



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2018/008

Audit of quick impact projects in the
United Nations Interim Security Force
for Abyei

Overall, the implementation of quick impact
projects was satisfactory

20 February 2018
Assignment No. AP2017/635/01

Audit of quick impact projects in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of quick impact projects (QIPs) in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of management and implementation of QIPs in UNISFA. The audit covered the period from July 2015 to June 2017 and included a review of the: (a) project proposal evaluation, approval and selection procedures; (b) project implementation and monitoring process; and (c) procedures for the closure of QIPs.

Overall, the QIPs programme was managed and implemented to a satisfactory level. The Mission successfully implemented all the 48 planned projects and used 100 per cent of the programme budget. The projects were also implemented within the six-month timeline required by the DPKO/DFS policy on QIPs.

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Audit of quick impact projects in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of quick impact projects (QIPs) in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA).
2. QIPs are small-scale, rapidly implementable projects of benefit to the population, developed and implemented in a participatory manner. These projects are used by United Nations peacekeeping operations to establish and build confidence in the Mission, its mandate and the peace process, thereby improving the environment for effective mandate implementation.
3. The budget for QIPs in UNISFA for 2015/16 and 2016/17 was \$500,000 for each year and was fully utilized to fund 48 projects (23 projects in 2015/16 and 25 projects in 2016/17). Due to lack of implementing partners in the region, Agency A was the main implementing partner for QIPs in UNISFA. In 2016/17, all the 25 QIPs were implemented by Agency A as well as 21 out of 23 projects implemented in 2015/16.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

4. The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of management and implementation of QIPs in UNISFA.
5. This audit was included in the 2017 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the operational and reputation risk related to the management of QIPs.
6. OIOS conducted this audit from November 2017 to January 2018. The audit covered the period from July 2015 to June 2017. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risks areas in the management of QIPs, which included a review of the: (a) project proposal evaluation, approval and selection procedures; (b) project implementation and monitoring process; and (c) procedures for the closure of QIPs.
7. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews of key personnel, (b) reviews of relevant documentation, (c) analytical reviews of data, and (d) physical verification of projects. A sample of 34 projects spread over the northern, central and southern parts of Abyei, costing \$750,260 were reviewed, out of a total population of 48 projects that cost \$1 million.
8. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Project proposal evaluation, selection and approval

Systems and structures were in place to ensure that only projects that met the selection criteria were selected and implemented

9. The DPKO/DFS policy on QIPs requires UNISFA to select and implement projects that provide an enabling environment for the Mission to implement its mandate. The policy also requires consultations with representatives of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in the country during the identification phase of any QIPs to avoid duplication and to ensure coordination and coherence with humanitarian and development projects. The policy stipulates a maximum budget of \$50,000 per project.

10. Over the two-year period under review, UNISFA received 98 project proposals from various stakeholders in the region; 51 in 2015/16 and 47 in 2016/17 out of which 48 proposals were selected and approved for implementation (23 proposals for 2015/16 and 25 for 2016/17). UNISFA gave priority to water projects due to its scarcity and the need for clean water in the community. In 2016/17, water projects constituted 52 per cent (13 out of 25) of the projects implemented. Water projects comprised construction of manually operated water pumps, each project costing \$15,115. All 48 projects selected for implementation were within the \$50,000 threshold, and over the two-year period reviewed, the project with the highest allocated budget was the construction of a community hall in Abyei town that cost \$49,000.

11. UNISFA had implemented a project proposal evaluation, selection and approval process that took into consideration the following: input from the local community, distribution of the projects across communities especially between the areas covered by the warring tribes in the Abyei area, and coordination with other United Nations agencies in the region during project selection to avoid duplication of projects.

12. The project selection process started with the solicitation of proposals from key stakeholders in the region, such as local community representatives, United Nations partners in the region and various UNISFA sections. Vetting and selection of the projects was a two-step process carried out by the QIPs management team (QMT), which conducted an initial review of all proposals submitted and came up with a shortlist of projects for consideration by the project review committee (PRC). The PRC, comprised of the Mission's senior management and a representative from United Nations partner organizations, was responsible for making the final selection and approval of the projects to be implemented. For the 34 projects reviewed by OIOS, pre-selection site visits were conducted and were vetted by both the QMT and PRC.

13. OIOS concluded that the Mission had systems and structures in place to ensure that only projects that met the required selection criteria were selected and implemented.

