements of occupational health. In the meantime, the Mission will optimize the capacity of its existing OSH resources by increasing the use of OSH focal points across the Mission to undertake OSH inspections, whose OSH responsibilities will be formally included in their annual workplans.

- (2) UNMISS should: (a) task all relevant Mission components to promptly report all occupational safety and health related incidents and accidents to the Environmental and Occupational Safety and Health Unit; and (b) ensure that all work-related incidents and accidents are promptly recorded in the incident reporting database.**

UNMISS accepted recommendation 2 and stated that the Mission would develop clear procedures for reporting of all OSH-related incidents and accidents to the EOSH Unit and distribute them to all OSH focal points, and Chiefs of Mission components annually, and publicize to all UNMISS personnel via email broadcasts at least twice a year.

B. Occupational safety and health programme

The Mission needed to improve OSH awareness raising efforts

25. To guide and direct all newly deployed personnel to work safely and prevent injuries and illnesses as well as raise awareness, UNMISS conducted weekly induction training via Microsoft Teams, issued email broadcasts, intranet pop-ups, and bulletins. However, due to restricted access to these platforms, awareness raising information was not available to individual contractors and contingent personnel. Also, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, OSH in-person campaigns targeting individual contractors and contingent personnel had been suspended, although the Mission provided an OSH briefing and training to 84 individual contractors in Juba in October 2020, but it did not cover contractor personnel working in the 10 field offices. This was necessary considering the tasks such as, excavation, electrical and high hazard construction work

they perform. Given the high turnover of individual contractors due to the short-term nature of their contracts, OSH training needs to be provided more frequently.

26. As part of eligibility requirements for self-sustainment reimbursements, contingent units were required to implement preventive health measures to ensure safe and healthy work environment for its troops. However, there was no evidence that the Mission was properly overseeing implementation of these measures in the three contingent unit camps visited. Also, there were no coordination mechanisms to ensure effective implementation of the OSH programme among contingent personnel.

27. In June 2018, 134 Mission personnel received a 2-day OSH training facilitated by the United Nations Global Service Centre. This training was targeted at personnel with OSH-responsibilities, and only 1 of the 7 interviewed OSH focal points had attended this training. There had been no refresher course since. In July 2021, the EOSH Unit facilitated a 2-day workshop on OSH risk assessment, but almost a third of the 22 nominated OSH focal points and alternates did not attend because they were on leave and had not yet been trained. The Mission had also not provided training on OSH requirements to the OSH Committee members, chiefs of sections, and supervisors with OSH-related responsibilities. Training had mostly been provided to personnel from the Mission Support Division, and the content was limited to occupational safety aspects relating to physical injuries, with occupational health aspects not being sufficiently covered. During the audit period, only 5 per cent of national staff in four field locations received occupational health and safety briefing.

28. The above resulted because of limited staffing and financial resources allocated for the implementation of the OSH programme. UNMISS had only one staff dedicated to the programme, and the EOSH Unit lacked the financial resources to hire a training consultant. Inadequate training impacted the ability of all Mission staff, including OSH focal points and OSH Committee members to effectively incorporate and consider OSH-related perspectives in their areas of responsibility.

(3) UNMISS should: (a) strengthen awareness raising of all Mission personnel, including by observing a health and safety day at work, to promote a health and safety culture among Mission personnel; and (b) provide occupational safety and health (OSH) training to all personnel with core OSH responsibilities.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 3 and stated that it would observe a Mission-wide health and safety day to coincide with the World Day for Safety and Health at Work, and commit to quarterly publication of its Environmental and Occupational Safety and Health bulletin to promote a health and safety culture among Mission personnel. Also, the Mission stated that it would compile inputs to an OSH training needs assessment and provide enhanced OSH training to personnel identified with core OSH responsibilities.

Need to ensure that the psychosocial response plan is informed by a mental health needs assessment

29. The International Peace Institute, in its report dated December 2020⁴, identified three categories of stressors that can impact mental health in peace operations, including the hardship environment, exposure to traumatic events and the organizational culture with its bureaucratic regulations, rules and support systems and processes. The United Nations Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy for 2018-2023, requires Secretariat entities to: (a) create a workplace that enhances mental and physical health and well-being; (b) develop, deliver and evaluate high-quality psychosocial services; (c) welcome and support staff who live with mental health challenges; and (d) ensure sustainable funding for mental health and well-being services.

⁴ Mental Health in UN Operations: Addressing Stress, Trauma, and PTSD among Field Personnel

30. As part of these efforts, UNMISS had raised awareness on mental health issues and provided psychosocial support interventions including critical incident interventions, managerial consultations, stress management programmes and psychosocial educational materials. However, UNMISS had not conducted a formal mental health and psychosocial needs assessment to inform the Mission's psychosocial response plan, especially considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which brought increased isolation and inadequate support system. Because of this, the Mission could not ensure it was providing targeted mental health support services. Also, the Mission's counseling capacities and psychosocial support interventions remain limited⁵. Level II medical clinics lacked psychiatrists, although 90 psychiatrist referrals were made during the audit period.

