



**Internal Audit Division I
Office of Internal Oversight Services**

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To: Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

From: Patricia Azarias, Director
Internal Audit Division I, OIOS

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "P. Azarias".

Subject: **OIOS Audit No. AN2005/590/03: Human Resources management for
OCHA's Field Operations: Final Report**

1. I am pleased to present our final report on the subject audit, which was conducted in August-September 2005. The report has incorporated your written comments of 24 January 2006 on OIOS' draft report dated 21 November 2005.

2. I am pleased to inform you that based on the information contained in your response to the draft report, we have closed recommendation AN2005/590/03/01. The table in the Annex to the report summarizes those recommendations that remain open in IAD I's database following our review of the initial comments, together with actions required in order for us to close the recommendations. These recommendations will be reported as part of OIOS' Semi-Annual Report to the Secretary-General on the implementation status of recommendations.

3. Please note that IAD I is assessing the overall quality of its audit process. I therefore kindly request that you consult with your managers who dealt directly with auditors and complete the attached client satisfaction survey form.

4. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your staff for the assistance and cooperation extended to the audit team. I would also like to acknowledge the rather positive and constructive nature of OCHA-Geneva's comments on the draft audit report.

Cc: Board of Auditors
Mr. Christopher B. Burnham, USG, DM
Ms. Yvette Stevens, Assistant Emergency Relief Coordinator and
Head of OCHA-Geneva
OIOS Programme Officer



United Nations
OFFICE OF INTERNAL OVERSIGHT SERVICES
Internal Audit Division I

Audit Report

Audit subject: Audit of Human Resources Management for OCHA's Field Offices

Audit No. and location: AN2005/590/03, Geneva

Report date: 09 February 2006

Audit team: Sergei Shishkin and Magdella Chotoosingh

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**AUDIT OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT FOR OCHA'S FIELD OFFICES
(AN2005/590/03)**

Executive Summary

In August-September 2005, OIOS audited management of human resources for OCHA's field offices.

The overall conclusion of the auditors was that a major change is needed in OCHA's approach to human resources management in order to support the field operations effectively and efficiently, and with due respect to the UN human resource management principles. Change should systematically address delays in recruitment for field offices and improve the fairness and transparency of the recruitment process. The following areas should be comprehensively addressed:

- policies and procedures, including a viable rotation policy;
- resources and organizational structure of HR functions;
- HR planning, including reliable database and reporting;
- accountability for the compliance to staff selection principles; and
- staff management and administrative issues, including PAS, training and attention to concerns of the staff in the field offices.

OIOS made a number of recommendations to address the weaknesses identified in the HR management systems. OCHA has accepted the recommendations and initiated their implementation. It is important that OCHA ensures full implementation of the accepted recommendations so that its goals in these areas are achieved.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In August-September 2005, OIOS audited management of human resources for OCHA's field offices. At the time of the audit, OCHA maintained approximately 30 field offices with almost 200 internationally recruited staff in the professional category. Most of the hired staff members were administered under the 200 series of Staff Regulations and Rules. Human resource management relevant to this category of staff was handled by the OCHA's Office in Geneva (OCHA-Geneva) and the Human Resources Service of the United Nations Office in Geneva (HRMS/UNOG).

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVES

2. The objectives of the audit were to assess the: (i) effectiveness and efficiency of recruitment practices for the OCHA's field offices and (ii) compliance of personnel management and administration with OHRM policies and procedures.

III. AUDIT SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

3. The audit was carried out in accordance with the standards for the professional practice of internal auditing in United Nations organizations. The auditors performed a preliminary risk assessment of the areas and evaluated the existing internal controls. Certain tests of the recruitment process and other HR functions were carried out, as well as interviews with the officials responsible for HRM. The heads of OCHA field offices were also surveyed. The audit covered HR activities in 2004 and the first six months of 2005.

4. The audit results were discussed with the officials of the Executive Office of OCHA-Geneva who were given an opportunity to comment on the audit observations issued during the audit. On 21 November 2005, IAD I provided the draft of the audit report for OCHA's comments which were received on 25 January 2006. The essence of these comments is included in the present report and shown in *italics*.

IV. AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Generally the auditors found that in order for OCHA to manage its human resources in the field effectively and efficiently, and within the UN human resource management principles, a major change in its approach to human resources management is required. This change to current practices should systematically address the delays in recruitment for field offices and strengthening the integrity of the recruitment process. The approach should be comprehensive and cover the following main areas:

- policies and procedures
- resources and organizational structure
- HR planning
- accountability for the compliance with selection principles and
- staff management and administration issues.

The above issues should be addressed as priority to enable OCHA to carry out its delegation of authority in human resources management in accordance with the Organization's principles.

A. Policies and procedures

200 series of Staff Regulations and Rules

6. As of August 2005, the number of field staff totalled 184, which located in more than 30 duty stations around the world. As mentioned above, most of the OCHA professional staff in the field offices are administered under 200 series of the Staff Regulations and Rules (SRRs). The 200 series is intended for hiring project personnel for specific projects that have limited objectives and duration. However, OCHA's field staff are assigned, extended and re-assigned from one duty station to another over a number of years depending on the OCHA's operational needs. Recruitment under the 200 series by OCHA and UNOG usually starts with a short assignment (up to one year, sometimes as short as two to three months). Depending on the needs and performance of the incumbents, these short-term contracts may be extended indefinitely.

