



OIOS

Office of Internal Oversight Services

INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

AUDIT REPORT

OHCHR Regional Office for South-East Asia in Bangkok

Strategic planning and results based management need to be strengthened to instil a human rights-based approach in South-East Asia

15 August 2008

Assignment No. AE2008/336/01

United Nations  Nations Unies

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM


MEMORANDUM INTERIEUR

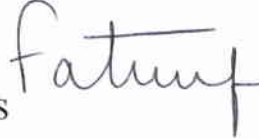
OFFICE OF INTERNAL OVERSIGHT SERVICES · BUREAU DES SERVICES DE CONTRÔLE INTERNE
INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION · DIVISION DE L'AUDIT INTERNE

TO: Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, Acting High Commissioner for
A: Human Rights
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

DATE: 15 August 2008

REFERENCE: IAD: 08- 01659

FROM:  Dagfinn Knutsen, Director
DE: Internal Audit Division, OIOS



SUBJECT: **Assignment No. AE2008/336/01 - Audit of OHCHR Regional Office for South-East Asia in
OBJET: Bangkok**

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 8 and 9 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. Please note that OIOS will report on the progress made to implement its recommendations, particularly those designated as high risk (i.e., recommendations 1, 2, 3 and 4), in its annual report to the General Assembly and semi-annual report to the Secretary-General.

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INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

FUNCTION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Audit of OHCHR Regional Office for South-East Asia in Bangkok

OIOS conducted an audit of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Regional Office for South-East Asia in Bangkok (ROB). The overall objective of the audit was to determine: the adequacy of the ROB planning processes; the effectiveness of internal controls in ensuring reliable reporting of transactions and safeguarding of assets; compliance with relevant rules, regulations and procedures; and effectiveness of efforts to mainstream the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) in the region. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

The ROB made notable improvements in the development of its 2008 – 2009 Strategic Plan and the associated Annual Work Plan. However, the ROB needs to include key stakeholders in the strategic planning process, focus more on strategic thematic issues impacting the region, and improve performance indicators.

The ROB was established in 2002 to strengthen OHCHR's presence and partnerships in the region. Its purpose is to help bridge gaps in human rights implementation in terms of knowledge, capacity, commitment and security at the national and regional level in South-East Asia. During the 2006 –2007 biennium, the ROB played a major role in helping establish a human rights mechanism for the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). In the current biennium, the ROB plans to build upon that work. The ROB reported and monitored human rights violations during the Myanmar crisis and had put in place a contingency plan to continue monitoring the situation. It worked with the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and the donor community to integrate the HRBA into the work of other UN programmes in the region. To strengthen its efforts in planning and programme management, the ROB and OHCHR Geneva need to:

- Obtain key stakeholders' commitment in the strategic planning process to establish goals and objectives, determine expected accomplishments and aid in the development and delivery of sustainable activities;
- Develop realistic and measurable performance indicators and criteria for evaluation of expected accomplishments;
- Strategically determine how to provide adequate coverage in the region and reassess staffing levels during the mid- and end of year review process to ensure adequate regional coverage; and
- Determine how to manage and utilize the vast amount of information it gathers. This information will help the OHCHR report and measure results, establish benchmarks, share lessons learned and develop exit strategies.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Regional Office for South East Asia in Bangkok (ROB). The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

2. The ROB was established in 2002 to strengthen OHCHR's presence and partnerships in the region. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) hosts the Regional Office under a Memorandum of Intent signed with the High Commissioner for Human Rights in February 2001. OHCHR only has an agreement with the Cambodian Government which is in effect until 2009.

3. During the 2006-2007 biennium, OHCHR reorganized the ROB in order to provide coverage of 11 countries in South-East Asia: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam.

4. The purpose of the ROB is to help bridge gaps in human rights implementation in terms of knowledge, capacity, commitment and security at the national and regional level in South-East Asia. For the 2008 - 2009 biennium, the ROB will focus on implementing recommendations of international treaty body mechanisms and special procedures; establishing a human rights mechanism for the Association of South-East Asian Nations; launching capacity-building programmes in the administration of justice and legislative reform and human rights education in Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam; preparing for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in the region; and building the capacity of the UN system to promote and protect human rights in Myanmar.

