OIOS

Office of Internal Oversight Services

INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2023/040

Audit of electoral support preparedness in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

There was a need to develop an exit strategy for the electoral responsibilities and strengthen the mechanisms for sharing lessons learned, knowledge and data

15 September 2023
Assignment No. AP2023-641-01

Audit of electoral support preparedness in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of electoral support preparedness in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of electoral support activities in MINUSMA. The audit covered the period from January 2018 to March 2023 and covered risks in the following areas: (a) strategic and work planning; and (b) implementation of electoral support activities.

MINUSMA provided effective logistical, security, capacity-building, electoral awareness-raising and technical support to the national electoral institutions. Following the Security Council's decision to terminate its mandate, MINUSMA needed to develop an exit strategy and ensure that lessons learned, knowledge and results of activities over the past 10 years in support of its electoral responsibilities are adequately transferred to other United Nations entities and stakeholders. Also, the Mission needed to streamline electoral governance and coordination mechanisms, document its electoral support activities and comply with the Office of Information and Communications Technology policy and guidance for developing and managing information technology applications.

OIOS made nine important recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, MINUSMA needed to:

- Develop an exit strategy for its electoral support responsibilities;
- Strengthen the electoral governance and coordination mechanisms;
- Strengthen the record management system of the Electoral Affairs Division;
- Finalize the register of electoral support lessons learned and share results;
- Document the results of electoral support capacity-building activities;
- Document the Election Result Management Information System application functional and technical design specification;
- Strengthen monitoring mechanisms over the fuel consumption of vehicles provided to electoral agents;
- Collect baselines, targets and results of initiatives implemented for enhancing the participation of youth and persons with disability in the electoral process; and
- Share lessons learned from the Mission's electoral communication support activities.

MINUSMA accepted all recommendations and implemented two recommendations, and two recommendations were overtaken by Security Council resolution 2690. MINUSMA stated that the Mission's tasks and responsibilities would be transferred to the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and the Government of Mali owing to Security Council resolution 2690 of 30 June 2023, which required MINUSMA to cease its operations immediately, transfer its tasks and withdraw its personnel by 31 December 2023 and subsequently enter a technical liquidation starting from 1 January 2024.

Actions required to close the recommendations are indicated in Annex I.

CONTENTS

Audit of electoral support preparedness in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

I.   BACKGROUND

1.   The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of electoral support preparedness in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

2.   MINUSMA was established in 2013 by Security Council resolution (SCR) 2100, and its mandate was extended annually by subsequent resolutions until 30 June 2023. In June 2023, SCR 2690 required MINUSMA to immediately start the cessation of operations, transfer tasks and withdraw its personnel by 31 December 2023, and subsequently start liquidation effective 1 January 2024.

3.   Prior to SCR 2690, all other Security Council resolutions related to the MINUSMA mandate had called on the Mission to, inter alia, assist the transitional authorities of Mali in the organization and conduct of inclusive, free, fair and transparent elections ensuring full, equal and meaningful participation of women, and inclusion of youth, Malian refugees and internally displaced persons. In addition, SCR 2640 (2022) authorized MINUSMA to assist the transitional authorities of Mali in collaboration with the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the holding of four different types of scrutiny in 2023-2024 comprising: (i) constitutional referendum; (ii) local, cercle, regional and district elections; (iii) legislative elections; and (iv) presidential elections.

4.   The MINUSMA Electoral Affairs Division (EAD) is responsible for the coordination and implementation of the Mission's electoral mandate, including: (a) provision of logistical and security support, particularly to facilitate access to remote areas; (b) coordination of international electoral assistance; (c) support for the creation of an atmosphere conducive to the conduct of peaceful elections; (d) provision of technical support and advice to the Independent Election Management Authority (AIGE) . The Mission electoral support responsibilities are guided by the Integrated Mission Plan (1 March 2023) and the MINUSMA Integrated Electoral Support Plan (2022-2024 cycle).

5.   The 2017 and 2021 Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) conducted by the Electoral Assistance Division in the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs recognized the role of the United Nations Integrated Electoral Team (UNIET) in Mali in the 2013, 2016 and 2020 elections, including: the good offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG); and the Mission's logistical, security, technical assistance and communication support. The 2021 NAM concluded that electoral stakeholders considered the United Nations a credible and neutral partner for the electoral process in Mali.