7. It appears that the 200 series contracts are not well suited for OCHA's need for quick deployment for short-term assignments. In one of the 14 recruitment cases examined by the auditors, the Deputy Area Coordinator (L-4) in Iraq was appointed to his post for one month and separated in June 2004. He was later reappointed for one month in October 2004. These multiple appointments added to the workload of the HRS and the human Resources Management Service (HRMS) of UNOG. It is recognized that there is a need for speedy appointments in reaction to changing field conditions. However, in order to preserve the integrity of the recruitment process of the 200 series personnel, hiring short-term field personnel under a Reimbursable Loan Agreement or a Special Service Agreement would be a more suitable arrangement.

Recommendation 1

OIOS recommended that, in order to ease the administrative workload and shorten the time involved in short-term recruitments without compromising the integrity of the recruitment process, OCHA-Geneva use alternative methods of employment (AN2005/590/03/01).

8. OCHA commented that *it had considered using these alternative methods and found that while they may appear to reduce administrative work, the use of short-term recruitments have proven to be more suitable to OCHA's operations. Short-term recruitments of up to 4 months do not go through a competitive selection process. The majority of cases of field staff employed on short-term contracts are eventually used to fill fixed positions. OCHA benefits from being able to assess the attitude and skill of the staff member who gains valuable work experience in return. Staffs employed on reimbursable loan agreements are significantly more expensive, while persons hired under Special Service Agreements can only be considered for recruitment six months after the end of their contracts.* In view of these comments, OIOS closes this recommendation in its database.

Recruitment procedures and guidelines

9. The Expedited Recruitment Procedures (Revised) (the Procedures), which were promulgated by OCHA Management in October 2004, were intended to fully address the recruitment needs of the OCHA field offices. They aimed at shortening the time needed for recruitment and, thus, at alleviating long-outstanding vacancies. These Procedures established various deadlines for the recruitment steps: (i) vacancy announcements (VAs) should be issued in ten working days; (ii) eligibility checks for internal and external candidates should be completed by the HRS/AO within ten working days after the closing of the VA for all P/L-2 and P/L-3 posts; and (iii) eligibility checks for internal candidates within five working days for P/L-4 and P/L-5 posts. The interview/desk review panels should then submit their recommendations within ten days to the respective Chiefs/Directors of substantive branches/divisions who should submit their proposals within two working days.

10. The Procedures establish that all applications should be screened for eligibility by the Administrative Office (AO) or Executive Office (EO). They also state that “[t]he Chief/Director of the Division/Branch concerned should decide on whether candidates will be screened on the basis of interviews or desk reviews. The Chief/Director of the Division/Branch may limit the interviews/desk reviews to internals, externals or both.” However, the Procedures do not address the important issue of who should select the eligible candidates for interviews/desk reviews, what should be the basis for that selection, and how the selection should be documented. The only required documentation of the selection process is a matrix ranking candidates, which should be prepared as a result of interviews/desk reviews. The absence of formal standards to rate candidates based on predetermined evaluation criteria may diminish the transparency of the selection process.

11. It also appears that the Procedures were not based on a comprehensive analysis of the recruitment bottlenecks and their underlining causes. There were no deadlines for establishing posts after the cost plan was approved or for the preparation of the VA after a post was established. Approval of a candidate by the Director of OCHA-Geneva was also not guided by a timeline.

12. The Human Resources Management Guidelines (the Guidelines) promulgated by OCHA in April 2004 give managers discretionary authority to fill the vacancies of less than a four months’ duration. In cases of “sudden” emergencies, managers may appoint staff for a maximum of six months without advertising the vacant position. Recognizing the need to staff sudden emergencies, the exercise of this authority should be spelled out in the Procedures. In particular, the following points should be clarified: (i) what constitutes a “sudden emergency”, (ii) what is the level of managers that are given this authority and (iii) who should endorse these managers’ decisions. The procedures should also indicate that, although these appointments are made without a formal selection process, the appointees should meet the requirements of the posts as spelled out in the Generic Job Descriptions or Terms of Reference.

Recommendation 2

OIOS recommended that Management update the Expedited Recruitment Procedures and Guidelines with the view to make them more comprehensive and to ensure the transparency of the selection process (AN2005/590/03/02).

13. OCHA advised that *the recommendation had been noted and would be considered in the revision of expedited recruitment procedures which was being reviewed by the Executive Office*. OIOS will close this recommendation in its database after receiving the results of the review.

Absence of background and reference checks

14. There is an agreement with HRMS/UNOG that they shall issue offers of appointment within ten days after the submission of all the relevant recruitment documents. However, this deadline is extended whenever there is a need for additional clarifications concerning the candidate. Extensions of this nature, however, are not tracked. In addition, there seems to be no obligation by HRMS/UNOG to perform background and reference checks of the selected candidates before the issuance of Offers of Appointment and Letters of Appointment. According to HRMS/UNOG, they cannot carry out these checks due to insufficient internal capacity (one professional and one GS staff member) to process recruitments and other personnel actions (PA) of OCHA field personnel. The absence of the background and reference checks increases the risk of hiring unqualified or unsuitable candidates.