5. The Strategic Management Plan, presented for the biennium 2008 - 2009, forecasts the staffing structure and budget for OHCHR operations in Bangkok as shown in Tables 1 and 2, respectively. Human rights operations are funded through the extra budgetary funds (XB) of OHCHR.

Table 1: ROB Staffing Structure

Title	Number	Level	Proposed
Chief of Office	1	P-5	
Human Rights Officers	2*	P-4 (1) P-3 (1)	P-3 (1)
Administrative Assistant	1	G-6	
Team Assistant	1	G-4	
Driver	1	G-2	
Consultants	2		

* P-4 staff member reported for duty in September 2007; P-3 staff member reported for duty in February 2008

Table 2: ROB Costs for 2006 - 2007 and Projected Costs for 2008 – 2009

<i>In USD</i>	(a) TOTAL 2006/2007 *	(b) TOTAL 2006/2007 **	(c) TOTAL 2008/2009 ***	(c) - (b)	%
Personnel and related costs	622,164.00	665,619.00	1,068,210.00	402,591	60.48%
Consultants	23,795.00	20,622.00	46,125.00	25,503	123.67%
Official travel	36,314.00	39,508.00	24,403.00	-15,105	-38.23%
Contractual Services	11,884.00	29,000.00	17,835.00	-11,165	-38.50%
General operating expenses	130,609.00	151,596.00	157,032.00	5,436	3.59%
Seminars, grants & contributions	56,992.00	56,670.00	155,759.00	99,089	174.85%
Subtotal	881,758.00	963,015.00	1,469,364.00	506,349	52.58%
Programme support costs	114,629.00	137,622.00	191,017.00	53,395	38.80%
GRAND TOTAL	996,387.00	1,100,637.00	1,660,381.00	559,744	50.86%

* From CMS report - Projected costs 2006/2007

** From IMIS report - Allotments for 2006/2007

*** From SMP - Fund requirements 2008/2009

6. Comments made by OHCHR are shown in *italics*.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVES

7. The main objectives of the audit were to:

- (a) Assess the adequacy of the ROB 2008 – 2009 Strategic Management Planning process and the completion of activities during the previous biennium;
- (b) Determine the effectiveness of internal controls to ensure reliable recording and reporting of transactions, and safeguarding of assets;
- (c) Assess compliance with relevant directives, rules, regulations and procedures as well as the adequacy of systems in place to ensure sound management practices in key functional areas; and
- (d) Assess the effectiveness of coordination with host country official entities, the UN Country Team and the Civil Society and the efforts to mainstream the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) in the region.

III. AUDIT SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

8. The audit focused on the activities and plans for the 2006 – 2007 and 2008 – 2009 bienniums. The audit included interviews and discussions with staff from ROB and ESCAP. OIOS reviewed administrative records, supporting documents and files in the areas of finance, human resources management, property, and logistics and purchasing. The audit also reviewed selected files for services rendered by ROB staff to regional stakeholders, as well as the database used for tracking reported cases of human rights violations. Due to time constraints, OIOS limited its assessment of the effectiveness of coordination with host country officials, UN Country Team and Civil Society to discussion with ROB staff and review of documents.

IV. AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Strategic management and governance

Building upon improvements in strategic planning

9. The Strategic Management Plan (SMP) serves as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) principal planning and evaluation tool for all of its global activities, and sets the broad parameters and priorities for all parts of OHCHR. OHCHR field offices prepare individual strategic plans which OHCHR Geneva consolidates into the OHCHR SMP. Upon approval by OHCHR Geneva, the ROB's draft Strategic Plan will become the implementing instrument at the field level. OHCHR requires the Strategic Plan to contain narrative descriptions of objectives and goals, and that field Strategic Plans follow the logical framework approach adopted by other UN entities. Following the logical framework approach enabled the ROB to become more focused on preparing the Annual Work Plan and provide details on the type of activities it deemed as necessary to achieve the SP goals and objectives.

