



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2022/074

Audit of electoral support activities in MINUSCA

There was a need to conduct an after-action review of support provided to the electoral process and strengthen support for electoral resource mobilization to ensure the timely achievement of election funding requirements

19 December 2022

Assignment No. AP2022-637-03

Audit of electoral support activities in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of electoral support activities in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of electoral support activities in MINUSCA. The audit covered the period from July 2020 to June 2022 and included strategic and work planning and work plan implementation.

MINUSCA adequately planned and documented its electoral support strategy and provided effective logistical, capacity-building, electoral awareness-raising and civic education support to the national electoral institutions. However, the Mission needed to strengthen support for electoral resource mobilization to ensure the timely achievement of election funding requirements and conduct an after-action review of support provided to the electoral process.

OIOS made seven recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, MINUSCA needed to:

- Conduct an after-action review of its electoral support to the 2020-23 presidential, legislative and local elections to inform future electoral support by identifying lessons learned and actionable recommendations.
- Strengthen coordination with the other electoral assistance actors and monitor and track the implementation of action points from coordination meetings.
- Enhance and document existing resource mobilization strategies, monitor pledges and contributions received and follow up on those not received, and advocate for the establishment by the Government of an internal funding mechanism to support future electoral processes in the country.
- Ensure effective implementation of the Integrated Elections Security Plan by enhancing its advocacy actions to the Government and monitoring the plan to ensure that the Government meets its commitments in terms of logistical and financial resources for elections security.
- Pursue support in the identification, resource mobilization and repair/rehabilitation of bridges in poor condition and enhance advocacy to the Government for long-term investment in road infrastructure to facilitate logistical and security support in future election cycles.
- Enhance advocacy to the Constitutional Court to ensure that political parties comply with the 35 per cent candidacy quota for women as per the Parity Law of March 2016.
- Ensure that additional protection measures for women candidates and voters at campaign rallies and polling stations are included in the Integrated Elections Security Plan and implemented.

MINUSCA accepted all recommendations and has initiated action to implement them. Actions required to close the recommendations are indicated in Annex I.

CONTENTS

I. BACKGROUND	1
II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY	1-2
III. AUDIT RESULTS	2-12
A. Strategic and work planning	2-5
B. Work plan implementation	5-12
IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	13
ANNEX I	Status of audit recommendations
APPENDIX I	Management response

Audit of electoral support activities in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of electoral support activities in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).
2. Pursuant to Security Council resolutions (SCR) 2499 (2019) and 2552 (2020), the MINUSCA Electoral Assistance Division is responsible for the coordination and implementation of the Mission's electoral mandate, including: (a) managing the electoral component both at the Mission's headquarters and in field offices, (b) coordinating international electoral assistance, and (c) implementing programmes and advising the National Elections Authority (ANE) in all substantive areas of electoral management and operational implementation.
3. The Electoral Assistance Division is headed by a Director at the D-1 level who reports to the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (DSRSG RC/HC). The Division has 68 authorized posts comprising 30 international, one national staff and 37 United Nations volunteers.
4. The approved operating budgets and expenditures (excluding salaries) of the Electoral Assistance Division for 2020/21 and 2021/22 are shown in table 1. The low budget utilization of 39.5 per cent during 2021/22 was because of the postponement of the local elections from November 2021 to July 2023 and delays in launching electoral operations due to the lack of financial resources. The delayed adoption of the law on the delimitation of administrative districts, which aimed to enhance the inclusivity of the electoral process by updating the electoral mapping and voter registration, also contributed to the low budget utilization.

Table 1
MINUSCA Electoral Assistance Division budgets and expenditures for 2020/21 and 2021/22

	2020/21 (US\$)	2021/22 (US\$)
Budget	8,235,000	4,290,300
Expenditure	(9,386,000)	(1,696,149)
Surplus/(deficit)	(1,151,000)	2,594,151

Source: MINUSCA Budget & Finance Section

5. Comments provided by MINUSCA are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

6. The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of electoral support activities in MINUSCA.
7. This audit was included in the 2022 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to strategic, operational and reputational risks to MINUSCA if it does not achieve its mandate of supporting the Central African Republic Government in holding credible, inclusive and transparent elections within the constitutional timeframe.

8. OIOS conducted this audit from July to October 2022. The audit covered the period from July 2020 to June 2022. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risk areas in electoral support, which included strategic and work planning and work plan implementation.

9. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key personnel; (b) a review of relevant documentation; (c) an analytical review of data; and (d) site visits to a selected sample of electoral field offices in Bangui and Sector headquarters of Bouar, Kaga-Bandoro and Bria.

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

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Strategic and work planning

Mission's strategic planning of its support to the Central African Republic electoral process was adequate

11. In planning its support for the Central African Republic electoral process, MINUSCA is required to focus on: (i) strengthening electoral and other institutions involved in elections, (ii) capacity development of national institutions involved in the electoral process, (iii) building greater public information and outreach capacity, and (iv) helping in planning, preparing and conducting credible inclusive and peaceful elections.

12. To achieve this objective, in conjunction with the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), MINUSCA developed: (a) an overall concept of operations to serve as a roadmap for the development of the United Nations operational plans for the 2020-21 elections; and (b) a global operational planning document detailing the United Nations Integrated Electoral Assistance responsibilities through the three phases of the electoral support process (i.e., pre-election, election-day, and post-election). The concept of operations highlighted various MINUSCA activities in support of the electoral process based on its mandate. These included, inter alia, electoral mapping, recruitment and training of voter registration agents, voter registration operations and data consolidation, electoral process security, election day activities and post-election day activities.