Recommendation 3

OIOS recommended that Management ensure the performance of background and reference checks through adopting relevant procedures and allocating necessary resources (AN2005/590/03/03).

15. OCHA agreed with this recommendation and advised that *it would take necessary steps to include background and reference checks as part of its hiring procedures*. OIOS will close this recommendation in its database after receiving a confirmation that these controls have been introduced.

“Reclassifications”

16. The 200 series SRRs do not provide for career growth. OCHA and UNOG, recognizing the need for career development, follow the practice of “reclassification” of the posts and the levels of incumbents. However, there are no written rules for this process. The general practice is to “reclassify” incumbents and their posts after two years of service based on the recommendation of the supervisor. In 2004 and the first eight months of 2005, 36 “reclassification” cases were submitted to HRMS. Some of them were rejected on the grounds that the incumbents had been on their posts for less than two years.

17. The practice of “reclassification” of L posts in the field and at headquarters includes both the level of the post and that of its incumbent. Therefore, in the auditors’ opinion, this practice puts staff members on regular budget posts at a disadvantage, since the reclassification of their posts is subject to budgetary restrictions and a more rigorous process and justification than the criteria required for L posts. “Reclassification” limits the use of external candidates for OCHA’s positions and restricts fair competition for the upgraded posts. Although the “reclassified” posts are advertised, the incumbents have an advantage compared to other candidates. This is because reclassifications are initiated by supervisors on the basis of the incumbent’s performance. The “reclassification” exercise raises doubt concerning the justification for higher than originally established post classifications, since it appears to be discretionary.

18. The inconsistencies mentioned above reflect the absence of formally established guidelines for reclassifying L posts. In these circumstances, the practices applied by OCHA-Geneva expose the reclassification process to risks of abuse and unfair treatment of its staff in different categories of posts.

Recommendation 4

OIOS recommended that “reclassification” practices in respect to L posts be reviewed and formally promulgated in consultation with OHRM. Any reclassification of posts should be based on justified needs and subject to fair competition (AN2005/590/03/04).

19. OCHA responded to this recommendation stating that *upgrades of staff members through reclassifications have been processed on the understanding that the post had already been classified and had already gone through a competitive selection process. A subsequent reclassification of that same post (located in the same exact section in the same exact duty station) led to an upgrade of the staff member provided it was requested and justified by the Desk/Section/Branch, and supported with the latest PAS of the staff member.* In OIOS’ opinion, since the reclassification of the L posts and their incumbents’ levels is a widespread practice which may be in contradiction with the principles of staff promotion in the Organization, it should be reviewed and approved formally by OHRM. The recommendation will stay open in the OIOS’ database until such a review is carried out.

Rotation policy

20. A consistent rotation policy may become a powerful tool for widening OCHA’s human resource base and enriching the experiences and skills of OCHA’s staff both in the field and at headquarters. OCHA has prepared a rotation policy and was seeking OHRM’s feedback on the feasibility of its implementation in compliance with UN mobility requirements. The main objection to the proposal by OHRM was that the policy did not follow the Secretariat-wide mobility standard which will be introduced starting in 2007. Another obstacle foreseen was that the difference in recruitment and service conditions between the 100 series and 200 series of the SRRs would not allow for the easy transfer of staff from one category of posts to the other. A possible solution would be to introduce a standard contract for all OCHA personnel both in the field and headquarters, as practiced by some agencies with wide field presence. However, this change would require the endorsement from the legislative bodies.

21. In the meantime, the rotation policy, as proposed by OCHA, can be applied in respect of 200 series staff who serve both in the field and at headquarters. 100 series staff may be encouraged to participate in the rotation on a voluntary basis. For the rotation policy to be generally accepted, it should be fairly and consistently applied to all staff.

Recommendation 5

OIOS recommended that the rotation policy developed by OCHA be introduced as a pilot project in respect to staff serving under 200 series of the SRRs. Staff members serving under 100 series of the

SRRs should be encouraged to participate in rotation on a voluntary basis (AN2005/590/03/05).

22. OCHA responded that *it had discussed the rotation policy with OHRM and agreed for its introduction as a pilot project for the first two years, after-which it would be reviewed for the development of a full rotation policy. During these two years, staff holding 100 series contracts wishing to rotate to field offices would do so, with the understanding that they can return to their posts at Headquarters.* OIOS' will close the recommendation in its database after receiving a copy of the formally introduced rotation policy.

B. Human resource planning

Information database and reporting

23. Previous audits of OCHAs field offices showed a high number of vacancies for significant periods of time (e.g., Sudan, Indonesia). According to HRS, as of August 2005, there were 49 vacancies in OCHA field offices compared to 195 encumbered posts. Since some of the vacant posts were not formally established as of the time of the audit, these statistics cannot be considered reliable. According to the data compiled by Field Support Section (FSS), the time lapse from the Vacancy Announcement's (VA) closing date to the Director's approval for 11 VAs averaged 53 days. Another set of data compiled by FSS showed that, for the first six months of 2005, the average recruitment time (from the time the VA was issued to the date of entry on duty) was 127 days.

