



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2015/091

Audit of the recruitment of national staff and individual contractors in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

Overall results relating to the effective management of the recruitment of national staff and individual contractors in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan were initially assessed as unsatisfactory. Implementation of one critical and one important recommendations remains in progress

FINAL OVERALL RATING: UNSATISFACTORY

1 September 2015
Assignment No. AP2014/633/03

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
I. BACKGROUND	1
II. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE	1-2
III. AUDIT RESULTS	2-6
Recruitment policies and procedures	3-6
IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	6
ANNEX I Status of audit recommendations	
APPENDIX I Management response	

AUDIT REPORT

Audit of the recruitment of national staff and individual contractors 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 recruitment of national staff and individual contractors in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS).
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 UNMISS Special Representative of the Secretary-General sub-delegated the authority to recruit national staff and individual contractors to the Director of Mission Support who further delegated the authority to recruit national staff to the Chief Human Resources Officer. The Human Resources Section was responsible for: (a) managing the Mission's recruitment activities; (b) administering and providing support on human resources policies and guidelines; and (c) managing vacancies in coordination with respective programme managers. The recruitment of national staff and individual contractors was guided by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field Support (DPKO/DFS) Human Resources Handbook, and relevant administrative instructions and information circulars issued by the Department of Management.
4. The Human Resources Section was headed by the Chief Human Resources Officer at the P-5 level, supported by 19 international and 19 national staff. The 2012/13 and 2013/14 approved budgets for national staff were \$40.1 million and \$41.4 million respectively. The 2012/13 and 2013/14 approved national staffing levels were 1,636 and 1,750 respectively. UNMISS had 1,941 individual contractors in 2012/13 and 3,825 in 2013/14.
5. Comments provided by UNMISS are incorporated in italics.

II. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

6. The audit was conducted to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of UNMISS governance, risk management and control processes in providing reasonable assurance regarding the **effective management of the recruitment of national staff and individual contractors in UNMISS**.
7. The audit was included in the 2014 risk-based work plan of OIOS because of the risks relating to the recruitment of national staff and individual contractors.
8. 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 staff and individual contractors.
9. 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 for this audit.

10. OIOS conducted the audit from October 2014 to February 2015. The audit covered the period from 9 July 2011 (the start of the Mission) to 30 September 2014.

11. 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 and analytical reviews, OIOS assessed the existence and adequacy of internal controls and conducted necessary tests to determine their effectiveness.

III. AUDIT RESULTS

12. The UNMISS governance, risk management and control processes examined were initially assessed as **unsatisfactory**¹ in providing reasonable assurance regarding the **effective management of the recruitment of national staff and individual contractors in UNMISS**. OIOS made five recommendations to address the issues identified. UNMISS needed to: (a) develop a robust recruitment plan to expedite the recruitment of national staff; (b) establish a roster of qualified candidates for use in filling vacancies; (c) implement procedures and supervise staff on the maintenance of recruitment records; (d) liaise with government and local institutions on reference checks of candidates; and (e) reconcile purchase orders with service entry sheets and train staff responsible for creating entry sheets and purchase orders in Umoja in respect of individual contractors.

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

Table 1: Assessment of key control

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

¹ 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.

Recruitment policies and procedures

There was a need for a robust recruitment plan

14. UNMISS established in its 2013/14 results-based budget a target vacancy rate of 15 per cent for national staff. The UNMISS Human Resources Section work flow process and key performance indicators set a target of 45 days, from the date of vacancy announcement to the date of the on-boarding of selected national professional officers, and 35 days for general service staff.

15. As at 30 June 2014, UNMISS had an overall vacancy rate of 23 per cent for national staff. At the time of the audit, 395 posts were vacant including: 116 posts for more than two years; 202 for more than one year but less than two years; and 77 for less than one year. A review of a sample of 47 of the 194 recruitment cases completed during the audit period indicated that UNMISS recruited nine national professional officers and eight general service staff within the established targeted days. However, UNMISS took an average of: (a) 285 days to complete the recruitment of 19 national professional officers; and (b) 146 days to complete the recruitment of 11 general service staff. This was because UNMISS had not implemented adequate procedures, including a robust recruitment plan, to expedite the recruitment of national staff. Delays in the recruitment process resulted in posts in critical sections (such as supply, medical and communications and information technology) being vacant for considerable periods of time.