12. Key assumptions, risk factors and constraints were also reflected in the concept of operations and considered in operational planning and identification of the various electoral support activities. Some examples included the limited capability of the Government to fully meet its electoral resource obligations, delays in funding, funding gaps, donor fatigue and the absence of functioning state authority or delay in restoration of state authority in many areas. In addition, critical revisions to the legal and institutional framework, which were essential to ensure the participation of identified refugee populations, still needed to be promulgated. The coupling of presidential and legislative elections, the use of a computerized voter registry with voter photos (in lieu of fingerprint biometrics) and an increase in the size and distribution of the voting population from 2 million to 2.4 million from the 2015 elections' voter list presented additional constraints.

13. OIOS concluded that the Mission's overall concept of operations for its planned support to the 2020-21 elections was comprehensive and adequately prepared as it captured all elements of the Mission electoral support mandate and identified risk factors and challenges. It also outlined the responsibilities of the various MINUSCA components and relevant United Nations agencies in the country.

Annual work plan development was improved during 2021/22

14. United Nations regulations and rules governing programme planning and the MINUSCA integrated work plan development guidance for substantive sections and field offices require mission components to develop a strategic framework and annual work plans with expected accomplishments, activities and outputs, which should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound. Accordingly, the MINUSCA Joint Mission Planning Unit issued annual work planning guidance, including strategic and practical instructions on how substantive sections and field offices should develop integrated work plans that directly support the Mission Mandate and how to interlink strategic documents such as the Mission Concept, Political Strategy, Protection of Civilians Strategy and the National Strategy for the Extension of State Authority (“RESA Strategy”).

15. The Electoral Assistance Division developed its 2020/21 and 2021/22 annual work plans based on the Mission’s electoral mandate and in line with the report of the United Nations Headquarters Electoral Assistance Needs Assessment Mission¹ conducted in September 2018. The following gaps were noted in the formulation of the 2020/21 annual work plan:

- Key information on the Division’s vision and strategic objectives, contextual information on its thematic area and progress made so far, key actors, and significant strategic and operational risks were missing.
- Activities in the 2020/21 work plan were generally broad. They did not include indicators and targets for assessing performance. Where the indicators were available, they did not have some relevant details, such as the number of deliverables/outputs and frequency of activities. Examples of such broad activities included: (a) the mobilization of resources necessary for the preparations and organization of local elections; (b) MINUSCA and ANE initiatives in favor of better participation of women and the consideration of refugees in the electoral process; and (c) awareness-raising and civic education activities for voters and vulnerable groups. Also, the time frame for completing these activities was either not indicated or not specific enough to identify the planned quarter or month of completion. In addition, information on outputs, outcomes, funding sources for activities and lead sections for activities carried out jointly with other Mission components were missing from the annual work plans.
- There was also no provision for periodic progress reviews and updating the implementation status of activities, where applicable, to ensure that they were on track and achieving the desired results.

16. A review of the 2021/22 work plan showed that it was adequately prepared and included expected accomplishments, activities and outputs, which were specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound. Based on the improvements noted in the development of the 2021/22 annual work plan, OIOS did not make a recommendation.

Need to carry out an after-action review of the support provided to the 2020-21 elections

17. The Department of Peace Operations guidelines on after-action reviews requires MINUSCA to carry out an after-action review within two weeks following all operations that constitute a major event for the Mission to inform future operations and actions.

¹ This is a precondition to any type of United Nations electoral assistance indicating whether it is appropriate for the Organization to provide assistance and then setting up the parameters for such electoral assistance.

18. The Mission's overall concept of operations made provision for the organization of a joint ANE and United Nations integrated electoral assistance workshop involving relevant national stakeholders to develop and consolidate lessons learned from the electoral process. However, while MINUSCA participated in an evaluation workshop of the 2020-21 presidential and legislative elections organized by ANE in December 2021, it had not conducted an internal after-action review of its support activities to the presidential and legislative elections.

19. MINUSCA believed its participation in the evaluation workshop organized by ANE was adequate. However, the focus of the workshop was to identify weaknesses to be addressed by the Government and ANE in view of the upcoming 2023 local elections and did not include a detailed assessment of the Mission's support, including areas of weakness, identification of opportunities to improve electoral support effectiveness and lessons learned.

(1) MINUSCA should, upon completion of the upcoming local elections in 2023, conduct an after-action review of its electoral support to the 2020-23 presidential, legislative and local elections to inform future electoral support by identifying lessons learned and actionable recommendations.

MINUSCA accepted recommendation 1 and stated that the Mission would put in place the necessary measures to ensure that an after-action review of MINUSCA's electoral support to the 2020-23 presidential, legislative and local elections is implemented in a timely manner in line with the Central African Republic electoral calendar.

Need to strengthen the electoral assistance coordination mechanisms

20. In September 2019, MINUSCA established an Electoral Task Force to coordinate MINUSCA and UNCT support for the 2020-21 electoral process. The Task Force was made up of focal points from key Mission components, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Organization for Migration (IOM). In January 2020, MINUSCA also established an International Electoral Assistance Technical Working Group to facilitate adequate support from the United Nations system and the international electoral assistance partners to ANE and other national entities involved in the preparation and holding of elections.

