

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: 7 October 2009

REFERENCE: IAD: 09- 02968

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

SUBJECT: **Assignment No. AR2008/115/03 - Audit of UNHCR's recruitment process for National staff
in Sudan**

Delays in recruitment actions need to be addressed

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 recommendations 2 and 3 in the OIOS recommendations database. In order for us to close recommendation 1, we request that you provide us additional information as discussed in the text of the report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Audit of UNHCR's recruitment process for National staff in Sudan

OIOS conducted an audit of UNHCR's recruitment process for national staff in Sudan. The overall objective of the audit was to determine whether an effective system of internal control is in place for the recruitment of national staff in the UNHCR operations in Sudan. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

The efficiency of the recruitment process needs improvement. OIOS noted delays in recruitment actions that were caused by the inability to form the Appointments, Postings and Promotions Committee (APPC) in a timely manner and the inadequate documentation of recruitment cases submitted to the APPC.

The UNHCR Representation Office, Khartoum took prompt action to implement all the recommendations raised by OIOS.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of UNHCR's recruitment process for National staff in Sudan. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

2. UNCHR workforce consists of two categories of civil servants: International and National staff members. The latter is comprised of General Service (GS) staff and National Professional Officers (NPOs). The recruitment of National staff in Sudan falls under the delegated authority of the Representative, in accordance with IOM 62/97 – FOM 69/97 on the "Delegation of Human Resource Management Authority for Locally Recruited Staff in the Field", issued on 22 August 1997. The Human Resources Unit of the UNHCR Representation Office, Khartoum (ROK) administers the recruitment process for the Khartoum, East Sudan and Darfur regions and provides oversight for recruitment activities in South Sudan. There is an Appointments, Postings and Promotions Committee (APPC) in Khartoum, which is responsible for reviewing the recruitment processes conducted in the Sudan operations.

3. 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 defines the APPC role in the filling of vacancies in the GS category and other roles, including the assignment of General Service staff to the Field Service category, recourses against decisions of non-promotion, award of a personal grade, granting of Indefinite Appointments, recourses against recommendations for termination of Indefinite Appointment for unsatisfactory performance.

4. For NPOs, the responsibilities discussed in paragraph 7 fall under the mandate of the Appointments, Postings and Promotions Board (AAPB) at the UNHCR Headquarters in Geneva.

5. The requirements for National staff are determined in the Country Operation Plan. Upon approval of the plan by the Operations Review Board at Headquarters and classification of the posts by the UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management, positions are advertised in Sudan internally and externally. The Human Resources Unit in Khartoum and the Sub Offices pre-screen and invite candidates for written tests and interviews. The tests and interview results, together with the list of recommended candidates, are submitted to the APPC. Pending the implementation of the Recruitment and Posting module of MSRP ("Managing for Systems, Resources and People", UNHCR's ERP system), recruitment actions are processed manually.

6. National staff approved for the Sudan Operations as of 1 January 2008 was comprised of 443 GS staff and 14 NPOs. In 2009, an additional 15 NPOs have been deployed for the operations in Sudan, in accordance with IOM 84/2008 – FOM 86/2008 on "Internal Policy Note on National Professional Staff", issued in November 2008, which highlighted the importance of making robust efforts to explore fuller use of the

NPO workforce category in the field. Approximately 330 recruitment actions were taken by the APPC from 2007 to mid-2009.

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 is in place for the recruitment of National staff in the UNHCR operations in Sudan. Specifically, the audit assessed:

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

(b) Compliance by the UNHCR Sudan Operations with relevant regulations and rules to ensure a fair and transparent process for the recruitment of National staff.

III. AUDIT SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

9. OIOS reviewed the process for the recruitment of National staff in Sudan from 2007 to 2009, with main emphasis on the recruitment cases from 2008 to 2009. The audit fieldwork took place in May and June 2009.

10. The audit methodology comprised: (a) interviews with responsible personnel; (b) review of policies, procedures and administrative guidelines; (c) review of relevant documents and recruitment records; and (d) analysis of data available from MSRP.

IV. AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Inadequate management representation in the APPC

11. As per APPC Rule of Procedure 3, the Committee, in an operation the size of Sudan, should be composed of eight members (four members and four alternates) evenly nominated by staff representatives and management. The Representative should also appoint an ex-officio non-voting member who is responsible for providing policy and procedural guidelines. Any vacancies in the Committee must be replaced by the respective component (staff or management) from which the vacancy arose.

