



## INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

# REPORT 2015/019

---

Audit of recruitment of national staff and individual contractors in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

Overall results relating to the effective management of recruitment of national staff and individual contractors in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali were initially assessed as unsatisfactory. Implementation of one critical and one important recommendation remains in progress

FINAL OVERALL RATING: UNSATISFACTORY

25 March 2015

Assignment No. AP2014/641/03

# CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
I. BACKGROUND	1
II. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE	1-2
III. AUDIT RESULTS	2-6
Recruitment policies and procedures	2-6
IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	6
ANNEX I      Status of audit recommendations	
APPENDIX I   Management response	

# AUDIT REPORT

## **Audit of recruitment of national staff and individual contractors in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali**

### **I. BACKGROUND**

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of recruitment of national staff and individual contractors in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).
2. In accordance with its mandate, OIOS provides assurance and advice on the adequacy and effectiveness of the United Nations internal control system, the primary objectives of which are to ensure: (a) efficient and effective operations; (b) accurate financial and operational reporting; (c) safeguarding of assets; and (d) compliance with mandates, regulations and rules.
3. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for MINUSMA was delegated the authority to recruit national staff in accordance with the United Nations Staff Selection System. The national category of staff comprised national professional officers and locally recruited general service staff.
4. MINUSMA, as a start-up mission, was faced with challenges in filling posts due to lack of capacity to recruit staff in the initial stages of the Mission; but at the same time needing to become operational to implement the Mission's mandate. In order to accomplish this, MINUSMA needed to quickly fill vacant posts. The recruitment process was governed by United Nations Staff Regulations and Rules and Department of Field Support (DFS) guidelines dated 21 July 2010. The Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) also approved special authorities for MINUSMA dated 7 June 2013 and applicable until 6 June 2015 to facilitate the expeditious filling of critical functions.
5. The Human Resources Section, headed by a Chief Human Resources Officer at the P-5 level, had 61 approved posts, comprising 27 international staff, 30 national staff and 4 United Nations volunteers. The MINUSMA budget for national staff for the fiscal year 2013/14 was \$8.7 million with an approved staffing table of 781 posts. As at 30 June 2014, MINUSMA had recruited 362 national staff members resulting in a vacancy rate of 54 per cent.
6. Comments provided by MINUSMA are incorporated in italics.

### **II. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE**

7. The audit was conducted to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of MINUSMA governance, risk management and control processes in providing reasonable assurance regarding the **effective management of recruitment of national staff and individual contractors in MINUSMA**.
8. The audit was included in the 2014 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the operational risks related to inadequate staffing levels during the start-up phase of MINUSMA.
9. The key control tested for the audit was recruitment policies and procedures. For the purpose of this audit, OIOS defined this key control as the one that provides reasonable assurance that recruitment policies and procedures are followed in recruiting national staff and individual contractors.

10. The key control was assessed for the control objectives shown in Table 1. One control objective (shown in Table 1 as “Not assessed”) was not relevant to the scope defined for this audit.

11. OIOS conducted the audit from June to August 2014. The audit covered the period from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014.

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

13. In its assessment, OIOS took into consideration the flexibility afforded by DFS guidelines, dated 21 July 2010, on the selection of locally recruited staff. The DFS guidelines encouraged newly established missions to fully comply with the required recruitment procedures. However, the DFS guidelines included a provision that missions were not required to fully comply with these guidelines during the mission’s first year of existence, taking into account operational requirements at the start-up phase of the Mission and the time needed to establish joint staff-management bodies.

### III. AUDIT RESULTS

14. The MINUSMA governance, risk management and control processes examined were initially assessed as **unsatisfactory**<sup>1</sup> in providing reasonable assurance regarding the **effective management of recruitment of national staff and individual contractors in MINUSMA**. OIOS made five recommendations to address the issues identified. MINUSMA had a high vacancy rate of 54 per cent as at 30 June 2014 due to challenges faced during the start-up phase of the Mission, and the lack of a recruitment strategy to prioritize its recruitment needs. MINUSMA took action to establish a recruitment plan and a roster of qualified candidates which contributed to a reduction in the vacancy rate to 25 per cent as of March 2015. However, MINUSMA needed to: (a) establish a Mission Review Panel to ensure the recruitment process complied with DFS guidelines; (b) maintain adequate documentation to support the recruitment process; and (c) conduct independent reference checks of selected candidates.

