

Office of Internal Oversight Services

INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

AUDIT REPORT

Public information function in MINUSTAH

In developing its public information strategy, MINUSTAH needs to ensure that adequate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are in place

29 March 2011

Assignment No. AP2010/683/07

United Nations  Nations Unies

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

MEMORANDUM INTERIEUR

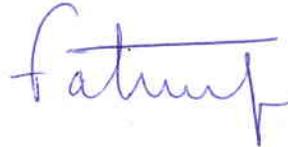
OFFICE OF INTERNAL OVERSIGHT SERVICES · BUREAU DES SERVICES DE CONTRÔLE INTERNE
INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION · DIVISION DE L'AUDIT INTERNE

TO: Mr. Edmond Mulet
A: Special Representative of the Secretary-General
United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti

DATE: 29 March 2011

REFERENCE: IAD: 11-00320

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



SUBJECT: **Assignment No. AP2010/683/07 - Audit of public information function in MINUSTAH**
OBJET:

1. I am pleased to present the report on the above-mentioned audit.
 2. Based on your comments, we are pleased to inform you that we will close recommendations 3 and 5 in the OIOS recommendations database as indicated in Annex 1. In order for us to close the remaining recommendations, we request that you provide us with the additional information as discussed in the text of the report and also summarized in Annex 1.
 3. Your response indicated that you did not accept recommendation 6. In OIOS' opinion however, this recommendation seek to address a significant risk area. We are therefore reiterating it and requesting that you reconsider your initial response based on the additional information provided in the report.
 4. Please note that OIOS will report on the progress made to implement its recommendations, particularly those designated as high risk (i.e., recommendations 2, 6 and 8) in its annual report to the General Assembly and semi-annual report to the Secretary-General.
- cc: Mr. Kevin Kennedy, Principal Deputy Special Representative, MINUSTAH
Mr. Adrian Hills, Chief of Staff, MINUSTAH
Mr. Gilles Briere, Chief of Mission Support, MINUSTAH
Ms. Eliana Nabaa, Chief of Public Information Office, MINUSTAH
Mr. Swatantra Goolsarran, Executive Secretary, UN Board of Auditors
Ms. Susanne Frueh, Executive Secretary, Joint Inspection Unit
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Ms. Eleanor Burns, Chief, Peacekeeping Audit Service, OIOS
Ms. Amy Wong, Programme Officer, Internal Audit Division, 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).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Audit of public information function in MINUSTAH

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of public information function in MINUSTAH. The overall objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of internal controls over the management of public information services in MINUSTAH. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

Internal controls over the management of public information services were inadequate as the lack of adequate planning and a monitoring mechanism diminished the efficiency and effectiveness of MINUSTAH's public information services. The main audit results are as follows:

- The Communications and Public Information Office (CPIO) had been responding to various crisis situations, which had hampered its ability to devote sufficient time and resources in the planning of public information campaigns after the 12 January 2010 earthquake. As a result, campaign plans and other planning documents in relation to the public information campaigns were not always available.
- There was no monitoring mechanism in place to measure the effectiveness and impact of MINUSTAH's public information services, which may hinder the CPIO from taking corrective action and modifying its strategies.
- Public information products and services were not acquired in a timely manner mainly due to inadequate planning and an unclear strategy after the 12 January 2010 earthquake.
- There were no written clearance procedures for the release of public information, which may pose a risk to the Mission's image and reputation if inaccurate, unreliable or biased information is released.
- There was no centralized repository to facilitate the tracking and easy retrieval of archived public information materials. The lack of an adequate archiving system resulted in the loss of important materials during the 12 January 2010 earthquake.
- Critical posts in the CPIO remained vacant. The absence of national professional officers had a significant adverse impact on the effective delivery of public information services in the regions.

OIOS made nine recommendations to address the weaknesses identified in the audit and to improve the management of the services provided.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of public information function in MINUSTAH. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.
2. The Security Council, by its resolution 1702 of 15 August 2006, reaffirmed the need to maintain a proactive communications and public outreach strategy to improve public understanding of the mandate and role of MINUSTAH in Haiti and to deliver messages to the Haitian people directly. Subsequent Security Council resolutions (i.e., 1780, 1840, and 1892) welcomed progress made by MINUSTAH in communications and public outreach strategy, and requested it to continue these activities.
3. In compliance with Security Council resolutions, MINUSTAH established a Communications and Public Information Office (CPIO) to provide public information on all aspects of the Mission's mandate and activities. The CPIO is headed by a Chief of Public Information at the D-1 level and has 104 approved posts including 24 international staff, 15 national professional officers, 57 national staff and eight United Nations volunteers.
4. The CPIO comprises six units as follows: (1) Media Relations and Monitoring Unit; (2) Outreach and Advocacy Unit; (3) Publications Unit; (4) Radio Unit; (5) Video Unit; and (6) Photography Unit.
5. Comments made by MINUSTAH are shown in *italics*.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVES

6. The main objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of internal controls over the management of public information services in MINUSTAH.