21. The Electoral Assistance Task Force was chaired by the DSRSR RC/HC, while the International Electoral Assistance Technical Working Group was chaired by the Director of the Electoral Assistance Division. The Electoral Assistance Division was the Secretariat for both coordination mechanisms. It was responsible for overall coordination, ensuring substantive and logistic preparation of meetings, outreach to partners and exchange of information and coordination in preparing reports.

22. From December 2019 to June 2022, the Electoral Task Force held nine meetings, of which detailed minutes were available for four of them. For the other five meetings, minutes were not maintained, but summaries of some of the discussions were included in the daily electoral reports. In the absence of regular minutes, relevant information on action points, deadlines and responsible officials for implementing recommendations was not available. Similarly, although the Electoral Assistance Division indicated that the Technical Working Group met monthly, only minutes of three meetings could be provided. The Electoral Assistance Division explained that meetings were suspended for four months until June 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic but were relaunched virtually through Microsoft Teams. However, evidence of such meetings was not available. Further, there was no system for tracking and monitoring the implementation of action points from the meetings of the task force and the working group.

23. MINUSCA was also a member of a Strategic Committee on elections established by the Government in November 2019 to support, monitor progress and address challenges in the preparation and delivery of the elections. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] From November 2019 to June 2022, the Committee held 20 meetings in which MINUSCA actively participated. However, no other meetings had been held since June 2022 despite the upcoming local elections initially planned for January 2023 (now postponed). [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] After the audit fieldwork, MINUSCA provided evidence on the reactivation of meetings of this Committee. As a result, OIOS did not make a recommendation on this issue.

24. One reason for the inadequacy of meetings and minutes of the Electoral Assistance Task Force and the Technical Working Group was that MINUSCA senior management, due to other priorities, had not reviewed and formally approved the draft terms of reference of both the Task Force and the Technical Working Group. In addition, due to other priorities of the Electoral Assistance Division, a mechanism for monitoring and tracking action points and recommendations had not been developed.

(2) MINUSCA should: (a) review and approve the terms of reference of the Electoral Task Force and the International Electoral Assistance Technical Working Group and ensure regular meetings are convened; and (b) develop a mechanism to monitor and track the implementation of action points from meetings of the Task Force and the Technical Working Group.

MINUSCA accepted recommendation 2 and stated that the Mission would: (a) review and approve the existing terms of reference of the Electoral Task Force and the International Electoral Assistance Technical Working Group and ensure regular meetings are convened; and (b) develop a mechanism to monitor and track the implementation of action points from meetings of the Task Force and the Technical Working Group.

B. Work plan implementation

MINUSCA and United Nations Country Team's support for electoral resource mobilization needed to be strengthened

25. The Government of the Central African Republic is primarily responsible for resource mobilization and allocation of funds for elections with support from MINUSCA and other partners. The 2018 electoral needs assessment mission recommended that integrated electoral assistance include resource mobilization and coordination of international electoral assistance, and UNDP, in close partnership with the Electoral Assistance Division, set up a support project for the electoral process. This support project should focus, among other things, on resource mobilization and managing the basket of funds.

26. In January 2020, a Steering Committee of the Electoral Support Project (PAPEC) was established by UNDP in conjunction with the United Nations Integrated Electoral Assistance Team and ANE to support the electoral process through a basket funding management mechanism managed by UNDP. The Steering Committee was responsible for providing strategic guidance, overseeing the management of project funds and adopting detailed annual operational plans for the project. The committee members included representatives of the Government, ANE, the United Nations Integrated Electoral Assistance Team (including MINUSCA, UNDP, UN Women and UNHCR), and the Technical and Financial Partners (TFPs) contributing to the funding. The Steering Committee is co-chaired by ANE and the UNDP Resident Representative.

27. OIOS review of the PAPEC/UNDP project document and all 15 minutes of meetings of the Steering Committee indicated that an estimated budget of \$41.8 million was needed to support the 2020-21 presidential, legislative and local elections in the Central African Republic. As of 31 July 2022, the Steering Committee had mobilized \$32.4 million, which was used to support the organization of the four rounds of legislative elections during 2020 and 2021. However, the local elections initially planned for November 2021 were not held as of the audit date due to inadequate financing. The budget for local elections was estimated at \$14 million.

28. On 27 April 2022, ANE validated a revised electoral calendar with a planned date of May 2022 for the launch of local elections' operations and the first and second voting rounds in January 2023 and May 2023, respectively.

[REDACTED]. Also, MINUSCA and UNDP respectively contributed \$621,000 and \$500,000 to kickstart the electoral operations with the electoral mapping operation. MINUSCA had also attended resource mobilization meetings of partners in a neighboring country. There was a funding shortfall of \$12.5 million of the total estimated budget of \$14 million despite interest expressed by several donors in supporting the local elections through financial or in-kind contributions, including logistical assistance. Subsequent to the audit, the national authorities announced a delay to the electoral calendar and rescheduled the holding of the local elections.

29. MINUSCA and other members of the PAPEC/UNDP Steering Committee's efforts in supporting the Central African Republic Government in mobilizing resources were notable. However, there was still a need to: (a) enhance current strategies to mobilize more resources to fill the existing funding gap for the upcoming local elections and document such efforts to provide institutional memory [REDACTED], and (b) develop and implement tools to track pledges made by various donors and contributions received and to timely follow-up on pledges not received.

30. [REDACTED]. The latter required establishing an effective support funding mechanism to ensure adequate transfer of competencies and resources to elected local authorities for operational functioning.