24. The two-month deadline from the application date to staff placement – a goal established by OCHA in its Human Resources Management Guidelines in April 2004 – does not seem to be within OCHA's capacity. A survey of the Heads of OCHA's field office conducted by the auditors showed that 12 out of 13 respondents were dissatisfied with the time needed for recruiting and deploying their staff.

25. OCHA did not compile and analyze statistics for recruitment systematically. In order to take sound management decisions, it is important to have access to relevant data underlying the processes and actions taken within the HR function. For the human resources management cycle, some of the data is available in IMIS and other databases. However, since 200 series personnel are administered outside the Galaxy System, relevant HR workload statistics and HR performance measurements are not readily available. There is also no formal requirement to generate information or management reports relating to HR activities. As a result, HRS was unable to ascertain the number of recruitments, reclassifications, redeployments, contract extensions and separations carried out over the last years.

26. Some of the data essential for recruitment management, e.g. the dates VAs were requested by substantive offices, advertisement dates, eligibility screening, suitability screening, and recommendation and approval of candidates, are not captured in IMIS. This information is gathered by HRS and maintained in Excel spreadsheets to track the internal recruitment process. While the database tracks IMIS post numbers, account numbers, vacancy numbers, dates of issue, closing dates, numbers of applications received, deadlines and dates when eligibility screening and candidate selection took place, it does not accumulate to record historical trends. Additionally,

there is no tracking of the duration of vacancies from the establishment of a post until a successful candidate is deployed.

27. The management report generated from the database is intended for the internal use of HRS. However, other important elements of the recruitment process (such as the establishment date of a new post to be advertised, preparation of TORs by programme managers, classification of the post (if applicable), date of the final approval by the Director of OCHA-Geneva or Coordination and Response Division (CRD) in NY, date of forwarding the request for recruitment to UNOG and further actions leading to the placement are not recorded in this database.

28. The FSS started compiling data concerning key personnel actions and the time required to fill vacancies. However, these efforts need a more organized approach, including the identification of standard reports and their periodicity. In OIOS' opinion, compiling meaningful statistics and data on workloads and producing relevant reports cannot be achieved with the available resources in HRS. At the initial stage, developing a comprehensive database to capture all relevant data and produce management reports should be treated as a separate project with specific goals, timetable, outputs and dedicated resources.

Recommendation 6

OIOS recommended that Management, in its effort to strengthen the HR support for field offices, identify its requirements for information and initiate a project to achieve its goals in this area (AN2005/590/03/06).

29. OCHA responded that *it had taken note of this recommendation and will include this approach in the designing of the database application*. OIOS would like to have additional information on the implementation of this recommendation before it can be closed in its database.

Planning of field staff deployment

30. It is recognized that the planning of human resources deployment in the context of emergency operations is a very challenging exercise. However, in light of the fact that some locations, such as Regional Support Offices (RSOs) and Regional Disaster Response Advisors (RDRA) offices have a more permanent nature than those of emergency coordination operations, human resources planning is possible and necessary to facilitate the timely deployment of field personnel. This planning should start with a proper staff needs assessment and justification for field posts. OCHA has sufficient procedures to carry out this exercise. However, the implementation of these procedures appears to be unsystematic in various cases.

31. There were some inconsistencies in the level of posts approved for the field offices. An L-5 level was established for the Head of Office post for several offices; however the sizes of the offices differed significantly. For example, the Angola Office had a total of 6 staff, Zimbabwe – a total of 6 staff, Eritrea – 13. On the other hand, Guinea had 20, Burundi - 25, Uganda -38 and Cote d'Ivoire - 43. For RSOs, the L-5 level was established for RSO-Central and East Africa, which had a total of 16 staff, RSO-West Africa with 27 staff and RSO-South Africa with only 7 staff. In some other smaller offices, the level of a senior OCHA officer was L-4. Although it was confirmed that all the post levels were classified by HRMS of UNOG based on their terms of reference (TORs), it would

seem that the responsibilities and workloads of Heads of Offices were different in most cases. This, in our opinion, would justify the need for different levels of the posts.

32. In some cases, inadequate planning for posts in the field offices resulted in the withdrawal of vacancy notices. This translated into additional unnecessary work. In one case, a staff member who worked in OCHA-Nairobi was appointed to OCHA-Geneva, effective 23 November 2004. The vacant post of Liaison Officer L-4 at OCHA-Sudan in Nairobi was then advertised on 27 January 2005 but subsequently withdrawn on 10 May 2005 after 56 applications had been screened for eligibility. In the meantime, the staff member, who was now working in Geneva, was sent on “mission” to OCHA-Sudan until 31 March 2005, returning to OCHA-Geneva. This same staff member applied for the position in Nairobi – the same post the staff member previously vacated, then encumbered on a “mission” basis - when it was re-advertised on 1 June 2005.