III. AUDIT SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

7. The audit covered MINUSTAH's public information services from 1 July 2009 to 31 December 2010.
 8. The audit focused on: (a) public information activities undertaken by the CPIO to achieve mandate objectives; (b) the support provided to substantive sections on their public information campaigns; and (c) the support provided by the Office of Mission Support to the CPIO to implement public information activities.
 9. The audit methodology included a review and analysis of relevant information and documents and interviews with Management and key staff.
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IV. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Strategic management and governance

The public information organization structure

10. The CPIO was properly established in accordance with the United Nations policy and guidance for public information issued by the Department of Public Information (DPI) in cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The Chief of CPIO oversees the development, production and dissemination of public information materials (i.e., publications, video, media relations, advocacy and outreach activities and photography), the Mission's website and the monitoring of local and international media. The Chief of CPIO reports directly to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General who has supervisory responsibilities over the public information component.

The strategic plan

11. The policy on public information in peacekeeping operations requires that the Chief of CPIO develop a public information strategy for each phase of the mission in close consultation with other mission components under the guidance of the Head of Mission who approves the strategy.

12. A comprehensive public information strategy was not in place. While the CPIO had prepared adequate work plans and other short-term planning documents, they were not adequate substitutes of a strategic plan. The new Chief of CPIO, who arrived in the Mission in July 2010, is in the process of developing a strategy which incorporates the Mission's key objectives and tasks as documented in the Mission's Integrated Strategic Framework. Since the CPIO is in the process of developing a public information strategy, OIOS does not make a recommendation in this regard.

Planning of public information campaigns

13. MINUSTAH's public information (PI) campaigns were consistent with the result-based budget and supportive of broader programmatic objectives such as reconciliation and political dialogue, electoral process, promoting the culture of peace, and police reform. In this regard, CPIO had put in place an adequate mechanism for regular consultation with the chiefs of other sections in the Mission in order to determine public information priorities and tasks. As a result, the CPIO continuously produced major information campaigns in support of substantive sections.

14. In the aftermath of the 12 January 2010 earthquake, the CPIO responded to various crisis situations which hampered its ability to devote sufficient time and efforts to the planning phase of PI campaigns. Therefore, campaign plans and other planning documents in relation to PI campaigns were not always available. Minutes were not maintained for planning meetings held prior to the launch of PI campaigns. In addition, short and longer term objectives of PI campaigns, which

represent an important part of the planning process, were not clearly stated in measurable terms.

15. A more formalized PI campaign process will allow the CPIO and other Mission components to commit adequate time, effort and resources to communication planning, conducting research and even pre-testing to some extent.

Recommendation 1

(1) The MINUSTAH Communications and Public Information Office should ensure that adequate resources are devoted to planning for public information campaigns by preparing adequate public information campaign plans and maintaining all planning documents, including minutes of planning meetings for evaluation purposes.

16. *The MINUSTAH Management accepted recommendation 1 and stated that a campaign plan will be developed and campaign meetings recorded for each new campaign embarked upon.* Recommendation 1 remains open pending the receipt of campaign plans and other planning documents prepared in connection with the launch of public information campaigns.

Measurement of the impact and effectiveness of public information services

17. A main component of the CPIO mandate requires that the population of Haiti receive regular information about the mandate, objectives, achievements and key messages of MINUSTAH. In this regard, the CPIO used several communication channels to reach its target audience, but its monitoring mechanisms to determine their effectiveness were limited, thus preventing the CPIO from taking corrective actions and modifying its strategy accordingly. OIOS, however, noted efforts by the CPIO to evaluate its activities held at Multi-Media Centers by requesting immediate feedback from participants and conducting an analysis of demographic data collected from participants. Although the television programme named “Jwet Pou Ou” had received positive feedback from artists and media personnel in Haiti, only 13 per cent of the respondents in the 2nd public opinion poll had seen the programme.

