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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. Ibrahim Gambari, Joint Special Representative
A: African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur

DATE: 16 November 2011

REFERENCE: IAD: 11- 00702

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



SUBJECT: **Assignment No. AP2011/634/01 – Audit of the recruitment of national staff in UNAMID**

OBJET: **Overall results relating to the effective management of national staff recruitment in UNAMID were unsatisfactory; however, management has started implementing the OIOS recommendations**

1. Attached please find the final report on the above-mentioned audit.
2. Annex-I shows the status of recommendations. Please note that OIOS will report on the progress made to implement its recommendations in its annual report to the General Assembly and to the Secretary-General, quarterly for critical recommendations and annually for important recommendations (1 to 3).
3. Please note that under General Assembly resolution 59/272, a Member State may request that the final report be made available. Also note that pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/263, OIOS has included the complete management response as an appendix to the present report.
4. We wish to express our appreciation to the Management and staff of UNAMID for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during the assignment.

cc: Mr. Mohamed Yonis, Deputy Joint Special Representative for Operations and Management, UNAMID
Mr. Wolfgang Weiszegger, Director of Mission Support, UNAMID
Mr. Swatantra Goolsarran, Executive Secretary, UN Board of Auditors
Ms. Susanne Frueh, Executive Secretary, Joint Inspection Unit
Mr. Seth Adza, Chief, Audit Response Team, Department of Field Support
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AUDIT REPORT

Audit of the recruitment of national staff in UNAMID

BACKGROUND

The African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) is the United Nations' largest peacekeeping mission.

Recruitment and promotion of national staff is the responsibility of the National Staff Unit, part of the Human Resources Section. The National Staff Unit is headed by a P-4 who reports to the Chief Administrative Services. Recruitment of local staff is decentralized to different sectors across the Mission area. As at February 2011, the Unit was composed of 21 international staff and 28 national staff. The table below shows the human resources budget and staffing for the fiscal year 2010/11.

Table: UNAMID HR budget and staffing levels for the 2010/11 financial period

Categories	Budget (\$000)	Authorized posts	On board as at December 2010	Deployment percentage
International staff	261,836	1,542	1,095	71
National staff	65,731	3,358	2,841	85
Total	327,567	4,900	3,936	80

Source: UNAMID 2010/11 budget and staffing table as at December 2010

This audit was included in OIOS 2011 risk-based work plan because of the Mission's reliance on national staff in achieving its mandate and high operational risks associated with their recruitment.

OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

The audit was conducted to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes of UNAMID in providing reasonable assurance regarding the effective management of its national staff recruitment process. The key control tested for the audit was recruitment and promotion policies and procedures. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2010.

AUDIT RESULTS

In OIOS opinion, risk management, control and governance processes of UNAMID examined were **unsatisfactory** to provide reasonable assurance regarding the effective management of the national staff recruitment process. UNAMID had not developed Mission-specific standard operating procedures to guide the National Recruitment Unit's staff in discharging their responsibilities. Moreover, most of the national staff responsible for recruitment did not have sufficient experience and were not adequately trained. As a result, there were a number of control weaknesses identified in the process resulting in insufficient justification of staff selection. UNAMID recruited over 1,800 Individual Contractors during the audit period, with many of them being transferred from a former contractor without going through a competitive process. Also, the nine-month limit for employment of Individual Contractors had not been implemented, and UNAMID was employing them for periods ranging from 13 to 27 months, which created legal risks.

Mission-specific standard operating procedures

The Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support had promulgated standard operating procedures to manage human resources, including recruitment. However, human resources staff members interviewed by OIOS were not familiar with the procedures. Also, UNAMID had not developed Mission-specific standard operating procedures taking into account the unique operating environment in Darfur to guide staff of the National Staff Unit in discharging their responsibilities. The lack of guidance to staff, as well as their lack of experience in the recruitment process resulted in non-compliance with a number of recruitment policies and procedures, as follows:

- Vacancy announcements were developed and posted outside Mission camps. However, they were not widely disseminated within the Mission through its existing outreach activities to attract as many qualified candidates as possible.
- In 32 of 192 recruitment cases examined, there was no evidence that all applicants were considered for short-listing based on criteria agreed by the programme managers. In 19 cases, applicants who did not meet the minimum requirements for the posts were short-listed, interviewed and selected.
- There was insufficient evidence that all applicants selected for posts had been interviewed. Of the 192 recruitment cases reviewed: (a) interview forms were not signed by the panel members for 16 cases; and (b) there was no evidence that interviews had been conducted for 30 cases. Also, for technical positions such as language assistants and vehicle mechanics, no tests were carried out to ensure that candidates had the necessary expertise and skills.
- In general, reference checks to verify work experience and academic qualifications were not done for national staff positions. The National Staff Unit informed OIOS that it was difficult to obtain formal reference checks due to the Mission's operating environment. UNAMID had not considered finding alternative options to validate national staff's credentials.
- The Mission had not established a Mission Review Board to oversee the recruitment process and ensure fairness and transparency in the recruitment process.

