



Office of Internal Oversight Services

INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

AUDIT REPORT

Audit of Electoral Support Programme in UNAMA

**Resources to support the electoral process in
Afghanistan were inadequate**

18 September 2009

Assignment No. AP2009/630/03

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. Kai Eide
A: Special Representative of the Secretary-General
United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

DATE: 18 September 2009

REFERENCE: IAD: 09- 02885

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

Fatou

SUBJECT: **Assignment No. AP2009/630/03 - Audit of Electoral Support Programme in UNAMA**
OBJET:

1. I am pleased to present the report on the above-mentioned audit.
2. Based on your comments, and to enable us to close the recommendations, we request that you provide us with 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 as indicated in Annex 1, particularly those designated as high risk (i.e., recommendations 1, 2 and 5) in its annual report to the General Assembly and semi-annual report to the Secretary-General.

cc: Mr. Peter Woodard Galbraith, Deputy SRSG- Pillar I, UNAMA
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Mr. Talatbek Masadykov, Chief Political Affairs Officer, UNAMA
Ms. Neva Donalds, Chief of Mission Support, UNAMA
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INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

FUNCTION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Electoral Support Programme in UNAMA

OIOS conducted an audit of the Electoral Support Programme in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The overall objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy of UNAMA's support to the electoral process. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

The Mission lacked appropriate expertise and strategy to ensure the effectiveness of its support of the electoral process. There were a number of deficiencies as follows:

- The Electoral Support Unit (ESU) was established to help the Mission in leading international efforts in support of the electoral process, but the Unit was not stable and therefore could not be considered as effective. Less than seven months after its creation, the Unit was restructured and its Head removed.
- To ensure effective electoral support, the General Assembly authorized nine posts, including six professional level posts. As at the date of the audit, only two of the posts had been filled, the recruitment having been delayed by more than five months. OIOS notes that the posts were filled by individuals who lacked the relevant experience in electoral support.
- UNAMA established the ESU to perform a number of tasks, but there was no work plan to show how the Unit prioritize its activities. Due to the lack of a work plan, the ESU appeared to lack a clear direction.
- OIOS was informed that the ESU attended various meetings on electoral matters, convened meetings of stakeholders including UNDP, donors, and the Independent Electoral Commission. The ESU should serve as repository of electoral support intelligence; however it did not maintain adequate working documents of meetings and other forums, which it participated in.

OIOS has made five recommendations to address the issues identified during the audit.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of Electoral Support Programme in United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

2. In its resolution 1806 (2008), the Security Council requested UNAMA to lead international efforts to support the electoral process through the Afghan Independent Election Commission (IEC) by providing technical assistance and coordinating other international donors, agencies and organizations providing assistance and channeling funds earmarked to support the process. Accordingly and pursuant to the 2009 budget (A/63/346/Add.4), UNAMA established the Electoral Support Unit (ESU), to function as a stand alone unit working closely with the Political Affairs Unit and other units in Pillar I.

3. Presidential and provincial elections were scheduled for 20 August 2009 and the parliamentary election in 2010. Afghanistan has a bicameral National Assembly consisting of the House of People (Wolesi Jirga) with maximum 249 seats and the House of Elders (Meshrano Jirga) with 102 seats. Under the constitution, the president and his/her two vice presidents are elected through direct popular vote to serve for a 5-year term. Members of the House of People are elected by popular vote for a 5-year term. In the House of Elders, 34 members will be elected from provincial councils for 4-year terms, 34 from local district councils for 3-year terms, and 34 will be appointed by the president to serve 5-year terms.

4. At the time the last presidential election was held in 2004, Afghanistan had a population of about 28 million of which approximately 10 million was eligible to vote. Eighty per cent of the 10 million eligible voters voted. During the last parliamentary elections held on 18 September 2005, Afghanistan had a population of about 30 million and approximately 12.5 million were eligible to vote. Of the 12.5 million eligible voters, 6.4 million voted. Currently, Afghanistan has a population of about 33 million.