(4) UNMISS should develop an action plan for the implementation of the United Nations Mental Health and Well-being Strategy based on a mental health and psychosocial needs assessment.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 4 and stated that it would assess developing the action plan within existing capacity of its Health Services Section/Staff Counseling Unit without compromising operational service delivery, or contract the services of an external consultant.

Gender and disability perspectives needed to be integrated in the OSH programme

31. UNMISS took a gender-neutral approach in implementing its OSH programme, which meant that the needs and concerns of both men and women were not adequately considered in developing OSH policies and prevention strategies. Gender issues were not discussed during OSH Committee deliberations, the gender focal point was not represented on the Committee, and the Mission did not provide personal protective equipment of appropriate sizes for both men and women. Also, the Mission had not taken adequate measures to ensure the safety of personnel with disabilities in the workplace. For example, offices, accommodation units, washrooms and facilities such as transport and water collection points were not easily accessible. As the Organization's disability inclusion strategy was launched recently, and the Mission was still in the early stages of its implementation, these perspectives need to be better considered in the OSH programme for the future.

(5) UNMISS should take steps to mainstream gender perspectives and disability inclusion into its occupational safety and health programme, including developing policies and guidelines to address gender and disability issues.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 5 underscoring its commitment to ensuring its OSH programme ensures full, equal and meaningful participation of all in the Mission's operations. The Mission will task the EOSH Unit in consultation with the Gender Affairs Unit and the UNMISS Disability Inclusion focal point in the Office of the Chief of Staff to review and update all OSH policies, guidance and training materials to ensure gender and disability perspectives are incorporated, and will publicize relevant information on OSH-related gender and disability issues at its awareness raising day.

Need to establish accident/incident reduction targets and review OSH performance regularly

32. To ensure effective implementation of its OSH programme, UNMISS needed to put in place mechanisms to collect, report and monitor relevant information and key performance indicators (KPIs).

⁵ At the time of the audit, the Mission had seven staff counsellors serving over 19,000 Mission personnel, and due to budget cuts had only 10 peer helpers who volunteered to provide support to colleagues coping with personal or work-related stressors.

33. Existing KPIs did not enable adequate assessment of OSH activities, as they were not tracking all relevant information, such as: (a) number of persons trained to conduct occupational safety risk assessments; (b) number of OSH Committee decisions implemented; and (c) number of work activities halted due to recognition of unsafe conditions of work, including non-use of personal protective equipment. Moreover, while the Mission completed self-assessment templates established by DOS, these were compliance-based assessments against the minimum operational occupational safety requirements, such as establishment of an OSH Committee and appointment of a Mission OSH focal point, and they did not provide an adequate basis for evaluating the Mission's performance in implementing the OSH programme.

(6) UNMISS should establish mechanisms to collect relevant data to enable monitoring and reporting performance on the implementation of the occupational safety and health programme.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 6 and stated that it was in the process of migrating records from its legacy document repository platform to a new Sharepoint data. The Mission explained that a prototype dashboard (built in Microsoft Power BI) to support monitoring and analysis of the OSH records in the database was under review, and once fully launched, would become the reporting and monitoring tool for occupational safety and health programme.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

34. 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.

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

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of occupational safety and health in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁶ / Important ⁷	C/ O ⁸	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁹
1	UNMISS should strengthen its occupational safety and health (OSH) programme by ensuring there is an OSH committee led by senior management to oversee OSH activities; clearly assigning responsibilities for the implementation OSH activities; instituting a comprehensive OSH risk management; and optimizing the capacity of existing resources to conduct OSH inspections and implement recommendations arising thereof.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that: (a) OSH Committee meetings are led by senior management and attended by all required members or their representatives, and meetings include monitoring implementation of recommendations of OSH inspections; (b) UNMISS OSH policy statement is updated to clarify responsibility for the management of occupational health in the Mission; (c) an OSH risk management system is in place; and (d) analysis of existing OSH resources for optimal implementation of the OSH programme.	30 June 2022
2	UNMISS should: (a) task all relevant Mission components to promptly report all occupational safety and health related incidents and accidents to the Environmental and Occupational Safety and Health Unit; and (b) ensure that all work-related incidents and accidents are promptly recorded in the incident reporting database.	Important	O	Receipt of a copy of the procedures for reporting OSH-related incidents and evidence that they are being promptly recorded in the incident reporting database.	30 June 2022
3	UNMISS should: (a) strengthen awareness raising of all Mission personnel, including by observing a health and safety day at work, to promote a health and safety culture among Mission personnel; and (b) provide occupational safety and health (OSH) training to all personnel with core OSH responsibilities.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence: (a) of observation of a Mission-wide health and safety day and the publication of quarterly OSH bulletins; and (b) that all Mission personnel with core OSH responsibilities have been trained in OSH matters.	31 July 2022

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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.

