



OIOS

Office of Internal Oversight Services

INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

AUDIT REPORT

Horizontal audit of UNHCR recruitment process for national staff

UNHCR Headquarters should assist Representatives in the field to better exercise their delegated authority for recruiting national staff by providing the necessary training, information technology resources and support

11 November 2009

Assignment No. AR2009/162/02

United Nations  Nations Unies

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. António Guterres, High Commissioner
A: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

DATE: 11 November 2009

REFERENCE: IAD: 09- **03093**

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

Fatoumata

SUBJECT: **Assignment No. AR2009/162/02 - Horizontal audit of UNHCR recruitment process for national staff**
OBJET: **national staff**

1. I am pleased to present the report on the above-mentioned audit.
2. In order for us to close the 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., recommendations 1, 2, 7, 8 and 11), in its annual report to the General Assembly and semi-annual report to the Secretary-General.

cc: Mr. L. Craig Johnstone, Deputy High Commissioner, UNHCR
Ms. Janet Lim, Assistant High Commissioner, UNHCR
Ms. Karen Farkas, Controller and Director, DFAM, UNHCR
Ms. Maha Odeima, Audit Coordinator, UNHCR
Mr. Swatantra Goolsarran, Executive Secretary, UN Board of Auditors
Ms. Susanne Frueh, Executive Secretary, Joint Inspection Unit
Mr. Moses Bamuwamye, Chief, Oversight Support Unit, Department of Management
Mr. Byung-Kun Min, Special Assistant to the USG-OIOS
Mr. Christopher F. Bagot, Chief, Geneva Audit Service, OIOS

INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

FUNCTION

“The Office shall, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations examine, review and appraise the use of financial resources of the United Nations in order to guarantee the implementation of programmes and legislative mandates, ascertain compliance of programme managers with the financial and administrative regulations and rules, as well as with the approved recommendations of external oversight bodies, undertake management audits, reviews and surveys to improve the structure of the Organization and its responsiveness to the requirements of programmes and legislative mandates, and monitor the effectiveness of the systems of internal control of the Organization” (General Assembly Resolution 48/218 B).

CONTACT INFORMATION

ACTING DIRECTOR:

Fatoumata Ndiaye: Tel: +1.212.963.5648, Fax: +1.212.963.3388
e-mail: ndiaye@un.org

CHIEF, GENEVA AUDIT SERVICE:

Christopher F. Bagot: Tel: +41.22.917.2731, Fax: +41.22.917.0011
e-mail: cbagot@unog.ch

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Horizontal audit of UNHCR recruitment process for national staff

OIOS conducted an audit of the recruitment process for national staff at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The overall objective of the audit was to determine whether an effective system of internal control was in place for the recruitment of national staff in UNHCR's field offices. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

Overall, the audit found that the UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management (DHRM) needs to provide adequate training, appropriate information technology resources and support from Headquarters to enable Representations to properly discharge the recruitment authority delegated to them.

In order to reduce delays in recruitment and strengthen the accountability of staff members involved in recruitment at the field level, DHRM should ensure that Representations prepare an annual recruitment schedule, based on the approved Country Operation Plan and standard efficiency benchmarks to be established organization-wide. Also, in conjunction with the implementation of the new Performance Appraisal and Management System, DHRM should develop standard performance objectives for the functions that relate to recruitment activities at the field level.

UNHCR has not implemented the Recruitment and Postings Module of MSRP (Managing for Systems, Resources and People) in field offices to facilitate national recruitment and to better monitor ongoing recruitment cases. Therefore, Representations have to rely on manual and electronic reporting and monitoring systems they have developed themselves, which may not be accurate and reliable. DHRM should either roll out the Module at least in major field operations or explore the possibility of developing an interim solution tailored to serve as a common monitoring tool in the field offices.

DHRM should also develop the necessary monitoring and reporting systems at Headquarters to enable review and assessment of the efficiency of national recruitment delegated to the field. This is necessary to identify deviations from established benchmarks and to assist in addressing the causes of the deviations, especially when they are of a systemic nature. To achieve this goal, DHRM should coordinate with the UNHCR Division of Information Systems and Telecommunications to determine whether such a reporting and monitoring tool could be developed within MSRP.

Finally, DHRM should review the existing mechanisms for dealing with recruitment-related queries from Representations and take appropriate action to improve the quality and timeliness of its responses.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the recruitment process for National staff at the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

2. UNHCR workforce consists of two categories of civil servants: International and National staff members. As per IOM 62/97 – FOM 69/97 on the Delegation of Human Resources Management Authority for Locally Recruited Staff in the Field, issued on 22 August 1997, the authority and responsibility of Representatives in field operations were reinforced by fully delegating the administration and management of recruitment of national staff to them. As per paragraph 7 of the IOM/FOM, “DHRM [the Division of Human Resources Management of UNHCR] will retain its central role for global standard-setting and the establishment of UNHCR’s personnel policies for all categories of staff, irrespective of the level at which they are managed and administered. DHRM will monitor and support these delegated functions worldwide ensuring that standards and norms are applied consistently across the organization”. Paragraph 8 of the same IOM/FOM continues, “Detailed guidelines and reference manuals will be issued and functional training to administrative staff and managers to whom delegation is intended will be provided. This will be complemented by feedback to field offices as implementation gets underway and by the establishment of an administrative review mechanism to ensure that decisions and actions taken by field-level offices are in conformity with established guidelines, policies and procedures”.

3. The Appointments, Postings and Promotions Committees (APPC) for General Service staff and the Appointments, Postings and Promotions Board (APPB) for the National Professional Officers (NPOs) are responsible for reviewing the recruitment processes conducted at UNHCR offices in the field.