31. In addition, joint resource mobilization missions to meet with international donors abroad were part of the strategy adopted by the Government in conjunction with MINUSCA, UNDP and ANE. However, as of October 2022, only three joint resource mobilization missions, two to Cameroon and one to the Democratic Republic of the Congo had been conducted.

(3) MINUSCA should, in conjunction with other members of the Electoral Support Project Steering Committee: (a) enhance existing resource mobilization strategies by expanding the base of their resource partnerships and encouraging in-kind contributions; (b) document these strategies to serve as institutional memory; (c) develop and implement tools for monitoring pledges and contributions received and follow-up on pledges not received; and (d) advocate through its good offices for the establishment by the Central African Republic Government of an internal funding mechanism to support future electoral processes in the country.

MINUSCA accepted recommendation 3 and stated that the Mission would: (a) prepare a document that outlines the various resource mobilization strategies applied by the Mission in conjunction with

the Central African Republic authorities and United Nations Development Program; (b) develop and implement a monitoring matrix to inform follow-up on pledges and contributions of donors in the context of the local elections; (c) continue tripartite meetings involving MINUSCA, United Nations Development Program and the Central African Ministry of Finance and Budget to follow up on the Government's commitment to providing financial resources for the local elections; and (d) use its good offices to advocate for the establishment by the Central African Republic Government of an internal funding mechanism to support future electoral processes.

Support to the National Elections Authority Data Processing Centre was adequate

32. The ANE Data Processing Centre plays a vital role in the electoral process, including receiving registration forms, performing mass data entry and data correction, producing and printing electoral lists, processing candidates' applications, tabulating and consolidating the results of the various elections and producing election statistics for analysis and archiving purposes.

33. To ensure its operational effectiveness, MINUSCA in conjunction with UNDP under the PAPEC project, provided support to the ANE Data Processing Centre in several areas, including: (a) the acquisition of a vehicle, furniture items, and various information technology equipment at an approximate cost of \$3.8 million, (b) assessment of the needs of the Centre which resulted in the adoption of an improved voter registration methodology enabling the production of a computerized photographic voters' list, (c) identification and ordering of equipment for the mapping work and the enrolment of voters, (d) training of mapping and data capture agents in Bangui on data processing, and (e) recruitment of experts in data processing to perform qualitative and quantitative analysis of databases.

34. OIOS concluded that MINUSCA, in conjunction with UNDP under the PAPEC project, provided adequate support to the ANE Data Processing Centre, which contributed to the successful completion and publication of the results of the four rounds of elections.

Support for the adoption of new legal and institutional electoral frameworks was ongoing

35. In accordance with Security Council resolution 2499 (2019), MINUSCA was required to provide technical support and good offices to ensure that the necessary legislative frameworks were in place to launch the electoral process, including voter registration.

36. MINUSCA was actively engaged with the Central African Republic authorities through the good offices of its Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG). Relevant Mission components also provided technical assistance to ensure necessary revisions were made to existing legal and institutional frameworks for inclusive presidential, legislative and local elections. This support contributed to the adoption of 15 revised electoral, legal and institutional frameworks related to the elections. The decentralization process and finalization of the legal framework for the local elections were ongoing at the time of the audit. This included the draft law on the delimitation of administrative districts and the transfer of competencies and resources to the communes awaiting adoption by the National Assembly.

37. OIOS concluded that MINUSCA, through its good offices and technical assistance from relevant Mission components, effectively contributed to the adoption of electoral, legal and institutional frameworks for the organization of inclusive presidential, legislative and local elections.

Need to enhance advocacy for effective implementation of the Integrated Elections' Security Plan

38. In October 2020, MINUSCA, the National Defense and Security forces and ANE jointly developed an Integrated Election Security Plan, which was translated into an integrated operational order at the local

level, detailing the responsibilities of the various security actors. However, the Plan could not be implemented effectively at the local level mainly due to the inability of the national authorities to meet some of their commitments related to logistical and financial resources.

39. For instance, deployed FACA and ISF elements in most of the sub-prefectures did not have adequate logistical resources such as vehicles and fuel, which prevented them from being operational during the election.

40. This was exacerbated by several other challenges, including incursions by armed groups and threats of attacks, the presence of explosive devices, poor condition of roads and bridges preventing access by security forces to polling centres in remote locations, and fear of populations in locations under the control of the armed groups. In addition, due to inadequate security coverage, some voting centres could not open during the various rounds of elections. For example:

- The presence of armed group elements in the prefectures during the 27 December 2020 presidential and first round of legislative elections hampered the deployment of election materials and polling station personnel to voting centres, resulting in the disruption or non-opening of 2,201 (41 per cent) of 5,408 polling stations in the Bangui district and the 16 prefectures.
- Some pockets of insecurity in the sub-prefectures of Bakouma (Mbomou) and Gadzi (Mambéré-Kadéï) during the 14 March 2021 second round of legislative elections prevented the elections from taking place. A total of 104 polling stations did not open for reasons of insecurity, including 37 in Bakouma and 67 in Gadzi due to the non-deployment of security forces.

41. Although MINUSCA provided various security support which contributed to the safe escort and transportation of electoral materials to the prefectures and sub-prefectures, protection of electoral agents and safe delivery of ballot boxes, the issue of Integrated Elections Security Planning and coordination with other bilateral security forces present in the country had not been adequately addressed to ensure all parties can fulfill their commitments.

(4) MINUSCA should ensure effective implementation of the Integrated Elections Security Plan by: (i) enhancing its advocacy efforts through the good offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General; and (ii) systematically monitoring the implementation of the Plan to ensure logistical and financial resources for elections' security are adequate.