Recommendations 7 - 9

OIOS recommended that OCHA-Geneva ensure that:

- (i) all recruitment cases are initiated for available posts, which are established based on the needs assessment (AN2005/590/03/07);
- (ii) the level of posts is based on an assessment of the responsibilities and workload (AN2005/590/03/08); and
- (iii) substantive managers are advised to better plan their needs for the field posts to avoid unnecessary administrative work and expenses (AN2005/590/03/09).

33. OCHA accepted these recommendations. OIOS would like to be advised of the specific measures taken to implement them. This would enable us to close the recommendations in the database.

Roster of candidates

34. In order to satisfy OCHA’s need for speedy recruitment and deployment of personnel to its field offices, especially in cases of emergencies, there is a need to maintain a roster of eligible candidates who have demonstrated qualifications and are available to report for duty on short notice. In spite of a number of audit recommendations made during the previous audits of OCHA, which were accepted by Management, a proper roster of prescreened and readily available candidates for field deployment has yet to be developed.

35. In developing the roster, applicants should be screened for their eligibility and suitability for fieldwork. Presently, the selection process is delayed by at least two weeks due to the tedious eligibility screening process. Both eligibility and suitability screening may also be shortened if relevant information from the applicants can be automatically filtered. In efforts to speed the recruitment for the field posts, OCHA should advertise its requirements for skills and qualifications considered essential for field duties. When applying for roster registration, candidates should be required to provide the necessary documentation to support their qualifications and physical fitness. The requisite background and reference checks should be performed before the candidates are

placed on the roster. In order for the roster to be fully useful, it should be constantly updated to include new candidates, deleting those no longer available or suitable for field duties.

36. It is recognized that creating such a roster cannot be performed within the available resources or undertaken by HRS alone. Other substantive units should be involved to assess the candidates' suitability. The necessary software should also be identified or developed to facilitate the roster exercise. This project will need concerted effort with sufficient resources for its successful accomplishment.

Recommendation 10

OIOS recommended that Management prioritize the creation and maintenance of a workable roster of qualified candidates for the posts in OCHA field offices. Necessary resources for the start-up and maintenance of the roster should be allocated (AN2005/590/03/10).

37. OCHA agreed with this recommendation and advised that *it had already started discussions on the development of a vacancy management system that includes the development of a roster. As an interim measure, OCHA was also considering formulating a policy that would allow candidates deemed suitable for one vacancy to be considered eligible for similar or equivalent vacancies elsewhere in OCHA without having to reapply; candidates would be included on a roster for surge capacity and short-term assignments.* OIOS will retain this recommendation in its database pending a creation of a workable roster for the field vacancies.

C. Compliance with selection rules

38. Recruitment procedures for OHCA field offices have most of the elements to ensure that only eligible and the most suitable candidates are hired. These elements include: advertisement of the posts on Relief Web; eligibility screening by HRS, which is, to a certain extent, independent of the operational management; suitability assessment by a panel of substantive officers, approval by a Head of OCHA-Geneva or OCHA-New York; and review of the process by HRMS of UNOG, which issues Letters of Offer and Letters of Appointment to successful candidates.

39. However, a review of the recruitment files showed some deviations from these recruitment principles. In a number of cases, the qualifications of the candidates appeared to be below the eligibility criteria. In some cases, there was no documentation showing the evaluation of the candidates on file. In the case described in paragraph 30 above, the staff member was advised of her selection even before the second eligibility screening of 42 applications was completed. This raises some doubts about the integrity of the selection process in this case.

40. These cases reflect, in the opinion of the auditors, insufficient importance given by managers to the integrity of the selection process. It also appears that the HRS's responsibility to maintain this integrity has not received enough support in terms of policies that emphasize its importance. HRS also needed additional resources of appropriate professional level, especially at peak workload periods, to deal effectively with the cases (see paragraph 43 below).

41. OCHA acknowledged that *there might have been a few recruitment cases that did not fully meet the eligibility criteria. However, given the nature of OCHA's mandate and operations, there*

were mitigating circumstances and elements that justified such decisions. Furthermore, in light of the number of applicants that were received (over 8000 in 2004 and over 13000 in 2005), some of these cases may have been due to oversight, despite the fact that OCHA strives to maintain the highest level of accuracy in conducting eligibility screening. In addition to screening by OCHA/HRS, UNOG/HRMS conducts a meticulous analysis of the recommended candidate's experience and qualifications at the time of request for recruitment. This additional review by UNOG supplements and adds control to the process.

Recommendation 11 - 12

OIOS recommended that OCHA take additional steps to strengthen the internal controls in the recruitment of its field personnel. These steps should include:

- (i) advising all managers of the necessity to abide (in the selection of candidates) by the legibility criteria (AN2005/590/03/11); and
- (ii) supporting the control role of HRS and HRMS with appropriate authority and resources (AN2005/590/03/12).

42. OCHA responded that *it had taken note of the recommendations and will make every effort to desist from such cases in the future. It will ensure that programme managers and heads of field offices comply with established criteria. OCHA has begun the process to increase the resources and provide staff at appropriate levels of authority in an effort to strengthen the capacity of the HRS.* OIOS will close these recommendations in its database after receiving additional information on strengthening the capacity of the Human Resource Section.