10. The ROB experienced delays in the preparation of the 2008 – 2009 SP due in part to inadequate staffing, as well as OHCHR's efforts to institutionalize strategic planning within the organization. OIOS noted a marked improvement in the 2008 – 2009 SMP and the 2008 Annual Work Plan. However, the ROB needs to strengthen certain areas of the plan as prescribed by the logical framework methodology. It also needs to:

- Include key stakeholders in the formal development of the Strategic Plan to establish attainable goals and objectives; determine expected accomplishments and associated activities; aid in the development and delivery of sustainable activities; and help identify strengths, weaknesses, and potential opportunities;
- Strengthen performance indicators by including quantitative output descriptions and milestones for expected accomplishment of a specific objective;
- Revise the annual work plan to gain synergies from planned activities and to strengthen procedures for internal evaluation; and
- Assess the current staffing levels to ensure reasonable coverage of the region.

Including key stakeholders in the ROB strategic planning process

11. OHCHR's standard operating procedures require field presence to prepare and submit the country or regional Strategic Plan to OHCHR Headquarters and to work in close coordination with the OHCHR Geneva Desk. The procedures, however, do not require the inclusion of key stakeholders in the formal strategic planning process. Although the ROB is in close contact with many of its stakeholders on an ad hoc basis through training sessions, workshops,

and other activities, strategic planning needs to be more formal and structured. Without a formal planning process, the ROB may not adequately assess the plausibility of their plans, goals and objectives, and associated activities.

12. Including major stakeholders in a formal planning process will help the ROB to establish goals and objectives, assess risks, identify strategic interventions, prioritize activities, and develop meaningful performance indicators and evaluation criteria. Although the ROB prepared its draft Strategic Plan and may be in the process of finalizing the plan, it should still consider conducting formal discussions with key stakeholders during the mid-year or annual review process and make reasonable adjustments to the plan. This is particularly important given the political climate in some of the countries within the region and the lack of a formal agreement between the ROB and the Government of Thailand, particularly since the ROB has planned a number of activities in Thailand.

13. OIOS believes that the strategic planning process is an additional opportunity to bring together stakeholders at different levels to discuss strategies for the region. The ROB worked with the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) to integrate the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) into the work of other United Nations programmes in the region. However, although the United Nations Development Assistance Framework incorporates the HRBA in Guidelines for UNCTs, mainstreaming the HRBA on the ground will take time. In addition, collaborating with the donor community to integrate the HRBA into their activities may be a challenge. While on one hand, donors fund ROB and other human rights related organizations and activities, on the other hand, some donors engage in development, or other projects where human rights violations may occur. The ROB took the initiative and gathered information to demonstrate to donors the level of funding, number of projects and the recipients to possibly use this as leverage to instill the HRBA within the donor community on the ground.

14. OIOS recognizes that the inclusion of key stakeholders should be carried out within the context of the political situation in the region, and that some countries may be more receptive to certain ideas than others. However, the overall goal of the ROB should be to transfer the knowledge, skills and abilities to the countries, and prepare for the eventual exit of OHCHR. Planning should be done with these long-term goals in mind. Otherwise, OHCHR runs the risk of having stakeholders become too dependent upon the ROB.

Recommendations 1 and 2

(1) The OHCHR Regional Representative, Regional Office Bangkok, should include key stakeholders in the development of the office's Strategic Plan and the associated Annual Work Plan, during the mid-year and end of year review, as well as during the regular biennial planning process in order to help determine objectives and goals for the region, and ensure commitment to engage in activities necessary to achieve objectives with desired outcomes.

(2) The OHCHR Policy Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Section should update the Strategic Planning and Annual Work Plan guidelines to require the inclusion of key stakeholders in the planning process.

15. *The OHCHR Administration accepted recommendation 1 and agreed on the need for increased external consultations in preparation of strategic plans and work plans which was not possible in the timeframe of this SMP. Consultations are now being held during missions with individual governments, UNCTs and national partners to refine priorities. External consultations should be completed ahead of 2009 work plan. Recommendation 1 remains open pending receipt of documentation from OHCHR showing consultations with key stakeholders in preparing the work plans for ROB.*

16. *The OHCHR Administration accepted recommendation 2 and stated that the recommendation is valid for country offices or human rights advisers (with UNCT) for formulating the strategic plan in relation to the key UN and national stakeholders like the National Human Rights Institutions, NGOs, local government bodies. However, systematic consultation with national actors may be unrealistic for regional offices in relation to all countries they may provide assistance. Recommendation 2 remains open pending receipt of documentation from OHCHR on the updated planning guidelines requiring the inclusion of key stakeholders in the planning process.*