(1) UNMISS should implement a robust recruitment plan that takes into account immediate and anticipated job openings to ensure that current and projected vacancies are identified and filled in a timely manner.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 1 and stated that its Human Resources Section identified vacancies and actions were taken to expedite the filling of these vacancies through effective coordination between the Human Resources Sections and hiring managers. For the remaining vacancies, a timeline for posting of vacancy announcements was established in consultation with the concerned sections. Based on the action taken by UNMISS, recommendation 1 has been closed.

The Mission needed to create rosters to expedite the recruitment process

16. The administrative instruction on staff selection system requires UNMISS to create generic job openings for the purpose of creating and maintaining viable rosters of qualified candidates for immediate and anticipated job openings. The administrative instruction for the appointment of consultants and individual contractors requires UNMISS to maintain a roster of qualified individual contractors.

17. A review of the recruitment and selection processes for national staff and individual contractors indicated that UNMISS had not developed and maintained rosters of qualified candidates. This was because UNMISS had not taken action to circulate generic vacancy announcements for the purpose of creating rosters and had not established a process for putting on a roster qualified but unselected candidates for specific vacancy announcements. UNMISS explained that rosters were not developed due to an insufficient number of qualified candidates in the Republic of South Sudan. However, a review of recruitment exercises indicated that UNMISS had a number of qualified candidates that were successful in the recruitment process; but had not been placed on a roster. For example, a vacancy announcement for two posts resulted in 67 applicants of which 8 were qualified and another vacancy announcement for one post had 34 applicants, 6 of which were considered as qualified. As a result, UNMISS was unable to promptly fill vacant positions of national staff and hire individual contractors to reduce the high vacancy rate.

(2) UNMISS should implement procedures to ensure qualified applicants are being placed on a roster.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 2 and stated that it started to create rosters out of ongoing recruitments with candidates who were recommended for roster but not selected for the post. Based on the action taken by UNMISS, recommendation 2 has been closed.

There was a need for adequate documentation of recruitment actions and decisions

18. DPKO/DFS standard operating procedures and the administrative instruction on the staff selection process require UNMISS to maintain case files with complete records of all recruitment activities.

19. A review of the recruitment case files for 194 of the 1,355 national staff on board at the time of the audit indicated that UNMISS had not maintained adequate records of the recruitment process. The following documents were not available on file:

- Initial requests for recruitment from programme managers for 194 recruitment cases and vacancy announcements for 106 posts;
- Records of detailed pre-screening procedures conducted to determine eligibility for employment for 96 recruitment cases;
- Personal history profiles of candidates for 46 recruitment cases and copies of academic credentials for 52 others;
- Copies of invitations for screening for 115 posts, interview reports for 62 recruitment cases and comparative evaluation reports for 61 recruited candidates;
- Four comparative evaluation reports related to national professional officer recruitments were not signed by the Chief Human Resource Officer to indicate approval; and
- The required medical clearance prior to issuing letters of appointment to 42 national staff.

20. Similarly, a review of 200 of the 1,462 recruitment case files of individual contractors on board at the time of the audit indicated the absence of recruitment files for 116 of the individual contractors and for the remaining 84, the following information was not available on file:

- Medical clearance certificates for 15, personal history profile for 62, interview reports for 34; and job descriptions for 58;
- Proof of nationality for 8 and birth certificates for 36; and
- Comparative evaluation reports and copies of vacancy announcements for all 84.

21. The above resulted as UNMISS had not implemented adequate procedures and properly supervised staff involved in archiving recruitment documents in the Total Record and Information Management archiving system. As a result, there was a risk that UNMISS recruitment and selection of national staff and individual contractors may not be transparent, fair and competitive.