5. Comments made by UNAMA are shown in *italics*.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVES

6. The main objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy of UNAMA's support to the electoral process, in particular:

(a) Verify that the Mission's support activities were clearly defined, delineated reflecting the requirements of electoral stakeholders including IEC;

(b) Verify that appropriate mechanisms were in place for responding to the needs of electoral stakeholders, within the mandate of the Mission and UN policies, in an effective and efficient manner; and

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- (c) Assess compliance with UN regulations and rules in the establishment of the Electoral Support Unit (ESU).

III. AUDIT SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

7. The audit covered the period from January to June 2009. The auditors reviewed the electoral support structure as well as the activities of the ESU. The audit did not cover the work of the UNDP, the IEC and other actors involved in the electoral process who are not part of UNAMA or the Departments of Political Affairs (DPA) and Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO).

8. The audit methodology included interviews and discussions with key staff of the Mission and reviews of relevant documents and records.

IV. AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Structure of the Electoral Support Unit

9. As indicated above, the Security Council requested UNAMA to lead international efforts to support the electoral process, through the Afghan IEC, by providing technical assistance and coordinating other international donors, agencies and organizations providing assistance and channeling funds earmarked to support the process. In November 2007, the Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) of the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), based on their assessment, recommended the establishment of a capacity within UNAMA to support the electoral process. Accordingly and pursuant to the 2009 budget (A/63/346/Add.4), UNAMA established the ESU, to function as a stand alone unit working closely with the Political Affairs Unit and other units in Pillar I and report to the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

10. Following completion of the fieldwork for the present audit, OIOS was informed that the ESU had been restructured and its head, at P-5 level, had been removed effective June 2009. The restructured ESU had been merged with the Political Affairs Section and it was not clear if the ESU will continue to be headed by a specialist at P-5 level. The abrupt restructuring of the ESU, within less than a year of its creation and barely a month before the presidential elections were held, raised questions about the establishment of the ESU and the extent of the analyses supporting the restructuring. As well, the abrupt restructuring raised questions about the Mission's preparedness to effectively support the presidential election scheduled to be held in August 2009 and local and parliamentary elections scheduled to be held in 2010. The removal of the head of the ESU could also amount to the use of authorized resources for unintended purposes if the P-5 post is not set aside pending the recruitment of a new Head of the Unit.

Recommendation 1

(1) The UNAMA Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General should ensure full compliance with the General Assembly mandate establishing the Electoral Support Unit including, for example, the reporting arrangements and the use of resources.

11. *The UNAMA Senior Management accepted recommendation 1 and stated that the UNAMA Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General will continue to ensure full compliance with the General Assembly mandate establishing the Electoral Support Unit within his pillar as part of a political mission working in conjunction with UNDP-ELECT, and will ensure proper reporting arrangements and use of resources in that context. Recommendation 1 remains open pending verification of the Mission's compliance with the General Assembly mandate establishing the ESU.*

B. Ineffective recruitment of electoral officers

12. According to the 2009 budget, the General Assembly authorized nine posts for the newly established ESU – i.e. six international staff (1 P-5, 2 P-4, 2 P-3, and 1 P-2) and three local staff. Primarily, due to poor planning and the lack of effective recruitment activities, only two of the posts (1 P-5 and 1 P-4) had been filled as at the date of the audit.

13. The Tiger Team deployed to the Mission by the Department of Field Support (DFS) commenced the recruitment for nine posts in early 2009, but the on-boarding of the successful candidates for four posts (1 P-5, 1 P-4, 2 GS posts) was completed as at June 2009. The interviews for the remaining posts had been completed, but the Mission suspended the selection and on-boarding of the successful candidates pending the completion of the presidential election scheduled to be held in August 2009. To fill the gap, the Mission loaned three staff (1 P-4, 1 P-3, and 1 P-2) from the Political Affairs Section.

