



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2022/070

Audit of the child protection programme in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

**UNMISS supported the implementation of an
action plan to halt and prevent grave
violations against children but needed to
further mainstream the child protection
mandate into the civilian, police and military
components of the Mission**

**16 December 2022
Assignment No. AP2022-633-02**

Audit of the child protection programme in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the child protection programme in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS). The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of activities implemented by UNMISS to monitor and report on the six grave violations of child rights and to engage and advocate with state actors and armed forces/groups for ending, preventing and responding to such violations. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2020 to 31 March 2022 and included: (a) mainstreaming child protection; (b) monitoring and reporting of grave violations; (c) support for implementation of the action plan to halt and prevent violations; and (d) support for the release and reintegration of children associated with armed forces and groups (CAAFAG).

UNMISS partnered with the United Nations Country Team and other stakeholders to establish a Task Force that effectively fulfilled its responsibilities for monitoring and reporting grave violations against children. UNMISS also supported the implementation of the action plan to halt and prevent grave violations against children and the release and reintegration of CAAFAG in South Sudan. However, there was a need to further mainstream the child protection mandate into the Mission's civilian, police and military components for better advocacy and outreach for child protection and to improve the handling and reporting of child protection information.

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

- Establish a mission-wide child protection mainstreaming plan to guide the civilian, police and military components in their mainstreaming efforts;
- Develop guidelines, nominate and train child protection focal points for all military units and implement an effective mechanism to monitor the implementation of a directive by the Force Commander on the protection of children;
- Develop comprehensive guidelines with clear roles and responsibilities for mainstreaming child protection in police operations in all field offices;
- Regularly assess the effectiveness of child protection trainings; and
- Ensure that Child Protection Unit staff use access restricted shared folders for storing child protection information, complete relevant mandatory trainings, and consistently record incidents in the Situational Awareness Geospatial Environment application.

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

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Audit of the child protection programme 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 the child protection programme in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS).
2. General Assembly resolution A/RES/51/77 (1996) and subsequent resolutions mandated the protection of children affected by armed conflict (CAAC) as a fundamental peace and security concern and an inherent priority within the broader obligation of the United Nations to promote the protection of civilians. The mandate identifies six grave violations committed against children during armed conflict: (i) recruitment and use of children by armed forces or groups; (ii) killing or maiming of children; (iii) sexual violence against children; (iv) attacks on schools and hospitals; (v) abduction of children; and (vi) denial of humanitarian access to children.
3. The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for CAAC (SRSG-CAAC) leads the United Nations' advocacy for the protection and well-being of CAAC. The UNMISS Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), through the Child Protection Unit (CPU), is responsible for ensuring child protection is mainstreamed across the Mission's operations and forms part of the dialogue with parties to the conflict and national reconciliation efforts.
4. CPU is responsible for implementing the Mission's child protection mandate, which involves monitoring, investigating, verifying and reporting the six grave violations against children by armed forces and groups in South Sudan. CPU partnered with the Humanitarian Country Team and the United Nations Country Team organizations with child protection mandates to establish the country task force for monitoring and reporting (the Task Force) on grave violations against children. The Task Force is co-chaired by the UNMISS Deputy SRSG Resident Coordinator/ Humanitarian Coordinator (DSRSG RC/HC) and the Country Representative for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in South Sudan.
5. CPU is headed by a Chief at the P-5 level reporting to the DSRSG RC/HC and supported by 9 international and 14 national staff and 9 United Nations volunteers deployed in Juba and nine field offices. The approved budget for child protection activities was \$300,000 for each 2020/21 and 2021/22.
6. Comments provided by UNMISS are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

7. The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of activities implemented by UNMISS to monitor and report on the six grave violations of child rights and engage and advocate with state actors and armed forces/groups for ending, preventing and responding to such violations. The audit addressed whether:
 - a. The child protection mandate was integrated into all aspects of the Mission.
 - b. UNMISS had adequate mechanisms for monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children.
 - c. UNMISS actively supported the implementation of the action plan to halt and prevent grave violations against children in South Sudan (the action plan).

d. UNMISS actively supported the release and reintegration of girls and boys associated with armed forces/groups.

8. This audit was included in the 2022 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the high reputational risk to the United Nations related to the non-implementation of the child protection mandate in UNMISS.