6.   EAD is headed by a Director at the D-1 level who reports to the Deputy SRSG /Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator. The Division has three units: (i) Political, Legal and Reporting; (ii) Electoral Reforms; and (iii) Planning and Operations. It has 17 authorized posts comprising 8 international and 4 national staff and 5 United Nations volunteers (UNV). The Division also recruited 183 temporary staff comprising 20 UNVs and 163 individual contractors to supervise the electoral process.

7.   The MINUSMA budget for electoral support for 2021/22 and 2022/23 was $989,000, and $2.4 million, respectively. The increase was due to the rental of vehicles to support electoral activities in the field, printing of electoral materials and providing support to the newly established AIGE.

8.   Comments provided by MINUSMA are incorporated in italics.

II.   AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

9.   The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of electoral support activities in MINUSMA.

10.   The audit was included in the 2023 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the strategic, operational and reputational risks relating to the electoral support activities of MINUSMA.

11.   OIOS conducted this audit from February to July 2023. The audit covered the period from January 2018 to March 2023. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered risks in the following areas: (a) strategic and work planning; and (b) implementation of electoral support activities.

12.   The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key personnel; (b) a review of relevant documentation; and (c) an analytical review of data.

13.   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

<u>Need to define an exit strategy for electoral assistance activities</u>

14.   To enhance the sustainability of MINUSMA electoral support activities, the 2020 Policy on Principles and Types of United Nations Electoral Assistance requires the Mission to prepare an exit strategy, including a tentative timetable towards the ultimate cessation of assistance. However, MINUSMA had yet to develop an exit strategy for its electoral assistance activities.

15.   In view of SCR 2690 (2023) mandating the Mission to end its activities and transfer tasks, bearing in mind the possible contribution of other United Nations entities and stakeholders, there was a need for an exit strategy to ensure sustainability and continuity of results achieved. The strategy should include mechanisms to facilitate the handover of knowledge and electoral support responsibilities to the identified successor(s).

> **(1)   MINUSMA should develop an exit strategy for the Mission electoral support responsibilities, including mechanisms to ensure an effective and comprehensive handover of responsibilities and knowledge to other United Nations entities and stakeholders.**
>
> *MINUSMA accepted recommendation 1 and stated that the current political context, leading to the Government's decision to request the withdrawal of the Mission without delay, has overtaken the Mission's capacity to develop and implement a well-designed exit strategy with a reasonable transition period. The Mission would treat this recommendation through the Mission transfer plan developed in line with the Mission's imminent withdrawal.*

<u>Need to strengthen the electoral governance and coordination mechanisms</u>

16.   To effectively implement electoral support activities, MINUSMA established three major internal electoral governance and coordination mechanisms:

i.   The Strategic Electoral Group (GSE), which includes representatives of the Mission's leadership, substantive and support divisions and UNCT, was responsible for providing strategic mission-wide guidance and oversight on electoral preparedness matters.

ii.   The Electoral Working Group (EWG) and regional EWGs were coordination mechanisms reporting to the GSE on technical aspects. They included representatives of substantive components, Mission Support Division, United Nations Police, Force, Department of Safety and Security and UNCT. EWG also had sub-groups in logistics, security, gender, communication and human rights.

iii.   UNIET was responsible for coordinating, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the electoral mandate.

17.   Although EWG and UNIET had specific terms of reference (ToR), the ToR for GSE was still in draft, and there were no ToRs to clarify roles and responsibilities and guide the activities of the regional groups and sub-groups. Also, some stakeholders were not consistently participating in meetings. For example, EWG only met once, just 20 days before the date of the constitutional referendum, and the EWG subgroup on security did not meet before the constitutional referendum. According to EAD, the activation of EWG and its subgroups was postponed because the national electoral commissions responsible for providing guidance were not yet operational. For instance, the National Security Commission was operationalized 20 days before the referendum.