15. The initial overall rating was based on the assessment of the key control presented in Table 1. The final overall rating is unsatisfactory as implementation of one critical and one important recommendation remains in progress.

---

<sup>1</sup> A rating of “**unsatisfactory**” means that one or more critical and/or pervasive important deficiencies exist in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance cannot be provided with regard to the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

**Table 1: Assessment of key control**

Business objective	Key controls	Control objectives			
		Efficient and effective operations	Accurate financial and operational reporting	Safeguarding of assets	Compliance with mandates, regulations and rules
Effective management of recruitment of national staff and individual contractors in MINUSMA	Recruitment policies and procedures	Partially satisfactory	Partially satisfactory	Not assessed	Unsatisfactory
<b>FINAL OVERALL RATING: UNSATISFACTORY</b>					

## Recruitment policies and procedures

The Mission had not developed a recruitment strategy

16. MINUSMA in its proposed budget for 2013/14, planned to achieve a vacancy rate of 37 per cent for national staff by 30 June 2014. This was based on historical recruitment patterns during the first year of past start-up missions. DFS guidelines required rosters be established by MINUSMA to enable positions to be filled promptly by fully-vetted, qualified candidates.

17. As of 30 June 2014, MINUSMA had a vacancy rate of 54 per cent for national staff. MINUSMA did not achieve its vacancy rate target mainly because: (a) it had not developed a recruitment plan to prioritize its recruitment needs; (b) there were delays in the recruitment process exemplified by a review of 66 recruitment files that indicated it took an average of 155 days to select candidates; and (c) it did not have a roster of qualified and pre-cleared candidates to facilitate rapid filling of vacant positions.

18. The initial high vacancy rate impacted on the ability of the Mission to implement urgent operational requirements. It also resulted in MINUSMA bypassing the recruitment process in order to fill posts quickly to reduce the vacancy rate. For instance, MINUSMA transferred individual contractors (about 65 per cent of Mission personnel on-boarded during the audit period) to fill regular staff positions without conducting a competitive recruitment exercise. These issues are referred to later in the report.

**(1) MINUSMA should develop a recruitment plan to prioritize the Mission’s recruitment needs.**

*MINUSMA accepted recommendation 1 and stated that it had a recruitment strategy in place which helped to reduce the national staff vacancy rate to 25 per cent. Based on the action taken by MINUSMA, recommendation 1 has been closed.*

**(2) MINUSMA should establish a centralized roster of qualified candidates that is up-dated regularly to expedite the recruitment process.**

*MINUSMA accepted recommendation 2 and stated that it had established a centralized roster of more than 100 qualified candidates which was being used to fill various national staff posts. Based on the action taken by MINUSMA, recommendation 2 has been closed.*

National staff were recruited without undergoing a competitive selection process

(a) Standard recruitment processes were not in place

19. The DFS guidelines for the selection of locally recruited staff required MINUSMA to: (a) widely circulate vacancy announcements to attract a sufficient number of qualified candidates; (b) post job openings for 30 calendar days or exceptionally for 15 days to meet immediate operational requirements; (c) pre-screen all candidates; (d) conduct interviews with at least three panelists, that were trained in competency-based interviewing, at a higher or the same level as the post being recruited; and (e) ensure that human resources officers attest that the recruitment process was properly applied before selection of candidates. Additionally, MINUSMA was required to establish an independent Mission Review Panel to ensure that applicable procedures were followed in evaluating and selecting candidates.

20. A review of the recruitment process during the audit period indicated that MINUSMA posted vacancy announcements on its website and on social media and sent vacancy announcements to all staff members and the Malian government National Office for Employment Promotion for wider distribution. In addition, its regional offices posted vacancy announcements on a job bulletin board to ensure wide awareness of vacant positions. Throughout these forums, vacancy announcements yielded a large number of applications. OIOS concluded that MINUSMA took adequate measures to ensure wide circulation of vacancy announcements.

