



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2017/135

Audit of the phasing out of human resources in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti

The Mission developed and implemented a drawdown plan for the gradual phasing out of its human resources

12 December 2017
Assignment No. AP2017/683/07

Audit of the phasing out of human resources in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the phasing out of human resources in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). The objective of the audit was to assess whether MINUSTAH established and implemented controls to effectively manage the phasing out of human resources during the drawdown period. The audit covered the period from 13 April to 30 September 2017 and included development and implementation of the drawdown plan, personnel check-out procedures, maintenance of human resources documentation such as performance evaluation and attendance records, and staff capacity building and career assistance (job fair) for locally recruited staff.

MINUSTAH developed a downsizing plan for the gradual phasing out of its human resources, organized a number of training and capacity building activities for local recruited staff and established a comparative review process to manage the retrenchment of staff. However, MINUSTAH needed to share lessons learned on the timing of job fairs and improve the management of staff personnel files.

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

- Include in their after-action review, lessons learned on the timing of job fairs to increase participation by downsizing staff members and potential employers; and
- Implement a mechanism to ensure that personnel files of departing staff members are properly updated to avoid delays in processing final entitlements.

The MINUSTAH Liquidation Team accepted the recommendations and has implemented one of them and initiated action on the other.

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I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the phasing out of human resources in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).
2. Security Council resolution 2350 of 13 April 2017 extended the mandate of MINUSTAH for a final period of six months until 15 October 2017. The Council requested that the Secretary-General begin immediately to reduce MINUSTAH's tasks in a phased manner ensuring that critical functions are defined and appropriate support capacity is maintained, and to prioritize efforts to ensure a successful and responsible transition to the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH).
3. The MINUSTAH Human Resources Section is responsible for planning and coordinating the phasing out of civilian personnel. The Section is headed by a Chief at the P-4 level who is supported by 10 international and 22 national staff. MINUSTAH civilian staffing strength as at April 2017 (date of Security Council Resolution 2350) and retrenchment as at September 2017 (first month of retrenchment schedule) are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: MINUSTAH strength and retrenchments

Category of staff	Staff strength 1 April 2017	Number of staff retrenched from April to September 2017
International	285	80
National	845	486
United Nations Volunteers (UNV)	87	58
Total	1,217	624

Source – Personnel Section and UNV office

4. Comments provided by the MINUSTAH Liquidation Team are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

5. The objective of the audit was to assess whether MINUSTAH established and implemented controls to effectively manage the phasing out of human resources during the drawdown period.
6. This audit was included in the 2017 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the scheduled drawdown and closure of MINUSTAH and the related reputational risks to the Organization.
7. OIOS conducted this audit from July to September 2017. The audit covered the period from 13 April to 30 September 2017. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risk areas in the phasing out of human resources in MINUSTAH, which included: development and implementation of the drawdown plan, personnel check-out procedures, maintenance of human resources documentation such as performance evaluation and attendance records and staff capacity building and career assistance (job fair) for locally recruited staff.
8. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews of key personnel, (b) reviews of relevant documentation, (c) analytical reviews of data, (d) sample testing of 81 personnel files using a random sampling method, and (e) assessment of the effectiveness of career/job fair activities.

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

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Development and implementation of the drawdown plan

Staffing drawdown was adequately planned

10. The Department of Field Support (DFS) Liquidation Manual requires MINUSTAH to plan for the downsizing of its staff as early as possible, but not later than six months before the anticipated end of mandate. The Manual further requires MINUSTAH to communicate the downsizing plan with staff as early as possible during all stages of the process and also consult with the Field Personnel Division (FPD) to coordinate the drawdown planning for field civilian staff.

11. Pursuant to the Security Council resolution 2350 of 13 April 2017, MINUSTAH developed a progressive drawdown plan for all uniformed and civilian components from 15 April to 15 October 2017. The plan was developed using a function-based approach with critical and non-critical functions defined in coordination with Section/Unit chiefs. It was structured in three main drawdown phases, namely 1 May to 30 June, 1 July to 31 August, and 1 September and 15 October. The Mission consulted with FPD to coordinate and obtain guidance on the downsizing process for civilian staff through several memos and code cables dated 3 May, 10 May and 11 June 2017. Also, the Mission organized two town hall meetings with staff on 12 May and 9 August 2017 to communicate and share information on an ongoing basis during the drawdown process. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) approved and FPD endorsed the detailed drawdown plan in June 2017.

12. Based on the above, OIOS concluded that MINUSTAH had adequately planned for the downsizing of its personnel.

A comparative review process was carried out to retrench staff

13. The United Nations Staff Rules (ST/SGB/2014/1) requires that termination of staff appointment arising from abolition of posts or reduction of staff should in all cases be done taking into consideration competencies (performance), integrity (core values) and length of service of staff.

14. To ensure compliance with the above requirement, MINUSTAH established two Comparative Review Panels (CRPs) comprising eight members each, four nominated by the Mission management and four nominated by staff representatives (Field Staff Union and National Field Staff Union) with terms of reference. In June 2017, the CRPs assessed 153 local staff identified for retrenchment by the Mission as part of the drawdown plan. OIOS review of the CRP matrix and other documentation for 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, e-performance reports of 2015/16 and 2016/17 and overall performance rating of concerned staff. Panel members used the established evaluation, agreed on the outcome of the review, and submitted their recommendations to the Chief of Mission Support for review and transmission to the SRSG who endorsed it. MINUSTAH subsequently sent the report to FPD for final approval. The report was approved by FPD on 15 June 2017.