18.   The absence of effective governance mechanisms impeded timely identification and follow-up on key issues noted by OIOS during the audit, including the need to implement risk-mitigating actions and develop communication work plans and information-sharing mechanisms. As the Mission prepares to downsize and withdraw from Mali, a strengthened and fully functioning electoral governance and coordination framework is needed to guide the completion and handover of residual tasks and responsibilities.

> **(2)   MINUSMA should finalize the terms of reference of the electoral governance and coordination mechanisms and maintain minutes of their meetings to facilitate the transfer of electoral support responsibilities to other entities.**
>
> *MINUSMA stated that the Government's decision to request the withdrawal of the Mission without delay and the Security Council's ending of the Mission's substantive mandate have overtaken this work and do not allow the Mission to finalize the development of such tools.*

Need to strengthen the records management system of the Electoral Affairs Division

19.   EAD had a dedicated online SharePoint channel for storing information and documents. However, the names and classifications of folders and files were not standardized for ease of document retrieval and business continuity. As a result, retrieving documents required a considerable amount of time.

20.   This was due to a lack of follow-up on compliance with standard filing procedures. Proper classification and storage of electoral-related documents and accumulated data is key for effective handover and continuity of tasks. During the audit, EAD appointed a new focal point to ensure document classification and collection.

> **(3)   MINUSMA should strengthen the records management system of the Electoral Affairs Division to ensure proper classification and storage of electoral-related documents and data on the SharePoint channel.**

<u>Need to finalize the collection of lessons learned on electoral support activities and share them</u>

21.   To effectively collect and document lessons learned from electoral support activities, the Mission was required to develop standard templates and appoint a focal point with related responsibilities. Also, in accordance with the Policy on Knowledge Management and Organizational Learning, MINUSMA needed to document lessons learned in the Policy and Practice Database, the official repository for guidance and lessons learned products for the peace and security pillar.

22.   MINUSMA had not developed the required standard templates nor appointed a focal point for collecting lessons learned from its electoral support activities and had not uploaded the results of previous lessons learned to the central repository. EAD explained that lessons learned were regularly collected and mainstreamed throughout the electoral process. For instance, the 2020 after-election lessons learned review identified weaknesses in several areas, including governance and reporting of meetings, logistics coordination, use of electoral support software, and information-sharing among United Nations Police, Force and EAD. However, lessons learned may not be captured and shared without a centralized and coordinated process using standardized collection templates.

23.   In addition, in August 2022, GSE announced that the Mission would develop a lessons learned register called the "white book" to document lessons learned and best practices from previous electoral cycles, which would be shared with the Government of Mali. However, the finalization of the book was still pending due to inadequate resources. EAD also indicated that it was not aware of the requirement to share lessons learned in the Policy and Practice Database.

24.   The collection and sharing of lessons learned by EAD would strengthen electoral support activities within the peace and security pillar. They would also facilitate knowledge transfer given the Mission's withdrawal from Mali.

> **(4)   MINUSMA should finalize the register of electoral support lessons learned and share results with relevant stakeholders and upload related documents in the Policy and Practice Database.**
>
> *MINUSMA accepted recommendation 4 and stated that the Mission, in coordination with relevant stakeholders, was compiling a register of electoral support lessons learned called the white book. This register would analyze and identify lessons and good practices from 10 years of MINUSMA electoral assistance.*

B.   Implementation of electoral support activities

<u>Need to collect and share results of capacity-building and knowledge-sharing activities</u>

25.   Through the work of several divisions, including EAD and political and civil affairs divisions, MINUSMA carried out regular activities to support the Malian electoral capacity. However, there was no comprehensive tracking system to collect data and analyze the results of all electoral capacity-building activities, including the support provided by other MINUSMA divisions, UNCT and other partners contributing towards the implementation of the electoral support mandate. EAD estimated that since 2013,

it had implemented around 200 capacity-building events and trained more than 2,000 people on electoral support issues.

26.   As a result, there was no accurate consolidated data on the number and demographics of individuals who received capacity-building support from the Mission or other organizations. Such data should be used to plan future interventions, monitor results, avoid duplication, and demonstrate achievements. As the Mission prepared to transfer its tasks and knowledge to other United Nations entities, this information would be important to handover and planning future electoral support activities.