Strengthening guidance in defining performance indicators

17. Performance indicators help to define performance standards, describe the objective in measurable terms, and form the basis for monitoring and evaluation. OHCHR Geneva needs to define and provide guidance on performance indicators to help the ROB to strengthen the Strategic Plan and Annual Work Plan performance indicators and to quantify results, measure outcome, and have stakeholders assume more responsibility and ownership, as opposed to just increasing the number of activities conducted. For example, the 2008 – 2009 Annual Work Plan has numerous training activities. The ROB should begin to focus on transferring responsibility for training to key and capable stakeholders according to the “train the trainer” concept. Engaging in activities with an overall goal of transferring human rights responsibility to key stakeholders may allow the ROB to move into an oversight/monitoring role, and to eventually plan an exit strategy. If this is not done, the ROB runs the risk of creating a cycle of dependency rather than sustainability.

Recommendation 3

(3) The OHCHR Policy Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Section should update the Strategic Planning and Annual Work Plan guidelines to include the development of performance indicators as prescribed by the logical framework and ensure that the indicators are realistic,

measurable, and build competence within the stakeholders necessary to sustain goals once achieved.

18. *The OHCHR Administration accepted recommendation 3 and stated that training sessions were organized for key staff on results based management (RBM) including the development of indicators, which were then prescribed along with means of verification in the Guidelines for the preparation of the SMP. While the guidelines narrative could be further expanded in that regard, guidelines alone will never be sufficient to address the very relevant assessment of OIOS -- an issue which lies in staff's capacity in the area. Real change may happen with a combination of office programme staff's mandatory training, ongoing coaching by the Policy Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Section, and the creation of a critical mass of dedicated RBM-competent staff who could relay the necessary close coaching. Lastly, indicators should be established as part of the Strategic Plan and remain valid for the Annual Work Plan, avoiding any duplication of efforts leading to confusion and overburden. Any written guidance should therefore be part of the Strategic Planning guidelines. Recommendation 3 remains open pending receipt of the updated guidelines issued by OHCHR on developing performance indicators.*

Achieving greater impact of the activities in the Annual Work Plan

19. OHCHR considers the Annual Work Plan as an important planning tool for all its field presences. The purpose of the Annual Work Plan is to:

- Translate the biennial SMP, Strategic Plan, and where appropriate country engagement strategies, into a practical and more detailed work plan;
- Based on the objectives, expected accomplishments and outputs defined in the Strategic Plan, define what concrete activities will be implemented, when they will be implemented and by whom;
- Serve as the basis for monitoring implementation of the activities of the field presence; and
- Provide a clear and transparent framework by which donors and OHCHR's key interlocutors can support the objectives of the field presence.

20. The 2008 Annual Work Plan demonstrates the effort the ROB has made in planning its numerous activities. The plan includes detailed information regarding goals and objectives, expected accomplishments, and also timeframes to conduct activities. The ROB should continue to refine the plan by assessing the level and number of planned activities as well as the participants, and the manner in which activities are conducted. For example, ROB may be able to combine several activities to gain synergy by including a cross section of stakeholders. Further, as OHCHR assigns Human Rights Advisors in different locations, and with the recent addition of office staff, ROB may want to conduct several activities in a particular country to help minimize travel cost of participants, rather than conducting activities in one location and inviting participants from across the region to one location. If the ROB staff conducts

activities at the country level, they may reach a wider audience and increase the level of participation.

21. The Annual Work Plan did not provide the details of the planned training, or some of the other activities, but provided a generic listing of activities which may be conducted. Using the generic listing of planned activities should lend itself to exploring different ways to conduct and deliver the activities. The mid year review is an opportune time for ROB to streamline, and adjust its planned activities to make a greater impact.

22. The OHCHR guidelines did not provide instructions on evaluation criteria. As a result the ROB criteria are vague, which makes it difficult to monitor achievement of goals and relevance of activities. In addition, since key stakeholders were not included in the strategic planning exercise, the ROB may not have garnered the support and commitment of stakeholders to become involved in the evaluation process.

