



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2021/020

Audit of environmental clean-up of team sites in the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur

**The Mission established and implemented
procedures to effectively plan for
environmental clean-up of all sites but
monitoring and reporting on its
implementation needed to improve**

9 June 2021

Assignment No. AP2020-634-07

Audit of environmental clean-up of team sites in the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of environmental clean-up of team sites in the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). The objective of the audit was to determine whether UNAMID had established and implemented procedures to effectively manage and implement the environmental clean-up of its premises and sites before their handover to host communities and/or the Government of Sudan. The audit covered the period from January to early May 2021 and included the environmental clean-up process of 10 team sites, including the planning of clean-up activities, and implementation of those activities prior to the handover of sites.

UNAMID established and implemented procedures to effectively plan for environmental clean-up of all sites but needed to improve monitoring of their implementation to ensure that all planned tasks were effectively completed.

OIOS made one recommendation for UNAMID to ensure that Environmental Management and Occupational Safety and Health Unit personnel is present at the team site until completion of all planned tasks and to ensure that final environmental clean-up reports are prepared. UNAMID accepted the recommendation and has initiated action to implement it.

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I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of environmental clean-up of team sites in the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).
2. By its resolution 2559 of 22 December 2020, the Security Council decided to terminate the mandate of UNAMID as of 31 December 2020 and to start its drawdown and to complete its withdrawal of all uniformed and civilian UNAMID personnel by 30 June 2021 followed by its liquidation on 1 July 2021.
3. During the drawdown and liquidation of UNAMID, the environmental clean-up of team sites is a critical task to ensure UNAMID meets its responsibility to handover all premises to host communities and the government in an equal or better condition than at the initial time of occupancy by the Mission.
4. UNAMID had established a Drawdown Working Group (DDWG) to oversee the closure and handover of team sites. The drawdown and team site closure schedule was divided into six phases, phase I to III included the closure of six team sites by end of March 2021 and phase IV to VI included the closure of a further nine sites by the end of the drawdown period.
5. Environmental clean-up is regulated by the Environmental Policy for United Nations Field Missions, the Guide for Senior Leadership on Field Entity Closure and the Guidelines on Environmental Clearance and Handover of Mission/field entity/field entity sites. UNAMID has also two standard operating procedures: (a) Environmental Site Closure and Environmental Clearance Strategy; and (b) Closure of UNAMID Camps and Team Sites and Handover of Premises, Facilities and Lands.
6. UNAMID is implementing a two-stage environmental clean-up process: (i) the initial environmental clean-up, which focuses on major environmental aspects such as the initial removal of contaminated soil and clean-up and backfilling of garbage disposal sites, and (ii) final environmental clean-up, which focuses on residual environmental aspects such as the removal of remaining or newly contaminated soil, decommissioning of wastewater treatment plants (WWTP) and final clean-up of remaining garbage disposal sites.
7. Environmental clean-up is the responsibility of the Environmental Management and Occupational Safety and Health (EMOSH) Unit, staffed with one P-3, 1 field service staff, 1 National Professional Officer and 5 national staff reporting to the Chief of the Engineering and Environmental Protection Section (EEPS). The environmental clean-up activities during the drawdown were also carried out by a contingent engineering company and by the troop/police contingents stationed at the team site.
8. Comments provided by UNAMID are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

9. The objective of the audit was to determine whether UNAMID had established and implemented procedures to effectively manage and implement the environmental clean-up of its premises and sites before their handover to host communities or the Government of Sudan (GoS).

10. This audit was included in the 2021 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the health, safety and environment risks that need to be mitigated prior to the closure of team sites and their handover to host communities and GoS.

11. OIOS conducted this audit from March to May 2021. The audit covered the environmental clean-up of 10 team sites closed during the period from January to early May 2021. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risks areas in the environmental clean-up process, which included planning of clean-up activities, and implementation of those activities prior to the handover of the site.

12. The audit methodology included: (a) review of relevant documents including policies and procedures, plans, environmental assessments, clean-up reports and handover documents; (b) interviews with key personnel; and (c) field visits to four team sites in Nertiti, Tawilla, Kass and Zalingei (former UNAMID Headquarters), which were in the process of being closed.

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

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Planning and implementation of environmental clean-up

The Mission developed a comprehensive plan for team site closure

14. Based on the timelines provided by Security Council resolution 2559, UNAMID developed a schedule for the closure of its 14 remaining team sites by 25 May 2021. EEPS/EMOSH was responsible for planning environmental clean-up activities and, as part of this process, had conducted pre-closure environmental assessments of all team sites starting in December 2019. OIOS review of 10 pre-closure assessment reports noted that EMOSH had adequately documented and evaluated the condition of each site, including existing environmental risks that UNAMID needed to address, as well as potential risks that may impact future occupants of sites. The assessment reports were comprehensive and included pictures, detailed lists of actions to be performed, the responsible party for the clean-up and timelines for completion.