9. OIOS conducted this audit from May to September 2022. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2020 to 31 March 2022. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risks areas related to child protection, which included: (a) mainstreaming child protection; (b) monitoring and reporting of grave violations; (c) support for the implementation of the action plan to halt and prevent violations; and (d) support for the release and reintegration of children associated with armed forces and groups (CAAFAG).

10. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key personnel involved in child protection in civilian and uniformed components of the Mission, (b) a review of relevant documentation, (c) an analytical review of CPU data on trainings and violations against children, and (d) testing of information related to randomly selected 99 of 466 violations against children.

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

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Mainstreaming child protection

Need to strengthen mainstreaming of child protection into Mission plans and activities

12. UNMISS civilian, police and military components have a shared responsibility to implement the Mission's child protection mandate. The mainstreaming of child protection in strategic and operational processes demands coordinated planning and collaboration with Mission components and support by senior leadership. A review of child protection mainstreaming activities showed the following:

a) There was a need for greater engagement by substantive sections in implementing the child protection mandate

13. To guide the implementation of the Mission's child protection mandate, CPU participated in weekly management meetings attended by chiefs of sections where ongoing child protection activities and other relevant developments were discussed. These meetings helped CPU identify opportunities to monitor violations and collaborate with other sections on various activities, including training and capacity-building workshops, awareness-raising events, and patrols to remote locations. The CPU 2021/22 work plan incorporated relevant actions, including advocacy, awareness raising, verification, monitoring and reporting of grave violations against children, and the need to identify and engage with child protection focal points in various substantive sections to coordinate mainstreaming efforts.

14. However, UNMISS still needed to develop a mission-wide child protection mainstreaming plan to guide components and ensure their respective work plans incorporate shared child protection objectives. Various substantive sections such as the Gender Unit, Protection, Transition and Reintegration Section, Rule of Law Advisory Section, Political Affairs, Civil Affairs and Human Rights divisions could play a role in mainstreaming child protection. Nevertheless, a review of the work plans of these components for the periods between 2021 and 2024 showed that only the Human Rights Division work plan reflected

specific child protection actions. This was because senior leadership had not directed heads of sections to integrate child protection considerations into their work plans.

15. In addition, the substantive sections had yet to appoint focal points to guide and support child protection mainstreaming efforts. CPU explained that it did not advocate for the nomination of focal points in substantive sections as it would place additional responsibilities on its limited staffing resources. Consequently, although there were no child protection focal points in sections, CPU developed strategic partnerships and worked closely on child protection issues with the Human Rights Division, Women's Protection Advisor and Rule of Law Section. For instance, CPU staff relied on human rights officers to verify violations against children during patrols in which CPU staff could not participate and collaborated with the Women's Protection Advisor in reporting verified incidents of conflict-related sexual violence.

16. As a result of the absence of a mission-wide child protection mainstreaming plan, there was inadequate mainstreaming of child protection across all operations and processes, which is key to ensuring collective and effective implementation of the child protection mandate.

(1) UNMISS should develop a mission-wide child protection mainstreaming plan to guide civilian, police and military components in their mainstreaming efforts and ensure that their respective work plans incorporate shared child protection objectives.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 1 and stated that the Child Protection Unit would work with the relevant civilian, military and police focal points to develop a mission-wide child protection mainstreaming plan that is integrated and aligned with the sectional work plans.

b) There was a need to enforce mainstreaming of child protection in military operations

17. Mainstreaming child protection in military operations was guided by a directive on the protection of children issued in February 2020 by the Force Commander. The directive outlined the objectives, specific actions and reporting mechanisms, including the referral procedures to be followed by military staff when they identify violations. A Military Gender and Protection Advisor (MGPA) also facilitated the mainstreaming efforts. However, the directive was not being implemented effectively because the Force leadership had not dedicated adequate staffing resources and was not actively monitoring and enforcing its implementation. For example:

- The list of nominated focal points showed that 59 of 94 military units (or 63 per cent) had protection focal points; however, the list was not accurate as it was not regularly updated to reflect the rotation of military personnel. Also, focal points and the MGPA had not received any training on their child protection responsibilities.
- There was a need for guidance on the nomination of focal points as some staff were overburdened with focal point responsibilities with the same individuals nominated as focal points for gender, women protection and conflict-related sexual violence, in addition to their core functions. Also, the participation of some focal points was limited because they had core office-bound responsibilities that limited their participation in patrols and routine force protection activities in communities. In OIOS view, regular focal point participation in force activities that engage the local population could be a pre-requisite to ensure that focal points effectively carry out their responsibilities.
- Forty-three (or 73 per cent) of the nominated focal points were not of staff officer rank, which precluded them from being assigned a United Nations email address per the current Mission's

practice. As a result, these focal points could not effectively collaborate with other focal points by exchanging information through emails. In addition, 35 focal points (or 59 per cent) had limited or no English proficiency, making verbal communication challenging.

- Further, although the directive prohibits using schools, hospitals, or other public facilities as temporary operating bases for the military, a military contingent camped on school premises for three days during an integrated patrol exercise in the Central Equatoria State in August 2021. Such an occurrence could be detrimental to the reputation of the Mission.

18. As a result of Force leadership not dedicating adequate staffing resources and not actively monitoring and enforcing the directive, various child protection mainstreaming activities were not implemented. These included: operational planning based on analysis of risks to children and steps to mitigate harm; integration of CPU in setting military patrol priorities; and provision of child protection continuation training to military units.

(2) UNMISS should ensure that the Military Component: (a) develops guidelines on the nomination of child protection focal points; (b) nominates focal points for all sectors, contingents and units in accordance with guidelines, and provides them with relevant training to carry out assigned tasks; and (c) implements an effective mechanism to monitor implementation of its directive on the protection of children by military personnel.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 2 and stated that a revised version of the Department of Peace Operations / Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Manual for Child Protection Staff in United Nations Peace Operations was expected to be finalised and issued during the first quarter of 2023. This would provide a revised template for Force Commander directives on child protection, including guidelines on the nomination and training of child protection focal points and a mechanism to monitor the effectiveness of the implementation of the directives. Further, training initiatives for focal points were also being undertaken.

c) There was a need to develop a plan and guidelines for mainstreaming child protection in police operations

19. The Police Component had a Gender, Child, Vulnerable Persons Protection (GCVPP) focal point in Juba who was supported by 10 police protection advisors in the field offices. The GCVPP focal point was expected to facilitate the implementation of its strategic priority to protect women, children, and other vulnerable persons. Guidelines were issued to outline the composition, functions and main tasks of the GCVPP and sexual- and gender-based violence (SGBV) teams of the United Nations police (UNPOL) field offices and included relevant monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

20. However, the guidelines were not comprehensive because they did not cover key activities of UNPOL in field offices, such as patrolling and capacity building, and did not include guidance on the integration of child protection in all police operations. Furthermore, the guidelines focused on the GCVPP focal point responsibilities at the five UNMISS field offices with the Protection of Civilian (POC) sites (Juba, Bor, Malakal, Bentiu and Wau), but they were silent on the responsibilities of the GCVPP focal point and protection advisors in the remaining five field offices without POC sites (Aweil, Torit, Yambio, Kuajok and Rumbek). Also, due to the redesignation of four of the five POC sites as internally displaced person camps under the protection of the host government in 2021, the guidelines were only applicable to the Malakal field office and needed to be updated.

21. CPU had not engaged the Police Component to develop a plan with shared objectives on mainstreaming child protection considerations in all police operations. This resulted in child protection being considered an isolated activity rather than an integral part of UNPOL operations. Officials in UNPOL viewed child protection as the responsibility of the GCVPP focal point and protection advisors, and therefore they did not integrate it into their regular operations. This view prevented the comprehensive mainstreaming of child protection in police operations.

22. UNMISS has a crucial role in building the capacity of the South Sudan National Police Service (SSNPS), one of the parties mentioned in the Secretary-General's 2020 and 2021 reports on CAAC as having committed grave violations against children. During the audit period, UNMISS organized three 10-day training sessions for SSNPS in Juba, Wau and Yambio, which included child-friendly interviewing techniques and briefly addressed the six grave violations as a form of conflict-related gender-based violence against children. However, there was a need for clear objectives and guidelines to ensure that UNPOL effectively integrates child protection in its advising and capacity-building activities for SSNPS.