Recommendations 4 and 5

(4) The OHCHR Policy Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Section should update the Annual Work Plan guidelines to include instructions on planning specific activities, and develop criteria to evaluate the relevance of those activities in accomplishing goals and objectives.

(5) The OHCHR Regional Representative, Regional Office Bangkok, should further develop the Strategic Management Plan and Annual Work Plan to strategically focus on activities, taking into consideration upcoming plans for expansion of Human Rights Advisors in other countries, and to reassess the delivery of planned activities in specific countries to increase participation and decrease costs.

23. *The OHCHR Administration accepted recommendation 4.* Recommendation 4 remains open pending receipt of the updated Annual Work Plan guidelines including instructions on specific activities and developing evaluation criteria.

24. *The OHCHR Administration accepted recommendation 5 and stated that the Strategic Plan and work plan are being reworked in the context of the Mid-Year-Review and in light of potential donor support for new activities.* Recommendation 5 remains open pending receipt of the revised Strategic Management Plan and Annual Work Plan from OHCHR.

Prioritizing and balancing the scope of work

25. At the regional level, OHCHR seeks interaction with and the constant improvement of the existing system of human rights protection, and has the responsibility to facilitate such improvement. OHCHR's goal at the regional level is to make human rights widely available to facilitate the decision making

process, carry out human rights advocacy with all actors, and provide tools to increase the capacity of all actors. In the past, the ROB conducted a variety of activities throughout the region, but there had been more focus on Thailand.

26. The 2008 – 2009 draft SMP includes a considerable number of activities in the southern region of Thailand. If there is an imbalance in the level of activities planned and conducted in the region, it may give the appearance that the office favours one country over another. In addition, this practice might marginalize ROB's impact if there are too many disparate activities, particularly given the limited staff. The ROB played an instrumental role during the 2006 – 2007 biennium in helping establish a human rights mechanism for the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the endorsement of the draft Charter at the 13th ASEAN Summit in November 2007. As a regional office, the ROB should continue to focus on thematic issues pertinent to the region. OIOS understands that the ROB will be compelled to address other injustices, but this must be done within the context of the political situation on the ground, country agreements, in line with the High Commissioner's priorities, and in consideration of available resources.

Improving the ROB's span of control

27. As OHCHR plans to establish a Human Rights Advisor in the Philippines, and given the recent assignment of an Advisor in Indonesia, this should help the ROB to focus on a cluster of countries, i.e., Lao Peoples Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. (Figure 1 below depicts the OHCHR presence in Asia and the Pacific). While Cambodia is covered under the geographic span of the ROB, the ROB does minimal work if any in Cambodia, as there is an existing OHCHR country office. OHCHR Geneva may also in the future, consider streamlining the work of ROB within the region and its span of control to avoid duplication, and to help the ROB concentrate on regional strategies as other field presences are established in the region. This is not to diminish the importance of the work that ROB is doing, but to help strategically focus its activities to make the greatest impact.

Recommendations 6 and 7

(6) The OHCHR Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division should work in conjunction with the Regional Office in Bangkok to further prioritize its activities, and to help ensure synergy by using new approaches to providing capacity building or other technical services.

(7) The OHCHR Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division should determine the necessity to streamline work conducted by the Regional Office in Bangkok in relation to the establishment of additional Human Rights presences in the region, in order to reduce the span of control of the Regional Office in Bangkok and improve strategic focus to realize greater impact.

28. The OHCHR Administration accepted recommendation 6 and stated that the Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division will work with Bangkok office to produce maximum synergy from activities addressing common themes or elements, e.g. treaty reporting. Recommendation 6 remains open pending receipt of the revised Strategic Management Plan from OHCHR showing further prioritization of activities with common themes or elements covering the region.

29. The OHCHR Administration accepted recommendation 7 and stated that communication has improved with the Human Rights Advisor in Indonesia. The deployment of a Human Rights Advisor to Philippines is still pending. A retreat of South-East Asia field staff will be held in the context of annual field consultations in November 2008. Recommendation 7 remains open pending receipt of documentation from OHCHR showing the results of initiatives to streamline work, reduce span of control and improve strategic focus.