C. Resources and organizational structure

43. At OCHA-Geneva, the administrative functions in human resources management are carried out by the Administrative Office (AO), its Human Resources Section (HRS) and by the Human Resources Management Service (HRMS) of UNOG. HRS has three professional and six general service staff. While the number of OCHA's personnel in the field offices has been steadily growing from about 100 in 2001 to more than 180 in 2005, the number of posts in the HRS only increased from nine to eleven. The staff of the Human Resource Management Unit in HRMS/UNOG dealing with OCHA field personnel remained unchanged over that period (one professional and two GS staff members). The disparity in resources compared to the workload could be the source of the process constraints and delays in the cycle.

44. In March 2005, OCHA management, recognizing constraints in human resources management in respect of its field staff, created a Field Support Section (also called Field Support Unit in the publication "OCHA in 2005") within AO. Its functions include serving as the primary liaison between the OCHA administrative offices at headquarters and OCHA offices in the field. The major emphasis in the activities of this Section, which consists of four professional and four general service staff, should be on shortening the recruitment timeframe through the Expedited Procedures to ensure transparency in the selection process, in line with the OCHA HRM Guidelines.

45. It appears that the decision to augment the AO resources, especially in its field support functions, was not sufficiently planned in terms of specific processes related to human resources management. The staff of FSS had no background in human resources management matters and no specialized training was provided to them before they assumed their new duties. From the review of the HRM files, it also appeared that FSS had become an additional correspondence point between field offices and HR officers at both OCHA and UNOG. In some cases, this could result in delays of various staff matters instead of facilitating their resolution. One of the performance indicators for FSS was 30 per cent reduction in the average recruitment time from 2004 to 2005. This goal seems not to be based on real data and its achievement looks doubtful. It is recognized that some time is needed before changes in the organizational structure and processes demonstrate a desired effect. However, the lingering perception of FSS' insufficiency for practical improvement in the support of field offices calls for a thorough review of its effectiveness.

46. OCHA Management has prepared a proposal to obtain the Delegation of Authority for the recruitment and management of its field personnel under the 200 series. This proposal needs to be substantiated by adequate resources, in terms of the number and qualifications of the staff, structures and sound procedures to ensure efficiency and the soundness of human resources management.

Recommendations 13 - 14

OIOS recommended that, based on reliable workload statistics, Management:

- (i) Assess the resources needed for the efficient human resource management (AN2005/590/03/13); and
- (ii) Review the place of FSS in the organizational structure of OCHA-Geneva and its specific functions in light of the accumulated experience (AN2005/590/03/14).

47. OCHA-Geneva, in their comments on the audit notes issued during the audit, agreed that *there was a need for review of the functions of FSS to define its priorities for the year 2006 in light of actual experience gained since FSS assumed its functions in March 2005. For the year 2006, it should be clearly identified which personnel matters FSS can respond to directly and which matters must be referred to the Human Resources Section.* OIOS will close these recommendations in its database after receiving additional information on the assessment of the resources needed for the efficient human resources management and on the review of the functions of FSS.

D. Performance appraisal system (PAS)

48. The work of field personnel should be evaluated on a periodic basis in accordance with the 200 SRRs. However, PAS reports for the 2004 – 2005 cycle were not prepared for all of the 10 cases reviewed by the auditors. PAS compliance in relation to field personnel needs major improvement. The PAS tool enables Management to monitor the performance of OCHA field personnel and identify areas to strengthen core competencies and other training needs.

Recommendation 15

OIOS recommended that OCHA comply with established procedures regarding the evaluation of the performance of field personnel (AN2005/590/03/15).

49. OCHA agreed with this recommendation and advised *that FSS had been tasked with the responsibility of promoting timely compliance by field personnel*. OIOS will close this recommendation in its database after receiving additional information on the compliance with PAS requirements.

F. Resolution of staff concerns

50. The auditors surveyed 33 field offices to obtain feedback on the field staff's perception of staff-management relations and how effectively OCHA management dealt with their concerns. The response overwhelmingly dispraised OCHA management on this point. Field staff generally felt that OCHA management was not very responsive to their concerns. The respondents also stated that issues raised were not resolved in a timely manner when they were presented.

51. The introduction of FSS was supposed to, among other things, address and direct all field staff queries to the right channels within OCHA. In carrying out its functions, however, FSS does not have management tools to monitor the number of staff queries and concerns, analyze the nature of these issues, or develop benchmarks for responding to these issues. Moreover, there is a need for FSS personnel to have a good understanding of staff rules, procedures and processes, in order to address the concerns of field staff adequately and efficiently.

Recommendation 16

OIOS recommended that OCHA develop management tools to monitor and manage staff queries and concerns, and provide timely feedback and resolutions (AN2005/590/03/16).

52. OCHA-Geneva responded that, *owing to workload and not yet fully filled staffing structure, FSS has, while doing their best to respond to field requests, not properly monitored requests to register them and to keep track of timeliness of response. With the support of the IT Section a data base logging system had been set up and was tested by FSS staff. Beginning 2006, systematic logging of queries from field offices will be in place and, more importantly, FSS will have contacted all Field Offices to ensure that all administrative requests are channelled to/through FSS*. OIOS will close this recommendation in its database after receiving information on a number of queries and the time frame for their resolution.