4. The APPC mandate, defined as per APPC Rules of Procedures, is to make recommendations to the Deputy High Commissioner or the High Commissioner’s designated Representative in the field in accordance with the United Nations Staff Rules. The APPC Rules of Procedure and Procedural Regulations define its role in filling vacancies in the General Service category and other roles, including assignment of General Service (GS) staff to the Field Service (FS) category, recourses against decisions of non-promotion, awards of a personal grade, granting of Indefinite Appointments and recourses against recommendations for termination of Indefinite Appointment for unsatisfactory performance.

5. For NPOs, who are locally recruited, the above responsibilities are part of the APPB mandate. As per APPB Rules and Procedures, “The APPB is established to advise the High Commissioner and/or designated officials of the High Commissioner on appointments, postings and promotions of internationally recruited staff members at the P-1 to D-1 levels (except Junior Professional Officers) and of National Professional Officers. The APPB will verify that the

Procedural Guidelines have been applied correctly and with integrity, in accordance with prevailing human resources policies.”

6. An MSRP (Managing for Systems, Resources and People) extraction data shows that locally recruited staff members (GS staff and NPOs) represent 77 per cent of the UNHCR staffing table as of 30 June 2009, of which 90 per cent are in the GS category (GS-1 to GS-7) and 10 per cent are in the NPO category (NPO-A to NPO-D).

7. Comments made by UNHCR are shown in *italics*.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVES

8. The overall objective of the audit was to determine whether an effective system of internal control was in place for the recruitment of National staff in UNHCR’s field offices. Specifically, the audit assessed:

(a) The efficiency and effectiveness of the process and procedures for the recruitment of National staff; and,

(b) Compliance by the Representation with relevant staff rules and regulations for the fair and transparent recruitment of National staff.

III. AUDIT SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

9. This report summarizes the key systemic issues identified in four OIOS audits of the recruitment process for national staff, conducted horizontally in the following UNHCR operations: (a) the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (assignment number AR/2008/110/04); (b) Sudan (AR2008/115/03); (c) Syria (AR2009/131/04); and (d) Jordan (AR2009/131/05).

10. These audits, which took place between December 2008 and June 2009, covered national recruitment of GS staff members and NPOs. In addition, at the Headquarters level, OIOS reviewed the governance arrangements as well as policies and procedures pertaining to the recruitment of GS staff members and NPOs. The review did not cover the recruitment process for Field Service assignments or the recruitment of local staff members for the Global Service Centre in Budapest.

11. The methodology used by OIOS for this audit consisted of an activity-level risk assessment, interviews with key staff members at Headquarters and in Field Offices, review of documents and records at DHRM and in field offices, and analysis of data extracted from MSRP and other information management systems. A sampling methodology was utilized as appropriate to select representative numbers of recruitment cases to be tested by OIOS during the field audits.

12. In addition, a web-based survey was conducted by OIOS and a questionnaire was sent to 180 selected staff members in charge of recruitment of National staff in UNHCR field offices (a selection of 30 field offices was done in collaboration with DHRM) in order for OIOS to gather specific information related to challenges and impediments occurring in regular recruitment exercises, in relation with the audit objectives.

13. The survey was conducted through two questionnaires, one for Representatives and Heads of Sub-Offices (hereinafter, "management") and the other one for targeted staff members involved in recruitment activities in the field, including Human Resources Officers, Administrative Officers, Human Resources Clerks and Human Resources and Finance Assistants (hereinafter, "other staff members"). The number of responses received was 90 (or 50 per cent), comprising 25 from management and 65 from other staff members.

IV. AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Control environment

Lack of training in recruitment could lead to inefficiencies, inappropriate decisions, non-compliance and weak accountability

14. DHRM has not ensured that the Representations are provided with adequate training, appropriate information technology resources and sufficient monitoring and support from Headquarters to enable them to properly discharge recruitment authorities that have been delegated to them, in line with IOM 62/97 – FOM 69/97, paragraph 8. In every audit of the recruitment process for national staff conducted at the field level, i.e., the DRC, Sudan, Syria and Jordan, OIOS found instances of inefficiencies, lack of transparency, and non-compliance with the applicable rules and regulations in the recruitment process. These lapses are partly attributable to a lack of familiarity with the established guidelines, policies and procedures.

15. In response to a survey conducted by OIOS, only 24 per cent of management and 44 per cent of other staff members were satisfied with the level of training they had received on recruitment. In fact, 53 per cent of management and 29 per cent of other staff members confirmed that they had not received any recruitment-related training.

16. Moreover, when the respondents were asked about the training they would like to take in order to improve their skills, management commented that they lacked general training in human resources management, particularly with respect to compliance with the established guidelines, policies and procedures. Other staff members expressed an interest in a dedicated training on recruitment, interviewing skills, UNHCR Staff Regulations and the use of the MSRP Human Resources module.

17. OIOS noted that there is no dedicated training programme in the UNHCR online training catalogue for representatives and field staff involved in recruitment.

18. Furthermore, the APPC Rules of Procedure, which govern the functioning of APPC, do not specify whether APPC members were required to be well-versed in the Staff Rules and the Staff Administration and Management Manual (SAMM). In OIOS' opinion, it is crucial that APPC members have thorough knowledge of UNHCR Staff Rules and Regulations, the SAMM and APPC procedural guidelines, in order to maintain a high level of credibility when making recommendations.

