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INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

MEMORANDUM INTERIEUR

OFFICE OF INTERNAL OVERSIGHT SERVICES · BUREAU DES SERVICES DE CONTRÔLE INTERNE
INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION · DIVISION DE L'AUDIT INTERNE

TO: Mr. Haile Menkerios
A: Special Representative of the Secretary-General,
United Nations Mission in Sudan

DATE: 25 May 2010

REFERENCE: IAD: 10- **00414**

FROM: Fatoumata Ndiaye, Director
DE: Internal Audit Division, OIOS



SUBJECT: **Assignment No. AP2009/632/05 - Audit of recruitment of national staff in UNMIS**
OBJET:

1. I am pleased to present the report on the above-mentioned audit which was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.
2. Based on your comments, we are pleased to inform you that we will close recommendation 1 in the OIOS database as indicated in Annex 1. In order for us to close the remaining recommendations, we request that you provide us with the additional information as discussed in the text of the report and also summarized in Annex 1.
3. Please note that OIOS will report on the progress made to implement its recommendations, particularly those designated as high risk (i.e., recommendation 3), in its annual report to the General Assembly and semi-annual report to the Secretary-General.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Audit of recruitment of national staff in UNMIS

OIOS conducted an audit of recruitment of national staff in United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS). The overall objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of internal controls over the recruitment of national staff in UNMIS. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

The Mission was generally implementing policies and procedures on the recruitment of national professional officers (NPOs) and local staff in line with the delegated authority from the Department of Field Support. However, the audit found the following areas that need improvement:

- As of 1 September 2009, UNMIS vacancy rates were 40 and 21 per cent for NPOs and local staff respectively. This was high when compared to the targets of 15 and 10 per cent respectively established in the Human Resources Action Plan. The high vacancy rates were attributed to several new posts approved for the 2009/2010 fiscal year for which the Mission had not yet initiated and/or completed the recruitment process.
- Delays were encountered in the on-boarding of selected candidates. The average time from the completed selection process to the candidates' reporting date was 230 days compared to the established target of 75 days.
- Reference checks to confirm the experience, qualifications and work history of selected candidates were not conducted.

The audit has made recommendations to address the internal control weaknesses noted in the audit.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of recruitment of national staff in United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS). The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.
2. The Department of Field Support (DFS) delegated authority to UNMIS for the recruitment of national staff. On 21 July 2008, DFS further delegated authority to approve the grade for National Professional Officers (NPOs) recruited in the Mission. As of 30 September 2009, UNMIS had 2,516 national staff against 3,258 authorized posts, representing a vacancy rate of 23 per cent. During the 2008/2009 fiscal year, there were over 200 on-boarding recruitment actions, 300 movements to higher level actions and 100 separations of national staff.
3. National staff comprise of locally-recruited general service (GSL) staff and NPOs. NPOs are locally-recruited staff performing professional functions, while GSL staff are employed to carry out administrative and support functions.
4. The Human Resources Section (HRS) is responsible for anticipating, identifying and meeting the civilian personnel requirements of the Mission and ensuring their efficient deployment, management, administration and separation. HRS is headed by the Chief Civilian Personnel Officer (CCPO) at P-5 level and supported by international and national professional staff, field service staff and national general service staff.
5. Comments made by UNMIS are shown in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVES

6. The main objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of internal controls over recruitment of national staff in UNMIS.

III. AUDIT SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

7. The audit covered the recruitment of NPOs and locally recruited GSL staff for the year 2008/2009, and focused on:
 - (a) Vacancy rate management;
 - (b) Recruitment and selection processes;
 - (c) On-boarding process; and
 - (d) Entitlements reflected in the letter of appointment.
8. The audit methodology included review of personnel and recruitment files and other pertinent records, interviews with key personnel involved in the recruitment, selection, and on-boarding processes as well as analysis of data.

IV. AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Initiation of recruitment actions

9. Recruitment actions form an integral part of the management of vacancy rates in the Mission. HRS works closely with the programme managers in filling vacant positions in the respective programmes. The programme managers are responsible for planning of posts and initiating recruitment actions.

10. As of 30 September 2009, UNMIS had 742 national staff vacant posts resulting in a vacancy rate of 23 per cent. Fifty-six of the 742 posts had been vacant for at least one year. Below are the statistics of national staff on regular posts as of 30 September 2008 and 2009. These rates were high compared to those established in the Human Resources Action Plan (HRAP) dated 18 February 2008. The HRAP states that for a stable mission such as UNMIS, vacancy rates of 10 per cent for GSL staff and 15 per cent for NPOs are acceptable.