(3) UNMISS should implement adequate procedures and properly supervise staff on the maintenance of recruitment records.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 3 and stated that it introduced a checklist for ensuring completeness of files for the recruitment of national staff and individual contractors. The supervisor of the staff assigned to the recruitment case would review the case file and certify its correctness.

Recommendation 3 remains open pending receipt of evidence showing adequate maintenance of recruitment records.

Reference and background checks needed to be systematically performed

22. The DPKO/DFS Human Resources Handbook on appointments and promotions requires UNMISS to verify a candidate's academic qualification and work experience as soon as the candidate was shortlisted and not later than one month prior to selection. Also, the administrative instruction on consultants and individual contractors requires UNMISS to verify the credentials, qualifications and experience of selected individuals.

23. A review of the recruitment case files for 194 of the 1,355 national staff on board at the time of the audit indicated that UNMISS did not verify: the academic credentials of 126 of the 194 staff; and the work experience of 83 of 194 staff. Furthermore, a review of 200 out of 1,462 recruitment case files of individual contractors on board indicated that UNMISS did not verify the academic and employment credentials of 84 individual contractors. UNMISS was unable to provide the recruitment case files for the remaining 116 as they were not available due to poor record management.

24. The above resulted due to inadequate efforts by UNMISS to ensure the cooperation of central and local government and institutions to obtain information on the academic qualifications of recruited national staff and individual contractors. As a result, there was a risk of UNMISS recruiting staff that did not possess the requisite qualifications and experience for the positions.

(4) UNMISS should assign staff to liaise and follow up with government and local institutions with the view to ensuring smooth conduct of reference checks on the academic qualifications and work experience of each recruited national staff and individual contractor.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 4 and stated that it assigned a staff to liaise with relevant government authorities. It would continue to make every possible effort to conduct reference checks on academic qualifications and was working with the United Nations Country Team on the subject matter. Recommendation 4 remains open pending receipt of evidence that UNMISS is following up with appropriate government and local institutions on reference checks on the academic qualifications and work experience of recruited national staff and individual contractors.

The Mission needed to implement procedures to reconcile purchase orders with service entry sheets

25. The Field Finance Procedure Guidelines requires UNMISS to process individual contractual payments: (a) against appropriate credits reserved in the accounts; and (b) based on original, certified attendance sheets or service certification reports. UNMISS created 4,775 purchase orders in Umoja during the period from 21 November 2013 to 20 April 2015 to reserve and obligate approximately \$11.9 million for the cost of services of individual contractors. UNMISS also created corresponding service entry sheets (attendance sheets) in Umoja showing the number of days worked.

26. A review of 420 of the 4,775 purchase orders and corresponding service entry sheets in Umoja indicated the presence of duplicate purchase orders and service entry sheets. For example, 104 purchase orders issued in respect of 61 contractors were duplicated with similar dates, services and amounts; resulting in UNMISS obligating additional funds of \$212,222 for individual contractual payments. Moreover, a review of service entry sheets indicated that the Human Resources Section certified the payment of 581 duplicate and erroneous service entry sheets for an estimated amount of \$261,000. This resulted due to the lack of adequate procedures to ensure prompt reconciliation of purchase orders with

the service entry sheets as well as the lack of adequate training of staff responsible for creating entry sheets and purchase orders in Umoja.

(5) UNMISS should implement procedures to ensure prompt reconciliation of purchase orders with service entry sheets and train staff responsible for creating entry sheets and purchase orders in Umoja in respect of individual contractors.