19. The overall quality and efficiency of recruitment activity is directly linked to staff competencies and skills. UNHCR should make efforts to ensure that functional training is provided to administrative staff and managers, to whom delegation of recruitment authority is intended, in accordance with IOM 62/97 - FOM 69/97. In this regard, DHRM should consider using the recently established Global Learning Centre in Budapest as the facility to develop web-based training tools, in order to make staff well-versed in UNHCR recruitment guidelines, policies and procedures. Making such training available in e-training format would not only be cost and resource efficient but would also make it accessible world-wide and provide more flexibility to staff members for completing the training. In addition, in OIOS' opinion, it would be important to make customized training, based on an assessment of needs, compulsory for certain categories of staff members, such as representatives and APPC members.

Recommendation 1

(1) The UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management should develop dedicated training for Representatives, field staff and members of the Appointments, Postings and Promotions Committee (APPC) in the field on UNHCR recruitment guidelines, policies and procedures, in accordance with the IOM 62/97 – FOM 69/97 (paragraph 8), giving consideration to implementing such training through web-based learning tools and making it compulsory for certain categories of staff members, such as Representatives and APPC members.

20. *The UNHCR DHRM accepted recommendation 1 and stated that they will develop a training programme as recommended by OIOS. In light of the eventual delegation of responsibility for national officer recruitment and postings through the APPC (local and regional), there will be an increased need to oversee, guide and train constantly as staff rotation and changes will impact on acquired knowledge of the procedures. These actions will be delegated to the Personal Administration and Payroll Section (PAPS) and the Recruitment and Posting Section (RPS) with the Global Learning Centre's support in Budapest. Recommendation 1 remains open pending the development of the training programme on UNHCR recruitment guidelines, policies and procedures.*

Inadequate supervisory controls over the use of delegation of authority could increase the risk of inefficiencies, inappropriate decisions, non-compliance and weak accountability

21. To ensure the proper execution of the delegation of authority to the field, Headquarters should exercise supervision over the delegated authorities. However, OIOS noted that DHRM does not currently have the tools and mechanisms to exercise these functions appropriately and to take corrective action as may be warranted. Staff at DHRM acknowledged that they do not have the ability to be proactive and consistent in this regard.

22. During the audits of the recruitment process for national staff in the DRC, Sudan, Syria and Jordan, OIOS did not come across any mechanisms to demonstrate how Headquarters was exercising their supervisory role, except for APPB's review of the selection of NPO candidates. In addition, there was no standardized reporting from the field to Headquarters on matters related to the recruitment of National staff. For instance, in Syria and Jordan, the Representations were not aware of the fast track system for the recruitment of National staff authorized for supplementary budget and emergency operations or of any instructions regarding the time table for its implementation. This led to significant recruitment delays, which could have been avoided had there been effective supervisory control by DHRM over the implementation of the fast track system.

23. DHRM should determine how much effort it is willing to expend on introducing additional supervisory tools and mechanisms, taking into account the costs and benefits of such controls. This would also depend on the Organization's risk tolerance, i.e., the level of risk it is willing to accept in terms of the delegation of authority to the field for the administration and management of the recruitment of national staff.

Recommendation 2

(2) The UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management, in satisfying the provisions of IOM 62/97 – FOM 69/97 (paragraphs 7 and 8), should consider introducing additional supervisory tools and mechanisms to ensure adherence to the relevant rules and procedures in the recruitment of national staff, taking into account the costs and benefits of such controls and the Organization's risk tolerance regarding the recruitment of national staff delegated to the field.

24. *The UNHCR DHRM accepted recommendation 2 and stated that the training modules as well as oversight and quality control mechanisms need to be put in place. There are risks associated with the policy of delegating the selection process of national officers to the field. In order to mitigate these risks, a help desk and close monitoring of the results will be put in place to enable a proper follow up. Dedicated resources will be needed for the training and help desk activities. This issue is on the agenda for the review of the APPC guidelines. A*

restructuring of the APPC Secretariat at Headquarters and the units covering APPC issues in the field is under discussion and the need for increased capacity at Headquarters and in the field is foreseen. Recommendation 2 remains open pending implementation of the required quality control mechanisms to ensure adherence to relevant rules and procedures in the recruitment of national staff.

B. Planning

UNHCR has not defined a target for measuring the effectiveness in achieving its objective to enhance NPO presence in the field

25. IOM 84/2008 – FOM 86/2008 on Internal Policy Note on National Professional Staff issued in November 2008 highlighted the importance of making robust efforts to explore fuller use of the NPO workforce category. In Annex 2 of the IOM/FOM, DHRM stated that NPO classification is based on “same criteria as for International Professional” and that “new functional, managerial, core and cross-functional competency models for NPOs will be used along with revised job descriptions”. The rationale for introducing the NPO category was to allow the Organization to tap into local knowledge on issues such as the national legal system, local media and community networks, languages, economic, social and cultural conditions, and to invest in the future by enhancing national capabilities in refugee hosting countries and countries of origin.

26. A comparative analysis of staffing tables between 31 December 2008 and 30 June 2009 showed that the number of NPOs across the Organization has increased from 365 to 424 (55 additional NPOs, or an increase of 15 per cent). NPOs now represent 6.7 per cent of the total number of UNHCR staff against 5.4 per cent as at 31 December 2008.

27. However, IOM 84/2008 – FOM 86/2008 is only implicit about what UNHCR wants to achieve in terms of enhancing the NPO presence in the field. Any project or undertaking should have targets, such as expected accomplishments or indicators of achievement, in order to measure its success or to assess whether it is going in the direction of management’s goals. In paragraph 4.2.1, the IOM/FOM merely states that “For regions, where the NPO rate falls below 5 per cent (e.g., Africa, Asia and MENA), efforts should be made to increase, where feasible, the ratio of NPOs”. While this appears to establish the lowest acceptable level by region, the IOM/FOM does not define any other targets. For instance, it does not specify the maximum or optimal level or the desirable range that the Organization aims to achieve in terms of the ratio of NPOs of the total UNHCR workforce, whether at the global, regional or local level. Effectively, the IOM/FOM only provides current statistics without indicating any targets.