(3) UNMISS should ensure that the Police Component develops comprehensive guidelines with clear roles and responsibilities for mainstreaming child protection in its operations in all field offices.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 3 and stated that it would continue developing the Police Commissioner's Directive, which would serve as a comprehensive guideline outlining the responsibilities of officers in all field offices regarding child protection issues.

Need to ensure all newly deployed staff attend induction training

23. UNMISS provided induction training to newly deployed civilian, military and police personnel which included modules on child protection and addressed relevant topics, including the impact of conflict on children, the six grave violations and reporting and referral procedures. In addition, military and police trainers provided awareness generation induction training, including briefings on child protection to military contingents and Formed Police Units (FPU). However, staff attendance at the induction trainings needed to be increased. Analysis of attendance records showed that attendance at induction training by civilian, police and military staff officers were 66, 75, and 62 per cent, respectively. Also, attendance records for awareness generation induction training were not available for 400 of 847 FPUs and for all 12,986 military contingents deployed from January 2020 to February 2022. This gap was attributable to inadequate record-keeping.

24. Low attendance at induction trainings was due to inadequate monitoring mechanisms, which could result in insufficient staff awareness of the child protection mandate. However, as OIOS report 2021/070 of the audit of conduct and discipline in UNMISS made a recommendation on the same subject and UNMISS was in the process of implementing it, OIOS did not make a recommendation.

Need to assess the effectiveness of child protection trainings provided by various components of the Mission

25. CPU conducted 46 child protection refresher training / mainstreaming sessions attended by 1,045 staff across the 10 field offices during the audit review period. It developed an assessment tool to assess participants' understanding of the content and guide further improvements. However, CPU did not consistently perform the assessments and maintain records. In addition, although the Force Headquarters Training Unit had developed a training evaluation checklist to assess the effectiveness of various training courses provided to military staff, the checklist did not include an evaluation of child protection training. At the time of the audit, the Police Component was developing a child protection training programme to

improve UNPOL capacity for monitoring and reporting on human rights violations and abuses, as well as a mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness of trainings delivered.

26. CPU explained that field office staff prioritised other responsibilities and performed training assessments at their discretion. In the absence of a regular evaluation of child protection trainings, opportunities for continuous improvement would be missed.

(4) UNMISS should ensure that the effectiveness of child protection trainings provided by the Child Protection Unit, Military and Police components are regularly assessed.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 4 and stated that the Child Protection Unit would use an assessment tool to more systematically assess staff trainings, the Force Headquarters would include in its checklist specific questions and situations relating to child protection for the evaluation of its sector headquarters and subordinate units, and the Police Component would develop further tools for evaluating the effectiveness of trainings for South Sudan National Police Service child protection focal persons.

B. Monitoring and reporting of grave violations

The process for verification of violations committed against children during armed conflict was effective

27. CPU was responsible for verifying reported violations and implementing a process to ascertain the veracity of information in line with the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism Field Manual standards. OIOS review of the verification process for 99 of the 466 reported grave violations against children in the audit review period showed that the reported cases affected 94 children (18 girls and 76 boys). All reported violations contained the required information, including the source, date, location and description of the incident, name of armed force or group involved, the number of children affected and the type of violation. Following prescribed standards, CPU staff reviewed the information for accuracy and completeness and provided comprehensive weekly reports for senior management. The reported violations were only considered verified after appropriate follow-up and corroboration of facts by members of the Task Force. The DSRSG RC/HC also reviewed comprehensive weekly reports on violations and obtained clarification as appropriate. OIOS concluded that CPU and the Task Force effectively verified allegations of grave violations against children.