G. Time and attendance records

53. Time and attendance (T&A) reports for field personnel are prepared, certified, and submitted to the Administrative Office (AO) on a monthly basis. The T&A reports are prepared manually, certified by the staff and the supervisor, and then transmitted by facsimile or e-mail to the AO each month. The AO processes the T&A reports and calculates field-related entitlements, such

as ORB and hazard pay, for eligible field staff, based on T&A records in addition to monitoring annual and sick leave balances.

54. For 2004 and 2005, T&A reports were not submitted for all field personnel on a timely basis. Some offices (Nairobi) had good track records in complying with the reporting requirements for time and attendance, while other offices (Afghanistan and Ethiopia) were delinquent in submitting the reports for their field staff. In one case, the 2005 time and attendance reports of one staff member had not been submitted as of the date of the audit. Other cases showed that time and attendance records had not been submitted since April 2005. The late submission of the time and attendance records meant that there were delays in processing certain entitlements for field personnel who were eligible to receive them.

55. The AO spends a significant amount of time following up on missing time and attendance reports each month. An automated timekeeping system would help to reduce the time required to track missing reports and manually monitor the eligibility for ORB and hazard pay entitlements of field personnel. An automated system would also calculate leave balances, sick leave entitlements, and minimize errors and time lags of the manual system.

Recommendations 17 - 20

OIOS recommended that Management:

- (i) Ensure that all relevant time and attendance records are submitted by field offices on a timely basis (AN2005/590/03/17);
- (ii) Develop guidelines on time and attendance administration and emphasize the importance of complying with these requirements, as it relates to receiving ORB and hazard pay entitlements, on a timely basis (AN2005/590/03/18);
- (iii) Produce monthly reports showing the number of late submissions of each office in order to assess which offices may require additional administrative guidance on complying with time and attendance requisites (AN2005/590/03/19); and
- (iv) Adopt an automated timekeeping system that field offices could use to automatically record, track, and report the time and attendance of their personnel (AN2005/590/03/20).

56. In their response to the audit notes on this subject, OCHA-Geneva agreed with these recommendations and advised that *it had begun to prepare guidelines for field offices. It also had begun to review offices that were having difficulties in providing timely and accurate reports. This area would be considered in planning missions to field offices. OCHA-Geneva agreed that an automated timekeeping system could prove more efficient and accurate and would contribute to timely submissions. It intends to explore this application.* OIOS will close these recommendations in its database after receiving additional information on their implementation.

H. Staff training

57. OCHA has a comprehensive training policy that takes into account the training needs of the Office. The policy came into effect 01 July 2005 and addresses many training issues relating to the development of the technical skills of OCHA's human resources that are essential to the achievement of OCHA's objectives. The development of a policy on training and the establishment of a training unit are steps in the right direction of human resources development. However, there is no training plan that addresses the training needs of all field staff, based on level and duties.

58. At present, training needs of individual field staff are identified by Heads of Field Offices and requests are sent to the OCHA-Geneva for approval. To be effective, there is a need to develop a broader training approach. Training needs should be identified through two mechanisms: the performance appraisal system (PAS) under which the supervisors and staff are required to identify training and development needs and at the senior management level, which should consider the overall field staff training needs for the Office in the context of the organizational objectives.

Recommendation 21

OIOS recommended that OCHA develop a comprehensive training plan that considers the overall development needs of the field staff in performing their duties and contributing to the effective achievement of the Office's objectives (AN2005/590/03/21).

59. OCHA agreed with this recommendation and informed that *the Staff Development and Learning unit has already taken steps to address a comprehensive training plan that encompasses field staff*. OIOS will close the recommendation after receiving a copy of the training plan for OCHA's field personnel.

I. Management of outside expertise

60. OCHA hires consultants regularly to provide technical expertise and knowledge in the area of humanitarian assistance. Workshops, seminars, and trainings were frequently the object of the hiring of these experts. The auditors reviewed the contracts of consultants and individual contractors for 2004 and 2005 to ascertain if all rules relating to their hiring were followed. Requests for experts and terms of references were prepared for all cases reviewed. Consultants were selected on the basis of their expertise and professional capacity and compensated according to the relevant level of remuneration for professional and higher categories. Evaluation ratings of the consultants' and individual contractors' performance were also completed. Contracts were not awarded to the same consultant for longer than the prescribed period of 24 months within a 3-year period. Travel costs were reimbursed according to UN Rules.

61. Generally, however, the selection of both consultants and individual contractors was not done on a competitive basis. Approximately half of the consultant contracts reviewed during 2004 and 2005 showed that only one candidate was considered for a particular consultancy. A roster of consultants was not maintained for the purpose of short listing candidates and selection appeared to be based on past assignments. Following a competitive process to hire consultants and individual contractors would minimize the potential for abuses, favouritism, and ensure that the best candidate is selected.

62. There were cases when consultants were engaged before signing their contracts. Specifically, in five out of ten consultancy contracts reviewed, the consultants did not sign the contracts until after delivering the hired services. In one case, the date for which the consultant was hired was deferred until a later date. However, the contract was not amended to reflect this change as of the date of the audit, even though the contract apparently was initiated several months post facto. The HR official responsible for processing consultant payments did not have a copy of the signed contract on file for the consultant, nor was HRS aware that the contract had been amended to include new terms. Contracts with consultants should always be signed prior to their commencement in order to protect the interests of both the consultant and the Organization in cases of possible disputes relating to the assignments.