28. DHRM indicated that UNHCR does not necessarily want to impose any targets regarding the NPO presence, because NPO staffing is linked to the operational needs in the field and any targets should be left for Representatives to assess themselves, especially since every operation is different. OIOS understands this justification, however, the lack of pre-defined targets makes it

difficult for representations to strategically plan for their need for NPOs and fails to give them the incentives to respond in a manner that corresponds to the requirements of IOM 84/2008 – FOM 86/2008. Lack of formal targets, whether in the form of expected accomplishments or indicators of achievement, also reduces the desired impact of this organization-wide undertaking and increases the risk that the objectives to enhance local capacity, to contribute to national development and to reinforce professional level national staff in office structures might not be achieved.

29. An alternative solution, which was brought up in the discussion with DHRM staff, would be to define “soft” targets for key operational functions in the field (e.g., protection, RSD, resettlement, etc.), such as in the form of “one NPO per key function per office.” For small offices, such a soft target could be flexible.

30. UNHCR needs to take into consideration what it seeks to achieve in terms of enhancing the NPO presence in the preparation of the administrative instruction consolidating the processes and procedures applicable to NPOs to help managers comply with the requirements of IOM 84/2008 – FOM 86/2008.

Recommendation 3

(3) The UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management should consider defining targets for measuring the achievement in its endeavour to explore fuller use of the National Professional Officer category, either at the global, regional or country level.

31. *The UNHCR DHRM accepted recommendation 3 with reservation and stated that targets linked to operational delivery should be determined by the Regional Bureaus and the Division for Programme Support and Management (DPSM). Targets linked to procedures being followed and efficiencies in terms of the process of selection and appointment could be set locally and monitored by DHRM. This issue is on the agenda of the APPC guidelines review/updating in view of the transfer of the review of NPO positions to local/regional APPCs. Recommendation 3 remains open pending issuance of the revised APPC guidelines addressing the review of NPO positions by local/regional APPCs and the development and implementation of related targets and monitoring mechanisms by DHRM.*

Lack of requirement to develop annual recruitment schedule at the country operation level diminishes the efficiency and effectiveness of recruitment activities and dilutes process owners' accountability

32. The SAMM does not require Representations to prepare an annual plan or schedule for filling the posts approved in the Country Operation Plan (COP), approved by the Operations Review Board (ORB) at Headquarters. The IOM 62/97 – FOM 69/97 on the Delegation of Human Resource Management Authority for Locally Recruited Staff in the Field lists the various tasks for which the Representations are responsible. However, it does not specify any task

regarding the planning for human resource management activities, such as recruitment activities.

33. The delegation of authority given to Representatives to implement the COP, including the related recruitment actions, is essential in the current UNHCR organizational system. Representatives have the delegated authority to implement agreed programmes and, therefore, they also have the responsibility to recruit the necessary workforce to implement the programmes.

34. OIOS analyzed the standard job descriptions for various positions related to Human Resources Management at the local level. This included the following job descriptions: Representative (P-5 level), Deputy and Assistant Representative (Administrative), Head of Sub-Office, Head of Field Office, Regional Human Resources Officer, Human Resources Officer, Associate Human Resources Officer, Senior Human Resources Assistant, Human Resources Assistant, Senior Human Resources Clerk, Human Resources Clerk, Senior Administrative Officer and Administrative Officer. The analysis showed that general provisions are made in the standard job descriptions regarding staff management, but no specific tasks are assigned to any of these positions regarding recruitment planning.

35. During the audits of UNHCR Recruitment Process for National Staff in the DRC, Syria, Jordan and Sudan, OIOS observed that there were no recruitment schedules or other forms of annual planning to ensure the efficient and effective filling of posts. Instead, OIOS was often informed that this would not be manageable in UNHCR's evolving environment.

36. OIOS acknowledges that the UNHCR operations are frequently subject to large planning uncertainties and emergencies which require flexibility. However, OIOS is of the opinion that the Representations do have sufficient information regarding the programmes they aim to implement and the posts that have been approved by the ORB, which is needed to develop appropriate recruitment schedules. The lack of advance recruitment planning at country operation level reduces UNHCR Representations' ability to effectively manage their human resource requirements and achieve the objectives stated in the COP. In addition, the lack of adequate recruitment planning due to the absence of clearly assigned targets (such as the deadline for filling all approved posts given the programme requirements or standard timeframes for each step in the process of recruiting staff) dilutes the accountability of the Representatives.

Recommendation 4

(4) The UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management should make it a requirement for UNHCR Representatives to develop an annual recruitment schedule, on the basis of the Country Operation Plan, in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of recruitment activities and to reinforce mechanisms to hold Representatives accountable for the recruitment process.

37. *The UNHCR DHRM accepted recommendation 4 and stated that the COP is already used as the planning tool. However, a recruitment plan could be helpful for target setting and scheduling at the country level. This needs to be explored further with the Bureaus.* Recommendation 4 remains open pending the organization-wide implementation of country level recruitment plans for target setting and scheduling.

There is a need for UNCHR-wide standards to measure the timeliness of recruitment of national staff in the field

38. One of the key efficiency indicators for the recruitment process is the time taken to complete a recruitment action. Except for the fast track deployment model, there is no standard timeframe for recruitment of national staff in UNHCR.