21. A review of 85 of 362 national staff recruitment files indicated the following:

- In 19 cases, the vacancy announcement was posted for a period ranging from 6 to 14 days;
- In five cases, the Human Resources Section did not always adequately pre-screen applicants to ensure they met the minimum requirements of the job opening. For example, four candidates selected for positions in human resources, procurement, information technology and political affairs did not have the requisite experience, and one candidate did not have the educational requirements;
- In 60 cases, an interview panel was not constituted. For 25 cases with a constituted panel, applicants were not always interviewed by a panel of at least three staff at higher or the same level as the post being recruited. Also, only 6 of the 49 programme managers had attended training on competency-based interviewing skills; and
- Human resources officers did not always attest, by signing relevant documents, that selection procedures were properly applied. For example, only 7 of the 19 interview summaries available on recruitment case files were attested.

(b) Inadequate procedures for recruiting temporary staff

22. The Administrative Instruction on the administration of temporary appointments required MINUSMA to assess candidates to determine whether they met the minimum requirements, including those technical and other competencies required for the position. Such assessment would include a comparative analysis of applications. OHRM special authorities allowed the granting of temporary appointments to qualified candidates without issuing a temporary job opening. Candidates appointed under this measure were required to have the required academic credentials and work experience.

23. A review of 15 files relating to the 102 staff recruited on a temporary basis during the audit period indicated that 10 recruitments had been handled solely by the respective programme managers. These programme managers did not maintain evidence that a comparative analysis of applicants had been done. Also, for the selected candidates, there were no technical evaluations, job descriptions or reference checks to ensure they had the required academic credentials and work experience.

(c) Individual contractors were hired without conducting a competitive process and without justifying the need for an exception to normal procedures

24. The Administrative Instruction on individual contractors required the Head of Mission to institute competitive selection procedures, which normally included an evaluation. Also, the Mission was required to make efforts to shortlist three candidates for consideration. The Administrative Instruction also stated that exceptionally, the Head of Mission could engage an individual contractor even though he or she was the only candidate considered, provided a reasoned and documented justification for such exception was recorded prior to selection.

25. A review of 31 files for individual contractors engaged during the audit period indicated that MINUSMA was engaging individual contractors without evaluations and making efforts to shortlist three candidates for consideration. Also, the reason for exceptional non-compliance was not justified or documented. MINUSMA later recruited 135 of the 210 individual contractors on either a temporary or fixed-term appointment without conducting a competitive recruitment exercise.

(d) Recruitment files were incomplete

26. The Administrative Instruction on staff selection process required MINUSMA to maintain adequate records of the recruitment process to support selection decisions by programme managers.

27. A review of 114 national staff recruitment files indicated that they were incomplete. For example: (a) 41 files did not include vacancy announcements; (b) 64 files did not have results of interviews; and (c) 24 files did not include data related to total number of applicants, shortlisted candidates, interview panel members and results of evaluation processes.

(e) Reference and background checks were not performed

28. The DFS guidelines for the selection of locally recruited staff required the Chief Human Resources Officer to conduct reference and background checks on all selected external candidates. If the prevailing situation prevented the completion of reference and background checks, the Chief Human Resources Officer needed to document the Mission's efforts to conduct the required checks.

29. MINUSMA did not conduct background checks on candidates' education and previous employment. Copies of diplomas and work certificates were requested from candidates; but these were not independently verified with educational institutions and former employers. MINUSMA informed OIOS that verifying academic and previous employment records was not done as it would further delay the recruitment process. As a result, there was an increased risk of recruiting staff without the requisite experience and skills for the position.

30. MINUSMA advised that they did not implement a formal recruitment process including an adequate filling system or comply with DFS guidelines and other administrative instructions due to: (a) the need to expedite the on-boarding of national staff to meet operational requirements; and (b) the lack of full capacity of the Human Resources Section and programme managers to ensure procedures were fully complied with. Moreover, MINUSMA had not established a Mission Review Panel as at the time of the

audit, there were still ongoing discussions between Management and national staff to finalize the constitution of a National Staff Union.