14. The generic vacancy announcements for electoral officers, at P-4 or P-5 level, require relevant, progressively responsible work experience in electoral administration and systems. On this basis, the EAD of the DPA maintains a roster of electoral experts. The roster contains candidates with a strong background on electoral matters whose references have already been checked. There was no clear evidence that the roster of electoral experts was used when recruiting for the two posts. The Mission relied mainly on the roster of the Field Personnel Division (FPD) of DFS which is typically used for recruiting political affairs officers who do not need to have work experience in electoral administration and systems. The use of the EAD's roster would have helped in recruiting senior staff with more relevant experience in electoral administration and systems.

15. As underscored in paragraph 10 above, the ESU had been restructured and its head, at P-5 level, had been removed effective June 2009. Therefore, six

(1 P-5, 1 P-4, 2 P-3s and 1 P-2, and 1 GS) of the nine approved posts had been vacant as at the time of the audit.

16. The delays in filling the vacancies of the ESU, the removal of the Head of the ESU as underscored in paragraph 10 above, and the recruitment of staff that did not possess the relevant experience in electoral support raised serious questions regarding the quality of the support provided to the presidential election scheduled to be held in August 2009. As well, the lack of the relevant expertise in the ESU raised questions about the Mission's ability to effectively support the local and parliamentary elections scheduled to be held in 2010.

Recommendations 2 and 3

The UNAMA Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Office of Mission Support should:

(2) Ensure that high priority is given to the recruitment for the Electoral Support Unit; and

(3) Ensure the recruitment of staff that possesses the relevant experience in electoral support as contained in the generic vacancy announcements for electoral support officers.

17. *The UNAMA Office of Mission Support accepted recommendations 2 and 3 and stated that it will continue to do everything within their power to ensure the recruitment of staff who possess relevant experience to provide electoral support as part of a political mission working in conjunction with UNDP-ELECT, in line with UNAMA's mandate and approved budget. Recommendations 2 and 3 remain open pending verification of the timely selection and on-boarding of candidates that possess the relevant experience in electoral support for the remaining six posts including the post for the Chief of the ESU.*

C. Inadequate work planning for the Electoral Support Unit

18. As indicated above, UNAMA established the ESU to fulfill its advisory role in support of the electoral process and to ensure a coherent and coordinated overall UN contribution to the election. Following is a list of some of the specific functions for which the Unit was established.

- Collect political intelligence on all electoral issues;
- Provide overall monitoring of the IEC, Electoral Complaints Commission and the Media Commission;
- Monitor and analyze media reporting;
- Support the IEC;
- Support the counting process;
- Monitor and analyze intimidation and/or attempted influence by state officials and other groups;
- Monitor all political and electoral issues;

- Manage the vetting of candidates;
- Manage political party and candidates registration issues;
- Monitor and provide analysis on the work of the Electoral Complaints Commission;
- Assist UNDP ELECT and UNDP HQ with all electoral funding drives;
- Coordinate other international donors, agencies and organizations providing assistance; and
- Coordinate the channeling funds earmarked to support the process.

19. The ESU did not have a work plan containing, among others, the descriptions of the activities to be performed and related timeframes and deadlines, expected accomplishments and performance indicators, and assigning responsibility for each activity. The Mission's 2008-2009 budget contains functional descriptions of the posts of the ESU. Additionally, the ESU has terms of reference, which contain an overview of the responsibilities of its staff. In OIOS' view, the budgets and the terms of reference do not fulfill the requirements of a complete work plan. Therefore, they do not show the priorities of the Unit and its staff, as well as the timeframes for accomplishing tasks.

Recommendation 4

(4) The UNAMA Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General should ensure that the Electoral Support Unit prepare a work plan, duly approved by senior management, specifying, among others, the descriptions of its planned activities and related timeframes and deadlines, expected accomplishments and performance indicators, and assigning responsibility for each activity.