39. All four audits conducted by OIOS in the field demonstrated that delays have affected the recruitment process of national staff and directly impacted the services rendered by UNHCR to its beneficiaries. The following audit observations illustrate the matter:

- The audit of recruitment of national staff in the UNHCR operations in the DRC highlighted three cases (one National Professional Officer post and two General Service posts) where the time taken to fill posts created towards the end of 2007 exceeded 12 months, and 11 posts (two NPO and nine GS posts) created in January 2008 were vacant for almost one year;
- In the UNHCR operations in Syria, OIOS conducted an ageing analysis of the positions that remained vacant as of April 2009. 25 General Service posts had remained vacant for more than one year;
- In the UNHCR operations in Jordan, a Senior Protection Clerk post was vacant for 16 months and a Senior Field Safety Clerk post remained vacant for 17 months;
- In Sudan, 36 recruitment cases, dating back to February 2009, were pending deliberation by the APPC as of June 2009.

40. These delays were attributed to various causes, such as delays in forming the APPC and organizing APPC meetings, absence of key staff involved in recruitment, lack of proper documentation and consequent need for clarification from the interview panel, need to re-advertise vacancies due to lack of candidates, etc. If management in the operations audited had set clear expectations for an acceptable timeframe for recruitment actions, this could have reduced the recruitment delays observed by OIOS and strengthened the accountability mechanisms in respect of staff members involved in recruitment.

41. In the survey conducted by OIOS, 49 per cent of the respondents were satisfied "with the way management has set up clear performance targets in order to avoid delays in recruitment activities". Comments received from staff

members about potential improvements showed that recruitment delays could be reduced if human resources staff received clear instructions from management defining statutory timeframes for recruitment actions.

42. In OIOS opinion, DHRM should define organization-wide standards for the recruitment of national staff, in an effort to improve the timeliness of recruitment. This could be in the form of benchmarks, for example, the number of days between the date of issuance of the vacancy notice and the entry of duty date of the staff member selected for the post. At the field level, such a benchmark should be broken down into the different stages of recruitment actions, depending on the local circumstances, as discussed in paragraph 36 above.

Recommendation 5

(5) The UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management should define organization-wide standards such as benchmarks for the recruitment of national staff, in an effort to improve the timeliness of recruitment.

43. *The UNHCR DHRM accepted recommendation 5 and stated that once the delegation is implemented, standards (rules and procedures) and benchmarks could be set. However, the post classification process as well as post creation and discontinuation in UNHCR fluctuate based on operational requirements. This issue is on the agenda for the review of the APCC guidelines. Recommendation 5 remains open pending the development of standards/benchmarks for the recruitment of national staff.*

Lack of standard performance objectives for the functions related to recruitment activities may dilute individual accountability and lead to avoidable delays

44. The SAMM chapter 1, part 5 describes the new UNHCR Performance Appraisal and Management System (PAMS). The new system states that each staff member should have set objectives which are aligned with his or her manager's objectives and the global goals of the organization. According to the PAMS User Manual: "Setting an individualized work plan and relevant achievable performance expectations at the beginning of the performance cycle determines the staff member's contribution to organizational objectives. It also encourages the establishment of the priorities for the work that needs to be done during the year, as commitment of staff to output and performance expectations has motivational value and establishes personal accountability."

45. OIOS observed in all four audits conducted at the field level that individual work plans with performance objectives for staff members involved in recruitment activities did not exist. In addition, a question was raised in the OIOS questionnaire to the group "other staff members" as to how satisfied they were with the way management has set up clear performance targets, in order to avoid recruitment delays. Only 49 per cent of the 65 respondents were satisfied or fully satisfied with the establishment of their own performance targets. The analysis of the 26 individual comments made in response to this question showed that

individual performance targets were lacking and would be needed to improve timeliness.

46. The lack of performance objectives as a key component of an effective performance management system may impact the quality of the recruitment processes by diluting staff members' accountability and negatively affecting the timeliness of recruitment, which is the most visible criteria of the efficiency of service provided. Linked to the implementation of PAMS, which defines core competencies and areas of improvement for each staff member, performance objectives would play a key role in enhancing the quality of the recruitment management in the field.

47. In addition, in OIOS opinion, given the standardized nature of recruitment of national staff, DHRM should consider developing standard performance criteria for the functions that relate to recruitment activities at the field level.

Recommendations 6

(6) The UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management should, in conjunction with the implementation of the UNHCR Performance Appraisal and Management System, develop standard performance objectives for the functions that relate to recruitment activities at the field level, in order to improve the timeliness of recruitment and reinforce accountability.

48. *The UNHCR DHRM accepted recommendation 6 and stated that objective-setting is a joint responsibility of staff and supervisor, and cannot be "over"-standardized. However, UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management will aim for the next cycle in 2010, to issue guidance notes on the preparation of work objectives. Recommendation 6 remains open pending the issuance of guidance notes on preparation of work objectives for recruitment related functions in the next cycle of the appraisal system.*

C. Monitoring

Lack of monitoring impacts the Representations' ability to identify bottle-necks and impedes their ability to reduce recruitment delays

49. UNHCR has developed a Recruitment and Postings Module in MSRP to electronically manage the recruitment process. While this module is currently utilized only for international recruitment, it has not been rolled out to the field offices to facilitate national recruitment and to better monitor ongoing recruitment cases. Therefore, the Representations have to rely on manual or electronic reporting and monitoring systems they have developed themselves, which could lack accuracy and reliability. This was observed by OIOS in its four field audits and confirmed by 65 per cent of the respondents to the OIOS questionnaire. When asked whether they have the necessary IT tools to fulfill their role in recruitment effectively, staff responded that they were using basic

Microsoft applications (Word, Excel), internet-based applications and Lotus Notes-based applications. OIOS was further informed that there were no plans to implement the Recruitment and Postings module of MSRP in the field in the near future.