15. The environmental clean-up was assigned to a contingent engineering company and to the troop/police contingents residing in the camp. The clean-up process was supervised by a staff member from EEPS/EMOSH, who was also responsible for providing regular status up-dates to the Environmental Officer in UNAMID. Of the 10 team sites reviewed by OIOS, they were either closed on the planned date or earlier. Moreover, DDWG met regularly to monitor progress, and to discuss and resolve issues related to the handover of team sites.

16. OIOS concluded that UNAMID had developed a comprehensive environmental clean-up plan for closure of all team sites, which was being implemented within the established timelines.

OIOS field visits identified weaknesses in clean-up activities

17. OIOS reviewed available documentation supporting the closure of the 10 sites including for example, task orders assigned to the engineering contingent, results of reconnaissance conducted (for status up-dates), and clean-up progress reports. All areas identified in pre-closure assessment reports were included in task orders to be implemented, and clean-up progress reports mentioned that related environmental risks were mitigated. Final environmental clean-up reports were not available for the six sites already closed, although a draft report was available for the Saraf Umra team site. UNAMID informed that the reports were not yet available due to the heavy workload of staff caused by the tight timeline in the closure of team sites.

18. Moreover, for these closed sites, although soil samples had been collected, no analysis had been done to determine areas of soil contamination or degradation from fuel leakages that may need to be addressed. Therefore, sites were handed over prior to the necessary soil clean-up activities having been completed. Although the environmental clearance certificate from GoS allows UNAMID subsequent access for bioremediation treatment of contaminated soil if required, this may not be practical for those sites that have already been occupied by host communities/GoS. The delay in soil analysis was because UNAMID was unable to conduct the analysis in-house and was still waiting for a memorandum of understanding to be signed with the relevant government ministry in Khartoum to analyze the soil samples and present their results.

19. During a visit to the Nertiti team site for the official handover ceremony to GoS, OIOS observed several weaknesses in the environmental clean-up, although the clean-up progress report stated that the clean-up was successfully completed. For example, OIOS noted that:

- UNAMID did not dewater, clean and disinfect serviceable septic tanks, grease traps, manholes, and lifting stations; and the WWTP was not disconnected, as required to mitigate safety and security.
- A contingent-owned clinic was not cleaned and emptied, and OIOS found medications, needles, syringes, and scalpels, which posed serious health and safety risks. Also, various hazardous chemicals had not been removed from accommodation areas.
- Open burning was still ongoing and the contingent occupying the team site burned flak jackets and helmets in the tipping site. All ballistic materials needed to be transported to El Fasher and properly disposed of. Moreover, fire extinguishers, that are considered hazardous materials and to be transported to El Fasher, were left lying around in random places in the camp.
- Not all concertina wires were removed, and scrap was not always sorted by type and stored in dedicated areas but scattered around the team site. There was also random solid waste such as food packaging, papers, and plastic items scattered around the team site.
- Unwanted office documents were scattered without incineration or shredding.

20. As OIOS could not place reliance on the clean-up reports being submitted, additional site visits were conducted to Tawilla, Kass and Zalingei during their respective official handover ceremonies on 29 April 2021, 5 May 2021 and 6 May 2021. The following was observed:

- In Tawilla, although most of the clean-up was completed, a septic tank had not been dewatered, cleaned, and disinfected.
- In Kass, several septic tanks were not emptied, the grease trap from the kitchen was not cleared and several ablutions were not cleaned and disinfected. Moreover, medications, food remains, and random solid waste were found inside accommodations and offices, and in the clinic, there were also medications, needles, syringes, and sharp objects. Sensitive security reports were left in the radio room

without shredding and United Nations helmets and flak jackets were left behind in random places in the camp.

- In Zalingei, one drain pit at the generator site was not emptied, many United Nations logos were not removed, medical waste had not been incinerated, and medical ash was scattered around the incinerator site and not encapsulated. There were also eight boxes of medicines in a sea container, and ballistic helmets and flak jackets were left behind.

21. UNAMID dealt with OIOS' observations seriously, and the Environmental Officer accompanying OIOS during the site visits provided instructions to the responsible contingent to ensure all clean-up tasks were properly completed. Photographic evidence to support the additional clean-up was submitted to OIOS. The lack of adequate clean-up was mainly because staff assigned to oversee the process often left the team site prior to the handover date and before all clean-up activities that were delegated to contingents were completed. In OIOS view, although the closure of team sites needed to be completed timeously, UNAMID should not compromise on the quality of the environmental clean-up process.