> **(5)   MINUSMA should document the results of its electoral support capacity-building activities and share them with relevant United Nations entities and stakeholders.**
>
> *MINUSMA accepted recommendation 5 and stated that the Mission is currently drafting an activity report on support for electoral processes from 2013 to 2023.*

<u>Need to enhance the processing of technical assistance requests</u>

27.   From 2018 to 2023, EAD accepted and implemented 20 requests for electoral technical assistance, totaling $6.6 million. OIOS reviewed the 20 requests for assistance, including capacity-building and the provision of materials and noted that the Mission took an average of 45 days to approve the requests and 37 days to disburse the first installments to implementing partners after approval of the related project. In two cases, extension amendments of the project agreements with implementing partners were approved after the agreements' end-dates, which could lead to time-consuming litigation.

28.   EAD explained that delays in the approval and disbursement of funds for technical assistance projects were due to initial difficulties in using the grant module in Umoja for implementing partners and the need to negotiate funding with other divisions. Also, the Mission had not established time benchmarks for approving requests and disbursement of funds, and there was no mechanism to track the time required for each process. Benchmarks and tracking mechanisms are needed to ensure effective and timely use of resources and to identify and address the root cause of delays.

<u>Need to align with technical guidance on the development of information technology applications</u>

29.   In response to a request by the Government of Mali in 2016, EAD developed the Election Result Management Information System (SIGRE), an application to collect electoral data and planned to hand it over to the Government once finalized. EAD used the application for the 2018 and 2020 elections, and at the time of the audit, the Division was upgrading it and planned to test a new version of the system during the 2023-24 electoral cycle. EAD had a team of two UNVs and one national consultant in charge of developing and maintaining information and communication technology applications, including SIGRE.

30.   A review of the SIGRE development process indicated that EAD did not comply with the Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT) technical guidance on software development (APP.02.PROC), which defines the application life cycle and milestones and requires that the architecture, information security and disaster recovery control requirements be pre-defined. These standards ensure the security and integrity of the application. The following issues were noted in the development of SIGRE:

- There was no business case or project document with pre-defined requirements for the development of SIGRE.
- The MINUSMA Field Technology Section (FTS), responsible for managing information and communication technology-related risks, was not aware of recent developments and changes to SIGRE. As a result, FTS did not conduct a due diligence review of the application. Also, SIGRE

data was not uploaded to UniteApps, the central repository of information for United Nations Secretariat applications and public information website and the main data source for audit reporting.

- The application source code was stored on the computer of an EAD local consultant, which created uncertainty about the application of relevant security standards.

31. The above lapses could have been avoided with better coordination between FTS and EAD and knowledge of OICT requirements and technical guidance for the development and management of applications. As the application is currently in the testing/implementation stage and MINUSMA plans to handover the application to the national electoral authorities, there was a need to document the functional and technical design specification of the system, including ownership, scope and use of the application and data collected during the test/implementation stage, and total cost of ownership. The Mission should also ensure that information security and change management steps are documented and implemented in accordance with OICT technical guidance and prioritize vulnerability tests as recommended by FTS.

32. Following the preliminary audit results on the need to strengthen internal controls, FTS conducted a security assessment of the application and identified six critical and high risks for which mitigating measures would be implemented.

> **(6)** **MINUSMA should: (a) document the Election Result Management Information System application functional and technical design specifications, including information security and change management performed; (b) conduct a vulnerability test of the application; and (c) document the ownership, scope and use of the application and data collected during the test/implementation stage.**
>
> *MINUSMA accepted recommendation 6 and stated that the Mission has developed relevant documentation to inform the framework and facilitate the use of the Election Result Management Information System (SIGRE) through specific information on the technical design specifications, including information security and change management. On 14 June 2023, the Mission conducted security vulnerability assessments on SIGRE and addressed all vulnerability issues. Also, SIGRE is a United Nations-owned application developed by MINUSMA and classified as "strictly confidential". Therefore, the data collected from the applications was treated, classified and stored per strictly confidential United Nations rules and regulations.*

Need to strengthen the fuel reconciliation mechanism of electoral agents' vehicles

33. Although MINUSMA was required to provide logistical and security support for the elections, the Government of Mali did not share the election security and logistics plans for the constitutional referendum with the Mission. This limited the Mission's planning capacity to provide relevant support. For instance, in the absence of formal requirements from the Government on the quantity of materials and number of people to transport for the constitutional referendum, the Mission could not prepare a comparative analysis of alternative air carriers to mitigate logistical support risks. Nonetheless, the Mission prepared its logistics and security plans based on existing knowledge and estimates, recruited 182 electoral assistants (162 national individual contractors and 20 UNVs) and provided vehicles, information technology and other administrative material.