50. As long as the Representatives do not have reliable and accurate access to technological tools to facilitate and monitor the recruitment activities locally, there is a risk that they will not be able to identify the delays and bottle-neck situations and address their root causes in a timely manner.

51. OIOS is aware that in most country operations the volume of recruitment actions is limited and therefore the roll-out of the Recruitment and Postings Module of MSRP may not be cost-efficient. However, UNHCR should consider implementing the system at least in its major field operations.

Recommendation 7

(7) The UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management (DHRM) should implement the Recruitment and Postings Module of MSRP (Managing for Systems, Resources and People) at least in the major field operations, in order to enable the Representatives to better monitor the local recruitment process. In case the roll out of the Module is not feasible within a reasonable timeframe, DHRM should explore the possibility of developing an interim solution, tailored to serve as a common tool to facilitate the monitoring of recruitment activities by the Representatives in the field.

52. *The UNHCR DHRM accepted recommendation 7 and stated that originally, Recruitment and Posting Section (RPS) had requested two different recruitment modules, one for the processing of Professional job openings and the other for the processing of GS and FS job openings. In the end, only one module was introduced. Thus, while UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management agrees with the principle of extending the use of MSRP to facilitate the filling of local positions in large operations, the security of the existing recruitment module that is shared by the APPC Secretariat in Geneva and RPS in Budapest must be ensured. Apart from confidentiality being a major issue, there are risks associated with an increase in users and volume of applications. As is the case of personnel administration, whereby each field office is restricted in its use of MSRP for data related to its own location, a similar system or module which is location specific could be developed for the filling of local posts. Recommendation 7 remains open pending the development and roll out of a secure and manageable MSRP module for filling local posts in the field.*

DHRM needs to explore technology as a means to enhance monitoring and address issues of a systemic nature

53. The definition of standards based on organization-wide benchmarks for recruitment of national staff, as discussed in paragraphs 38 to 43 above, would

require that DHRM has the ability to monitor how such standards are complied with. Therefore, there is a need for DHRM to develop the necessary monitoring and reporting systems to enable it to perform this task. For example, a reporting and monitoring tool could be developed as part of the MSRP Recruitment and Posting module to identify deviations from established benchmarks and to assist in addressing the causes of the deviations, especially when they are of a systemic nature. The system which currently exists in the United Nations secretariat – i.e., the Human Resource Action Plan – also could be considered at UNHCR, facilitated by the integrated MSRP system. Furthermore, it would increase transparency of recruitment at field level, strengthen accountability mechanisms and allow DHRM to better fulfill the requirements established in IOM/62/97 - FOM 69/97, paragraphs 7 and 8.

Recommendation 8

(8) The UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management, in coordination with the Division of Information Systems and Telecommunications, should explore the possibility of using MSRP (Managing for Systems, Resources and People) to facilitate reporting and monitoring of recruitment of national staff delegated to Representatives in the field, in accordance with IOM 62/97/ FOM 69/97 (paragraphs 7 and 8).

54. *The UNHCR DHRM accepted recommendation 8 and stated that the timing for planned introduction of the recommended mechanism (December 2010) is very indicative, pending detailed examination with DIST. Recommendation 8 remains open pending the development and implementation of an electronic mechanism for reporting and monitoring on the recruitment of national staff.*

D. Control activities and compliance

Lack of a weighting system in competency-based interviews reduces the transparency of the recruitment process and could affect UNHCR's credibility

55. Article 4.4.69 of the SAMM states that: "The manager is responsible for evaluating which of the eligible candidates is most suited for the position as reflected in the job description, based on their qualifications and experience as well as their competencies, abilities and record of past performance as evidenced in the fact sheets, Performance Appraisal Reports and other relevant documentation." The IOM 20/2000 – FOM 21/2000 related to competency-based interviewing provides guidance to managers on the interview process and evaluation of candidates. This IOM/FOM, which was primarily targeting recruitment of P-4 staff and above, could be used at other levels of staffing as well, including in the recruitment of national staff in the field.

56. The IOM 20/2000 – FOM 21/2000, in part 1 states that: "...the post competencies that are the most important will be identified in order of priority. These key competencies will then form the basis for the development of a pool of

pre-determined interview questions and the identification of response(s) considered to be the most indicative of successful performance, which will facilitate a comparative evaluation of short-listed candidates". This implies that selection criteria should be weighted to give the appropriate emphasis to each of the desired competencies. Lack of a pre-determined weighting system raises questions about the objectivity, transparency, consistency and reliability of the decisions, following the interviews.

57. In the web-based survey, only 51 per cent of the respondents acknowledged using a pre-determined weighting system for the selection criteria, even though it is encouraged in the IOM 20/2000 – FOM 21/2000 and its annexes. This control weakness was also observed in the OIOS audit of the recruitment process for national staff in the DRC.

58. The limited use of weighted selection criteria poses the risk to the transparency of the selection process as it leaves more room for subjectivity in the interview panel's decision-making. As a result, in OIOS' opinion, competency-based selection without using pre-determined weighting criteria could give the perception of an unfair recruitment process and negatively affect both staff morale and UNHCR's credibility among external candidates.

Recommendation 9

(9) The UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management should emphasize to the Representatives the importance of pre-determined weighting criteria when interviewing candidates in the recruitment process for national staff, as encouraged in the IOM 20/2000 – FOM 21/2000.

