OIOS
Office of Internal Oversight Services

INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2019/029

Audit of the operations of the regional office of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Southern and Eastern Africa

The roles and responsibilities of the regional office were reprioritized following a change management strategy, but the office structure and duration of technical and operational missions needed review

30 April 2019
Assignment No. AN2018/590/02

Audit of the operations of the regional office of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Southern and Eastern Africa

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the operations of the regional office of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Southern and Eastern Africa (ROSEA). The objective of the audit was to determine whether operations of the regional office were effective and efficient in achieving OCHA's strategic objectives. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2016 to 31 October 2018 and included a review of ROSEA's roles and responsibilities, workplan implementation, and management of staff and other resources allocated to the operations.

ROSEA's roles and responsibilities were reprioritized following a change management strategy to focus primarily on humanitarian surge for emergency response. However, to further improve efficiency and effectiveness, ROSEA needed to review the office structure and duration of technical and operational missions.

OIOS made two recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, ROSEA needed to:

- Review its staffing profiles and structure to ensure they are optimally designed to provide effective, timely and high-quality surge support, in line with the Internal Operations Committee's decision on the role of OCHA's regional offices; and

- Review the feasibility of utilizing remote support methodologies where available and effective, to limit the duration of in-country non-surge missions and reduce operational costs.

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

CONTENTS

Audit of the operations of the regional office of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Southern and Eastern Africa

I. BACKGROUND

1.   The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the operations of the regional office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Southern and Eastern Africa (ROSEA).

2.   OCHA is responsible for bringing together humanitarian actors to ensure a coherent response to emergencies. Its mandate is centered around five core functions: (a) humanitarian coordination; (b) humanitarian financing; (c) information management; (d) advocacy; and (e) policy.

3.   Until 2015, the OCHA regional offices for Southern Africa (ROSA) and Eastern Africa (ROEA) operated from Johannesburg and Nairobi, respectively. At the beginning of 2016, ROSA and ROEA were merged into ROSEA, with the Deputy Head of Office in Johannesburg reporting to the Head of Office in Nairobi. The closure of ROSA was completed by 31 March 2018, resulting in ROSEA covering 25 countries (10 from ROEA and 15 from ROSA) from 1 April 2018.

4.   Comprising the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes, Eastern Africa is a region susceptible to large scale emergencies, resulting in significant displacement of population and emergency needs. Therefore, OCHA maintains presence in six countries in this region: Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan. While prone to drought and floods, the Southern Africa region has fewer protracted humanitarian crises and OCHA does not have any country offices in the region. In both regions the 2015-2016 El Nino weather phenomenon continues to have a significant humanitarian impact.

5.   For those countries where OCHA does not have a presence[1], ROSEA works closely with local authorities and partners to bolster national disaster preparedness and assist in emergency response both through surge missions and remote support. ROSEA also supported the coordination of activities related to the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) for these countries. During the audit period, CERF allocations to the 13 countries without OCHA presence amounted to $189 million.

6.   ROSEA cost plans amounted to $7.7 million for 2016, $5.3 million for 2017 and $4.4 million for 2018. In 2018, ROSEA had 32 posts, including the Head of Office at the P-5 level.

7.   Comments provided by OCHA are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

8.   The objective of the audit was to determine whether operations of the OCHA regional office in Southern and Eastern Africa were effective and efficient in achieving OCHA's strategic objectives.

9.   This audit was included in the 2018 risk-based workplan of OIOS due to risks associated with: (a) alignment of ROSEA's roles and responsibilities, as a regional office, to OCHA's core functions; (b) coordinating the efforts of all humanitarian partners in the region; and (c) managing staff and other resources in ROSEA.

---

[1] Djibouti, Rwanda, Uganda (Eastern Africa); Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Southern Africa)

10.   The audit covered the period from 1 January 2016 to 31 October 2018. Audit fieldwork took place from 5 to 23 November 2018 in Nairobi, Kenya. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risk areas in OCHA operations in ROSEA which included: a review of its roles and responsibilities, workplan implementation, and management of staff and other resources allocated to the operations.

11.   The audit methodology included: (a) interviews of key personnel, (b) reviews of relevant documentation, (c) analytical reviews of data, and (d) sample testing of key transactions in procurement and payments.