18. The Mission radio station (i.e., MINUSTAH FM) is critical to the success of its PI strategy. It is also essential in terms of reaching out to the population living in the regions. At the time of the audit, the Mission’s radio coverage was not available in the north of Haiti, preventing the Mission to reach about two million people by radio. According to the 2nd public opinion poll, there was a substantial growth potential for the Mission radio station since only about one-fifth of Haitians listen to MINUSTAH FM. OIOS was informed that radio expansion activities had been seriously hampered after the earthquake due to procurement delays and limited engineering capacity for the installation of transmitters.

Recommendations 2 and 3

(2) The MINUSTAH Communications and Public Information Office should ensure that a mechanism is in place for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of its public information services in order to adjust its public information strategy as appropriate.

(3) The MINUSTAH Management should take action to maximize transmitting capability for nation-wide Mission radio coverage.

19. *The MINUSTAH Management accepted recommendation 2 and stated that the effectiveness of its public information services is to be measured on an on-going basis. This will include conducting a biennial survey and regular opinion polls, as well as obtaining feedback from participants on CPIO trainings. Also, substantive sections will be required to provide a report on the effectiveness of campaigns run by them for which CPIO produces marketing materials. Recommendation 2 remains open pending the receipt of documentation evidencing the monitoring and evaluation of public information campaigns.*

20. *The MINUSTAH Management accepted recommendation 3 and stated that additional transmitters have been deployed to ensure nation-wide radio coverage, and action is in progress to secure radio frequencies. Based on the action taken, recommendation 3 has been closed.*

Public information activities in the regions

21. MINUSTAH has established nine outreach centers throughout Haiti known as Multi-Media Centers (MMCs). The CPIO conducted 1,694 outreach activities at the MMCs with over 85,000 participants from 1 January 2009 to 31 October 2010. The principal objective of the MMC project is to inter-connect people on specific subjects, facilitate access to information and establish a network in order to exchange experiences of different local initiatives for reconciliation and dialogue.

22. The MMCs were expected to provide video conferencing services to achieve this objective, but the equipment purchased since 2008 was never installed and some were being used for other purposes. At the time of the audit, action was in progress to enhance existing facilities and to purchase missing accessories required for video conferencing. Based on the actions being taken, OIOS does not make a recommendation in this regard.

Compliance by the Government of Haiti (GoH) with the Status of Force Agreement (SOFA) provisions

23. The GoH did not comply with its obligations under the SOFA by assigning the frequencies on which United Nations radio station, MINUSTAH FM, can operate. As a result, the Mission had to enter into a contractual

agreement with a local broadcasting company for the right to use its frequencies. This situation resulted in incurring unbudgeted expenditure of approximately \$310,000 as of 31 December 2010.

24. In 2007, MINUSTAH Management requested from government authorities the attribution of a radio frequency, but the request was not approved by the GoH. At the time of the audit, the Mission had initiated action with government authorities to request for FM radio frequencies for the United Nations radio station. Based on the action being taken, OIOS does not make a specific recommendation.

B. Operational management

Planning for the acquisition of public information products and services

25. For the fiscal year 2010/2011, the CPIO had an annual acquisition plan for an estimated value of over \$7 million. However, products and services were not acquired in a timely manner. As a result, the broadcasting of television programmes to the Haitian Diaspora was discontinued and the publication of Mission materials in two local newspapers was placed on hold pending action from the CPIO and the Procurement Section. At the time of the audit, immediate action was needed to acquire printing services to meet the requirements for the electoral assistance component.

26. In normal circumstances, the CPIO would raise requisitions many months prior to the scheduled delivery date to allow sufficient time for the procurement process. However, there were instances where the CPIO did not provide adequate details to the Procurement Section resulting in delays. On the other hand, the Procurement Section did not utilize the CPIO's annual acquisition plan as a planning tool to ensure timely procurement action for goods and services; instead, it took action on a case-by-case basis after receipt of requisitions and multiple reminders from the CPIO staff.

27. An effective acquisition plan requires advance planning and devising appropriate strategy to acquire goods and services in an economical and timely manner.

Recommendation 4

(4) The MINUSTAH Management should improve the planning process for the acquisition of public information products and services and ensure that the Communications and Public Information Office and the Procurement Section develop a common strategy to procure public information products and services in a timely manner.

28. *The MINUSTAH Management accepted recommendation 4 and stated that numerous meetings have taken place between CPIO and the Procurement Section to develop a strategy to ensure that CPIO's procurement activities are carried out in an efficient and timely manner. Recommendation 4 remains open*

pending the receipt of documentation evidencing the timely acquisition of public information products and services.