59. *The UNHCR DHRM accepted recommendation 9 and stated that much guidance will be provided to local and regional APPCs as well as managers to ensure that the delegated process is consistent across the organization and that the quality of national officers is measured similarly regardless of country or region. Tools will be designed and provided to managers in order to facilitate the process. Relevant sections of IOM 20/2000 -FOM 21/2000 will be incorporated into the revised APPC guidelines. Recommendation 9 remains open pending the development of tools and the issuance of revised APPC guidelines to address the question of consistency in the criteria for the selection of national staff.*

DHRM needs to assist Representations in the field to perform efficient background checks on academic and scholastic diplomas and certificates of staff selected for GS posts, where relevant

60. According to the SAMM, chapter 4, procedure 4.2, section 5, the "Responsible Officer verifies original of diplomas and certificates and retains a certified copy in the Official Status File. If necessary, [the Responsible Officer] addresses letter to school/university to verify staff member's degree." This procedural step comes after the APPC review of the candidates. For NPO candidates, all personal and professional references, including the diplomas and

certificates, should be forwarded to DHRM. The APPB is then responsible, inter alia, for reviewing their accuracy and validity.

61. Recently, the United Nations Secretariat and agencies have faced an increase in so-called "diploma mills", i.e., organizations that award academic degrees and diplomas with substandard or no academic study and without recognition by official educational accrediting bodies. In order to counteract this emerging risk, thorough background checks have become critically important. In this regard, the Office of Human Resources Management of the Department of Management is using various lists of accredited institutions of higher learning from different sources, including the list of accredited universities recorded in the International Association of Universities database run by UNESCO.

62. During the audits in Syria and Jordan, OIOS observed that the official status files of locally recruited staff did not contain certified copies of diplomas and certificates. In addition, none of the case files reviewed provided evidence of background checks having been performed. In the DRC, basic internal controls in the area of background checks were in place, but management was not aware of the existence of unaccredited institutions of higher learning or of the accredited universities database. As a result, the Representation was not in a position to ensure that staff members possessed the academic or scholastic diplomas or certificates that they had disclosed in their applications, especially when the post required a specific educational background.

63. At UNHCR Headquarters, background checks for academic and scholastic diplomas and certificates of international staff and NPOs are done through the utilization of a specific directory of accredited universities, in conjunction with the UNESCO accredited universities database, as well as consultations with Ministry of Education of the given country.

64. However, for General Service staff, DHRM is not aware of what is actually done by the field offices. Considering the audit observations made in Syria, Jordan and the DRC, DHRM should communicate to the Representatives the methodology and tools that are being used at Headquarters for checking the educational background of international staff and NPOs, in line with the SAMM, chapter 4, procedure 4.2, section 5, as relevant for each advertised post. In doing so, DHRM should also highlight that this control is simultaneously an assessment of the integrity of the applicants.

Recommendation 10

(10) The UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management should provide the methodology and tools to UNHCR Representations in the field to conduct efficient background checks of academic and scholastic diplomas of General Service staff selected through local recruitment, in accordance with the Staff Administration and Management Manual, chapter 4, procedure 4.2, section 5.

65. *The UNHCR DHRM accepted recommendation 10 and stated that the APPC regulations and methodology will be amended and a training module will be developed by PAPS and RPS. Already, Recruitment and Posting Section and Policy Development and Evaluation Service are using web-based resources to get information on universities which are not accredited. Recommendation 10 remains open pending the development of regulations and methodology, and the development and roll out of a training module, related to the conduct of background checks in the recruitment of national staff.*

E. Information and communication

DHRM needs to review the existing mechanisms for its response to recruitment related queries from the field

66. In accordance with IOM 62/97 – FOM 69/97, paragraphs 7 and 8, “DHRM will monitor and support the delegated functions worldwide ensuring that standards and norms are applied consistently across the organization”, and “[detailed guidelines, reference manuals and functional training] will be complemented by feedback to field offices as implementation gets underway”.

67. The vast array of guidelines, policies and procedures developed by DHRM have played an important role in the implementation of the delegation of authority. However, while Representatives and staff members under their responsibility have the full range of this documentation accessible through the UNHCR intranet, there is a perception that field staff require more than what is currently available and expect supplementary support and guidance from DHRM. This was expressed in the responses to the web-based questionnaires sent by OIOS.

68. The results of the questionnaires illustrated that support from Headquarters was perceived to be either weak or lacking altogether. While comments from the respondents showed that the support had improved recently, field staff expressed concerns about the slow response from DHRM, the need for greater clarity on implementation of policies and lack of a dedicated DHRM staff assigned to assist with questions from the field. Only 53 per cent of all responses (40 per cent of management and 58 per cent of other staff members, respectively) indicated satisfaction with the Headquarters’ support in HR related questions, particularly those related to recruitment. As a result, there is a perception of isolation of field staff from the Headquarters. While OIOS understands that the priority of DHRM is given to international recruitment, IOM 62/97 – FOM 69/97 requires that the delegation of authority of local recruitment to the field has to be complemented by adequate support from Headquarters.

69. DHRM does have personnel who are responsible for responding to recruitment-related queries from the field. The queries range from very simple issues to complex technical matters. However, DHRM does not have a system for prioritizing the queries and determining the most competent person at Headquarters (Geneva or Budapest) to whom these queries should be dispatched. There is also a need for better communication with the Representations to help them to direct queries to the right section or person. In addition, DHRM needs to

explain to staff members in the field that simple queries could be handled directly by the Human Resources Officer in the field rather than to be sent to Headquarters. Such practices would reduce the length of the response times.

70. Also, there is potential for improvement through the development of technological tools in providing support and guidance to the field more efficiently. As a good example, IT Global International Field Technical Support (GIFTS) has developed its Field Infrastructure Support and Advice service, which is committed to solving incidents and problems by email, telephone and remote access, for over 350 field offices worldwide, including 182 offices with LANs. This kind of direct support to the field does not exist for human resources management, or in the area of recruitment of national staff.