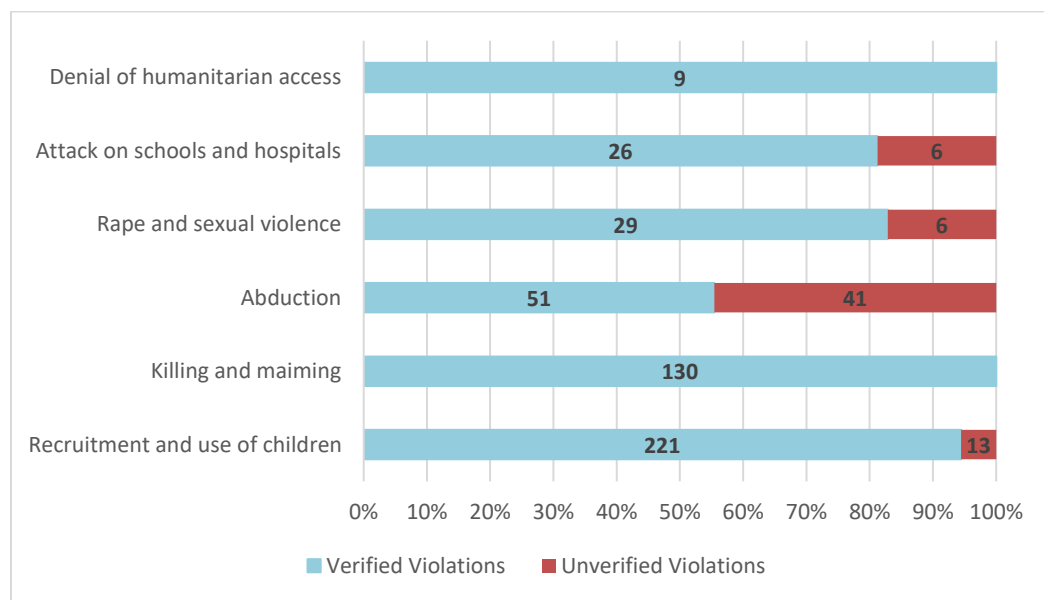
The Task Force was effectively fulfilling its responsibilities for monitoring and reporting grave violations

28. The Task Force oversees the implementation of the mechanism for monitoring and reporting information on the six grave violations. It convened three meetings during the review period.

29. A review of the minutes showed that members shared information on violations, coordinated to review and verify the accuracy of incidents, discussed programmatic challenges and allocated responsibility for agreed actions. The analysis of patterns and types of grave violations against children by the Task Force showed increases in violations from 186 to 201 and affected children from 165 to 183 between 2020 and 2021. These were linked to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, frequent political defections and delays in the unification of armed forces. The Task Force also observed increasing violations against children which were not reportable under the scope of the monitoring and reporting mechanism because they were from sub-national and inter-communal violence. The co-chairs of the Task Force would discuss these cases with the SRSR-CAAC separately from those included in the reports.

30. The Task Force submitted quarterly global horizontal note reports, which provided analysis of verified violations and updates on the progress of activities. It also contributed to the annual reports of the SRSG-CAAC and the annual and bi-annual reports of the Secretary-General on CAAC. For example, the global horizontal note reports issued between January 2020 and March 2022 showed that the Task Force verified 466 (or 88 per cent) of 532 reported violations, including recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming, and abductions, as shown in figure 1.

Figure 1: Number of reported violations between January 2020 and March 2022



Source: OIOS analysis of CPU violations data

31. The co-chairs of the Task Force engaged relevant government officials on issues of concern and in seeking accountability for perpetrators. However, difficulty in corroborating information due to movement or absence of witnesses and passage of time, and insecurity in some locations prevented the verification of the remaining 66 violations. Unverified violations were classified as allegations until circumstances allowed for their verification.

32. Based on the above, OIOS concluded that the Task Force effectively fulfilled its responsibilities for monitoring and reporting child protection matters.

Need to improve the handling and storage of sensitive child protection information and to report through the early-warning system

- a) *Proper storage of information and completion of mandatory training by staff needed to be enforced*

33. Monitoring and reporting grave violations against children involve handling sensitive information which needs to be appropriately secured. CPU staff at the Mission Headquarters in Juba and two other field offices in Malakal and Wau stored information on grave violations against children in dedicated shared folders with access restricted to authorised users in the respective offices. However, weekly child protection reports which also contained sensitive information were mainly stored on the personal computers of staff or in portable flash drives in the Juba and Yambio field offices, increasing the risk of loss and unauthorised access to sensitive information. OIOS attributed the poor handling of information to low completion rates

of mandatory information management courses. As of 30 June 2022, only 13 of 31 (or 42 per cent) and 8 of 31 (or 26 per cent) CPU staff had completed mandatory trainings on information security awareness and information sensitivity in peacekeeping, respectively.

b) Need to ensure all CPU incidents are reported through the early-warning system

34. To facilitate data-driven situational awareness, planning and decision-making by senior leadership, effective June 2021, Mission sections were required to record incidents in the early-warning Situational Awareness Geospatial Environment (SAGE) application. However, OIOS review indicated that CPU recorded only 26 of the 81 reported incidents between 10 June 2021 and 31 March 2022 in SAGE.