UNMISS accepted recommendation 5 and stated that the Human Resources Section started using a new process for liquidating purchase orders, which allowed purchase orders to be liquidated immediately upon expiration. UNMISS had also conducted training on Umoja. Based on the action taken by UNMISS, recommendation 5 has been closed.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

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

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of the recruitment of national staff and individual contractors in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

Recom. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	C/ O ³	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁴
1	UNMISS should implement a robust recruitment plan that takes into account immediate and anticipated job openings to ensure that current and projected vacancies are identified and filled in a timely manner.	Important	C	Action taken.	Implemented
2	UNMISS should implement procedures to ensure qualified applicants are being placed on a roster.	Important	C	Action taken.	Implemented
3	UNMISS should implement adequate procedures and properly supervise staff on the maintenance of recruitment records.	Critical	O	Receipt of evidence showing adequate maintenance of recruitment records.	30 November 2015
4	UNMISS should assign staff to liaise and follow up with government and local institutions with the view to ensuring smooth conduct of reference checks on the academic qualifications and work experience of each recruited national staff and individual contractor.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that UNMISS is following up with appropriate government and local institutions on reference checks on the academic qualifications and work experience of recruited national staff and individual contractors.	31 March 2016
5	UNMISS should implement procedures to ensure prompt reconciliation of purchase orders with service entry sheets and train staff responsible for creating entry sheets and purchase orders in Umoja in respect of individual contractors.	Important	C	Action taken.	Implemented

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 UNMISS in response to recommendations.

APPENDIX I

Management Response

United Nations




Nations Unies

UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SOUTH SUDAN
(UNMISS)

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Office of the Director of Mission Support

To: Ms. Eleanor T. Burns, Director
Internal Audit Division, OIOS Date: 11 August 2015

From: Stephani L. Scheer
Director Mission Support
UNMISS 

Subject: **Draft report on an audit of the recruitment of national staff and individual contractors in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of the South Sudan (Assignment AP2014/633/03)**

1. Reference is made to your memorandum dated 20th July 2015 on the Audit of the recruitment of national staff and individual contractors in UNMISS.
2. On behalf of UNMISS Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Ellen Margrethe Løj, please find attached UNMISS comments on the recommendations listed in Appendix 1 of the draft report of the auditors.
3. UNMISS would like to take this opportunity to express its appreciation for the work of the auditors and for the valuable recommendations made by the auditors as a result of this audit.

Thank you and best regards.

Attachments: UNMISS comments along with 8 annexes

cc: Mr. Bolton Tarleh Nyema, Chief, Peacekeeping Audit Service, IAD, OIOS
Mr. Antonio Ivan, Resident Auditor, UNMISS
Ms. Ellen Margrethe Løj, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, UNMISS
Mr. Paul Egunsola, Chief of Staff, UNMISS
Ms. Stephani Scheer, Director Mission Support, UNMISS
Ms. Maria Emmerich, OIC-Deputy Director of Mission Support UNMISS
Ms. Hilda Otieno, Chief Human Resources Officer, UNMISS
Ms. Corinne Clavé, Audit Focal Point, UNMISS

Management Response

Audit of the recruitment of national staff and individual contractors 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 implement adequate procedures including a robust recruitment plan taking into account immediate and anticipated job openings to ensure that current and projected vacancies are identified and filled in a timely manner.	Important	Yes	Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO)	Implemented	<p>1. Human Resources identified 370 vacancies as at 20 January 2015. This included approximately 192 newly created vacancies due to the termination of Security Guards following the outsourcing of security guards functions.</p> <p>2. Actions were taken to expedite the filling of these vacancies through effective coordination between Human Resources and Hiring Managers.</p> <p>3. These concerted efforts have resulted in posting of 250 vacancy announcements till date, of which 34 candidates are onboard, 99 are under onboarding and 117 are in the process of being selected (<i>Status of recruitment of National Staff with an executive summary were provided to OIOS</i>).</p> <p>4. For the remaining 120 vacancies, a timeline for posting of vacancy announcements has been drawn up in consultation with the concerned Sections (<i>Recruitment plan was provided to OIOS</i>).</p> <p>The Mission considers this recommendation as implemented.</p>

¹ 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.