Editorial control over public information materials

29. The CPIO engaged a Haitian film production company to create an information soap opera used to convey a series of messages to internally displaced persons camps to support their relocation to safer accommodation. The scope of work stated that the service provider would be given messages on a weekly basis and turn them into scripts, for verification by the United Nations, and then into a fully produced episode of a soap opera for a period of 16 weeks.

30. Although there was no cause for concern as to the messages portrayed in the soap opera, the CPIO did not maintain documentary evidence supporting its review and approval of the scripts to demonstrate that it has retained editorial control over the materials. CPIO staff informed OIOS that the scripts were reviewed and approved by the Chief of CPIO, but there were no documents to evidence the review and approval of the scripts.

31. The policy on public information in peacekeeping operations states that the Chief of CPIO should retain editorial control of all public information materials. The policy further states that editing of United Nations materials by anyone other than authorized United Nations personnel, is inadmissible.

Recommendation 5

(5) The MINUSTAH Communications and Public Information Office should maintain documentary evidence of its review and approval of all scripts to demonstrate that the Mission has retained editorial control of public information materials.

32. *The MINUSTAH Management accepted recommendation 5 and stated that CPIO will ensure that all scripts are formally signed off in writing.* Based on the assurances provided by Management, recommendation 5 has been closed.

The release of public information materials

33. The policy on public information in peacekeeping operations requires that the CPIO develop written clearance procedures for the release of public information through radio and video programmes, print materials and presentations. However, the CPIO did not document its procedures. This may pose a risk to the Mission's reputation if any inaccurate, unreliable or biased public information product is released. Documented clearance procedures are essential for institutional knowledge and to ensure accountability of concerned staff.

Recommendation 6

(6) The MINUSTAH Communications and Public Information Office should ensure that clearance procedures for the release of public information are documented to prevent release of inaccurate and unreliable information.

34. *The MINUSTAH Management did not accept recommendation 6 and stated that CPIO follows the DPI standard operating procedures to ensure that no information is released without the requisite clearances.* The audit did not find evidence of compliance with DPI's Policy and Guidance for Public Information in the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. This Guidance states that the Chief of Public Information must establish in each unit a clearance procedure, including by: (1) designating public information component officials who may clear information for public release; (2) defining the type of information that may be cleared at each level; and (3) ensuring that all public information component staff are aware of the clearance procedure. The CPIO should ensure that its clearance procedures are documented because of the risk to the Mission's reputation if any inaccurate, unreliable or biased public information product is released. Therefore, OIOS reiterates recommendation 6 and is requesting the Mission's Management to reconsider its initial response. Recommendation 6 remains open pending receipt of documentation on Mission specific clearance procedures for the release of public information.

Archiving of public information materials

35. The policy on public information for peacekeeping operations requires the CPIO to maintain an archive of all public information materials. At the time of the audit, there was no centralized repository to facilitate the tracking and easy retrieval of archived public information materials.

36. The method of archiving public information materials was left at the discretion of the Unit Chiefs. For instance, the Chief of Photography Unit utilized a personal portable hard drive to maintain a Mission archive of selected photographs. The servers used to archive radio audio files were kept in an old server container with no access control system. The server container had a water leak during the rainy season in October 2010. Physical backups in disk format were being used for radio audio files, but the disks were insecurely kept within the broadcasting studio instead of an off-site storage facility.

37. The lack of an adequate archiving system resulted in the loss of important materials during the 12 January 2010 earthquake.

Recommendation 7

(7) The MINUSTAH Communications and Public Information Office should develop an archiving system, preferably in electronic format, setting appropriate standards for classification, retention, preservation, safety and access to archived public information materials.

38. The MINUSTAH Management accepted recommendation 7 and stated that CPIO will utilize the DPKO developed TRIM records management software to archive its documents; and procurement action has been taken to purchase dedicated servers to archive audio visual materials. Recommendation 7 remains open pending the receipt of documentation evidencing the use of the TRIM records management software to archive CPIO documents and the acquisition of servers to archive audio visual materials.

C. Human resources

Staffing

39. The staffing of the CPIO has an overall vacancy rate of 26 per cent, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Staffing summary of the CPIO as of 31 December 2010

Post Title	No of Posts (a)	Staff on Board
International – Professional	16	11 (b)
International – Field Staff	8	7 (c)
United Nations Volunteer (UNV)	8	4
National Professional Officer	15	6
National Staff – General Service	57	49
Total	104	77

(a) – Includes 19 posts approved in the commitment authority.

(b) – P-3 video producer on extended sick leave and P-3 advocacy staff on loan to DFS UNHQ.

(c) – FS-5 staff on extended sick leave.