20. *The UNAMA Senior Management accepted recommendation 4 and stated that UNAMA acknowledges that the ESU did not have a work plan containing descriptions of the activities to be performed. The ESU's main activities and responsibilities were described in some detail, however, in the terms of reference approved by Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General. The ESU had also established a detailed distribution of work matrix, conceptualized and set up a mission-wide consultative structure (the Election Task Force-ETF). Recommendation 4 remains open pending verification of the work plan of the ESU.*

D. Inadequate documents of the activities of the Electoral Support Unit

21. The coordination of various players, including those internal and external to UNAMA, participation in meetings, forums, and consultation with stakeholders of the electoral process are critical to the effectiveness of the ESU. OIOS was informed that the ESU attended various meeting on electoral matters, convened meetings of the ETF and other stakeholder including UNDP, donors and IEC. The ESU should serve as repository of electoral support intelligence;

however, it did not maintain adequate working documents of meetings and other forums, which it participated in. For example, the ESU did not have records of the weekly meetings of the ETF, the monthly meetings of the donor group held on the first Tuesday of each month, bi-monthly meeting with US Embassy, weekly meetings of UNAMA/UNDP ELECT, and the fortnightly meetings of the IEC Steering Committee.

22. Due to the absence of the above-mentioned working documents, OIOS could not assess the nature and extent of the meetings/consultations, and if they were held. The ESU explained that its staff was overstretched and therefore was unable to maintain records of its activities. However, at the time of the field work, OIOS noted that the Unit had seven staff including three international staff loaned from the Political Affairs Section and two national staff. Moreover, OIOS notes that the preparation of the records of meetings is integral to participation in the concerned meetings and should therefore not be considered separate tasks that required additional resources.

Recommendation 5

(5) The UNAMA Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General should ensure the establishment of mechanisms for the creation of credible records of the meeting, consultations, forums attended by the Electoral Support Unit.

23. *The UNAMA Senior Management accepted recommendation 5 and stated that the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General will ensure the establishment and continued functioning of mechanisms for the creation of credible records of meetings, consultations, and forums attended by ESU as required.* Recommendation 5 remains open pending verification of the mechanisms for the creation of credible records of the meetings, consultations, and forums attended by the ESU.

V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

24. We wish to express our appreciation to the Management and staff of UNAMA 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 Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General should ensure full compliance with General Assembly mandate establishing the Electoral Support Unit including for example, the reporting arrangements and the use of resources.	Human Resource	High	O	Verification of the Mission's compliance with the General Assembly mandate establishing the Electoral Support Unit.	December 2009
2	The UNAMA Office of Mission Support and the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General should ensure that high priority is given to the recruitment for the Electoral Support Unit.	Compliance	High	O	Verification of the timely selection and on-boarding candidates that possess the relevant experience in electoral support for the remaining six posts.	December 2009
3	The UNAMA Office of Mission Support and the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General should ensure the recruitment of staff that possess the relevant experience in electoral support and contained in the generic vacancy announcements for electoral support officers.	Human Resource	Medium	O	Verification of the timely selection and on-boarding candidates that possess the relevant experience in electoral support for the remaining six posts.	December 2009
4	The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General should ensure that the Electoral Support Unit prepare a work plan, duly approved by Senior Management, specifying, among others, the descriptions of its planned activities and related timeframes and deadlines, expected accomplishments and performance indicators, and assigning responsibility for each activity.	Operational	Medium	O	Pending verification of the revised work plan of the ESU.	October 2009

Recom. no.	Recommendation	Risk category	Risk rating	C/O ¹	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ²
5	The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General should ensure the establishment of mechanisms for the creation of credible records of the meeting, consultations, forums attended by the Electoral Support Unit.	Operational	High	O	Pending verification of the mechanisms for the creation of credible records of the meetings, consultations, and forums attended by the ESU.	November 2009

1. C = closed, O = open

2. Date provided by UNAMA in response to recommendations.