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

III.   AUDIT RESULTS

A.   Roles and responsibilities

<u>There was a need to realign ROSEA's staffing profiles</u>

13.   Up to 2017, OCHA's mandate for regional offices revolved around three core responsibilities, namely: surge response, emergency preparedness and strengthening partnerships. In June 2018, the Internal Operations Committee endorsed the recommendations of an internal OCHA Task Team that OCHA regional offices should be responsible for surge response as their primary activity. When not supporting surges, the offices would perform country-level activities relating to technical support, operational readiness support and operational partnerships, as well as other regional level activities such as information management and facilitation of relevant meetings.

14.   OIOS noted that ROSEA had reallocated resources internally, streamlined its functions and refocused its work on country-level surge and support activities. This included: reassigning three staff (two national and one international) from the "Communication, Reporting and Partnerships Unit" to the "Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit"; and ensuring the Office's workplan reflects its reorientation and focus on country-level surge and support, and that any work related to strengthening partnerships was operational in nature.

15.   Additionally, it would be important for ROSEA to review its staff resources and ensure alignment of its organizational structure with OCHA's New Operating Model and the Internal Operations Committee's decision on the role of regional offices. ROSEA's current structure includes legacy posts for supporting longer term preparedness work, including work on disaster risk management and strengthening partnerships, which are no longer a priority. The review may require reclassification of certain positions to enable the Regional Office to deliver the highest quality and most in-demand surge and technical support requirements to field operations.

> **(1) OCHA-ROSEA should review its staffing profiles and structure to ensure that they are optimally designed to provide effective, timely and high-quality surge support, in line with the Internal Operations Committee's decision on the role of OCHA's regional offices.**
>
> *OCHA accepted recommendation 1 and stated that ROSEA had made multiple adjustments to the office's organizational chart and staffing profiles.* Recommendation 1 remains open pending receipt

> of the results of final adjustments to the staffing profiles and structure, and evidence of implementation.

B.   Workplan implementation

<u>Annual workplanning and monitoring were generally adequate</u>

16.   The planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation cycle established by the United Nations through ST/SGB/2018/3, requires all programmes to prepare precise workplans whose implementation should be monitored and reported on.

17.   ROSEA 2017 and 2018 workplans included five strategic objectives and two management objectives, which were also OCHA corporate level objectives. Priorities under each objective were spelt out including the timeframe for implementation of activities, products and events, the location and the responsible unit. The workplans did not specify performance indicators or baseline data as under new guidance from the Strategic Planning, Evaluations and Guidance Section, field offices are to be guided by the global corporate results framework. OIOS reviewed the corporate-level indicators and noted that they incorporated the performance of regional offices. In addition, the narrative reporting, which is done on an annual basis, provided an indication of the regional office's performance against defined objectives and expected results.

18.   OIOS concluded that ROSEA's annual workplanning and monitoring were generally adequate.

<u>ROSEA provided surge and/or backstopping support but needed to review the duration of technical and operational support missions</u>

19.   In June 2018, the Operations Committee defined surge as "a temporary increase in capacity deployed to meet urgent needs in a field operation, for up to six months, during a significant change in the lifecycle of that operation, or in cases of 'force majeure', which is to be measured in staff days". ROSEA developed a control mechanism to track its surge deployments, and this tracking record was used by the Information Management Unit to produce an infographic map that provides a visual representation of substantive surge statistics at any given time. Once a surge request was received, it was recorded in the tracking system. The requests came in various forms such as email, telephone, etc. OIOS observed that:

    (a)   During the audit period, ROSEA deployed 524 missions for a total of 5,070 days. Expenses incurred for these missions amounted to $1,039,163 of which $970,578 was incurred for surge missions to 26 countries under and sometimes beyond ROSEA's area of coverage (in line with the decision of the Internal Operations Committee that regional offices should also be available to surge to countries beyond their regions when needed). The 10 countries with the highest duration of mission-days for an average of 13 staff per country were: South Africa, 551 days; Ethiopia, 450; Somalia, 429; Madagascar, 423; Botswana, 391; Kenya, 353; South Sudan, 337; Zimbabwe, 256; Burundi, 215; and Sudan, 173;

    (b)   Thirty-eight of these deployments were for periods of more than 30 days with the longest period being for 176 days; and

    (c)   Not all missions lasting for 30 days or more were for surge. For instance, out of the 38 deployments of more than 30 days in 2018, 5 were related to technical support, operational readiness/preparedness and support mission.