31. The lack of implementation of procedures to ensure national staff were consistently recruited in accordance with the basic principles of the United Nations Staff Section System resulted in several cases of non-compliance with recruitment policies and good practices, impacting on the competitiveness of the recruitment process and lack of assurance that MINUSMA selected the most qualified applicants for positions. MINUSMA had also recruited staff that did not have the requisite skills and experience for the positions.

**(3) MINUSMA should implement a plan to: ensure that the Human Resources Section is operating in full capacity; build the capacity of programme managers; and establish a Mission Review Panel to ensure recruitment procedures comply with the Department of Field Support guidelines for the selection of locally recruited staff.**

*MINUSMA accepted recommendation 3 and stated that: (a) four of five vacant positions in the Human Resources Section as of March 2015 were at the on-boarding stage; and (b) the Human Resources Section was working with all programme managers to building their capacity in the recruitment process; (c) the Integrated Mission Training Center and the Human Resources Section had organized multiple training sessions on competency-based interviewing; and (d) a Mission Review Panel would be established by 15 March 2015. Recommendation 3 remains open pending receipt of evidence that: a Mission Review Panel has been established and is functioning as intended; and actions have been taken to build the capacity of programme managers.*

**(4) MINUSMA should develop and implement a filing system in the Human Resources Section to provide adequate documentation of all phases of the recruitment process.**

*MINUSMA accepted recommendation 4 and stated the Human Resources Section had implemented a checklist for each staff member's file and had initiated an electronic archiving system for all necessary documents. Based on the action taken by MINUSMA, recommendation 4 has been closed.*

**(5) MINUSMA should implement a procedure to conduct background checks of educational qualifications and work experience for selected staff.**

*MINUSMA accepted recommendation 5 and stated that verifying academic and previous work experience in post-conflict countries was challenging. However to address this issue, it required national staff members to produce original diplomas along with work letters, and on a case-by-case basis, additional checks would be conducted for sensitive roles. Recommendation 5 remains open pending receipt of evidence that MINUSMA is conducting background checks of educational qualifications and work experience for selected staff.*

#### **IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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

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



## STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

## Audit of recruitment of national staff and individual contractors in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

Recom. 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	MINUSMA should develop a recruitment plan to prioritize the Mission's recruitment needs.	Important	C	Action taken.	Implemented
2	MINUSMA should establish a centralized roster of qualified candidates that is up-dated regularly to expedite the recruitment process.	Important	C	Action taken.	Implemented
3	MINUSMA should implement a plan to: ensure that the Human Resources Section is operating in full capacity; build the capacity of programme managers; and establish a Mission Review Panel to ensure recruitment procedures comply with the Department of Field Support guidelines for the selection of locally recruited staff.	Critical	O	Receipt of evidence that a Mission Review Panel has been established and is functioning as intended, and of actions taken to build the capacity of programme managers.	March 2015
4	MINUSMA should develop and implement a filing system in the Human Resources Section to provide adequate documentation of all phases of the recruitment process.	Important	C	Action taken.	Implemented
5	MINUSMA should implement a procedure to conduct background checks of educational qualifications and work experience for selected staff.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that MINUSMA is conducting background checks of educational qualifications and work experience for selected staff.	May 2015