Table 1 – National staff levels- authorized, planned and actual staffing as of September 2008 and September 2009.

| | General Service | | NPOs | | Total | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-------|------|------|-------|-------|
| | 2008 | 2009 | 2008 | 2009 | 2008 | 2009 |
| Authorized staffing | 2,597 | 2,997 | 216 | 261 | 2,813 | 3,258 |
| Planned deployment | 2,532 | 2,597 | 214 | 214 | 2,746 | 2,811 |
| Actual staff on board | 2,264 | 2,359 | 135 | 157 | 2,399 | 2,516 |
| Vacant posts* | 268 | 638 | 79 | 104 | 347 | 742 |
| Vacancy rate* | 11% | 21% | 37% | 40% | 12% | 23% |
| Under recruitment /travel | 28 | 121 | 22 | 59 | 50 | 180 |

** As per UNMIS, the vacant posts and vacancy rate for September 2008 were based on planned deployment whereas those of 2009 were based on authorized staffing.*

11. The high vacancy rates were mainly attributed to the 445 posts (45 NPO, and 400 GSL) authorized in the 2009/2010 budget and the lack of qualified candidates in the Mission's sectors with the required English language skills. For example, in the regions there were no qualified candidates available for posts in the areas of communications, air operations and medical services. Consequently some of these positions had been vacant for over three years despite the continued efforts of HRS to source qualified candidates.

12. There were instances when the Mission did not initiate recruitment actions in a timely manner. This included 56 posts which had been vacant for one to three years. UNMIS HRS did not take action because the response from programme managers on requests for action and duty post location were not received. Delays in recruitment result in delays in the implementation of programmes and achievement of the Mission mandate. OIOS is pleased to note, that at the end of the OIOS field work, the Mission issued 34 vacancy announcements covering 108 vacant posts.

Recommendation 1

(1) The UNMIS Office of Mission Support should ensure that the Human Resources Section and responsible programme managers

initiate prompt action on vacant posts to ensure timely recruitment for posts.

13. *The UNMIS Office of Mission Support accepted recommendation 1 and informed OIOS that a number of factors negatively affected the length taken to recruit staff. The Mission stated that despite these challenges, the HRS continues to ensure that prompt action is taken for timely recruitment of vacant posts as a number of recruitments and staff movements were conducted since the inception of the Mission. Based on the action taken, Recommendation 1 has been closed.*

B. Sourcing, evaluation and selection of candidates

There was no evidence of review and crosschecking of the recruitment processes

14. There was no documentary evidence in the 20 recruitment files reviewed by OIOS to suggest that the work of Human Resources Assistants of HRS was reviewed and crosschecked by an HRS officer. The standard operating procedures on staff selection has vested the responsibility of the staff selection process to the CCPO to ensure accuracy, transparency and compliance with relevant policies and procedures. Most of the recruitment actions are done by Human Resources Assistants. However, HRS informed OIOS that each step of the recruitment process had been reviewed, crosschecked and appropriately approved, albeit there was no documentary evidence.

Recommendation 2

(2) The UNMIS Office of Mission Support should ensure that the recruitment process is reviewed and crosschecked and evidence properly documented.

15. *The UNMIS Office of Mission Support accepted recommendation 2 and stated that they have instituted corrective action following the recommendation, where the Human Resources Assistant who initiates the work process now initials and dates the administrative action before submitting it to the approving officer. Recommendation 2 remains open pending verification of implementation of the countercheck system within the recruitment process.*

Delays in the recruitment of candidates

16. The recruitment time for GSL staff and NPOs excessively exceeded the established targets. The recruitment time for GSL staff and NPOs in the fiscal year 2008-2009 for all the 20 recruitment files reviewed by OIOS ranged from 90 to 330 days. The HRAP for missions set the recruitment time for both national and international staff to a maximum of 75 days. This includes 30 days for the selection process (from the initiation of a recruitment process at the mission level to the selection decision) and 45 days from the approval of the selection decision to the candidate's reporting date.

17. Of the sample of 20 files reviewed, 15 cases had exceeded the HRAP recommended time for recruitment of 75 days by 90 days and more. An analysis of recruitment time-lags showed delays in the following processes: (a) shortlisting of

candidates for interviews; (b) selection of candidates interviewed; and (c) the issuance of appointment letters. For all the recruitment cases reviewed by OIOS, none was done within the established target period. This was attributed to the understaffing in the national staff recruitment cell of the HRS. Delays in the recruitment process increase the risk of the loss of competent candidates who might have pursued other opportunities.