20. OIOS is of the view that ROSEA should closely review requests for missions involving technical support and operational readiness and partnerships (i.e., non-surge missions) with a view to, where feasible, reducing the duration of in-country support and increasing the support done remotely through video conferencing or telephone to cut down on operational costs. This would also be in line with the recommendation of the OCHA Task Team as technical and operational support deployments came next in priority of the regional offices' responsibility after surge support.

> **(2) OCHA-ROSEA should review the feasibility of utilizing remote support methodologies where available and effective, to limit the duration of in-country non-surge missions and reduce operational costs.**
>
> *OCHA accepted recommendation 2 and stated that ROSEA continued to review all missions throughout the first half of the year to assess the viability of remote support in achieving mission objectives and to identify efficiencies and applicable lessons. However, given the nature of ROSEA's work, which relies heavily on strong operational partnerships, much of the work it undertakes must be performed in-country.* Recommendation 2 remains open pending receipt of the results of the feasibility study and evidence of their implementation, as appropriate.

The humanitarian emergency response structure at regional and country levels was effective

21. In accordance with the change management framework, when regional offices were not supporting surge, their next priority would be providing technical support to country operations in their regions of coverage.

22. ROSEA provided technical and policy advice to humanitarian coordinators and humanitarian country teams in the region, senior management in OCHA and other United Nations agencies, Member States officials, and international and regional organizations. There were two main regional coordination mechanisms: the Regional Humanitarian Partnerships Team (RHPT) for Eastern Africa, and the Regional Inter Agency Standing Committee (RIASCO) for Southern Africa. ROSEA's Head of Office chaired both platforms and was the secretariat for both coordination mechanisms, which met monthly. Both the RHPT and RIASCO had formal terms of reference, met as scheduled, and followed up on action points arising from previous meetings. In addition, ROSEA worked to strengthen collaboration on emergency preparedness and response with regional bodies, such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in Eastern Africa and Southern Africa Development Community in the Southern Africa.

23. ROSEA also supported resident coordinators in all countries in the region without OCHA offices. In Kenya, the United Nations Resident Coordinator led the coordination of United Nations humanitarian activities through the Kenya Humanitarian Partnership Team (KHPT). The role of the KHPT is to ensure strategic coordination and coherence of humanitarian action by the Government of Kenya and national and international humanitarian actors towards better humanitarian preparedness and response. The KHPT is also an information sharing platform to better inform humanitarian preparedness, response and durable solutions to recurrent and chronic humanitarian concerns. The KHPT had formal terms of reference and met on a quarterly basis at senior management level and monthly at operational and technical level. ROSEA's role was to support the Resident Coordinator on key humanitarian issues impacting Kenya that were discussed in the KHPT, and where required, give technical advice on humanitarian issues. Among other activities, the KHPT responded to the election crisis in Kenya and made a successful flash appeal for $106 million for the drought that engulfed the country in 2017, of which they received $71 million.

24. OIOS concluded that emergency coordination at regional and country levels was effective.

25.   Resident/humanitarian coordinators are responsible for overseeing the monitoring and reporting of CERF allocations with support from OCHA operations in the field. CERF allocations are made to ensure rapid response to sudden-onset emergencies or rapidly deteriorating conditions in an existing emergency, and to support humanitarian response activities in underfunded emergencies.

26.   During the period under audit, ROSEA supported the coordination of CERF allocations for 13 recipient countries where there was no OCHA presence. ROSEA successfully assisted in developing 32 CERF application proposals totaling $189 million. They included 21 applications for rapid response and 11 applications for underfunded emergencies. ROSEA, however, did not have any role in the monitoring and reporting of the use of CERF allocations.

27.   In February 2016, OCHA developed guidance for monitoring CERF allocations. This guidance articulated the role of the resident coordinators and OCHA country offices in monitoring and reporting CERF projects implemented by United Nations agencies. However, it did not define the role of regional offices regarding CERF projects. For example, the guidance stated that resident coordinators will be supported by OCHA country offices where these exist. OCHA explained that where there is no OCHA presence, agencies will provide information on the implementation of CERF projects to the resident/humanitarian coordinators. In light of this explanation, OIOS did not make a recommendation on this issue in this report.

C.   Management of staff and other resources

Human resources management was satisfactory

28.   According to its 2018 staffing table, ROSEA had 32 authorized posts - 13 professionals, 9 national officers, and 10 General Service (local). All but one post was filled; recruitment for one national officer post was in progress at the time of audit.

29.   For the 2017-2018 performance reporting cycle, ROSEA achieved a compliance rate of 89 per cent. This result was made possible after many email reminders to staff. It was also due to the personal attention of the Head of Office who circulated her own 360-degree appraisal to all staff to promote an atmosphere of openness and accountability for completing individual staff performance appraisals.

