



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2016/158

Audit of the phasing out of human resources in the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire during the drawdown period

The Mission adequately planned and implemented the retrenchment of its personnel; but management needed to increase support to staff to find new employment

13 December 2016
Assignment No. 2016/640/01

Audit of the phasing out of human resources in the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire during the drawdown period

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management and control processes over the phasing out of human resources in the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) during the drawdown period. The audit covered the period from January to November 2016 and included reviews of the downsizing of personnel, support provided to staff to find alternative employment, and the check-out process.

UNOCI adequately planned the downsizing of staff, conducted a job fair, and implement a transparent process for staff retrenchment. However, UNOCI needed to increase support to staff to find new employment.

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

- Conduct additional job fairs and take action to increase the participation of potential employers including members of the United Nations Country Team, donor organizations, and members of the diplomatic community in Côte d'Ivoire; and follow-up with the Government on possible employment opportunities for staff; and
- Ensure that personnel files for all separated staff are complete.

UNOCI accepted the recommendations, implemented one and has initiated steps to implement the second recommendation.

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
I. BACKGROUND	1
II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY	1-2
III. OVERALL CONCLUSION	2
IV. AUDIT RESULTS	2-5
A. Downsizing of personnel	2-3
B. Training, capacity building and job fair in support of national staff	3-4
C. Check-out procedures	4-5
V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	5
ANNEX I Status of audit recommendations	
APPENDIX I Management response	

Audit of phasing out of human resources in United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire during the drawdown period

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the phasing out of human resources in the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI).
2. The Security Council by resolution 2284 (2016) authorized complete withdrawal of all uniformed and civilian personnel of UNOCI by 30 April 2017 and to complete closure/liquidation of the Mission by 30 June 2017.
3. The UNOCI Human Resources Section is responsible for planning and coordinating the retrenchment of personnel. The Section is headed by a staff at P-4 level that is supported by 9 international and 27 national staff and had a staffing cost of about \$2.4 million per year. UNOCI civilian staffing levels as at April 2016, the date of resolution 2284, and the number of retrenched staff as at June 2016 are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: UNOCI strength and retrenchments

Summary of staff	Staffing strength 1 April 2016	Number of staff retrenched from April to 30 June 2016
International	295	34
National	638	95
United Nations Volunteers (UNVs)	137	25
Total	1,070	154

4. Comments provided by UNOCI are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

5. The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management and control processes over the phasing out of human resources in UNOCI during the drawdown period.
6. This audit was included in the 2016 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the scheduled drawdown of UNOCI and reputational risk related to the impact of the Mission's liquidation on future employment of affected staff.
7. OIOS conducted this audit from September to November 2016. The audit covered the period from January to November 2016. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risk areas in the phasing out of human resources in UNOCI, which included planning for downsizing of staff, support provided to staff to find alternative employment, the retrenchment and check-out processes.
8. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews of key personnel; (b) review of relevant documentation; (c) analytical reviews of data; (d) random sampling of cases processed by the Comparative Review Panel (CRP); and (e) review of career fair activities and the staff check-out process.

III. OVERALL CONCLUSION

9. UNOCI adequately planned for the downsizing of staff, implemented a job fair to support staff in finding alternative employment, and conducted a transparent process for staff retrenchment. However, the Mission needed to: (a) conduct additional job fairs and take action to increase the participation of potential employers including members of the United Nations Country Team, donor organizations, and members of the diplomatic community in Côte d'Ivoire; (b) follow-up with the Government on recruitment of national staff; and (c) ensure that personnel files for all separated staff were complete.

IV. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Downsizing of personnel

The downsizing of personnel was adequately planned

10. The Department of Field Support (DFS) Liquidation Manual (the Manual) requires UNOCI to: (a) plan for the downsizing of its staff as early as possible, but no later than six months before the anticipated end of mandate; and (b) consult with the Field Personnel Division, DFS to coordinate a downsizing planning exercise for civilian staff.

11. From September to November 2015, in anticipation of its liquidation, UNOCI drafted a transition document, which included a plan to transfer residual substantive activities to the host Government and to the United Nations Country Team. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) approved the transition document and shared it with the Multidisciplinary Strategic Review Mission (MSRM) led by the Assistant Secretary-General of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in February 2016. A review of the MSRM assessment results and recommendations showed that they were in line with the UNOCI transition plan.

12. Immediately after the Security Council authorized the closure of the Mission in April 2016, UNOCI updated the transition document and prepared a Mission Implementation Plan (MIP) with the participation of all Mission components and leaders of the national staff association. The MIP contained goals and key priorities for the liquidation and a staffing retrenchment schedule for the period from 30 June 2016 to 30 June 2017. The SRSG approved and the Field Personnel Division, DFS endorsed the MIP in May 2016.

13. OIOS concluded that UNOCI had adequately planned for the downsizing of its personnel.

A fair and transparent process was implemented to retrench staff

14. United Nations staff rules require termination of staff appointment arising from abolition of a post or reduction of staff to be done taking into consideration competencies, integrity and length of service of the staff. To ensure compliance with this requirement, UNOCI established a CRP comprising of 25 members nominated by Mission management and staff representatives.