34. For the 2020 election, MINUSMA contracted a local fuel vendor to refuel 31 vehicles assigned to electoral agents (total contractual value of $12,000). The vendor was paid based on after-service invoices certified by EAD. To prevent abuses such as overpayments, drivers were required to complete vehicle trip-tickets with key information on mileage, obtain fuel receipts from the local gas station and submit the

supporting documents to EAD for verification. OIOS reviewed all vehicle trip-tickets for the 2020 elections, and in 69 of 75 cases, the documentation was incomplete due to the lack of receipts, or they were not readable.

35.   EAD explained that this was due to poor documentation and had planned to strengthen the process of reconciling fuel consumption for the 2023-24 electoral cycle. At the time of the audit, the Mission was in the process of collecting fuel consumption supporting documents for the use of vehicles during the constitutional referendum. Inadequate vetting of fuel vouchers may result in loss of fuel due to theft or wastage.

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(7)   MINUSMA should establish and implement a mechanism to vet fuel vouchers and monitor the fuel consumption of vehicles provided to electoral agents.

MINUSMA stated that the Government's decision to request the withdrawal of the Mission without delay has overtaken the Mission's capacity to establish a mechanism to vet fuel vouchers and monitor the fuel consumption of vehicles. Since the Mission withdrawal is imminent, no more vehicle rental activities will be implemented.

Need to develop a strategy for promoting the inclusion of youth and persons with disability in the electoral process

36.   MINUSMA was required to take action towards ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in elections and the inclusion of youth, Malian refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), including through the provision of technical assistance and security arrangements.

37.   MINUSMA implemented various technical assistance activities promoting the participation of women, refugees and IDPs in the electoral process, including support to the local authority for the development of legal frameworks and training. In collaboration with the Government of Mali and UNCT agencies, MINUSMA also contributed to developing a roadmap for promoting women's participation in the electoral process and a strategy supporting the participation of refugees and displaced persons. The GSE was updated on the progress made in developing the gender roadmap and IDP/refugees' strategy. The UNCT focal points would continue to follow up on these plans after the Mission's departure.

38.   The Mission implemented technical assistance activities promoting the participation of youth and people with disability. For instance, it engaged with civil society groups to prepare a mapping of the population with disability and implemented several technical assistance projects promoting youth engagement in the electoral process. However, there was no strategy with baselines and targets for enhancing their inclusion in the electoral process. In addition, progress in promoting the participation of youth and people with disability in the electoral process had not been shared with GSE.

39.   In the absence of a strategy/roadmap with measurable indicators for enhancing the inclusion of youth and persons with disability in the electoral process, MINUSMA could not assess achievements and ensure the effective use of resources in promoting inclusive participation. The Mission needed to collect baselines, targets and results of initiatives implemented for enhancing the participation of youth and persons with disability and share with relevant United Nations entities and other stakeholders taking over these responsibilities.

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(8)   MINUSMA should collect baselines, targets and results of initiatives implemented for enhancing the participation of youth and persons with disability in the electoral process and share it with relevant United Nations entities and stakeholders that will take over these responsibilities.

MINUSMA accepted recommendation 8 and stated that the Government's request and the Security Council's subsequent decision to end MINUSMA's mandate without delay have prevented the Mission from collecting data about program activities. The Mission would address challenges in its White Book, a note compiling lessons and good practices from a decade of electoral assistance. This would include the challenge of improving the participation of youth and people living with disabilities.

Opportunity to promote the development of a fundraising strategy

40.   The 2018 Policy Directive on Principles and Types of United Nations Electoral Assistance suggests using a Basket Fund to raise resources needed for assisting national authorities. The results of the 2021 NAM also recommended developing a fundraising strategy for the full operation of the Basket Fund.