30.   Similarly, all ROSEA staff had completed most of the United Nations mandatory training courses. The audit tested the completion rate of two training courses and noted that: (a) 38 out of 40 staff had completed the training on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, and (b) 39 out of 40 had completed the training on human rights responsibilities.

31.   During the period under review, OCHA ROSEA engaged 12 consultants and individual contractors at a total cost of $296,664. A service provider was responsible for recruiting local individual contractors. OIOS reviewed the recruitment of four individual contractors and consultants and noted that terms of reference were prepared, individuals were recruited either from a roster of pre-approved candidates or following a recruitment exercise by the service provider based on terms of reference prepared by the requesting units. All candidates reviewed submitted a certificate of good health and performance evaluations were conducted at the completion of assignment. Also, the unit rates charged were all reasonable and within the United Nations guidelines.

32.   However, two contractors were engaged for more than the maximum period allowed. Since 2014, one contractor was employed for a cumulative total period of 46 months at a cost of $110,219 and the other

for 19 months at $70,702. ROSEA explained that these contractors were retained for longer periods because they had specialized skills in data management, geographical information systems, graphics, and information and communication technology in the humanitarian field, which were not readily available in the local market. These functions have now been taken over by OCHA staff. In view of the action taken by ROSEA, no recommendation was issued.

33.   In October 2017, the ROSEA Head of Office appointed a Security Focal Point with day-to-day security-related tasks including liaison with the United Nations Security Management System and the Department of Safety and Security. He was also responsible for assisting the Head of Office in ensuring the implementation of Minimum Operating Security Standards and Minimum Operating Residential Security Standards established by the United Nations Office at Nairobi. All ROSEA staff had undertaken the mandatory training in security.

34.   OIOS concluded that ROSEA's human resources management was satisfactory, including measures within its control to ensure the safety and security of staff.

ROSEA established adequate measures to ensure continuity of critical functions

35.   Within the framework of the United Nations Organizational Resilience Management System, OCHA regional offices are expected to prepare business continuity plans (BCP) to maintain the continuity of critical functions in emergencies or other disruptive events, while ensuring the health, safety and security of staff and protecting assets.

36.   In October 2017, ROSEA updated its BCP, outlining guidance to ensure ROSEA can continue critical processes and operational services when exposed to a broad range of risks, as outlined in the Kenya Security Risk Management Area and endorsed by the Security Management Team in June 2016. The BCP was applicable to all ROSEA staff in Nairobi and encompassed ReliefWeb and Humanitarian Data Exchange staff based in Nairobi, as well as dependents of ROSEA staff members posted elsewhere but were residing in Nairobi.

37.   The Head of Office circulated the BCP to all staff in August 2017 and identified staff members with critical roles in the event of a crisis in Kenya. The BCP was tested during Kenya elections in August and October 2017 including the warden system to ensure functionality. OIOS concluded that ROSEA had put in place adequate measures to ensure continuity of critical functions in emergencies.

Controls over movement and personal use of official vehicles were being improved

38.   According to Section 2 of the Administration Instruction (ST/AI/2006/1), the use of official vehicles for private purposes is limited to reasons of health, security and other location specific factors.

39.   ROSEA maintained manual vehicle movement log sheets with information on time in and time out, fuel used, mileage, and driver information. The logs also indicated whether the vehicle movements were for official or private purposes. A closer review of these log sheets showed two staff members who made multiple uses of the vehicles for personal purposes totaling 6,453 kilometres or $1,807 at $0.28 per kilometer during the audit period. At the time of the audit ROSEA had recovered $1,053 for the use of 3,761 kilometres and recovered $754 subsequently. Therefore, OIOS did not issue a recommendation on this issue.

ROSEA was further reassessing its transport requirements

40.   In accordance with general provisions on managing transportation equipment in OCHA, the number of vehicles provided to a field office is based on an assessment of the minimum requirements for the field office after taking into consideration factors including security and availability of public transportation.

41.   ROSEA had a fleet of eight vehicles with three drivers when the new Head of Office arrived on board in August 2017. It also maintained two service contracts with local taxi companies. ROSEA had already paid a total of $12,600 for taxi services during the audited period. Following a review of transportation needs, the Head of Office determined that the number of vehicles, drivers and the service contracts with local taxi companies were not consistent with ROSEA's operational requirements as most of the vehicles and drivers stayed idle.