B. Project implementation and monitoring

There were adequate controls in place for management and oversight of QIPs implementation

14. The DPKO/DFS policy on QIPs requires the Head of Mission to ensure that adequate procedures are in place to ensure the effective monitoring of projects. The policy requires that a memorandum of understanding (MOU) is signed on a timely basis for each project and that funds to execute projects are provided to the implementing partners in a minimum of two instalments.

15. Agency A was the main implementing partner for QIPs in UNISFA. In 2016/17, all 25 QIPs were implemented by them, and they were also responsible for 21 of the 23 projects implemented in 2015/16.

Agency A was responsible for most of the QIPs due to the unavailability of implementing partners in the region. However, procedures for vetting prospective implementing partners were in place and for the two years OIOS reviewed, there were efforts made to engage more implementing partners, but most prospective implementing partners either fell short of requirements or were not willing to take on the projects.

16. Because UNISFA only used Agency A to implement most of its QIPs programme for 2015/16 and 2016/17, coordination of implementation of the projects was straightforward. For example, for 2016/17, the Mission paid the entire budgeted amount to Agency A in two lump sum payments, 80 per cent after signing the MOUs for all the projects and 20 per cent after Agency A furnished a completion report for all the projects. OIOS review of 34 projects confirmed this process was working effectively, and final payment was only made after the implementing partners furnished the required completion reports and detailed expenditure reports. OIOS review also noted that an MOU between UNISFA and the respective implementing partner was signed before the start of the project.

17. Oversight of QIPs implementation in UNISFA was done by a dedicated staff member who coordinated site visits and managed the relationship with the implementing partners.

18. All projects implemented were executed within their respective cost and time budgets, and within six months. OIOS concluded that there were adequate controls in place over the implementation and monitoring of QIPs.

C. Project closure

Closure procedures were adequately implemented

19. The DPKO/DFS policy on QIPs requires that, upon completion of the project, the project focal point conducts site visits and submits a project closure and evaluation form to the QMT. The implementing partner shall submit a signed final list of expenditures with receipts to the authorized official through the QMT. Upon receipt of a copy of the signed project closure and evaluation form and the original final list of expenditures, the authorized official shall authorize the Finance Section to clear the final disbursement. Any unspent balance remaining upon the completion of the project shall be credited by the implementing partner to the Mission.

20. OIOS confirmed through a review of a sample of 34 projects that the UNISFA QIPs focal point in conjunction with the civil military cooperation (CIMIC) members conducted site visits to all project sites. This was evidenced by signed project evaluation forms and pictorial evidence of the visits. Moreover, OIOS visited all the 34 projects in the north, central and southern regions of the Mission to verify existence of the projects. No exceptions were noted during these visits.

Annual evaluation of quick impact projects was conducted

21. The DPKO/DFS policy on QIPs requires UNISFA to conduct a periodic evaluation to assess the impact of QIPs. A review of the 2015/16 and 2016/17 QIPs programme evaluation reports indicated that UNISFA conducted annual evaluations of QIPs. The programme was deemed successful in terms of having a positive impact on the community and providing an enabling environment for the Mission.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

22. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of UNISFA 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

APPENDIX I

Management Response

NATIONS UNIES



UNITED NATIONS

UNISFA

United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei

قوة الأمم المتحدة المؤقتة في أبيي

18 February 2018
Ref: CMS/IOM/18/015

TO: Arnold Valdez, Officer-in-charge
Peacekeeping Audit Service
Internal Audit Division, OIOS

FROM: Major General Tesfay Gidey Hailemichael
Acting Head of Mission and Force Commander
United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei



SUBJECT: Draft report on an audit of quick impact projects in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (Assignment No. AP2017/635/01)

1. Further to your memorandum of 12 February 2018 forwarding the subject draft report on an audit of quick impact projects in UNISFA, we have noted that the overall implementation of quick impact projects was found to be satisfactory and that there were no recommendations contained in the report.
2. Thank you and best regards.

cc: Mr. Robert Kirkwood, Chief of Mission Support, UNISFA
Mr. Alexander Rose, Principal Officer, UNISFA
Mr. Daniel Adekera, Communications and Public Relations Officer, UNISFA
Mr. Josphat Kariuki, Audit, Risk Compliance and BOI Section, UNISFA
Mr. Muhammad Nasir Khan, Community Affairs Officer, UNISFA
Ms. Cynthia Avena-Castillo, Professional Practices Section, Internal Audit Division, OIOS