⁸ Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

⁹ Date provided by UNMISS in response to recommendations.

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of occupational safety and health in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

4	UNMISS should develop an action plan for the implementation of the United Nations Mental Health and Well-being Strategy based on a mental health and psychosocial needs assessment.	Important	O	Receipt of a copy of an action plan for implementing the United Nations Mental Health and Well-being Strategy.	30 September 2022
5	UNMISS should take steps to mainstream gender perspectives and disability inclusion into its occupational safety and health programme, including developing policies and guidelines to address gender and disability issues.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that all existing OSH policies, guidance and training materials have been reviewed and updated to incorporate gender and disability perspectives in the Mission's OSH programme.	31 December 2022
6	UNMISS should establish mechanisms to collect relevant data to enable monitoring and reporting performance on the implementation of the occupational safety and health programme.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of the full implementation of a database to enable the monitoring and reporting of performance of the Mission's occupational safety and health programme.	31 December 2022

APPENDIX I

Management Response

UNITED NATIONS

United Nations Mission
in South Sudan




NATIONS UNIES

Mission des Nations Unies
en Soudan du Sud

Date: 20 December 2021

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

Through: Fatoumata Ndiaye
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight
Services

From: Guang Cong 
Officer-in-Charge and Designated Official
United Nations Mission in the Republic of South
Sudan

Subject: **Management Response to the draft report of an audit of occupational safety and health in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (Assignment No. AP2021-633-01)**

1. UNMISS acknowledges receipt of the draft report from OIOS on the Audit of Occupational Safety and Health dated 9th December 2021.
2. Please find attached the Management Response to the recommendations as indicated in Appendix I.
3. Thank you for your consideration and support.

cc: Mr. Nicholas Haysom, SRSG, UNMISS
Ms. Maria Costa, Director of Mission Support, UNMISS
Mr. Timothy Crowley, Chief, Operations and Resource Management, UNMISS
Ms. Elizabeth Gregory, Chief, Business Analytics and Compliance, UNMISS
Ms. Shazneen Gazdar, Chief, Environmental and Occupational Safety and Health Unit, UNMISS
Ms. Oluwatoyin Sijuade, Occupational Safety Officer, UNMISS
Ms. Maya Fridman, Professional Practice Section, Internal Audit Division, OIOS

Management Response

Audit of occupational safety and health 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 strengthen its occupational safety and health (OSH) programme by ensuring there is an OSH committee led by senior management to oversee OSH activities; clearly assigning responsibilities for the implementation OSH activities; instituting a comprehensive OSH risk management; and optimizing the capacity of existing resources to conduct OSH inspections and implement recommendations arising thereof.	Important	Yes	Env & OSH Unit	31 March 2022	The Mission accepts the recommendation and will take the following actions to implement: UNMISS to strengthen the participation of senior management in OSH oversight through required attendance of CORMS, CSCM, CSD, relevant sections and all field office FAOs (or their OICs) at every OSH Committee meeting, and by establishing a standing agenda item at the quarterly OSH Committee to review the implementation status of open inspection recommendations.
			Yes		30 June 2022	The Mission will update its 2019 Occupational Safety and Health Policy statement to clarify the responsible sections and units in UNMISS that are the lead for different elements of occupational safety and health. The Mission reasserts its position that given the relatively broad definition of occupational health used in the engagement, no single unit or section would be appropriate to handle responsibility for all areas, and instead there is a necessity for a combination of, inter alia, the Environmental and OSH Unit, Health Services Section (including Staff Counseling Unit), and Welfare and other relevant sections/units to action

¹ Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

² Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

Management Response

Audit of occupational safety and health 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
			Yes		30 June 2022	<p>and to all play a role, depending on the expertise demanded.</p> <p>This rationale also holds to the recommendation of conducting an OSH risk management exercise which would require the clear identification of the various sections and units where interactions on OSH issues and practices are at play while at the same time seeking the support and active participation of these identified sections and units for the OSH risk management.</p> <p>The Mission will endeavor to optimize the capacity of its existing OSH resources by increasing the use of OSH focal points across the mission to undertake some of the inspections demanded across its field offices. To enable this, all field offices will be required to nominate a primary and alternate OSH focal point that complete training administered by the Environmental and OSH Unit, and that have OSH responsibilities formally included in their annual workplans.</p>
2	UNMISS should: (a) task all relevant Mission components to promptly report all occupational safety and health related incidents and accidents to the Environmental and Occupational Safety and Health Unit; and (b) ensure that all work-related incidents and accidents are promptly recorded in the incident reporting database.	Important	Yes	Env & OSH unit	30 June 2022	The Mission accepts the recommendation and will develop a clear procedure for reporting of all occupational safety and health related incidents and accidents to the Environmental and Occupational Safety and Health Unit. The procedures will be distributed to all OSH focal points and chiefs of mission components annually and will be publicized to all UNMISS personnel via email Broadcast at least twice per year.