35. Interviews with CPU staff in the Yambio field office revealed that they were not aware that they had access rights to record incidents in SAGE. Therefore, they submitted CPU reports to the Yambio Field Integrated Operations Centre (FIOC) to record incidents in the system. This resulted in the exposure of sensitive information contained in child protection reports to unauthorised personnel as FIOC comprised staff from various sections.

36. The above resulted because CPU management did not implement adequate supervisory control to ensure staff stored sensitive information in secure folders, completed mandatory trainings, and recorded all CPU incidents in SAGE. Underreporting of incidents in SAGE by CPU limited the availability of information for effective data-driven situational awareness, planning and decision-making.

(5) UNMISS should ensure that Child Protection Unit staff: (a) use access-restricted shared folders for storing information in all field offices; (b) complete mandatory training courses on information security awareness and information sensitivity in peacekeeping; and (c) consistently record incidents in the Situational Awareness Geospatial Environment application.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 5 and stated that the Child Protection Unit (CPU) would take steps to ensure that information is stored in access-restricted shared folders available across all field offices and that all its staff complete the mandatory training courses on information security awareness and information sensitivity in peacekeeping. CPU would also ensure that all relevant incidents are updated in the Situational Awareness Geospatial Environment application.

C. Support for implementation of the action plan to halt and prevent violations

The Task Force was monitoring and supporting the implementation of the action plan

37. In February 2020, the Task Force facilitated the signing of the action plan by three representatives of parties to the conflict to stop and prevent specific grave violations against children. The action plan identified 17 government authorities to implement 61 activities with associated progress indicators. It also included implementation timeframes through February 2021 and required progress reports to be submitted to the Task Force.

38. The progress report prepared by the host government covering the period from February 2020 to February 2021 showed that the 61 activities were aggregated into 35 activities and categorised under 4 broad areas, as shown in table 1. However, as of February 2021, only 4 activities could be completed for multiple reasons, including lack of government funding, the COVID-19 pandemic, and insecurity in some parts of the country. The remaining 31 were either in progress or pending action.

Table 1: Status of implementation of action plan activities as of February 2021

Focus area	Number of activities	Completed	In progress	Pending action
1. Functioning United Nations-Government cooperation system	7	1	6	0
2. Enforcement and accountability mechanisms are in place	8	0	4	4
3. Prevention, awareness raising, and capacity building	12	0	8	4
4. Legal and policy reform prevents and responds to recruitment and use of children	8	3	4	1
Total	35	4	22	9

Source: Draft progress report on the implementation of the action plan covering the period 7 February 2020 to 7 February 2021

39. The action plan was extended by 18 months from 7 February 2021 to 7 August 2022 to facilitate the implementation of the outstanding activities, and discussions among the parties were ongoing for further extension. In May 2022, the Task Force facilitated a national conference on the protection of children in South Sudan, where delegates discussed the implementation of the outstanding activities, made 15 resolutions and issued 22 recommendations to the host government. While actions were still ongoing at the time of the audit, OIOS established that the Task Force was actively monitoring and supporting the implementation of the action plan.

The Mission was advocating for child protection with external actors

40. CPU advocated for the protection and well-being of children with different government levels, armed groups and communities across all 10 field offices from January 2020 to March 2022. CPU also conducted 437 sensitization and training sessions for 25,899 participants (6,649 female and 19,250 male) from various forces and institutions to develop consensus among actors on the need to protect children during armed conflict and improve collaboration to implement the action plan. In addition, the Task Force launched the “act to protect children campaign” across all 10 states and was developing common CAAC advocacy messaging. It also supported the creation of six state-level technical committees in Juba, Bor, Yambio, Aweil, Rumbek, and Bentiu to oversee the implementation of the action plan at the state level. Based on the actions taken, OIOS concluded that UNMISS actively advocated for child protection with external actors.