MINUSCA accepted recommendation 4 and stated that it would: (a) use its good offices to encourage the national authorities to take the necessary measures to ensure the effective security provision as foreseen in the updated Integrated Elections Security Plan (PISE); and (b) monitor the implementation of the Integrated Elections Security Plan through the coordination frameworks foreseen in the Plan.

Adequate logistical support was provided, but further assistance was needed for the repair of bridges and other infrastructure to facilitate access to voting centres

42. Security Council Resolutions 2499 (2019) mandates MINUSCA to assist the national authorities in preparing and delivering peaceful presidential, legislative, and local elections by providing technical and logistical support, particularly to facilitate access to remote areas and coordinating international electoral assistance.

43. In view of the presidential and first round of legislative elections of 27 December 2020, MINUSCA Electoral Assistance Division supported ANE in December 2020 in developing an electoral Logistics Support Plan, which was updated and implemented for the subsequent three rounds of residual legislative elections. MINUSCA logistical and technical support included, for example: (a) the establishment of the ANE branches in the prefectures and sub-prefectures, (b) the deployment of electoral officers and materials (sensitive and non-sensitive) to the prefectures and the ANE branches, and (c) monitoring the conduct of elections, centralization of results and their transportation from the prefecture capitals to Bangui. Statistics on logistical support activities undertaken by MINUSCA during the various rounds of elections indicated that 421 flights were operated in total, which contributed to the deployment of 454 tons of election materials and 860 members of the ANE from Bangui to 72 prefectures where voting took place, including 24 zones with difficult access.

44. However, providing logistical and security support by MINUSCA in a landlocked country with a surface area of 623,000 square meters and poor infrastructure was challenging. Most of the roads in the prefectures and sub-prefectures are inaccessible during the rainy season and can only be accessed by motorcycles. Also, most of the bridges were in poor condition making access to affected voting centres in remote locations difficult. For instance, MINUSCA contingents during November/December 2020 had to repair nine bridges on the Yalinga axis and one on the Ira-Banda axis in the prefecture of Haute Kotto to gain access and provide the necessary security support to the voting centres during the 2020-21 presidential and first round of legislative elections. MINUSCA has used, among other efforts, quick impact and community violence reduction projects to repair some roads and bridges, but the lack of infrastructure is overwhelming across the country. Advocacy already conducted include meetings with the national authorities and ANE.

(5) MINUSCA should: (a) in view of the upcoming local elections planned for January 2023, provide support to the national authorities in the identification, resource mobilization and repair/rehabilitation of bridges in poor condition that limit access to areas where voting will take place, and (b) enhance advocacy to the Government for long-term investment in road infrastructure to facilitate logistical and security support in future election cycles.

MINUSCA accepted recommendation 5 and stated that the Mission would, through a coordinated approach involving Mission components and the United Nations Country Team, continue to provide support to the national authorities in the repair/rehabilitation of bridges on the basis of a joint needs identification to enhance access to registration and polling stations, while advocating for long-term investments in infrastructure.

The MINUSCA and UNCT support for electoral awareness-raising and civic education was adequate

45. Civic education on the electoral process and voting procedures is a crucial component for the proper conduct of the electoral process.

46. The Electoral Assistance Division, in partnership with the Strategic Communication and Public Information Division, provided technical support to ANE in designing, implementing and evaluating

electoral outreach and communication activities, including producing related outputs. During the 2020-21 presidential and legislative elections, 139 electoral outreach and communication activities were carried out in Bangui and the 16 other prefectures of the country. Also, radio messages were developed, recorded and broadcasted through the United Nations Radio Guira FM and five national and community radio stations (including Radio Centrafrique, Radio Notre Dame, Radio Water for Good, Radio Ndeke Luka and Radio la Voix de l'Evangile). Examples of electoral outreach and communication activities included: (a) radio messages, production of an electoral anthem and audio sketches on the importance of voting, the prevention of electoral violence, and voting procedures, and (b) design and distribution of a sample ballot to the electoral field offices in support of ANE branches during the electoral education activities on "how to vote". The Electoral Assistance Division also procured several sensitization materials including banners, posters, pocket folders, billboards, t-shirts, flyers and pins that were distributed to support the sensitization activities of the ANE branches.

47. In addition, MINUSCA electoral field offices supported the ANE branches in terms of logistics, technical knowledge and financial resources to enable ANE to carry out its activities. Such assistance included funding by MINUSCA for some of the costs (including transportation and sensitization materials costs) related to the conduct of ANE branches' activities. Also, to increase the participation of the local population in the electoral process and to strengthen the internal and external communication of ANE, an electoral communication and sensitization coordination mechanism was created in Bangui with the participation of the Civic Education Unit, the PAPEC/UNDP project, and an external partner agency. This mechanism aimed to coordinate communication and sensitization activities undertaken by different parties to avoid any overlap or duplication.

48. MINUSCA support for electoral awareness-raising and civic education contributed to the noted participation of the local population in the 2020-21 presidential and legislative elections, as shown in table 2. However, security incidents in some locations, as explained in paragraphs 38-40 and 60 of this report adversely impacted voter turnout to some extent, particularly during the 27 December 2020 presidential and first round of legislative elections.

Table 2
Statistics on participation in the 2020-21 presidential and legislative elections.