42.   ROSEA issued a directive for immediate disposal of vehicles that were more than five years old or in need of major repairs. It requested the service provider's Local Property Survey Board to dispose of five vehicles whose original cost was $177,888 through public auction. During the audit fieldwork, four out of the five vehicles were sold by public auction for $38,537. The service contract for the provision of taxi services with a local supplier was also discontinued with effect from 30 September 2017. ROSEA undertook to further reassess the optimal number of vehicles and drivers it needed to effectively support its operations and achieve cost savings given that the office did not undertake frequent field trips in Kenya. In light of this, OIOS did not make a recommendation on this issue.

Controls over physical inventory of assets in ROSEA were satisfactory

43.   According to the 2003 administrative instruction on property management, OCHA is responsible for creating, maintaining and updating its property and inventory control records, labeling property, monitoring the movement of property, recommending the disposal of obsolete and unserviceable property, and conducting periodic physical inventories during each biennium.

44.   As of 31 October 2018, ROSEA's inventory of both expendable and non-expendable property amounted to $393,548 broken down as follows: information technology equipment $130,654; communication equipment $53,572; transport and other equipment $181,174; and office furniture $28,148. ROSEA conducted the last annual physical inventory in October 2018 during which it identified unserviceable items originally costing $199,933 including the five official vehicles. ROSEA had already disposed of four vehicles and was preparing a disposal plan for approval by OCHA headquarters for the remaining unserviceable assets. OIOS, therefore, concluded that controls over physical inventory of assets in ROSEA were satisfactory.

IV.   ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

45.   OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of OCHA 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 the operations of the regional office of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Southern and Eastern Africa

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	C/ O[3]	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date[4]
1	OCHA-ROSEA should review its staffing profiles and structure to ensure that they are optimally designed to provide effective, timely and high-quality surge support, in line with the Internal Operations Committee's decision on the role of OCHA's regional offices.	Important	O	Submission of the results of final adjustments to the staffing profiles and structure, and evidence of implementation.	31 December 2019
2	OCHA-ROSEA should review the feasibility of utilizing remote support methodologies where available and effective, to limit the duration of in-country non-surge missions and reduce operational costs.	Important	O	Submission of the results of the feasibility study and evidence of their implementation, as appropriate.	30 September 2019

[1] Critical recommendations address critical and/or pervasive deficiencies 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.
[2] Important recommendations address important (but not critical or pervasive) deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance may be at risk regarding the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.
[3] C = closed, O = open
[4] Date provided by OCHA in response to recommendations.

APPENDIX I

Management Response

United Nations 🜨 Nations Unies

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM   MEMORANDUM INTERIEUR

TO: A:	Ms. Muriette Lawrence-Hume, Chief New York Audit Service, Internal Audit Division, OIOS	DATE:	17 April 2019
		REFERENCE:	

THROUGH:
S/C DE:

FROM: Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for
DE: Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief
       Coordinator

SUBJECT: **Draft report on an audit of the OCHA operations in the**
OBJET: **Regional Office for Southern and Eastern Africa**
          (AN2018/590/02)

    In response to your memorandum dated 11 March 2019, I am
enclosing herewith OCHA's management response to the draft
audit report and the recommendations issued. All
recommendations are accepted.

Copy to: Ms. Menada Wind-Andersen, Executive Officer, OCHA

Management Response

Audit of the operations of the regional office of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Southern and Eastern Africa

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	OCHA-ROSEA should review its staffing profiles and structure to ensure that they are optimally designed to provide effective, timely and high-quality surge support, in line with the Internal Operations Committee's decision on the role of OCHA's regional offices.	Important	Yes	Head of Office	31/12/2019	This progress has already begun, with multiple adjustments made to the office's organizational chart and staffing profiles.
2	OCHA-ROSEA should review the feasibility of utilizing remote support methodologies where available and effective, to limit the duration of in-country non-surge missions and reduce operational costs.	Important	Yes	Head of Office	30/09/2019	OCHA ROSEA continues to review all missions throughout the first half of the year to establish whether remote support is a viable means to achieve the mission objectives and identify efficiencies and lessons learned that can be applicable. However, given the nature of ROSEA's work -which relies heavily on strong operational partnerships- much of the work it undertakes must be performed in-country.

---

[1] Critical recommendations address critical and/or pervasive deficiencies 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.

[2] Important recommendations address important (but not critical or pervasive) deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance may be at risk regarding the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.