Recommendations 22 - 24

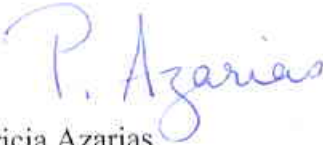
OIOS recommended that OCHA:

- (i) Develop a roster of qualified consultants and individual contractors for future use (AN2005/590/03/22);
- (ii) Hire consultants and individual contractors on a competitive basis to ensure that the best candidate is selected for the assignment (AN2005/590/03/23); and
- (iii) Ensure that the contracts of all consultants and individual contractors are prepared and signed before they commence their duties (AN2005/590/03/24).

63. In its response to the audit notes on the subject, OCHA-Geneva agreed with these recommendations and advised that it *had already started discussions on the development of a vacancy management system that includes the development of a roster. OCHA-Geneva will review its practices of hiring consultants and individual contractors. Offices will be reminded of the requirement of having contracts prepared and signed prior to commencement of duties by individual contractors.* OIOS will close these recommendations in its database after receiving additional information on their implementation.

V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

64. We wish to express our appreciation for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors by OCHA Management and staff.


Patricia Azarias
Director
Internal Audit Division I, OIOS

Annex

Further Action Required On Audit Recommendations

(OCHA's responses to the audit recommendations contained in this report have been recorded in OIOS' recommendation database for monitoring and reporting purposes. Please note that the recommendations shown below remain outstanding, unless shown as Closed pending the provision of documentation that they have been implemented as described in the following table.)

| Recommendation number | Required evidence of implementation |
|------------------------------|--|
| AN2005/590/03/01 | Closed. |
| AN2005/590/03/02 | Results of the review of the Expedited Recruitment Procedures and Human Resources Management Guidelines. |
| AN2005/590/03/03 | Confirmation that background and reference checks are being performed. |
| AN2005/590/03/04 | Review and approval by OHRM of the reclassification practices. |
| AN2005/590/03/05 | A copy of the formally introduced rotation policy. |
| AN2005/590/03/06 | Additional information on strengthening the HR support for field offices. |
| AN2005/590/03/07 | Information on more specific measures to implement the recommendation. |
| AN2005/590/03/08 | Information on more specific measures to implement the recommendation. |
| AN2005/590/03/09 | Information on more specific measures to implement the recommendation. |
| AN2005/590/03/10 | Creation of a workable roster for field vacancies. |
| AN2005/590/03/11 | Additional information on strengthening the capacity of the Human Resource Section. |
| AN2005/590/03/12 | Additional information on strengthening the capacity of the Human Resource Section. |
| AN2005/590/03/13 | Additional information on the assessment of the resources needed for the efficient human resources management and on the review of the functions of FSS. |
| AN2005/590/03/14 | Additional information on the assessment of the resources needed for the efficient human resources management and on the review of the functions of FSS. |
| AN2005/590/03/15 | Additional information on the compliance with PAS requirements for field staff. |
| AN2005/590/03/16 | Information on a number of queries received and the time frame for their resolution. |
| AN2005/590/03/17 | Additional information on the implementation of the recommendation. |
| AN2005/590/03/18 | Additional information on the implementation of the recommendation. |
| AN2005/590/03/19 | Additional information on the implementation of the recommendation. |

| | |
|------------------|---|
| AN2005/590/03/20 | Additional information on the implementation of the recommendation. |
| AN2005/590/03/21 | A copy of the training plan for OCHA's field personnel. |
| AN2005/590/03/22 | Additional information on the implementation of the recommendation. |
| AN2005/590/03/23 | Additional information on the implementation of the recommendation. |
| AN2005/590/03/24 | Additional information on the implementation of the recommendation. |

UNITED NATIONS



OIOS Client Satisfaction Survey

Audit of: Human Resources Management for OCHA's Field Operations

(AN2005/590/03)

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| By checking the appropriate box, please rate: | Very Poor | Poor | Satisfactory | Good | Excellent |
| 1. The extent to which the audit addressed your concerns as a manager. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. The audit staff's understanding of your operations and objectives. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Professionalism of the audit staff (demeanour, communication and responsiveness). | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. The quality of the Audit Report in terms of: | | | | | |
| • Accuracy and validity of findings and conclusions; | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Clarity and conciseness; | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Balance and objectivity; | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Timeliness. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. The extent to which the audit recommendations were appropriate and helpful. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. The extent to which the auditors considered your comments. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Your overall satisfaction with the conduct of the audit and its results. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please add any further comments you may have on the audit process to let us know what we are doing well and what can be improved.

Name: _____ Title: _____ Date: _____

*Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey. Please send the completed survey as soon as possible to:
 Ms. Patricia Azarias, Director, Internal Audit Division-1, OIOS
 By mail: Room DC2-518, 2 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017 USA
 By fax: (212) 963-3388
 By E-mail: iad1support@un.org*