Figure 1: OHCHR presence in Asia and the Pacific



Mid-year or annual assessment of staffing levels

30. Prior to September 2007, the ROB was composed of a Regional Representative, three national staff (an administrative assistant, a team assistant, and a driver), and two consultants who served on short term contracts. In the absence of a deputy or other human rights officers, the regional representative relied heavily on interns to carry-out core functions. The interns served as the backbone of the office and conducted a variety of substantive work for the office including research to assess situations in the region, data analysis, and preparation of monthly reports for submission to OHCHR Geneva. In September

2007, OHCHR appointed a Deputy for the ROB, and in February 2008, a Human Rights Officer was appointed.

31. At the time of the audit, the ROB drafted a proposed organizational structure and terms of reference with specific roles and responsibilities for the staff. According to the proposed organizational structure, the ROB identified the need for an additional staff to balance the distribution of work in the substantive area. The Deputy provided day-to-day oversight of the office staff and interns, played a major role in the development of the Strategic Plan and Annual Work Plan along with the Regional Representative, and planned activities, in addition to carrying out substantive work. It was also his responsibility to oversee the work of the staff recently assigned to the ROB to monitor and report on the Myanmar crisis. The recently appointed Human Rights Officer would focus on capacity building and technical cooperation. The proposed Human Rights Officer would focus on monitoring and protection, which was being covered by the Deputy and the Regional Representative.

Response to Myanmar crisis

32. In response to the crisis in Myanmar in September 2007, the ROB managed to put a plan in place to monitor the situation, and proposed to OHCHR Geneva alternatives to handle the crisis. In response, OHCHR Geneva activated the Rapid Response Plan and redeployed a staff member for six months from the OHCHR Nepal Country Office to work in Bangkok in order to monitor and report on human rights violations. At the time of the OIOS visit, the situation had subsided and the Nepal staff member's six-month assignment was almost over. There was some concern that if the situation escalates, the office will have difficulty supporting the protection and monitoring activities.

Support to the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review

33. Support to the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) will also be a major undertaking for the ROB. The UPR is a new process and the level or extent of support is not yet known. ROB is to support the countries in the region as they prepare for the UPR. The ROB support may include reviewing, or providing information, preparing portions of reports, providing information to OHCHR, NGOs, civil society, and other stakeholders.

34. The recent assignment of the Human Rights Officer will allow the ROB to focus on capacity building and technical cooperation in the region and to better define and prioritize those activities. The ROB, in conjunction with OHCHR Geneva, needs to determine if there is still a need for the additional Human Rights Officer to balance the workload and assign specific responsibility for protection and monitoring, as well as other activities in the region. This might reduce the need to redeploy staff in the event of a crisis.

Recommendation 8

(8) The OHCHR Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division should assess the need for an additional

**Human Rights Officer to balance the workload of the
Regional Office Bangkok.**

35. *The OHCHR Administration accepted recommendation 8 and stated that an additional P-4 post is under recruitment.* Based on the response, recommendation 8 has been closed.

B. Information management

36. The ROB emphasis is not on monitoring human rights violations and protection within the region. That is the role of an OHCHR country office. However, because of the lack of country offices within the region, the ROB also has the responsibility to collect and analyze a considerable amount of information concerning situations on the ground, which sometimes includes monitoring and protection activities, as well as carrying out its technical cooperation and capacity building activities. Managing this information may be a challenge for the ROB, and the OHCHR may need to address how to manage the vast amount of information and activities conducted by its field offices.

Management of monthly and weekly reporting

37. Monthly reports were submitted to the geographic desk at OHCHR Geneva, and the desk officer was responsible for taking all necessary action to follow up on requests and recommendations contained in the report. The monthly reports contain a wide range of information and could be quite voluminous ranging from a few pages to hundreds of pages. OIOS found that there was no systematic way to manage this information and ensure proper follow-up and monitoring.

38. OHCHR requires its field offices to submit monthly narrative reports and considers the reports to be an essential communication tool by which the field offices:

- Inform Headquarters of key political, security and human rights developments of relevance to the OHCHR, including an analysis of significant issues and any recommendations for follow-up action;
- Measure progress in and identify obstacles to, achieving the objectives set by their annual work plan; and
- Draw to Headquarters' attention any significant security or administrative issues that need attention.