41.   MINUSMA was a participating member of a Basket Fund project led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Basket Fund was signed in 2021 with a budget of $56.3 million to support the 2023-24 electoral cycle. However, the recommended fundraising strategy had yet to be developed. At the time of the audit, the Fund had raised 70 per cent of the budget, and the Mission was satisfied with current funding results but was of the view that UNDP should be responsible for developing the strategy.

42.   While significant progress had been made in raising funds, the lack of a clear strategy may hinder further advancement as potential funding options could be overlooked or insufficiently pursued. In its capacity as a member of the Basket Fund project, MINUSMA could encourage the development of a fundraising strategy as part of its hand-over responsibilities.

Need to collect electoral support communication lessons learned and share with relevant United Nations entities

43.   The MINUSMA Integrated Electoral Support Plan calls for the: development of a strategic communication workplan to support the electoral process and prevent potential electoral-related tensions; the recruitment of a communication consultant; and the use of Radio Mikado (the official radio of MINUSMA), social media, press briefings and articles to explain the nature of the electoral process and mitigate potential tensions.

44.   EAD, in collaboration with the Strategic Communication and Public Information Division, regularly supported the Mission's electoral mandate through information campaigns on key topics, including election, institutional reforms, gender participation, sharing of information with civil society organizations and use of social media to communicate with key stakeholders. However, as of June 2023, the communication consultant was not yet on board, and MINUSMA explained that this was due to resource limitations and recruitment delays. In addition, the Mission had not finalized its electoral communication work plan, and there had been no formal lessons learned exercises or assessments of previous electoral communication support activities to inform and guide future requirements and the development of electoral communication work plans.

45.   Although the Mission stated that it provided effective communication support during the constitutional referendum in 2023, the lack of a formal, timely shared and agreed-upon communication work plan and delays in the recruitment of the consultant impeded its ability to assess the efficient and effective use of its resources for electoral communication. As MINUSMA had supported several electoral events in Mali over the past 10 years, it should ensure that communication best practices, lessons learned and workplans are prepared and shared with relevant UNCT entities and stakeholders to whom electoral support responsibilities would be transferred.

> **(9)** **MINUSMA should, as part of the Mission exit plan, share lessons learned from the Mission's electoral communication support activities with the United Nations entities and stakeholders that would take over this responsibility.**
>
> *MINUSMA accepted recommendation 9 and stated that the Mission organised a round table from 2 to 4 August 2023 with the effective participation of relevant government institutions to share lessons and assess and analyse avenues for a coordinated transfer of tasks to the Government or United Nations Country Team in Mali. The round table report would contribute to developing the transfer plan and share strategic recommendations to ensure national ownership of the process.*

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

46.   OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of MINUSMA 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 preparedness in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	C/ O[3]	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date[4]
1	MINUSMA should develop an exit strategy for the Mission electoral support responsibilities, including mechanisms to ensure an effective and comprehensive handover of responsibilities and knowledge to other United Nations entities and stakeholders.	Important	O	Evidence of the transfer to United Nations Country Team and the Government of Mali of MINUSMA electoral support tasks and responsibilities as per Security Council resolution 2690 of 30 June 2023.	30 September 2023
2	MINUSMA should finalize the terms of reference of the electoral governance and coordination mechanisms and maintain minutes of their meetings to facilitate the transfer of electoral support responsibilities to other entities.	Important	C	Closed without implementation-overtaken by events.	
3	MINUSMA should strengthen the records management system of the Electoral Affairs Division to ensure proper classification and storage of electoral-related documents and data on the SharePoint channel.	Important	C	Implemented	
4	MINUSMA should finalize the register of electoral support lessons learned and share results with relevant stakeholders and upload related documents in the Policy and Practice Database.	Important	O	Evidence of MINUSMA electoral support assistance lessons learnt, and transfer of the lessons leant register to the United Nations Country Team in Mali, and the Department of Peace Operations (Policy and Practice Database).	30 September 2023
5	MINUSMA should document the results of its electoral support capacity-building activities and share them with relevant United Nations entities and stakeholders.	Important	O	Evidence that the Mission's report on its electoral support capacity -building activities has been completed and handed over to United Nations Country Team and Government of Mali.	30 September 2023

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[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 MINUSMA in response to recommendations.