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

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

<sup>3</sup> C = closed, O = open

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

# **APPENDIX I**



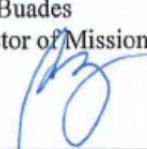

## **Management Response**



**FACSIMILE**

**Date: 10 March 2015**

**Reference: IAD: 15**

<b>TO:</b> Ms. Eleanor T. Nurns Director, Internal Audit Division, OIOS	<b>FROM:</b> Mongi Hamdi Special Representative of the Secretary-General MINUSMA 
<b>Copy:</b> Mr. Seydou Sirpe OIC Chief Resident Auditor MINUSMA	
<b>INFO:</b> Ms. Cynthia Avena-Castillo Professional Practices Section Internal Audit Division OIOS	
<b>FAX NO:</b> Electronic transmission	<b>FAX NO:</b> (223)
<b>TEL NO:</b>	<b>TEL NO:</b> (223)
<b>SUBJECT: Draft report on an audit of recruitment of national staff in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (Assignment No. AP2014/641/3)</b>	
Total number of transmitted pages including this page:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Reference is made to your interoffice memo dated 24 February 2015 on the above subject.</li><li>2. As requested, please find attached the Mission's comments per recommendation in Appendix I.</li><li>3. Your continuous support to MINUSMA audit matter would be highly appreciated.</li></ol> <p>Best regards</p>	
<b>Drafted by:</b> Miho Hirose Administrative Officer 	<b>Authorized by:</b> Paul Buades Director of Mission Support 
<b>Through:</b> Audrey Serret Senior Administrative Officer 	

## Management Response

## Audit of recruitment of national staff and individual contractors in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical <sup>1</sup> / Important <sup>2</sup>	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	MINUSMA should develop a recruitment plan to prioritize the Mission's recruitment needs.	Important	Yes	Human Resources Officer (In-Charge of Recruitment)	8 December 2014	Mission already has a recruitment strategy in place now which has also helped reduce the vacancy rate to current levels of 20% for International Staff and 25% for national staff.
2	MINUSMA should establish a centralized roster of qualified candidates that is up-dated regularly to expedite the recruitment process.	Important	Yes	Human Resources Officer (In-Charge of National Recruitment)	30 October 2014	At the onset of the mission, maintaining a roster was a challenge considering the finite resources of the Human Resources (HR) Section. However, with the progression of the first year, HR section has now successfully established a centralized national roster with more than 100 pre-qualified and pre-cleared candidates against Position-Specific Job Openings. It is being actively utilized to fill national posts for various functions and is an important part of HR's recruitment plan to target occupational groups with immediate and critical needs. Furthermore, it is to the credit of the mission that recruitment exercises were repeated in order to yield viable candidates for the position. This very dedication has assisted in building and strengthening the growing roster.
3	MINUSMA should implement a plan to: ensure that the Human Resources Section is operating in	Critical	Yes	Human Resources Officer (In-	15 March 2015	There are five vacant positions in the HR section; four of which are at the on-boarding stage. International Recruitment Unit is

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

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

## Management Response

## Audit of recruitment of national staff and individual contractors in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical <sup>1</sup> / Important <sup>2</sup>	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
	full capacity; build the capacity of programme managers; and establish a Mission Review Panel to ensure recruitment procedures comply with the Department of Field Support guidelines for the selection of locally recruited staff.			Charge of Client Support Unit  Human Resources Officer (In-Charge of Recruitment)		working individually on a continual basis with all Programme Managers in building their awareness and capacity vis-à-vis the recruitment process and associated tools (e.g. Inspira). Multiple sessions on Competency Based Interviewing (CBI) have also been conducted in partnership with Integrated Mission Training Center. The process for establishment of Mission Review Panel is progressing smoothly and will be completed in all respects by 15th March, 2015.
4	MINUSMA should develop and implement a filing system in the Human Resources Section to provide adequate documentation of all phases of the recruitment process.	Important	Yes	Human Resources Officer (In-Charge of Client Support Unit)	1st October 2014	As is true in any start-up mission, by necessity, filing was a secondary work process in the initial stages of the mission. However, with the strengthening of MINUSMA HR capacity, filing has already been identified as a priority and monitoring mechanisms have been put into place vis-a-vis a check-list for each staff file. Electronic archiving of all necessary documents is also in process.
5	MINUSMA implement a procedure to conduct background checks of educational qualifications and work experience for selected staff.	Important	Yes	Human Resources Officer (In-Charge of National Recruitment Unit)	1 May 2015	As is true within most post-conflict countries, verifying academic and previous work experience is not supported by the existing infrastructure. However, MINUSMA does require that National staff produce original diplomas, together with work letters in an attempt to overcome this obstacle. The same is being ensured for all staff being hired. In specific cases MINUSMA may carryout additional checks for sensitive roles. This will be determined on a case-by-case basis.