39. In addition to monthly reports, OHCHR field offices may also submit weekly, daily, or ad hoc reports as deemed appropriate. The weekly reports serve to keep OHCHR Geneva apprised of urgent or rapidly evolving issues, key political, security and human rights developments of relevance to the Office.

Tracking and monitoring special procedures

40. The ROB receives a number of allegations of human rights violations which are transmitted to a special procedures geographic desk officer at OHCHR

Headquarters. The geographic desk officer reviews the allegations and passes the information to the Special Rapporteur, Independent Expert, Working Group, or Representative of the Secretary-General for consideration when carrying out their respective special procedures mandates.

41. If it is decided to act upon the information, a letter is transmitted to the Government and the ROB will provide up to date information before the letter is sent to the Government. Information relating to dire situations or incidents may be sent directly to the High Commissioner for her attention and action through the appropriate channels in Geneva.

42. The Special Procedures Division (SPD) has a database which is not accessible by field staff. Having accessibility to the special procedures database might help the ROB to stay informed as to the status of action taken and follow up as required. It is difficult for the ROB to maintain visibility over special procedures given the nature of the activities associated with these cases. According to the 2008 -2009 Annual Work Plan, the ROB will develop a simple database to track and monitor special procedures within the region.

Recommendation 9

(9) The OHCHR Special Procedures Division should determine how best to share information with field offices to avoid redundancy and confusion.

43. *The OHCHR Administration accepted recommendation 9 and stated that it is standard practice for the SPD's Quick Response Desk to share information with Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division's (FOTCO) desk officers on communications sent to States and on any replies received. FOTCO desk officers play a key role in ensuring communication between HQ and field presences and relay the information to regional and country offices as appropriate, and conversely, information from field presences to SPD. SPD suggested that to support a coordinated approach to communications, the ROB copies reports on alleged human rights violations sent to FOTCO to SPD's Quick Response Desk at urgent-action@ohchr.org; and in monthly reports of ROB and field offices, ROB may highlight cases that SPD should act on. SPD also cited a range of communication and information tools posted on OHCHR website and/or the Portal made available to regional and country offices for their reference and information. Based on the action taken by OHCHR, recommendation 9 has been closed.*

Collecting, analyzing, monitoring and tracking OHCHR information

44. OHCHR receives a vast amount of information that it can use to effectively monitor outputs and activities and measure impact, without which OHCHR could lose visibility of critical issues and may give the impression that the mission is fragmented and ineffective. OHCHR stated that in addition to the guidelines on the process and content of the annual reports on activities and results, a monitoring system was being put in place to effectively monitor results against expected accomplishments. They added that the current phase of their

monitoring effort focuses on office-wide indicators, while the next stage will focus on field presences with the aim to establish a comprehensive system for the next SMP (2010 - 2011).

Maintaining and updating the ROB website

45. The management of the IT system of the ROB is handled by ESCAP. However, IT tools related to OHCHR policies and programmes are managed by OHCHR. OIOS noticed that the ROB website (<http://seasia.ohchr.org/>) has not been updated since August 2007, mainly due to the lack of interns with the necessary skills. The ROB should ensure that it communicates its website needs to OHCHR Headquarters particularly for information on the official position of the High Commissioner.

Recommendation 10

(10) The OHCHR Regional Office in Bangkok should work with the OHCHR Programme Support and Management Service in order to update its website on a regular basis.

46. *The OHCHR Administration accepted recommendation 10 and stated that the Programme Support and Management Service's Information Management and Technology Section (IMTS) and the Communications Section are working on a standard template and guidelines for websites of field presences, to maintain a consistent look and approach for all OHCHR websites. In the interim, IMTS is working with the ROB to improve functionality and facilitate updating of their existing website.* Recommendation 10 remains open pending receipt of the standard template and guidelines for websites of field presences.

C. Administration

47. The ROB signed in April 2007 a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with ESCAP, which covers many areas of administration of the OHCHR Regional Office, including lease of premises, maintenance and utilities, financial management and security. OIOS found the support given to ROB by ESCAP to be adequate. Some controls are still under the responsibility of ROB and the audit focused on those controls.