Recommendation 3

(3) The UNMIS Office of Mission Support should address delays faced by the Human Resources Section in recruiting staff to ensure compliance with established recruitment targets for the timely deployment of staffing resources.

18. *The UNMIS Office of Mission Support accepted recommendation 3 and stated that since the additional 445 posts were approved, efforts have been made to cope with the added workload. The staffing of the National Recruitment Unit has been increased by adding four temporary staff. The Mission is endeavoring to drastically reduce the selection timelines to an acceptable level, i.e. 75 days from the time a post becomes vacant, as per the HRAP guidelines Recommendation 3 remains open pending verification of achievement of recruitment timelines by the Mission.*

C. Appointment and validation of candidates

Reference checks on candidates are not conducted

19. OIOS noted that reference checks on educational qualifications and employment history of selected candidates were not conducted. There was no evidence that the required academic and employment history checks were conducted on the 20 sampled posts that were filled in 2009. UNMIS recruitment policy and procedures require reference checks to verify candidate's academic qualifications and previous work experience.

20. The failure to conduct the relevant reference checks creates the risk of recruiting unqualified and/or undesirable staff.

Recommendation 4

(4) The UNMIS Office of Mission Support should ensure that the Human Resources Section conducts adequate reference checks that include formal letters to educational institutions and previous employers.

21. *The UNMIS Office of Mission Support accepted recommendation 4 and stated that the National Staff Unit has conducted a review as a result of the HR Reform of both employment history and academic references. With respect to the academic reference checks for NPO staff, HRS is in the process of contacting the registrars of the various universities represented (of which the majority are in Khartoum), requesting that they validate the dates and type of diplomas of national staff. In certain cases, HRS is contacting the staff to explain discrepancies in the information provided. These checks*

are also conducted for all new staff to ensure that their diplomas are authentic. Recommendation 4 remains open pending verification of completion of the reference checks.

D. Administration of entitlements

22. The audit focused on the determination of the grades of new staff, service allowance and leave entitlements, which are reflected in the letters of appointment of national professional and local staff. OIOS reviewed appointment letters for 20 candidates selected between January and June 2009 for various positions and categories with regard to the grade, service allowance levels and leave benefits against academic qualifications and work experience laid down in the relevant standard operating procedures. The entitlements reflected in the appointment letters of the selected 20 candidates were determined in compliance with the relevant procedures and those entitlements are consistent with the experience and qualification requirements of the selected staff.

V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

23. We wish to express our appreciation to the Management and staff of UNMIS for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

cc: Mr. Nicolas Von Ruben, Director of Mission Support, UNMIS
Mr. Farid Zarif, Chief of Staff, UNMIS
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STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

| Recom. no. | Recommendation | Risk category | Risk rating | C/O ¹ | Actions needed to close recommendation | Implementation date ² |
|------------|---|-----------------|-------------|------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| 1 | The UNMIS Office of Mission Support should ensure that the Human Resources Section and responsible programme managers initiate prompt action on vacant posts to ensure timely recruitment for posts. | Operational | Medium | C | Action taken | Implemented |
| 2 | The UNMIS Office of Mission Support should ensure that the recruitment process is reviewed and crosschecked and evidence properly documented. | Operational | Medium | O | Verification of implementation of the countercheck system | Not Provided |
| 3 | The UNMIS Office of Mission Support should address delays faced by the Human Resources Section in recruiting staff to ensure compliance with established recruitment targets for the timely deployment of staffing resources. | Human Resources | High | O | Evidence of achievement of recruitment timelines by the mission. | Not Provided |
| 4 | The UNMIS Office of Mission Support should ensure that Human Resources Section conducts adequate reference checks that include formal letters to educational institutions and previous employers. | Human Resources | Medium | O | Evidence of completion of the reference checks. | Not Provided |

1. C = closed, O = open

2. Date provided by UNMIS in response to recommendations.

ANNEX 2

*Use this page if the orientation of Annex 2 is portrait. If the orientation is landscape, insert a section break at the end of Annex 1 and continue on the new page. (On the **Insert** menu, point to **Break**, select **Next page** under **Section break types**.) Leave the page blank if not required; do not delete it.*