15. In addition to the 120 staff retrenched as at 30 June 2016, UNOCI subjected 127 staff members (2 international staff, 118 national staff and 7 UNVs) to a CRP process to fill 27 posts and retrenched the unsuccessful staff in September 2016. OIOS review of the documentation on the CRP process showed that the evaluation criteria used included the length of service with the United Nations, years of experience in the relevant field, and staff performance reports for the years 2014/15 and 2015/16. Panel members properly used established criteria, agreed on the outcome of their review, and submitted their

report to the SRSG who endorsed it on 1 August 2016. UNOCI subsequently sent the report to the Field Personnel Division, DFS and the United Nations Volunteers Headquarters on 3 August 2016.

16. OIOS concluded that UNOCI had implemented a fair and transparent process for the retrenchment of its staff.

The Mission properly issued staff notices of termination

17. United Nations staff rules require UNOCI to give not less than 90, 30 and 15 calendar-day notice of termination to a staff member whose appointment is continuing, fixed-term, or temporary, respectively.

18. OIOS review of personnel files for 66 (15 international and 30 national staff and all 21 UNVs) of 154 retrenched staff showed that all sampled staff were on fixed-term and temporary appointments. The review showed that a minimum of 30-day notice was given to all categories of staff and UNVs. Four of the 30 national staff in the sample had contested the 30-day notice of termination and requested indemnity, which was not granted as the Mission successfully argued that it issued the notices in compliance with established guidelines. UNOCI had also a dedicated focal point within the Human Resources Section to attend to terminated employees' enquiries.

19. OIOS concluded that UNOCI had issued notice of termination in compliance with the United Nations staff rules.

B. Training, capacity building and job fair in support of national staff

UNOCI needed to further assist national staff to obtain employment

20. The Manual requires UNOCI to assist local and national staff to obtain other employment opportunities at the duty station by: amongst other things, implementing a training and capacity-building plan and organizing job fairs for staff to match their skills and experience with the needs of potential employers from the private sector, other United Nations entities, embassies, non-governmental and donor organizations.

21. Due to the pending closure of UNOCI, management implemented a training and capacity-building plan for its staff, including courses on language and communication, managerial and leadership, information technology and career development. During the period under review, UNOCI provided training to 644 staff (472 national and 172 international staff).

22. Additionally, on 14 September 2016, UNOCI sought support from the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to assist staff in finding employment opportunities. Based on a request from the Government for copies of resumes of staff expected to be impacted by the liquidation, UNOCI issued a broadcast encouraging staff to provide them. On 22 September 2016, UNOCI provided 156 resumes to the Cabinet of the Prime Minister. As of end of November 2016, UNOCI did not have any information relating to the outcome of this initiative; for example, the number of staff recruited by the Government. In September 2016, UNOCI also submitted names, performance appraisal reports, and personal history profiles of 33 international staff that were on the roster and were being affected by the downsizing to the Field Personnel Division, DFS for consideration for employment opportunities with other United Nations offices/missions.

23. However, UNOCI only held one job fair on 21 September 2016 after cancelling one that had been planned for June 2016 due to the national staff strike. Also, OIOS observation of the job fair showed low response and attendance rates of invited employers. Of the 30 entities invited, only 15 (50 per cent)

responded that they would attend. Of the 15 respondents, only 11 attended. Also, a review of relevant documentation showed that UNOCI did not invite 13 of 17 United Nations agencies funds and programmes operating in Côte d'Ivoire and embassies and donor organizations.

24. The above occurred because senior management was not involved in the Mission's communications with potential employers including members of the United Nations Country Team, donor organizations, and the diplomatic community in Côte d'Ivoire. For example, the Deputy SRSG, Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator responsible for the overall coordination of the United Nations Country Team in Côte d'Ivoire was not involved in inviting these organizations to the job fair. UNOCI sent these organizations a generic invitation letter that was signed by the Chief Civilian Personnel Officer.

25. As a result, UNOCI may be perceived as not adequately assisting staff in finding alternative employment opportunities.

(1) UNOCI should: (a) conduct additional job fairs and take action to increase participation of potential employers including members of the United Nations Country Team, donor organizations, and members of the diplomatic community in Côte d'Ivoire; and (b) follow-up with the Government on possible employment opportunities for staff.

UNOCI accepted recommendation 1 and stated that it would conduct more job fairs in December 2016 and the Head of Mission had sent out invitations on 29 November 2016 to the United Nations Country Team, private sector companies and other entities to participate in the fair. In follow-up to the Head of Mission's discussion with the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire regarding possible employment opportunities for UNOCI personnel, the Mission had progressively provided personal history profiles of national staff. Based on the action taken by UNOCI and evidence reviewed by OIOS, Recommendation 1 has been closed.