² 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 the recruitment of national staff and individual contractors 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
2	UNMISS should circulate generic vacancy announcements for the purpose of creating rosters and implement a process for putting on the roster qualified but unselected candidates for specific vacancy announcements.	Important	Accepted in terms of creating rosters but not in terms of circulating generic vacancy announcements because such vast exercise would be counterproductive in a context like South Sudan.	CHRO	Implemented	<p>UNMISS agrees with the recommendation of having a system for creating rosters for National Staff but not via Generic Vacancy Announcements as this would be counterproductive in a context like South Sudan.</p> <p>The benefit accrued from such exercise would be too limited to justify the increase in capacity of the Human Resources Section that would be required to handle such vast exercises for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruitment of national staff in South Sudan is a challenge due to the lack of sufficient pool of skilled and experienced candidates. The opportunities for education and skills development continue to be limited. Posts in specialized categories e.g Medical and IT, have been readvertised several times and not yielded qualified candidates. - Vacancy announcements for national staff are posted for specific States, and the roster applies to that State only. It is not possible to offer a job to a candidate outside the State for which he/she has been rostered. In fact, the local conditions in the country are such that if candidates are rostered outside their State of normal residence, they are unwilling to take up the job offer if it comes, due to serious security concerns; - Furthermore, many local people with skills for potential placement in UNMISS have fled the country, especially since the crisis that erupted in December 2013. <p>In view of the above, it is not considered productive</p>

Management Response

Audit of the recruitment of national staff and individual contractors in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						<p>or feasible to circulate Generic Vacancy Announcements for the purpose of roster creation in South Sudan.</p> <p>However, since the audit, the Mission has started to create rosters out of ongoing recruitments with the candidates who are recommended for roster but not selected for the post (<i>Roster was provided to OIOS</i>).</p> <p>The Mission considers this recommendation as implemented.</p>
3	UNMISS should implement adequate procedures and properly supervise staff on the maintenance of recruitment records.	Critical	Yes	CHRO	30 November 2015	<p>1. A checklist has been introduced for ensuring complete filing for the recruitment of national staff and individual contractors (<i>Checklist was provided to OIOS</i>). Checklists have been placed on all files pertaining to vacancy announcements made after 1 April 2015.</p> <p>2. The Human Resources staff assigned to the specific recruitment case confirms that all documents listed on the checklist are on file and sign off as certification of the same. The supervisor of the staff assigned to the recruitment case will also review the case file and certify its correctness.</p> <p>The target date for implementation of this recommendation is 30 November 2015.</p>
4	UNMISS should assign staff to liaise and follow up with government and local institutions with the view to ensuring smooth conduct of reference checks on the academic qualifications and work history of each	Important	Yes	CHRO	31 March 2016	<p>Staff has been assigned for necessary liaison with the relevant government authorities. UNMISS continues to make every possible effort to conduct the reference checks on academic qualifications and is currently working with the United Nations Country Team in the subject matter.</p> <p>The target date for implementation of this</p>

Management Response

Audit of the recruitment of national staff and individual contractors 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
	recruited national staff and individual contractor.					recommendation is 31 March 2016.
5	UNMISS should implement procedures to ensure prompt reconciliation of purchase orders with service entry sheets and train staff responsible for creating entry sheets and purchase orders in Umoja in respect of individual contractors.	Important	Yes	CHRO	Implemented	<p>1. Human Resources (HR) now uses a new process of Purchase Order liquidation that allows monthly closing in which Purchase Orders that expire are liquidated immediately upon expiration (<i>A screenshot showing the liquidation was provided to OIOS</i>).</p> <p>2. HR implemented two waves of training when Umoja Foundation was launched in 2013, over February-March 2014 and July-August 2014. (<i>Training Schedules and training Attendance Registration were provided to OIOS</i>). In addition, ad hoc training sessions on demand have been organized, peer Support has been activated (<i>Details provided to OIOS</i>), and resident experts have been cultivated (<i>List of UMOJA resident experts was provided to OIOS</i>).</p> <p>The Mission considers this recommendation as implemented.</p>