(1) UNAMID should develop Mission-specific standard operating procedures for national staff recruitment to clarify the roles and responsibilities of staff involved in the recruitment and promotion process, as well as the procedures to be followed, including for monitoring compliance with United Nations staff regulations and rules.

UNAMID accepted recommendation 1 and had provided OIOS with a copy of its Mission-specific standard operating procedures on recruitment of national staff. Based on action taken, recommendation 1 has been closed.

Staff experience and training

A review of the background and experiences of 29 of 49 national staff involved in recruitment showed that 27 of them, 93 per cent, had little or no recruitment experience prior to taking up the function and had not received any formal training.

(2) UNAMID should ensure that all staff assigned responsibilities in staff recruitment and promotion are provided adequate on-the-job training, as well as formal training on recruitment procedures and practices to be able to carry out their functions effectively. Assistance from DFS should be sought in providing the training.

UNAMID accepted recommendation 2 and stated that senior human resource staff will prepare a module for in-house training that will enhance knowledge of all staff administering the national staff recruitment process. Furthermore, UNAMID Training Section will prepare and deliver training to all staff involved in recruitment of national staff. Recommendation 2 remains open pending receipt of documentation confirming that staff involved in the recruitment and promotion of national staff has been trained.

Individual Contractors

Over 1,800 Individual Contractors were hired during the period. A review of 43 Individual Contractors case files indicated that 28 of them were transferred directly from a former contractor without going through the competitive process. Also, essential documents such as personnel history forms and education certificates were not available for 34 of the 43 cases reviewed. Moreover, the nine-month limit on the retention of Individual Contractors had not been followed: all 43 cases reviewed showed that Individual Contractors were employed for periods ranging from 13 to 27 months. The Mission was thus exposed to potential legal actions, as Individual Contractors employed beyond the stipulated timeframe are not covered by medical insurance.

(3) UNAMID should ensure that the Individual Contractor recruitment process adheres to the provisions of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support Human Resources Handbook and relevant Administrative Instructions. Also, Individual Contractor employment should not be extended beyond the limits set out in those guidelines and instructions.

UNAMID accepted recommendation 3 and stated that it will follow the guidelines in the Human Resources Handbook on employment of Individual Contractors and will ensure adherence to the limit of nine months of service within one calendar year. Recommendation 3 remains open pending receipt of documentation confirming: (i) the Individual Contractor recruitment process complies with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support Human Resources Handbook; and (ii) the nine-month limit of Individual Contractor employment is adhered to.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the Management and staff of UNAMID for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

AUDIT RESULTS

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AUDIT RESULTS

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the recruitment of national staff in the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operations in Darfur (UNAMID).

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE

2. The audit was conducted to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes of UNAMID in providing reasonable assurance regarding the effective management of its national staff recruitment process. The key control tested for the audit was recruitment and promotion policies and procedures, which are those controls designed to provide reasonable assurance that recruitment and promotion policies and procedures are followed in recruiting and promoting staff.

III. AUDIT SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

3. OIOS conducted the audit from March to June 2011. The audit covered the period 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2010. Of 632 recruitments completed during the period, OIOS reviewed and analyzed 192 files representing 30 per cent. UNAMID also hired over 1,800 Individual Contractors during the period.

4. To gain an understanding of UNAMID's recruitment and promotion policies and procedures, OIOS reviewed the United Nations staff regulations and rules, Administrative Instructions, the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support (DPKO/DFS) Human Resources (HR) Handbook and DPKO/DFS standard operating procedures (SOPs) on managing human resources. OIOS also interviewed staff from the National Staff Unit (NSU) and reviewed national staff members' recruitment files. An activity-level risk assessment was conducted to identify and evaluate specific risk exposures and to confirm the relevance of the selected key control in mitigating the associated risks.

5. Through interviews, analytical reviews and tests of controls, OIOS assessed the existence and adequacy of written policies and procedures, and also whether they were implemented consistently.

IV. OVERALL ASSESSMENT

6. In OIOS opinion, risk management, control and governance processes of UNAMID examined were **unsatisfactory** to provide reasonable assurance regarding the effective management of the national staff recruitment process. UNAMID had not developed Mission-specific standard operating procedures to guide the National Recruitment Unit's staff in discharging their responsibilities. Moreover, most of the national staff responsible for recruitment did not have sufficient experience and were not adequately trained. As a result, there were a number of control weaknesses identified in the process resulting in insufficient justification of staff selection. UNAMID recruited over 1,800 Individual Contractors during the audit period, with many of them being transferred from a former contractor without going through a competitive process. Also, the nine-month limit for employment of Individual Contractors had not been implemented, and UNAMID was employing them for periods ranging from 13 to 27 months, which created legal risks.

V. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Recruitment and promotion policies and procedures

Recruitment policies and procedures were inadequate

7. DPKO/DFS had promulgated SOPs to manage human resources, including recruitment and promotion. However, many of the staff interviewed by OIOS did not have a copy of the procedures. Also, UNAMID had not developed Mission-specific SOPs that take into account the unique operating environment in Darfur. Due to this, as well as a lack of expertise in HR and training of staff as referred to below, UNAMID had not always complied with the required recruitment and promotion process.

There were lapses in procedures for preparing and advertising vacancies

8. Programme managers are responsible for formally requesting a vacancy announcement (VA) to be prepared and advertised. A standard template was available for making such a request. Once the VA is prepared, it should be widely advertised in order to attract as many qualified candidates as possible.

9. In 105 cases of 192 recruitment files reviewed, there was no evidence on file that concerned programme managers had formally requested that VAs be prepared and advertised. Moreover, VAs were not widely advertised across the Mission Area instead they were only posted outside of the Mission's camps, and not included in the Political Affairs, Human Rights, Civil Affairs and Rule of Law Sections outreach activities to ensure that they reached a wider audience. Also, of the 192 VAs reviewed, 23 did not contain the required gender disclosure encouraging female applicants, and 18 did not mention the application fee disclosure.

Short-listing of candidates was not done in a consistent manner

10. Paragraph 3.2.3 of the SOPs states that the Chief Civilian Personnel Officer is responsible for determining whether the programme manager has fairly evaluated the suitability of each candidate based on the agreed parameters, criteria and methodology. However, short-listing of candidates was not consistently performed. Out of 192 files reviewed, 62 lacked evidence of proper short-listing by the programme manager. In 19 cases, candidates who did not meet the minimum requirements for the posts were interviewed and selected.

Testing and interviewing candidates were not systematically done

11. The DPKO/DFS HR Handbook states that to ensure transparency and objectivity, interviews should be conducted by an interview panel, which should include the programme manager to whom the successful candidate will report, and may also include other supervisors or members of the work unit, managers outside the work unit, and/or a representative from the Personnel Section. Where an interview panel is not being used, at least two persons should interview the candidates to make sure that personal biases do not dominate the final selection decision.

12. Out of 192 files reviewed, it was noted that for 16 cases, while interviews were performed, the interview forms were not signed by the panel members. In a further 30 cases, again while OIOS was informed by UNAMID that interviews took place, there was no evidence on file to support this.

AUDIT RESULTS

13. For technical functions such as language and finance assistants, written tests were not administered. Without job-specific written or technical tests, there was no assurance that selected candidates were qualified for the posts. UNAMID needs to consider including the requirement to carry out written tests for technical functions to be included in the Mission-specific SOPs.

Work experience and academic qualifications checks were not performed

14. The DPKO/DFS HR Handbook states that reference checks are to be conducted: (a) as soon as a candidate is short-listed for a position; or (b) prior to inclusion in the roster. The Offer of Appointment must state that it is subject to verification of the information provided in the personnel history form (PHP). If, due to operational requirements, it is necessary that the candidate report for duty before the responses to the reference checks have been received and verified, the recruitment may proceed but the candidate's contract will not be extended beyond the initial appointment until the reference checks are completed.

15. Work experience and academic qualifications verifications were not performed for national staff recruited in UNAMID. The NSU informed OIOS that it was difficult to perform reference checks in the Mission's operating environment.

Lack of roster to expedite the recruitment process

16. HRS did not maintain a roster of technically cleared applicants to expedite the recruitment of national staff. The lack of guidance to staff involved in recruitment reduced the Mission's ability to establish a roster of potential candidates for future recruitments.

A Mission Review Board to oversee the recruitment process had not been established

17. A Mission Review Board could have been established to help mitigate the risk of having an unfair recruitment process. The Mission had not established a Mission Review Board because it was not compulsory.

The maintenance of recruitment files in the National Staff Unit needed improvement

18. Employee recruitment files should contain relevant documents, such as PHP, medical clearance and interview reports. The maintenance of recruitment files was weak due to inadequate supervision and a lack of quality assurance procedures. The checklist designed to show completeness and verification of the required documents before the hiring of a candidate was either incomplete or, in most cases, not used.

Recommendation 1

(1) UNAMID should develop Mission-specific standard operating procedures for national staff recruitment to clarify the roles and responsibilities of staff involved in the recruitment and promotion process, as well as the procedures to be followed, including for monitoring compliance with United Nations staff regulations and rules.