C. Check-out procedures

Need to improve filing of personnel files during the check-out process

26. The Manual requires UNOCI to implement effective check-out procedures to ensure that: specific disciplinary or rebuttal cases related to staff are addressed; pension benefits forms are completed; accurate forwarding addresses and bank accounts of staff are obtained; assets assigned to staff are recovered; and claims such as those resulting from survey board cases and personal telephone bills are settled by staff.

27. OIOS review of personnel files for 70 (30 national staff, 15 International and 25 UNVs) of 154 separated staff indicated that UNOCI established a Check-out Unit that facilitated the check-out process, as follows:

- The Human Resource Section verified and certified attendance records for all national staff and forwarded them to the Field Personnel Division, DFS;
- The Security Section cancelled identification cards of all staff prior to their final clearance;
- The Property Control and Inventory Unit ensured that United Nations-owned assets assigned to departing staff were returned; and

- The Chief Civilian Personnel Officer sent copies of staff check-out forms, separation personnel action, instruction for payment of benefits and bank information of the departed staff to the Chief Finance Officer for onward transmission to the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund.

28. However, whilst the files of national staff and UNVs were complete, copies of the following documents were not in the personnel files of the 15 international staff selected for review: (a) check-out forms signed by self-accounting units, the Security Section and the Property Control and Inventory Unit; (b) separation personnel actions; (c) special report on completion of assignment; and (d) separation payment instructions and bank information. This occurred because the Human Resources Section had not implemented effective filing procedures to ensure that relevant documents of separated staff were collated and filed properly. Inadequate records could limit the Organization's ability to provide assurance that all required processes and recovery actions, if needed, have been completed prior to separation of staff

(2) UNOCI should implement effective procedures to ensure that personnel files for all separated staff are complete.

UNOCI accepted recommendation 2 and stated that following a workshop on check-out and separation procedures at the end of November 2016, current practices were reviewed and suggestions made to improve the check-out process. A one-stop check-out system would be organized with representatives from all sections involved in the check-out process and the Human Resources Section would maintain complete files with all relevant documents. Recommendation 2 remains open pending receipt of evidence that personnel files for all separated staff are complete.

V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

29. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of UNOCI 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 phasing out of human resources in United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire during the drawdown period

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	C/ O ³	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁴
1	UNOCI should: (a) conduct additional job fairs and take action to increase participation of potential employers including members of the United Nations Country Team, donor organizations, and members of the diplomatic community in Côte d'Ivoire; and (b) follow-up with the Government on possible employment opportunities for staff.	Important	C	Action taken	Implemented
2	UNOCI should implement effective procedures to ensure that the check-out process is completed and that personnel files for all separated staff are complete.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that personnel files for all separated staff are complete and accurate.	31 January 2017

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 UNOCI in response to recommendations.

APPENDIX I

Management Response

Management Response

Audit of phasing out of human resources in United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire during the drawdown period

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	UNOCI should: (i) conduct additional job fairs and take effective action to increase the participation of potential employers including members of the United Nations Country Team, donor organizations, and members of the diplomatic community in Côte d'Ivoire; and (ii) follow up with the Government for possible employment opportunities.	Important	Yes	Acting Chief of Staff and Chief Human Resources	31 December 2016	<p>In light of Mission liquidation, it is only feasible to conduct one more Job Fair. It is now slated for 15 December 2016.</p> <p>Letters of invitation to the UNOCI Job Fair have already been sent out by UNOCI Human Resources Section to the UNCT, private sector companies, etc.</p> <p>In follow-up, the Head of Mission has sent out on 29 November 2016 letters to the UNCT inviting them to participate in the UNOCI Job Fair. The Head of Mission will also mention the same at the 06 December 2016 meeting of the P5+EU.</p> <p>In follow-up to the Head of Mission's discussion with the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire regarding possible employment opportunities for UNOCI personnel, the Mission has progressively provided the PHPs of national staff in particular since 01 June 2016 at the request of the Office of the President (for the PIO Radio Unit staff)</p>

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.

Management Response

Audit of phasing out of human resources in United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire during the drawdown period

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						and the Ministry of Solidarity (for Civil Affairs staff) in particular. The Mission is aware that some staff have found employment elsewhere in Côte d'Ivoire, such as with the ICRC and the ICC Abidjan Office, to name a few.
2	UNOCI should implement effective procedures to ensure that the check-out process is completed and that personnel files for all separated staff are complete.	Important	Yes	Acting Chief of Staff and Chief Human Resources	31 January 2017	Following a Workshop on Check Out and Separation Procedures where all SAU's and Sections involved in this process participated (held 24 and 25 November), current practices were reviewed and improvements to reduce time spent on check out have been suggested. For example, a periodic One Stop check out area with representatives from all Sections involved in the check-out who can clear staff immediately in the system. Human Resources Focal Points will then have to complete files by the COB with all relevant documents in the staff members' official Status File in a timely manner. The new process agreed upon is now being put in place, with implementation roll-out as of 12 December 2016.