Management Response

Audit of occupational safety and health 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
3	UNMISS should: (a) strengthen awareness raising of all Mission personnel, including by observing a health and safety day at work, to promote a health and safety culture among Mission personnel; and (b) provide occupational safety and health (OSH) training to all personnel with core OSH responsibilities.	Important	Yes Yes	Env&OSH unit	30 June 2022 31 July 2022	<p>The Mission accepts the recommendation and will take the following actions to implement:</p> <p>(a) UNMISS will observe a mission-wide health and safety day to coincide with the World Day for Safety and Health at Work and commit to quarterly publication of its Env&OSH bulletin to promote a health and safety culture among Mission personnel.</p> <p>(b) The Mission can compile inputs to an OSH training needs assessment (TNA), including information on total numbers and types of personnel with core OSH responsibility across its mission locations, identifying a list of all high and moderate risk occupational activities undertaken. Based on the TNA, enhanced OSH training can be provided to the identified core personnel with OSH responsibilities.</p> <p>The Mission requests DHMOSH in UN Headquarters to look into issuing a recommendation to all troop and police contingent countries to direct new contingents to be already trained on enhanced OSH operations and compliance pre onboarding to UNMISS. This is viewed to maximize operationalizing OSH procedures and oversight at the Mission. The pre training to before onboarding will be supported further by enhanced training by OSH at UNMISS.</p>

Management Response

Audit of occupational safety and health 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
						<p>This training on arrival will focus on core personnel holding OSH responsibilities.</p> <p>Further, the Mission requests DHMOSH and OMA in UN Headquarters to look into issuing a recommendation to jointly develop the OSH training/certification that must be completed by all core contingent personnel prior to their mission deployments.</p> <p>The above comments are viewed as a more efficient method of training delivery given the high turnover rate of contingent forces and limited ability of the Mission to administer training in theatre to such a large population with sufficient timeliness.</p>
4	UNMISS should develop an action plan for the implementation of the United Nations Mental Health and Well-being Strategy based on a mental health and psychosocial needs assessment.	Important	Yes	Env & OSH and Staff Counselling unit	30 September 2022	<p>The Mission accepts the recommendation and will examine if it can develop the action plan within the existing capacity of its Medical Section / Staff Counseling Unit (without compromising operational service delivery) or whether it will necessitate the contracting the services of an external consultant. In the meantime, the Mission would welcome further instructions and guidance from Headquarters on implementation of the Mental Health and Well-being Strategy to support mission efforts in this regard.</p> <p>The Mission notes that in the meantime, the health and wellbeing need of its personnel are still catered for through the many mental health</p>

Management Response

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						promotions and ongoing stress management activities across the Mission. Critical incidents are promptly managed, and ethical principles, including respecting privacy, confidentiality and voluntary participation are incorporated.
5	UNMISS should take steps to mainstream gender perspectives and disability inclusion into its occupational safety and health programme, including developing policies and guidelines to address gender and disability issues.	Important	Yes	Env & OSH, Gender affairs unit and Disability inclusion focal point	31 December 2022	The Mission accepts the recommendation and is committed to ensuring its OSH program ensures full, equal, and meaningful participation of all in UN peacekeeping operations. To implement the recommendation, the Mission will task the Environmental and OSH Unit, in consultation with the UNMISS Disability Inclusion Focal Point in the Office of the Chief of Staff, Gender Affairs Unit and the Best Practices Unit to review and update all existing mission OSH policies, guidance and training materials to ensure gender and disability perspectives are incorporated and will publicize relevant information on Gender and Disability issues related to OSH at its awareness raising day. This will be done as part of the Mission's wider efforts to advance the implementation of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS), which include the conduct of a baseline accessibility assessment and the development of a reasonable accommodation policy, guidance on internal and external communication, and a mission- or peacekeeping-wide disability inclusion policy or strategy, which are dependent on the availability of external expertise and guidance from, and

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						consultation and harmonization with other missions and UNHQ entities.
6	UNMISS should establish mechanisms to collect relevant data to enable monitoring and reporting performance on the implementation of the occupational safety and health programme.	Important	Yes	ENV & OSH unit	31 December 2022	The Mission accepts the recommendation and is already in the process of migrating records from its previous COSMOS platform to a new SharePoint database. A prototype dashboard (built in PowerBI) to support monitoring and analysis of the records in the database is already under review and, once fully launched, will become the definitive mission-wide reporting and monitoring tool for OSH.