22. UNAMID was receiving from GoS an environmental clean-up certificate that indemnifies UNAMID from any litigation, financial liability or other enforceable actions by GoS or any individual with respect to environmental conditions and safety measures. However, not ensuring that sites are handed over only after proper environmental standards are met poses health, safety and environmental risks to future occupants, as well as reputational risk to the Organization.

(1) UNAMID should ensure that the Environmental Management and Occupational Safety and Health Unit personnel is present at the team site until completion of all planned tasks and that the final environmental clean-up reports are prepared.

UNAMID accepted recommendation 1 and stated that the Mission is embarking on documentation of the final environmental clean-up reports for all sites closed and has a target date of 30 June 2021 for their completion. Furthermore, environmental clean-up in liquidation will focus on the El Fasher log base and the Mission plans to maintain adequate staff capacity in EMOSH to monitor clean-up activities in liquidation. Recommendation 1 remains open pending receipt of evidence that final environmental clean-up reports have been prepared for each team site.

Environmental clearance certificates were available

23. The Mission must obtain environmental clearance from the government at the time of the handover of team sites to ensure their satisfactory environmental condition and safeguard the reputation of the United Nations. For issues not addressed during the clean-up phase, GoS has been providing an acceptance letter to release UNAMID from any future liabilities.

24. GoS issued environmental clean-up certificates for all closed team sites, including those where OIOS observed weaknesses. Moreover, scrap materials initially to be removed by UNAMID as part of the clean-up were left at the team sites due to GoS imposed restrictions on scrap removal. In these cases, a waiver was signed by UNAMID and GoS that specified all scrap materials to be left in situ, and GoS committed to ensure the best use of items handed over and proper disposal of those that could not be used. Also, by signing the waiver from the environmental clearance certificate, GoS acknowledged the health and environmental risks associated with the use and/or final disposal of such scrap items and released the United Nations from liabilities of any nature.

25. OIOS concluded that UNAMID had implemented procedures to ensure that environmental certificates were received, and safeguards were in place to mitigate environmental risks associated with the use of land by United Nations during the life of UNAMID.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

26. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of UNAMID 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 environmental clean-up of team sites in the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	C/ O ³	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁴
1	UNAMID should ensure that the Environmental Management and Occupational Safety and Health Unit personnel is present at the team site until completion of all planned tasks and that the final environmental clean-up reports are prepared.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that all final environmental clean-up reports for closed team sites were prepared.	30 June 2021

¹ Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

² Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

³ Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

⁴ Date provided by UNAMID in response to recommendations.

APPENDIX I

Management Response

AFRICAN UNION
الإتحاد الأفريقي



UNITED NATIONS
الأمم المتحدة

African Union – United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur

Office of the Officer-in-Charge, Operations, UNAMID

8 June 2021

To: Ms. Eleanor T. Burns
Director
Internal Audit Division, OIOS

From: M'Baye Babacar Cissé
Assistant Secretary-General
UNAMID

Subject: **Draft report on an audit of environmental clean-up of team sites in the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (Assignment No. AP2021/634/07)**

1. With reference to your memorandum dated 28 May 2021, on the captioned-subject, please find attached UNAMID response (Appendix I) to the draft report for your consideration.

Thank you.

cc: Mr. Houston Fergusson, UNAMID
Mr. Khalid Younis, UNAMID
Mr. Asim Warraich, UNAMID
Mr. Oluwadare Taylor-Pearce, UNAMID
Ms. Florence Ndungu, UNAMID
Mr. Samuel Kiiru, UNAMID

Management Response

Audit of environmental clean-up of team sites in the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	UNAMID should ensure that the Environmental Management and Occupational Safety and Health Unit personnel is present at the team site until completion of all planned tasks and that the final environmental clean-up reports are prepared.	Important	Yes	Chief, Engineering, Environment and Protection Section (EEPS)	30 June 2021	<p>Following the issuance of the Detailed Result reports by OIOS on 11 May 2021, the Mission has since concluded the closure and hand over of team sites with the last site (Shangil Tobaya) closed and handed over on 25 May 2021. The Mission is embarking on documentation of the final environmental clean-up reports for all sites closed and has a target date of 30 June 2021 for completion of all reports.</p> <p>Environmental clean-up in liquidation will focus on the El Fasher log base. The Mission plans to maintain adequate staff capacity in the Environmental Management and Occupational Safety and Health Unit personnel to monitor clean-up activities in liquidation.</p>

¹ Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

² Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.