D. Support for the release and reintegration of children associated with armed forces and groups

The Mission actively supported the release and reintegration of children

41. The reintegration of children released from the armed forces and the armed groups is a key objective of child protection. Although reintegration was not within the mandate of UNMISS, CPU worked closely with UNICEF and other members of the Task Force in advocating and supporting the release and reintegration of children. CPU regularly engaged child protection focal points in armed groups through workshops and supported the release of 43 children during the review period. CPU was also implementing quick impact projects to provide education facilities for children in Aweil, Bor and Yambio.

42. The Task Force engaged with the host government authorities and encouraged more partnerships with donors and other stakeholders to support the reintegration of CAAFAGs. However, reintegration faced challenges such as inadequate funding, staff shortages and the re-recruitment of children due to the continuation of conflict, splintering of armed groups and lack of social support services in remote areas.

Furthermore, the role of child protection focal points in the armed groups was not always supported by their leadership and peers as they faced intimidation for sharing information on grave violations, and the release of children from armed forces and groups would reduce their troop numbers. Notwithstanding these issues, OIOS concluded that the Mission actively supported the release and reintegration of CAAFAGs.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

Internal Audit Division
Office of Internal Oversight Services

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of the child protection programme in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	C/ O ³	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁴
1	UNMISS should develop a mission-wide child protection mainstreaming plan to guide civilian, police and military components in their mainstreaming efforts and ensure that their respective work plans incorporate shared child protection objectives.	Important	O	Receipt of a mission-wide child protection mainstreaming plan.	31 December 2023
2	UNMISS should ensure that the Military Component: (a) develops guidelines on the nomination of child protection focal points; (b) nominates focal points for all sectors, contingents and units in accordance with guidelines, and provides them with relevant training to carry out assigned tasks; and (c) implements an effective mechanism to monitor implementation of its directive on the protection of children by military personnel.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that the relevant guidelines were developed, focal points were nominated and trained, and an effective mechanism was put in place to monitor the implementation of the Force Commander's directive on the protection of children.	30 September 2023
3	UNMISS should ensure that the Police Component develops comprehensive guidelines with clear roles and responsibilities for mainstreaming child protection in its operations in all field offices.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of comprehensive guidelines with clear roles and responsibilities for mainstreaming child protection in police operations.	31 December 2023
4	UNMISS should ensure that the effectiveness of child protection trainings provided by the Child Protection Unit, Military and Police components are regularly assessed.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that the effectiveness of child protection trainings provided by the Child Protection Unit, Military and Police components are regularly assessed.	31 December 2023
5	UNMISS should ensure that Child Protection Unit staff: (a) use access-restricted shared folders for	Important	O	Receipt of evidence on actions taken by the Child Protection Unit to securely store sensitive	30 June 2023

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.

³ Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

⁴ Date provided by UNMISS in response to recommendations.

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of the child protection programme in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	C/ O ³	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁴
	storing information in all field offices; (b) complete mandatory training courses on information security awareness and information sensitivity in peacekeeping; and (c) consistently record incidents in the Situational Awareness Geospatial Environment application.			information, ensure the completion of mandatory training by staff, and record incidents in the Situational Awareness Geospatial Environment application.	

APPENDIX I

Management Response

UNITED NATIONS

United Nations Mission
in South Sudan

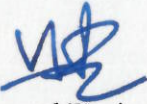


NATIONS UNIES

Mission des Nations Unies
en Soudan du Sud

Date: 6 December 2022

To: Mr. Kemal Karaseki
Acting Chief
Peacekeeping Audit Service
OIOS

From: Mr. 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 the child protection programme the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (Assignment No. AP2022-633-02)**

1. UNMISS acknowledges receipt of the detailed results of the audit dated 22 November 2022.
2. UNMISS accepts the 5 recommendations. An action plan for each recommendation is attached in the Appendix as requested.
3. I would like to thank OIOS for the continued support and consideration provided towards enhancing the work of UNMISS.