19. *UNAMID accepted recommendation 1 and has provided OIOS with a copy of its Mission-specific standard operating procedures on recruitment of national staff.* Based on action taken, recommendation 1 has been closed.

AUDIT RESULTS

Staff members of the National Staff Unit were not adequately trained for the job

20. Staff involved in recruitment activities should be properly trained to ensure that the recruitment process is fair and transparent and in accordance with the United Nations regulations and rules. From a sample of 29 out of 49 NSU staff members involved with the recruitment activities, 27 had little or no recruitment experience. Discussions with the NSU staff members identified that they had not been formally trained in performing their duties. Recruiting staff with little or no experience in recruitment procedures and lack of training create risks of improper recruitment actions.

Recommendation 2

(2) UNAMID should ensure that all staff assigned responsibilities in staff recruitment and promotion are provided adequate on-the-job training, as well as formal training on recruitment procedures and practices to be able to carry out their functions effectively. Assistance from DFS should be sought in providing the training.

21. *UNAMID accepted recommendation 2 and stated that senior HR staff will prepare a module for in-house training that will enhance knowledge of all staff administering the national recruitment process. Furthermore, UNAMID Training Section will prepare and deliver training to all staff involved in recruitment of national staff.* Recommendation 2 remains open pending receipt of documentation confirming that staff members involved in the recruitment of national staff process has been trained.

There was a need to comply with the procedures for hiring individual contractors

22. The Administrative Instruction ST/AI/1999/7 states that prior to the issuance of an Individual Contractor (IC) contract, the processing office shall verify the academic and professional credentials of the candidate recommended for selection. For that purpose, the requesting official shall submit contract proposals sufficiently in advance of starting dates to allow for completion of the verification requirements. It further indicates that the services of an IC shall be limited to six or, in special circumstances, nine work months in any period of twelve consecutive months. Furthermore, the DPKO/DFS HR Handbook states that because of the strict time limits on the period of service and limited insurance coverage, as well as the legal status of such personnel, the contractual mechanism should not be used where there is a need to retain individuals for extended periods.

23. A review of a sample of 43 case files noted that:

- There was no evidence that IC candidates had been interviewed. Many of the ICs were directly transferred to the Mission from a former contractor.
- Essential documents such as PHPs or education certificates were missing in 34 of the 43 cases reviewed.
- The nine-month limit on the retention of ICs had not been followed. All 43 files reviewed showed that ICs have been employed for a period above 13 months and up-to 27 months. UNAMID put in place a system to employ ICs for three weeks out of four each month throughout the year. The Mission was thus exposed to potential legal actions, as ICs employed over the stipulated time frame were not covered by medical insurance.

AUDIT RESULTS

Recommendation 3

(3) UNAMID should ensure that the Individual Contractor (ICs) recruitment process adheres to the provisions of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support Human Resources Handbook and relevant Administrative Instructions. Also, ICs should not be extended beyond the limits set out in those guidelines and instructions.

24. *UNAMID accepted recommendation 3 and stated that it will follow the guidelines in the Human Resources Handbook on employment of ICs and will ensure adherence to the limit of nine months of service within one calendar year. Recommendation 3 remains open pending receipt of documentation confirming that: (i) the IC recruitment process complies with the DPKO/DFS HR Handbook; and (ii) the nine-month limit of Individual Contractors employment is adhered to.*

STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS
Assignment No. AP2011/634/01 - Audit of the recruitment of national staff in UNAMID

Recom. no.	Recommendation	Risk category	Risk rating	C/O ¹	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ²
1	UNAMID should develop Mission-specific standard operating procedures for national staff recruitment to clarify the roles and responsibilities of staff involved in the recruitment and promotion process, as well as the procedures to be followed, including for monitoring compliance with United Nations staff regulations and rules.	Compliance	Important	C	Action taken	Implemented
2	UNAMID should ensure that all staff assigned responsibilities in staff recruitment and promotion are provided adequate on-the-job training, as well as formal training on recruitment procedures and practices to be able to carry out functions effectively. Assistance from DFS should be sought in providing training.	Operational	Important	O	Receipt of documentation confirming that staff members involved in the recruitment of national staff process has been trained.	30 December 2011
3	UNAMID should ensure that the Individual Contractor (ICs) recruitment process adheres to the provisions of the DPKO/ DFS HR Handbook and relevant Administrative Instructions. Also, ICs should not be extended beyond the limits set out in those guidelines and instructions.	Compliance	Important	O	Receipt of documentation confirming: (i) ICs recruitment process complies with the DPKO/DFS HR Handbook; and (ii) the nine-month limit of ICs employment is adhered to	30 June 2012

1. C = closed, O = open

2. Date provided by UNAMID in response to recommendations.