	Election events			
	27 December 2020 Presidential and legislative elections	14 March 2021 Second round of legislative elections	23 May 2021 Residual legislative elections	25 July 2021 Residual Legislative elections
Number of registered voters	1,858,236	1,596,071	682,582	84,036
Number of voters who took part in the poll	695,019	986,582	429,489	49,130
Elections turnout	37.40%	61.81%	62.92%	58.46%

Source: MINUSCA Electoral Assistance Division

49. OIOS concluded that MINUSCA provided adequate support for electoral awareness-raising and civic education during the 2020-21 presidential and legislative elections.

MINUSCA provided adequate capacity-building support to the National Elections Authority

50. In accordance with the United Nations policy directive on principles and types of electoral assistance, capacity development and knowledge transfer should be a core tenet of any electoral assistance.

51. The Electoral Assistance Division provided various technical assistance to ANE, including: (i) developing the operational training plan in support of the 2020-21 presidential and legislative elections; (ii) conducting a needs assessment for operational staff; (iii) developing the cascade training plans (i.e., a series of training processes, each occurring as the result of the one before) and programmes for national trainers and supervisors, members of ANE and polling station members; (iv) developing a practical guide for polling station members; and (v) deploying operational staff including national trainers and supervisors responsible for training members of ANE branches and members of polling stations. The support provided contributed to the training of 272 national trainers, 1,365 members of ANE and 27,488 members of polling stations during the 2020-21 presidential and legislative elections.

52. In addition, six staff members of the Electoral Assistance Division (4 P4, 1 P3, 1 UNV) and one international consultant on communications were collocated within ANE offices to strengthen the capacity of ANE personnel through regular meetings, policy advice, technical assistance and guidance and training.

53. OIOS concluded that MINUSCA provided adequate capacity-building support to the ANE.

Need to advocate for compliance with the established quota for women in legislative elections and additional protection measures for women candidates and voters

54. Greater participation of women, young people, minorities and disabled persons, internally displaced persons in the electoral process are vital for ensuring inclusive, free, fair, transparent, credible and peaceful electoral processes.

55. MINUSCA, in conjunction with UN Women and UNDP, established a support project titled “Election au Féminin – Ma voix, Mon droit” to promote the massive inclusion of women as voters, candidates/elected and actors in the organization and monitoring of the electoral process in the country.

56. The project was funded by UNDP in the amount of \$527,301 to implement the 2019-2021 PAPEC project. Several activities were implemented between July 2020 and March 2021 to ensure: (i) women and girls of voting age were registered to vote and better understood the issues of women's political participation; (ii) the participation of women in elections as candidates and their representation in decision-making bodies was increased; and (iii) the capacities of the main actors in the electoral process, women and youth organizations were strengthened to prevent and mitigate violence before, during and after the elections, including violence against women in the elections.

57. The activities implemented included: (a) capacity building of 280 women's election community volunteers on understanding the electoral process, the challenges of women's political participation and community mobilization techniques; (b) training of 100 women political coaches for potential women candidates to increase the representation of women in elected positions in the country; (c) advocacy campaign with leaders of political parties represented in the National Assembly to encourage the nomination of women as candidates for the 2020-21 elections and promote women's leadership within their governing bodies; (d) acquisition and installation of equipment and materials essential for the operationalization of the security emergency green/hotline number for the protection of women and girls during election periods; and (e) organization of nine workshops aimed at women's participation in elections as candidates and their representation in decision-making bodies, covering thousands of women.

58. These training sessions strengthened the capacities of potential women candidates in the areas of the electoral legal framework of the Central African Republic, the elaboration of campaign programmes, electoral campaign strategies, and techniques on mobilizing resources and public speaking. Among the women who benefited from these training workshops, 116 had their candidacies validated by the Constitutional Court, while 30 women's files were rejected for non-conformity with the law.

59. Statistics on women's participation in the 2020-21 electoral process indicated that out of 1.8 million individuals who registered to vote, 867,000 (47 per cent) were women. However, women candidates for the 2020-21 legislative elections represented only 15 per cent (254 out of 1,599 individuals), which was below the 35 per cent quota threshold set by the Electoral Law of March 2016. This happened because political parties did not comply with the 35 per cent women candidacy quota requirement, and the Constitutional Court, despite advocacy from MINUSCA through various meetings and forums, permitted political parties to submit candidates for the legislative elections despite failing to meet the 35 per cent women quota.

60. Further, elected women for the legislative elections were only 28 out of 234 elected members (12 per cent).

61. Statistics on the participation of youth (18-24 years of age) could not be provided due to the unavailability of the ANE Data Centre system at the time of the audit. Further, despite advocacy efforts by several stakeholders, including MINUSCA and the UNCT, the national authorities did not allow refugees outside of the country to participate in the electoral process and therefore did not adopt the corresponding legal framework. Based on the action taken by MINUSCA, OIOS did not make a recommendation on this issue.

(6) MINUSCA should enhance advocacy to the Constitutional Court to ensure that political parties comply with the 35 per cent candidacy quota for women as per the Parity Law of March 2016.

MINUSCA accepted recommendation 6 and stated that the Mission would continue advocating with the constitutional court for compliance with the 35 per cent candidacy quota for women as per the Parity Law of March 2016 throughout the electoral process and in line with the electoral calendar.

(7) MINUSCA should, in view of the upcoming local elections and in conjunction with other security actors, ensure that additional protection measures for women candidates and voters at campaign rallies and polling stations are included in the Integrated Elections Security Plan and implemented.