cc: Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, UNMISS
Ms. Sara Beysolow Nyanti, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, UNMISS and United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator
Mr. Mohan Subramanian, Force Commander UNMISS
Mr. Paul Egunsola, Chief of Staff, UNMISS
Ms. Victoria Browning, Director of Mission Support, UNMISS
Ms. Christine Fossen, Police Commissioner, UNMISS
Ms. Elizabeth Gregory, Audit Focal Point, UNMISS
Mr. Jeffrey Lin, Professional Practices Section, Internal Audit Division, OIOS

Management Response

Audit of the child protection programme 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 develop a mission-wide child protection mainstreaming plan to guide civilian, police, and military components in their mainstreaming efforts and ensure that their respective work plans incorporate shared child protection objectives.	Important	Yes	CPU	31 December 2023	The Mission notes the recommendation and will take the following actions to implement: The Child Protection Unit (CPU) will work with the relevant civilian, military and police focal points to develop a mission-wide child protection mainstreaming plan, that is integrated and aligned into the sectional workplans. Full implementation of the recommendation will be completed by 31 December 2023.
2	UNMISS should ensure that the Military Component: (a) develops guidelines on the nomination of child protection focal points; (b) nominates focal points for all sectors, contingents and units in accordance with guidelines, and provides them with relevant training to carry out assigned tasks; and (c) implements an effective mechanism to monitor implementation of its directive on the protection of children by military personnel.	Important	Yes	FHQ	30 September 2023	The Mission notes the recommendation and will take the following actions to implement: UNHQ is in the process of revising the DPO-DPPA Manual for Child Protection Staff in UN Peace Operations and expects the Manual to be finalized and issued during the first quarter of 2023. This will provide a revised template for FC Directives on Child Protection, including guidelines

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

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

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Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical/Important?	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
3	UNMISS should ensure that the Police Component develops comprehensive guidelines with clear roles and responsibilities for mainstreaming child protection in its operations in all field offices.	Important	Yes	UNPOL	31 December 2023	<p>on the nomination and training of Child Protection Focal Points and a mechanism to monitor the effectiveness of implementation of FC Directives.</p> <p>The mission would like to note that frequent rotation of military personnel and limited English language proficiency (particularly in contingents and enabling units) presents challenges to establishing a robust Child Protection Focal Point network. MGPA and two Sector Focal Points will have completed specialist Child Protection training by the end of 2022. Initial discussions have taken place regarding CPU personnel in the Field Offices conducting training for Sector Focal Points.</p> <p>Full implementation of this recommendation is expected by 30 September 2023.</p> <p>The Mission concurs with the recommendation and will continue developing the PC Directive, developed internally by UNPOL. This Directive will serve as a comprehensive guideline outlining all</p>

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Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical/Important?	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
4	UNMISS should ensure that the effectiveness of child protection trainings provided by the Child Protection Unit, Military and Police components are regularly assessed.	Important	Yes	CPU FHQ UNPOL	31 December 2023	<p>responsibilities regarding Child Protection issues to be carried on by officers in all Field Offices. Full implementation of this directive is expected by 31 December 2023.</p> <p>The Mission concurs with the recommendation and will take the following actions to implement:</p> <p>CPU notes that staff training does not constitute a critical priority in CPU's workplans. However, CPU will make efforts to more systematically assess trainings provided to staff, through the use of its assessment tool by 31 December 2023.</p> <p>FHQ will ensure that specific questions and situations relating to child protection are integrated into the FHQ evaluation checklists by 30 September 2023. These checklists serve as a systematic tool used for the evaluation of Sector Headquarters and Subordinate Units.</p> <p>UNPOL has taken note of the recommendation and will develop further tools for assessing the effectiveness of its various trainings</p>

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Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical/ Important?	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
5	UNMISS should ensure that Child Protection Unit staff: (a) use access-restricted shared folders for storing information in all field offices; (b) complete mandatory training courses on information security awareness and information sensitivity in peacekeeping; and (c) consistently record incidents in the Situational Awareness Geospatial Environment application.	Important	Yes	CPU	30 June 2023	The Mission notes the recommendation and will take the following actions to implement: CPU will take steps to ensure that information is stored through access-restricted shared folders in place across all field, and that all its staff have completed the mandatory training course information security awareness and information sensitivity in peacekeeping. CPU will continue to take steps to ensure that all relevant incidents are updated into the SAGE platform. Full implementation is expected by 30 June 2023.