12. In 2007, the APPC in Sudan consisted of eight members (four members and four alternates). However, only one member and one alternate member were management representatives, in violation of APPC Rule of procedure 3. OIOS further noted that there were no management representatives (except for the ex-officio member) at five of the APPC meetings held between July 2008 and January 2009. As a result, the Committee membership in these meetings consisted only of local General Service staff members. While the required quorum for the APPC meetings is four voting members or alternates (APPC Rule of Procedure 22), without any requirement as to the minimum number of management's representatives, ROK should nevertheless make efforts to ensure adequate management representation in the APPC meetings.

Recommendation 1

(1) The UNHCR Representation Office, Khartoum should ensure that there is adequate management representation in the Appointments, Postings and Promotions Committee (APPC), in accordance with APPC Rule of Procedure 3.

13. *The UNHCR Representation accepted recommendation 1 and stated that the current APPC has been constituted in accordance with existing rules and regulations on management and staff representation. Recommendation 1 remains open pending receipt of documentation showing the composition of the current APPC.*

Delays in recruitment due to untimely formation of the APPC

14. APPC Rule of Procedure 9 stipulates that for the formation of the APPC, members will be chosen from a list of eight names submitted by the staff association and the Representative. OIOS noted that from February to June 2009, there was no staff association in place as the transition to a new staff association was still in progress. As a result, the required list of names from the staff association could not be submitted for the formation of a new APPC that was expected to be functional in February 2009.

15. The delay in the formation of the APPC has slowed down the recruitment of National staff in Sudan. As of June 2009, there were 36 recruitment cases, dating back to February 2009, that were pending deliberation by the APPC. Due to the uncertainty in the formation of the new APPC, ROK could not provide any indication as to when these cases would be reviewed.

Recommendation 2

(2) The UNHCR Representation Office, Khartoum should ensure that alternative arrangements are put in place whenever there is an unavoidable delay in the formation of the Appointments, Postings and Promotions Committee (APPC), such as requesting the Regional APPC or the Headquarters APPC to review the affected recruitment cases.

16. *The UNHCR Representation accepted recommendation 2 and stated that the delay in the formation of the APPC at the beginning of the year was due to the delay in the election of a new staff council. A new staff council has since been duly elected and a new APPC effectively constituted since June 2009. The new APPC held its first meeting in July and cleared all outstanding cases, and has been holding regular monthly meetings. As at September 2009, there were no outstanding cases. Based on the action taken by the Representation, recommendation 2 has been closed.*

Delays in recruitment due to inadequate documentation and non-adherence to APPC Rules of Procedure

17. In 2007, the APPC held two sessions and recommended 84 recruitment cases for GS staff. Some of these cases had been pending since 2006, as they had originally been rejected by the APPC due to inadequate supporting documentation and improper

procedures followed by managers. In December 2007, at the request of the APPC, the Senior Administrative Officer at ROK issued a letter to all UNHCR offices in Sudan to ensure adherence to the APPC Rules of Procedure when submitting cases for review by the Committee. In spite of this, several cases were also deferred in 2008 by the APPC due to incomplete documentation and lack of adherence to APPC procedures. As this appears to be a recurring problem, which has a significant impact on the timeliness of recruitment in Sudan, senior management in ROK should assess the underlying reasons for the control weakness, and correspondingly address it, whether through training or sensitization sessions or other means.

Recommendation 3

(3) The UNHCR Representation Office, Khartoum should address the root causes for the inadequate documentation of cases submitted to the Appointments, Postings and Promotions Committee (APPC), including non-adherence to the APPC Rules of Procedure.

18. *The UNHCR Representation accepted recommendation 3 and stated that the Human Resources Unit at the Representation Office, Khartoum had already initiated training sessions for HR staff handling APPC cases both at the field and in ROK. One such training was organized with the assistance of the Personnel Administration and Payroll Section of UNHCR in November 2008. Further to the training sessions, ROK HR staff had undertaken field missions in 2009 to field offices in Kassala, Damazine and Kurmuk to provide individual training sessions to relevant staff who prepare case submissions to the APPC. Based on the action taken by the Representation, recommendation 3 has been closed.*

V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

19. 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.

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 Bamuwanye, Chief, Oversight Support Unit, Department of Management
Mr. Byung-Kun Min, Special Assistant to the USG-OIOS

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