MINUSCA accepted recommendation 7 and stated that the Mission would ensure additional protection measures for women candidates and voters at campaign rallies and polling stations are included in the Integrated Elections Security Plan and implemented throughout the electoral process and in line with the electoral calendar.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

Internal Audit Division
Office of Internal Oversight Services

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of electoral support activities in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ² / Important ³	C/ O ⁴	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁵
1	MINUSCA should, upon completion of the upcoming local elections in 2023, conduct an after-action review of its electoral support to the 2020-23 presidential, legislative and local elections to inform future electoral support by identifying lessons learned and actionable recommendations.	Important	O	Receipt of a copy of the report of the after-action review of MINUSCA's electoral support to the 2020-23 presidential, legislative and local elections.	15 February 2024
2	MINUSCA should: (a) review and approve the terms of reference of the Electoral Task Force and the International Electoral Assistance Technical Working Group and ensure regular meetings are convened; and (b) develop a mechanism to monitor and track the implementation of action points from meetings of the Task Force and the Technical Working Group.	Important	O	Receipt of copies of the approved terms of reference of the Electoral Task Force and the International Electoral Assistance Technical Working Group and evidence that meetings of these coordination mechanisms are held regularly with a tracking and monitoring mechanism implemented.	31 December 2022
3	MINUSCA should, in conjunction with other members of the Electoral Support Project Steering Committee: (a) enhance existing resource mobilization strategies by expanding the base of their resource partnerships and encouraging in-kind contributions; (b) document these strategies to serve as institutional memory; (c) develop and implement tools for monitoring pledges and contributions received and follow-up on pledges not received; and (d) advocate through its good offices for the establishment by the Central African Republic Government of an internal funding mechanism to support future electoral processes in the country.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of: (a) and (b) a resource mobilization strategy document developed documenting the various resource mobilization strategies applied by the Mission in conjunction with the Central African Republic authorities and United Nations Development Program; (c) tools for monitoring pledges and contributions received and follow-up on pledges not received; and (d) advocacy efforts deployed through the good offices of the SRSG for the Central African Republic Government to establish an internal funding mechanism to support future electoral processes in the country.	16 January 2023
4	MINUSCA should ensure effective implementation of the Integrated Elections Security Plan by: (i) enhancing its advocacy efforts through the good offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General; and (ii) systematically	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of enhanced advocacy efforts deployed through the good offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and evidence of systematic monitoring of the Integrated Elections Security Plan to encourage	16 December 2023

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of electoral support activities in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

	monitoring the implementation of the Plan to ensure logistical and financial resources for elections' security are adequate.			the national authorities to take the necessary measures to ensure the effective implementation of security commitments during the preparations and the holding of the 2023 local elections.	
5	MINUSCA should: (a) in view of the upcoming local elections planned for January 2023, provide support to the national authorities in the identification, resource mobilization and repair/rehabilitation of bridges in poor condition that limit access to areas where voting will take place, and (b) enhance advocacy to the Government for long-term investment in road infrastructure to facilitate logistical and security support in future election cycles.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of support provided to the national authorities in the repair/rehabilitation of bridges in poor condition that limit access to areas where voting will take place, and evidence of enhanced advocacy efforts deployed for the Government to make long-term investment in road infrastructure.	15 October 2023
6	MINUSCA should enhance advocacy to the Constitutional Court to ensure that political parties comply with the 35 per cent candidacy quota for women as per the Parity Law of March 2016.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of actions taken by MINUSCA in the context of preparations for the 2023 local elections, for the Constitutional Court to ensure that political parties comply with the 35 per cent candidacy quota for women as per the Parity Law of March 2016.	15 December 2023
7	MINUSCA should, in view of the upcoming local elections and in conjunction with other security actors, ensure that additional protection measures for women candidates and voters at campaign rallies and polling stations are included in the Integrated Elections Security Plan and implemented.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that adequate protection measures for women candidates and voters at campaign rallies and polling stations are included in the approved Integrated Elections Security Plan.	15 October 2023

² 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.

³ 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.

⁴ Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

⁵ Date provided by MINUSCA in response to recommendations.

APPENDIX I

Management Response

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM


MEMORANDUM INTERIEUR

TO: Ms. Fatoumata Ndiaye
A: Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight
Services

DATE: 13 December 2022

REFERENCE: MINUSCA/OSRSG/193/2022

FROM: Valentine Rugwabiza
DE: Special Representative of the Secretary-General
Head of MINUSCA



SUBJECT: **MINUSCA's comments on the Draft Report on an audit of electoral support activities in MINUSCA (Assignment No. AP2021-637-03)**
OBJET:

1. With reference to your interoffice memorandum from Friday 2 December 2022 on the above captioned subject, kindly find attached MINUSCA's comments on the draft Report on an audit of electoral support activities in MINUSCA.
2. I take this opportunity to thank your team for the findings and recommendations issued in this audit.