15. OIOS concluded that MINUSTAH had implemented an adequate process for the retrenchment of its staff.

The Mission issued notice of termination in compliance with the staff rules

16. The United Nations Staff Rules (ST/SGB/2014/1) requires MINUSTAH to give not less than 90, 30 and 15 calendar-day notice to a staff member whose appointment is continuing, fixed-term, or temporary, respectively as stipulated in the letters of appointment.

17. OIOS review of personnel files of 81 staff (8 international and 73 national staff) out of 470 retrenched staff for June and July 2017 showed that all concerned staff were on fixed-term appointments. The review indicated that a minimum of 30-day notice was given to all categories of staff in compliance with the Staff Rules.

18. OIOS concluded that MINUSTAH had issued notice of termination in compliance with the United Nations Staff Rules.

B. Staff capacity building, career development and job fair

MINUSTAH organized career training and job fairs in support of locally recruited staff

19. The DFS Liquidation Manual requires MINUSTAH to assist national staff to obtain other employment opportunities at the duty station and organize job fairs, where their skills and experience could be matched to the needs of potential employers from the private sector, other United Nations entities, embassies, non-governmental and donor organizations.

20. MINUSTAH implemented a training and capacity improvement plan, which included information technology courses, mentoring & advising, competency based interviewing skills, writing skills, entrepreneurship training, and career coaching and transition courses. During the period under review, MINUSTAH provided training to 786 staff (203 international, 533 national and 50 UNV staff). Also, in May 2017, MINUSTAH issued a memorandum encouraging all international staff members who were on the roster to upload their records including, performance evaluations and personal history profiles into the COSMOS recruitment platform to be considered for lateral assignments to other missions. Between June and September 2017, 62 out of 105 eligible international staff were laterally reassigned to other missions.

21. OIOS review of relevant documents for the job fair organized by MINUSTAH on 28 June 2017 indicated low attendance rate of potential employers and national staff. Out of the 531 entities invited (such as United Nations agencies, embassies, non-governmental organizations, and Government establishments), 34 (6 per cent) responded and attended including 1 out of the 12 United Nations agencies. Also, out of 844 national staff in the Mission, 81 (9 per cent) attended the job fair. The low participation was due to inadequate planning resulting in the late timing of the job fair, which occurred during the period when staff were already completing the check-out process. Had the job fair been organized earlier in the year before the commencement of the check-out process, more employers and staff might have participated.

(1) The MINUSTAH Liquidation Team should include in their after-action review, lessons learned on the timing of job fairs to increase participation by downsizing staff members and potential employers.

The MINUSTAH Liquidation Team accepted recommendation 1 and stated that it had forwarded the information to the team responsible for completing the after-action review. Recommendation 1 remains open pending receipt of the after-action review on the liquidation of MINUSTAH.

C. Personnel check-out procedures

Need to improve and adequately maintain personnel files during check-out process

22. The Liquidation Manual requires MINUSTAH to implement effective check-out procedures to ensure amongst others, that pension benefit forms are completed, accurate forwarding address and bank accounts of staff are obtained, assets allocated to staff members are recovered, and claims such as those resulting from survey board cases are settled by staff and attendance records are verified and certified by departing staff members.

23. A review of 81 out of 472 personnel files (including 8 international and 73 national staff) and data in Umoja indicated that check-out procedures were completed in line with the Liquidation Manual. All eight international staff received travel claims prior to departing the Mission. The Pass and ID unit cancelled in the system all identification cards for the sample selected. Also, the payment of entitlements such as repatriation grant required submission of documentary evidence that the staff member had relocated away from the country of the last duty station and that the staff member had returned the United Nations Laissez Passer to the Office of Human Resources. However, the Human Resources Section did not:

- Complete separation check-out forms for 38 files reviewed;
- Maintain CRP notification letters for 18 of 55 staff members who were subjected to the CRP process;
- Provide evidence that 29 staff members were notified of the results of the CRP;
- Verify the completed pension forms for 75 staff members; and
- Keep on file the performance appraisals for 34 staff members.

24. The above occurred because the Human Resources Section had not implemented a mechanism to adequately supervise and monitor the check-out process. This was also attributed to the limited staffing resources available within the Section and the large number of staff members who were completing the check-out process at the same time. Incomplete check-out process may result in delays in processing final entitlements due to departing staff members as well as pension remuneration.

(2) The MINUSTAH Liquidation Team should implement a mechanism to ensure that personnel files of separating staff members are properly updated to avoid delays in processing final entitlements.

The MINUSTAH Liquidation Team accepted recommendation 2 and stated that files for separating staff had been completed. Based on the action taken by the MINUSTAH Liquidation Team and verification by OIOS, recommendation 2 has been closed.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

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Office of Internal Oversight Services

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of the phasing out of human resources in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	C/ O ³	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁴
1.	The MINUSTAH Liquidation Team should include in their after-action review, lessons learned on the timing of job fairs to increase participation by downsizing staff members and potential employers.	Important	O	Receipt of the after-action review on the liquidation of MINUSTAH.	31 December 2017
2.	The MINUSTAH Liquidation Team should implement a mechanism to ensure that personnel files of separating staff members are properly updated to avoid delays in processing final entitlements.	Important	C	Action complete	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 the MINUSTAH Liquidation Team in response to recommendations.

APPENDIX I

Management Response

Management Response

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Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments ³
1	MINUSTAH Liquidation Team should include in their after-action review, lessons learned on the timing of job fairs to increase participation by downsizing staff members and potential employers.	Important	Yes	Chief, Operations and Resource Management.	31 December 2017	The information has been forwarded to the team responsible for completing the after-action review.
2	MINUSTAH Liquidation Team should implement a mechanism to ensure that personnel files of separating staff members are properly updated to avoid delays in processing final entitlements.	Important	Yes	Chief, Operations and Resource Management.	Implemented	The files for the departed staff are completed.

¹Critical 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.

²Important 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.