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of electoral support preparedness in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	C/ O[3]	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date[4]
6	MINUSMA should: (a) document the Election Result Management Information System application functional and technical design specifications including information security and change management performed; (b) conduct a vulnerability test of the application; and (c) document the ownership, scope and use of the application and data collected during the test/implementation stage, including the total cost of ownership.	Important	C	Implemented	
7	MINUSMA should establish and implement a mechanism to vet fuel vouchers and monitor the fuel consumption of vehicles provided to electoral agents.	Important	C	Closed without implementation-overtaken by events.	
8	MINUSMA should collect baselines, targets and results of initiatives implemented for enhancing the participation of youth and persons with disability in the electoral process and share it with relevant United Nations entities and stakeholders that will take over these responsibilities.	Important	O	Evidence of the transfer to United Nations Country Team and the Government of Mali of MINUSMA electoral support tasks and responsibilities as per Security Council resolution 2690 of 30 June 2023.	30 September 2023
9	MINUSMA should, as part of the Mission exit plan, share lessons learned from the Mission's electoral communication support activities with the United Nations entities and stakeholders that would take over this responsibility.	Important	O	Evidence of the transfer to United Nations Country Team and the Government of Mali of MINUSMA electoral support tasks and responsibilities as per Security Council resolution 2690 of 30 June 2023.	30 September 2023

APPENDIX I

Management Response

FACSIMILE

15 August 2023   **Reference: MINUSMA/OCOS/2023/126**

TO:	Mr. Kemal Karaseki, Acting Chief Peace keeping audit service. Internal Audit Division, OIOS	**FROM:**	El Hadji Diene Chief of Staff
ATTN:	Mr. Seydou Sirpe Chief Resident Auditor Bamako		

FAX #: **TEL #:**	**FAX #:** **TEL #:**	**Email: MINUSMA-mars@un.org**

SUBJECT: MINUSMA response to the draft report of an audit of electoral support preparedness in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (Assignment No. AP2023-641-01)

Total number of transmitted pages including this page: 5

Reference Facsimile, IAD-22/641/02, dated 28 July 2023 and, Peacekeeping Audit Service, OIOS, memorandum of 28 July 2023, OIOS-2023-01292

1. In reply to the referenced correspondence, please find attached MINUSMA's Management Response to the OIOS findings and recommendations, as presented in the subject report.

2. Note has been taken of the areas warranting the Missions attention, and an action plan for implementing the recommendations issued is attached.

     Best regards.

Drafted by: *bmailu* Boniface Mailu, Admin Assistant Risk Management & Compliance Unit (RMCU) Office of the Chief of Staff (OCOS)	**Authorized by**: *A.K* Anita Kabuga, Chief Risk Management & Compliance Officer Office of the Chief of Staff (OCOS)

Management Response

Audit of electoral support preparedness in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	Acce pted? (Yes/ No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementati on date	Client comments
1	MINUSMA should develop an exit strategy for the Mission electoral support responsibilities, including mechanisms to ensure an effective and comprehensive handover of responsibilities and knowledge to other United Nations entities and stakeholders.	Important	YES	Senior Electoral Officer	30 Sept. 2023	The current political context, leading to the government's decision to request the withdrawal of the Mission without delay, has overtaken the Mission's capacity to develop and implement a well-designed exit strategy with a reasonable transition period. This recommendation will be treated through the Mission transfer plan developed in line with the Mission's imminent withdrawal.
2	MINUSMA should finalise the terms of reference of the electoral governance and coordination mechanisms and maintain minutes of their meetings to facilitate the transfer of electoral support responsibilities to other entities.	Important	YES	Senior Electoral Officer	N/A	The government's decision to request the withdrawal of the Mission without delay and the Security Council's ending of the Mission's substantive mandate have overtaken this work and do not allow the Mission to finalize the development of such tools.
3	MINUSMA should strengthen the records management system of the Electoral Affairs Division to ensure proper classification and storage of electoral-related documents and data on the SharePoint channel.	Important	YES	Senior Electoral Officer	Implemented	MINUSMA's Information Management Unit (IMU) has initiated archiving the Mission's records and archives in paper and digital format as part of the drawdown phase. In this line, EAD has completed storing electoral-related documents and data in SharePoint.