Annex (1): MINUSCA's comments on the Draft Report on an audit of electoral support activities in MINUSCA

cc: Mr. Kemal Karaseki, Acting Chief, Peacekeeping Audit Service
Mr. Jeffrey Lin, OIOS
Mr. Frank Dalton, OiC DSRSGRC-HC, MINUSCA
Mr. Arsene Gbaguidi, Director Electoral Affairs Division, MINUSCA
Ms. Tiphaine Dickson, Risk Management and Compliance Officer, MINUSCA

Management Response

Audit of electoral support activities in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical/ Important?	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	MINUSCA should, upon completion of the upcoming local elections in 2023, conduct an after-action review of its electoral support to the 2020-23 presidential, legislative and local elections to inform future electoral support by identifying lessons learned and actionable recommendations.	Important	Yes	Chief Electoral Advisor	15 February 2024	MINUSCA accepts this recommendation and will put in place the necessary measures to ensure that an after-action review of MINUSCA's electoral support for the 2020-21 presidential, legislative and 2022-23 local elections is implemented in a timely manner. Per the United Nations Department of Peace Operations Policy on Knowledge Management and Organizational Learning (DPO 2020.11 / DPPA 2020.2), MINUSCA will initiate the review within two weeks of the completion of the electoral cycle. The revised electoral calendar for the 2023 local elections, published by the National Elections Authority on 21 November 2022, schedules the end of the electoral process on 16 December 2023. The after-action review should therefore start in the first week of January 2024. However, in the event of delays or byelections, MINUSCA will align its after-action as appropriate.

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.

Management Response

Audit of electoral support activities in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical/Important?	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
2	MINUSCA should: (a) review and approve the terms of reference of the Electoral Task Force and the International Electoral Assistance Technical Working Group and ensure regular meetings are convened; and (b) develop a mechanism to monitor and track the implementation of action points from meetings of the Task Force and the Technical Working Group.	Important	Yes	Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-general, Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Coordinator (DSRSG-RC-HC)	21 December 2022	MINUSCA accepts this recommendation and will (i) review and approve the existing terms of references of the Electoral Task Force and the International Electoral Assistance Technical Working Group, and ensure regular meetings are convened (ii) develop a mechanism to monitor and track the implementation of action points from meetings of the Task Force and the Technical Working Group.
3	MINUSCA should, in conjunction with other members of the Electoral Support Project Steering Committee: (a) enhance existing resource mobilization strategies by expanding the base of their resource partnerships and encouraging in-kind contributions; (b) document these strategies to serve as institutional memory; (c) develop and implement tools for monitoring pledges and contributions received and follow-up on pledges not received; and (d) advocate through its good	Important	Yes	Special Representative of the Secretary-general (SRSG) DSRSG-RC-HC Chief Electoral Advisor	16 January 2023	MINUSCA accepts this recommendation and will (i) prepare a document that outlines the various resource mobilization strategies applied by the Mission in conjunction with the CAR authorities and UNDP, including already applied strategies and those aimed at enhancing resource mobilization in the context of the local elections, (ii) develop and implement a monitoring matrix to inform follow up on pledges and contributions of donors

Management Response

Audit of electoral support activities in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical/Important?	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
4	MINUSCA should ensure effective implementation of the Integrated Elections Security Plan by: (i) enhancing its advocacy efforts through the good offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General; and (ii) systematically monitoring the implementation of the Plan to ensure logistical and financial resources for elections' security are adequate.	Important		SRSG Force Commander Police Commissioner	16 December 2023	MINUSCA accepts this recommendation and will (i) use its good offices to encourage the CAR authorities to take the necessary measures to ensure effective security provision as foreseen in the updated Integrated Elections Security Plan (PISE) and (ii) monitor the implementation of the PISE through the coordination frameworks foreseen in the plan, until the end of the electoral cycle. The revised electoral calendar for the 2023 local elections, published by the National Elections Authority on 21 November 2022, schedules the end of the electoral operations on 16
						in the context of the local elections, in coordination with UNDP and the CAR Government, (iii) continue tripartite meetings involving MINUSCA, UNDP and the Central African Ministry of Finance and Budget to follow up on the Government's commitment to provide financial resources for the local elections and (iv) use its good offices to advocate for the establishment by the Central African Republic Government of an internal funding mechanism to support future electoral processes.

Management Response

Audit of electoral support activities in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical/Important?	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
5	MINUSCA should: (a) in view of the upcoming local elections planned for January 2023, provide support to the national authorities in the identification, resource mobilization and repair/rehabilitation of bridges in poor condition that limit access to areas where voting will take place, and (b) enhance advocacy to the Government for long-term investment in road infrastructure to facilitate logistical and security support in future election cycles.	Important	Yes	SRSG DSRSG-RC- HC Force Commander DMS	15 October 2023	December 2023. MINUSCA will monitor the implementation of the PISE until this date. However, in the event of delays or byelections, MINUSCA will realign its support as appropriate.
6	MINUSCA should enhance advocacy to the Constitutional Court to ensure that political parties comply with the 35 per cent candidacy quota for women as per the Parity Law of March 2016.	Important	Yes	SRSG DSRSG-RC- HC	15 December 2023	MINUSCA accepts this recommendation and will continue advocating with the Constitutional Court for compliance with the 35 per cent candidacy quota for women as per the Parity Law of March 2016 throughout the electoral process and in

Management Response

Audit of electoral support activities in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

Rec no.	Recommendation	Critical/ Important?	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
7	MINUSCA should, in view of the upcoming local elections and in conjunction with other security actors, ensure that additional protection measures for women candidates and voters at campaign rallies and polling stations are included in the Integrated Elections Security Plan and implemented.	Important	Yes	Force Commander Police Commissioner	15 October 2023	line with the electoral calendar (see above). In the event of delays or by-elections, MINUSCA will realign its support as appropriate. MINUSCA accepts this recommendation and will ensure that additional protection measures for women candidates and voters at campaign rallies and polling stations are included in the Integrated Elections Security Plan and implemented throughout the electoral process and in line with the electoral calendar (see above). In the event of delays or by-elections, MINUSCA will realign its support as appropriate.