48. In general, internal controls were adequate and provided reasonable assurance that assets were safeguarded and that funds were spent as intended. OIOS, nonetheless, found duplications in the numbering of petty cash disbursement vouchers, although the expenses were for different transactions. The ROB should pre-number the vouchers in order to prevent duplicating voucher numbers in the future. Also, there was more petty cash on hand than the amount authorized. This occurred because reconciliation exercises were not done on a regular basis, but only at year-end. As a result, it was not possible to identify the origin of the difference. The ROB agreed to use pre-numbered petty

cash disbursement vouchers and to regularly conduct petty cash fund reconciliations.

49. ESCAP adequately handled procurement pertaining to the ROB (except for procurement actions under \$500 which is delegated to the ROB), and human resources management. OIOS found that the use (official and non official) of the vehicle and driver properly followed the OHCHR “Vehicle Policy for OHCHR Field Presences” received by the ROB at the end of year 2007.

V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

50. We wish to express our appreciation to the Management and staff of the OHCHR Regional Office for South East Asia in Bangkok 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 OHCHR Regional Representative, Regional Office Bangkok, should include key stakeholders in the development of the office's Strategic Plan and the associated Annual Work Plan, during the mid-year and end of year review, as well as during the regular biennial planning process in order to help determine objectives and goals for the region, and ensure commitment to engage in activities necessary to achieve objectives with desired outcomes.	Governance	High	O	Documentation from OHCHR showing consultations with key stakeholders in preparing the work plans for ROB.	31 December 2008
2	The OHCHR Policy Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Section should update the Strategic Planning and Annual Work Plan guidelines to require the inclusion of key stakeholders in the planning process.	Governance	High	O	Documentation from OHCHR on the updated planning guidelines requiring the inclusion of key stakeholders in the planning process.	31 July 2009
3	The OHCHR Policy Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Section should update the Strategic Planning and Annual Work Plan guidelines to include the development of performance indicators as prescribed by the logical framework and ensure that the indicators are realistic, measurable, and build competence within the stakeholders necessary to sustain goals once achieved.	Governance	High	O	Updated guidelines issued by OHCHR on developing performance indicators.	31 July 2009
4	The OHCHR Policy Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Section should update the Annual Work Plan guidelines to include instructions on planning specific activities, and develop criteria to evaluate the relevance of those activities in accomplishing goals and objectives.	Operational	High	O	Updated Annual Work Plan guidelines including instructions on specific activities and developing evaluation criteria.	None provided

Recom. no.	Recommendation	Risk category	Risk rating	C/O ¹	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ²
5	The OHCHR Regional Representative, Regional Office Bangkok, should further develop the Strategic Management Plan and Annual Work Plan to strategically focus on activities, taking into consideration upcoming plans for expansion of Human Rights Advisors in other countries, and to reassess the delivery of planned activities in specific countries to increase participation and decrease costs.	Strategy	Medium	O	Revised Strategic Management Plan and Annual Work Plan from OHCHR.	31 August 2008
6	The OHCHR Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division should work in conjunction with the Regional Office in Bangkok to further prioritize its activities, and to help ensure synergy by using new approaches to providing capacity building or other technical services.	Strategy	Medium	O	Revised Strategic Management Plan from OHCHR showing further prioritization of activities with common themes or elements covering the region.	None provided
7	The OHCHR Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division should determine the necessity to streamline work conducted by the Regional Office in Bangkok in relation to the establishment of additional Human Rights presences in the region, in order to reduce the span of control of the Regional Office in Bangkok and improve strategic focus to realize greater impact.	Operational	Medium	O	Documentation from OHCHR showing the results of initiatives to streamline work, reduce span of control and improve strategic focus.	None provided
8	The OHCHR Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division should assess the need for an additional Human Rights Officer to balance the workload of the Regional Office Bangkok.	Operational	Medium	C	Action completed.	Implemented
9	The OHCHR Special Procedures Division should determine how best to share information with field offices to avoid redundancy and confusion.	Operational	Medium	C	Action completed.	Implemented
10	The OHCHR Regional Office in Bangkok	Information	Medium	O	Standard template and guidelines for	None provided

Recom. no.	Recommendation	Risk category	Risk rating	C/ O ¹	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ²
	should work with the OHCHR Programme Support and Management Service in order to update its website on a regular basis.	resources			websites of field presences.	

1. C = closed, O = open
2. Date provided by OHCHR in response to recommendations.