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[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 Organisation.

[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 Organisation.

Management Response

Audit of electoral support preparedness in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	Accepted? (Yes/ No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						https://unitednations.sharepoint.com/sites/MINUSMA-ELE/EAD%20ARCHIVE/Forms/AllItems.aspx
4	MINUSMA should finalise the register of electoral support lessons learned and share results with relevant stakeholders and upload related documents in the Policy and Practice Database.	Important	YES	Senior Electoral Officer	30 Sept. 2023	The Mission is compiling a white book with relevant stakeholders, analysing and identifying lessons and good practices from 10 years of MINUSMA electoral assistance.
5	MINUSMA should document the results of its electoral support capacity-building activities and share them with relevant United Nations entities and stakeholders.	Important	YES	Senior Electoral Officer	30 Sept. 2023	The Mission is currently drafting its general report on support for electoral processes from 2013 to 2023.
6	MINUSMA should: (a) document the Election Result Management Information System application functional and technical design specifications including information security and change management performed; (b) conduct a vulnerability test of the application; and (c) document the ownership, scope and use of the application and data collected during the test/implementation stage, including the total cost of ownership.	Important	YES	Senior Electoral Officer	Implemented	a) EAD, in collaboration with FTS, has developed relevant documentation to inform the framework and facilitate using the Election Result Management Information System through specific information on the technical design specifications, including information security and change management. They are as follows: 1. Guide SIGRE Web Lien: Guide SIGRE WEB.docx (sharepoint.com) 2.Manuel SIGRE Mobile Lien: MANUEL SIGRE - MOBILE.docx (sharepoint.com)

Management Response

Audit of electoral support preparedness in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali

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						b) On June 14, FTS IT security conducted security vulnerability assessments on SIGRE; some vulnerabilities were discovered and reinforced, and the EAD IT team fixed others in web applications and mobile instances. c) The SIGRE application is a United Nations-owned application developed by EAD Electoral IT Officers in MINUSMA. The SIGRE project was classified as "strictly Confidential" by the EAD Management team on June 8, 2023. Therefore, the data collected from the applications was treated, classified, and stored per strictly confidential United Nations rules and regulations. Additionally, the EAD Electoral IT Officers worked in collaboration with the FTS team, and the latter provided guidance (which was strictly followed) during the test and implementation stages of the SIGRE.
7	MINUSMA should establish and implement a mechanism to vet fuel vouchers and monitor the fuel consumption of vehicles provided to electoral agents.	Important	YES	Senior Electoral Officer	N/A	The Government's decision to request the withdrawal of the Mission without delay has overtaken the Mission's capacity to establish a mechanism to vet fuel vouchers and monitor the fuel consumption of vehicles. Since the Mission withdrawal is imminent, no more vehicle rental activities will be implemented.

Management Response

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8	MINUSMA should collect baselines, targets and results of initiatives implemented for enhancing the participation of youth and persons with disability in the electoral process and share it with relevant United Nations entities and stakeholders that will take over these responsibilities.	Important	YES	Senior Electoral Officer	30 September 2023	The Government's request and the Security Council's subsequent decision to end MINUSMA's mandate without delay have prevented the Mission from collecting data about program activities. The Mission will address challenges in its White Book, a note compiling lessons and good practices from a decade of electoral assistance. This will include the challenge of improving the participation of youth and people living with disabilities.
9	MINUSMA should, as part of the Mission exit plan, share lessons from the Mission's electoral communication support activities with headquarters and with the United Nations entities and other stakeholders working on this.	Important	YES	Senior Electoral Officer	30 September 2023	The Mission organised a round table from 2 to 4 August with the effective participation of relevant government institutions to share lessons and assess and analyse avenues for a coordinated transfer of tasks to the Government or UNCT. The round table report will contribute to developing the transfer plan and share strategic recommendations to ensure national ownership of the process.