40. While the CPIO has taken action to reduce the vacancy rate and recruitment is ongoing to fill the vacant posts, attention is required to fill some of the posts such as: (1) P-3 Outreach and Advocacy Officer; (2) P-2 Public Information Officer; (3) National Public Information Officers to be deployed in the regions; and (4) UNV Photographer. These posts are considered critical because the lack of staff has had an adverse impact on the activities of the respective units. For instance, the police component informed OIOS that photographic documentation of Mission success stories was not available due to a lack of photographers. In addition, public information assistants were working in some regions without close supervision.

Recommendation 8

(8) The MINUSTAH Management should ensure that additional efforts are made to fill critical vacant posts and reduce the overall vacancy rate in the Communications and Public Information Office.

41. The MINUSTAH Management accepted recommendation 8 and stated that recruitment action is on-going to fill vacant posts. Recommendation 8 remains open pending confirmation that all critical vacancies are filled.

Training of staff

42. The CPIO is comprised of staff with technical skills who require periodic training to keep their skills current. However, there was insufficient training available to staff. CPIO staff claimed that training budgets were submitted to the Integrated Mission Training Center, however supporting documents could not be provided as they were lost during the 12 January 2010 earthquake. Due to budget constraints, the CPIO should also consider finding alternative training options such as on-line training to address the training needs of its staff. Another cost-effective initiative would be to bring trainers to Haiti and provide training to a larger group of local staff rather than sending individual staff members to training outside the Mission area. Without adequate training, staff may not be able to perform their duties effectively and efficiently.

Recommendation 9

(9) The MINUSTAH Communications and Public Information Office should develop a comprehensive training programme to address the training needs of its staff.

43. *The MINUSTAH Management accepted recommendation 9 and stated that CPIO is working with the Integrated Mission Training Cell to identify potential private training programmes that may be appropriate for CPIO personnel. Such programmes will be included in the 2011/2012 training budget. Recommendation 9 remains open pending the receipt of the comprehensive 2011/2012 CPIO training plan.*

V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

44. We wish to express our appreciation to the Management and staff of MINUSTAH 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 MINUSTAH Communications and Public Information Office should ensure that adequate resources are devoted to planning for public information campaigns by preparing adequate public information campaign plans and maintaining all planning documents, including minutes of planning meetings for evaluation purposes.	Strategy	Medium	O	The receipt of campaign plans and other planning documents prepared in connection with the launching of public information campaigns.	Not provided
2	The MINUSTAH Communications and Public Information Office should ensure that a mechanism is in place for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of its public information services in order to adjust public information strategy as appropriate.	Governance	High	O	The receipt of documentation evidencing the monitoring and evaluation of public information campaigns.	Not provided
3	The MINUSTAH Management should take action to maximize transmitting capability for nation-wide Mission radio coverage.	Strategy	Medium	C	Action taken.	Implemented
4	The MINUSTAH Management should improve the planning over the acquisition of public information products and services and ensure that the Communications and Public Information Office and the Procurement Section develop a common strategy to procure the public information products and services in a timely manner.	Operational	Medium	O	The receipt of documentation evidencing the timely acquisition of public information products and services.	Not provided
5	The MINUSTAH Communications and Public Information Office should maintain documentary evidence of a review and approval of all scripts to demonstrate that the Mission has retained editorial control of the public information materials.	Operational	Medium	C	Action taken.	Implemented

Recom. no.	Recommendation	Risk category	Risk rating	C/O¹	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date²
6	The MINUSTAH Communications and Public Information Office should ensure that clearance procedures for the release of public information are documented to prevent release of inaccurate and unreliable information.	Operational	High	O	The receipt of documentation on Mission specific clearance procedures for the release of public information.	Not provided
7	The MINUSTAH Communications and Public Information Office should develop an archiving system, preferably in electronic format, setting appropriate standards for classification, retention, preservation, safety and access to archived public information materials.	Operational	Medium	O	The receipt of documentation evidencing the use of the TRIM records management software to archive CPIO documents and the acquisition of servers to archive audio visual materials.	October 2011
8	The MINUSTAH Management should ensure that additional efforts are made to fill critical vacant posts and reduce the overall vacancy rate in the Communications and Public Information Office.	Human Resources	High	O	Confirmation that all critical vacancies have been filled.	On-going
9	The MINUSTAH Communications and Public Information Office should develop a comprehensive training programme to address the training needs of its staff.	Human Resources	Medium	O	The receipt of the comprehensive 2011/2012 CPIO training plan.	On-going

1. C = closed, O = open

2. Date provided by MINUSTAH in response to recommendations.