71. DHRM should consider developing an on-line web-page or hotline where staff members could send queries by thematic area, which would then be re-distributed automatically to the most appropriate person at Headquarters. This could be along the principles that GIFTS has introduced in the area of IT.

Recommendation 11

(11) The UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management should review the existing mechanisms in dealing with recruitment related queries from the Representations and take appropriate action, as necessary, in view of improving the quality and timeliness of the responses.

72. *The UNHCR DHRM accepted recommendation 11 and stated that while this is done, it depends on available human resources and expertise in Recruitment and Posting Section (RPS) to be able to undertake the required research and revert to Representatives in a timely manner. This issue is linked to the restructuring and strengthening of the Headquarters APPC Secretariat within the context of the reforms to the APPC regulations. Recommendation 11 remains open pending documentation of the steps taken to augment the capacity of RPS to respond to the queries from Representations in a more timely manner.*

V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recom. no.	Recommendation	Risk category	Risk rating	C/O ¹	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ²
1	The UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management should develop dedicated training for representatives, field staff and members of the Appointments, Postings and Promotions Committee (APPC) in the field on UNHCR recruitment guidelines, policies and procedures, in accordance with the IOM 62/97 – FOM 69/97 (paragraph 8), giving consideration to implementing such training through web-based learning tools and making it compulsory for certain categories of staff members, such as representatives and APPC members.	Human Resources	High	0	Development of a training programme on UNHCR recruitment guidelines, policies and procedures.	30 September 2010
2	The UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management, in satisfying the provisions of the IOM 62/97 – FOM 69/97 (paragraphs 7 and 8), should consider introducing additional supervisory tools and mechanisms to ensure adherence to the relevant rules and procedures in the recruitment of national staff, taking into account the costs and benefits of such controls and the Organization's risk tolerance regarding the recruitment of national staff delegated to the field.	Governance	High	0	Implementation of the required quality control mechanisms to ensure adherence to relevant rules and procedures in the recruitment of national staff.	Not provided
3	The UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management should consider defining a target or targets for measuring the achievement in its endeavor to explore fuller use of the National Professional Officer category, either at the global,	Strategy	Moderate	0	Issuance of the revised APPC guidelines addressing the review of NPO positions by local/regional APPCs and the development and implementation of related targets and monitoring mechanisms by DRHM.	31 January 2010

Recom. no.	Recommendation	Risk category	Risk rating	C/O ¹	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ²
4	regional or country level The UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management should make it a requirement for UNHCR Representatives to develop an annual recruitment schedule, on the basis of the Country Operation Plan, in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of recruitment activities and to reinforce mechanisms to hold Representatives accountable for the recruitment process.	Strategy	Moderate	O	Implementation of country level recruitment plans for target setting and scheduling.	31 January 2010
5	The UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management should define organization-wide standards such as benchmarks for recruitment of national staff in an effort to improve the timeliness of recruitment.	Strategy	Moderate	O	Development of standards/benchmarks for the recruitment of national staff.	Not provided
6	The UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management should, in conjunction with the implementation of the UNHCR Performance Appraisal and Management System, develop standard performance objectives for the functions that relate to recruitment activities at the field level, in order to improve the timeliness of recruitment and reinforce accountability.	Strategy	Moderate	O	Issuance of guidance notes on preparation of work objectives for recruitment related functions in the next cycle of the appraisal system	31 December 2010
7	The UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management (DHRM) should implement the Recruitment and Postings Module of MSRP (Managing for Systems, Resources and People) at least in the major field operations, in order to enable the Representatives to better monitor the local recruitment process. In case the roll out of the Module is not feasible within a reasonable timeframe, DHRM should	Information Resources	High	O	Development and roll out of a secure and manageable MSRP module for filling local posts in the field.	Not provided

Recom. no.	Recommendation	Risk category	Risk rating	C/O ¹	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ²
8	<p>explore the possibility of developing an interim solution, tailored to serve as a common tool to facilitate the monitoring of recruitment activities by the Representatives in the field.</p> <p>The UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management, in coordination with the Division of Information Systems and Telecommunications, should explore the possibility of using MSRP (Managing for Systems, Resources and People) to facilitate reporting and monitoring of recruitment of national staff delegated to Representatives in the field, in accordance with IOM 62/97/FOM 69/97 (paragraphs 7 and 8).</p>	Information Resources	High	O	Development and implementation of an electronic mechanism for reporting and monitoring on the recruitment of national staff	31 December 2010
9	<p>The UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management should emphasize to the Representatives the importance of pre-determined weighting criteria when interviewing candidates in the recruitment process for national staff, as encouraged in the IOM 20/2000 – FOM 21/2000.</p>	Human Resources	Moderate	O	Development of tools and the issuance of revised APPC guidelines to address the question of consistency in the criteria for the selection of national staff	31 December 2009
10	<p>The UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management should provide the methodology and tools to UNHCR Representatives in the field to conduct efficient background checks of academic and scholastic diplomas of General Service staff selected through local recruitment, in accordance with the Staff Administration and Management Manual, chapter 4, procedure 4.2, section 5.</p>	Human Resources	Moderate	O	Development of regulations and methodology, and the development and roll out of a training module, related to the conduct of background checks in the recruitment of national staff	31 January 2010
11	<p>The UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management should review the existing mechanisms in dealing with recruitment related queries from the</p>	Operational	High	O	Documentation of the steps taken to augment the capacity of RPS to respond to the queries from Representatives in a more timely manner.	Not provided

Recom. no.	Recommendation	Risk category	Risk rating	C/O ¹	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ²
	Representations and take appropriate action, as necessary, in view of improving the quality and timeliness of the responses.					

¹ C = closed, O = open

² Date provided by UNHCR in response to recommendations