

# Personal assignment



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INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION AUDIT REPORT UNHCR recruitment process for national staff in the Democratic Republic of the Congo Inadequate monitoring of recruitment actions resulted in unnecessary delays of more than one year in filling key posts 16 June 2009 { Assignment No. ARIIOOS/0/04 Unies United Nations rurtions @ INTEROFFICE EMORANDUM M oFFtce oF TINTERNALvERsrcHT sERvtcES o I M E M O R A N O U M N T E R I E U R B U R E A U D E s s E R V t c E s o E c o N T R O L E T N T E R N E I N T E R N A L U D I T D I V I S I O N D I V I S I O N D E L ' A U O I T I N T E R N E A o Mr. Ant6nio Guterres, High Commissioner A United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees omE 16 June2009 nennrr\*ce IAD: os-P d-i6 | oe Internal AuditDivision. OIOS for suarrcr Assignment AR2008/II0/04- Audit of the UIIHCRC recruitmentprocess nationalstaff No. osrerin the DemocraticRepublicof the Congo L audit. I am pleasedto presentthe report on the above-mentioned 2. Based on your comments, we are pleased to inform you that we will close recommendation I in the OIOS recommendations databaseas indicated in Annex I. n contained in the report, we request order for us to close the remaining recommendations that you provide us with the additional information as discussedin the text of the report and also summarized Annex L in 3. Please note that OIOS will report on the progress made to implement its particularly recommendation which has beendesigned high risk, as recommendations, 2 in its annual report to the General Assembly and semi-annualreport to the SecretaryGeneral. Mr. L. CraigJohnstone, UNHCR DeputyHigh Commissioner, Ms.

Judy Cheng-Hopkins, Assistant High Commissioner, LNHCRC Ms. Karen Farkas, Controller and Director, DFAM, UNHCR Ms. Maha Odeima, Audit Coordinator,

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Bagot, Chief, Geneva Audit Service, OIOS Form ALRDI 3 (2 January 2009)

INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION FUNCTION The Office shall, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations examine, review and appraise the use of financial resources of the United Nations in order to guarantee the implementation of programmes and legislative mandates, ascertain compliance of programme managers with the financial and administrative regulations and rules, as well as with the approved recommendations external oversight audits, reviews and summary bodies, undertake management improve the structure of the Organization and its responsiveness to the requirements of programmes and legislative mandates, and monitor the effectiveness of the systems of internal control of the Organization” (General Assembly Resolution 48/218 B). CONTACT ACTING

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mail:[email protected]ch OIOS) conducted audit of an The Office of

Internal Oversight Services (UNHCR) recruitment the United Nations High

Commissioner for Refugees process national staff in the Democratic

Republic of the Congo (DRC). The overall objective of the audit was to

determine whether an effective system of internal control was in place for the

recruitment national staff in the UNHCR of The to operation in the DRC, within

the authority delegated to the Representative. audit was conducted in

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accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing. Overall, the audit found that the internal control system needed to be improved to ensure that recruitment national staff is carried out in a timely and fair manner and in compliance with rules.

UNI ICR agreed with the concerns by OIOS and had initiated action in all the areas identified: as there were delays in filling vacancies as a result of inadequate posts could not be performance targets and monitoring controls. Several Officer posts in such fields as protection and supply chain management. In key areas as protection and supply chain management. In response to the audit, the UNHCR Representation Kinshasa has established a comprehensive list of vacant posts with specific target dates for the various actions that are required. This list will serve as a monitoring and accountability tool in an ongoing effort to reduce the time taken to fill vacant posts. The review of establishment criteria for the selection of staff needed and reweighted in order of improvement. Criteria should be determined where the importance takes place.

OIOS noted cases before the interview second- or third-ranked candidate was not invited while no clear explanation was given in the minutes of the interview panel or the (APPC). As a result, Appointments, Postings and Promotions Committee the transparency and objectivity of the process were diminished. In response to the audit, the Representation to the UNHCR will be considered the recruitment process, which will include the criteria and the weighting of these criteria. In addition, a Unit to review all in team has been established the Human Resources to recommendations made before they are submitted the

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APPC. did not have the UNHCR black list of The Representation received colleges and universitiesto ensurethat sclectedcandidates ‘[’ he certificatesfrom properly accrdited universitiesand colleges. Representation since requestedthe UNHCR Division of Human has ResourcesManagement to share the black list of colleges and universities rvith the office and, once received, plans to use it fbr all of the degrees thosc nervly recruitedstaff in 2009 and also to veri11’ recruited 2008. in TABLE OF GONTENTS Ghapter Paragraphs I. INTRODUCTION II. AUDIT OBJECTIVES III. AUDIT SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY I-5 6 7-8 IV. AUDIT FINDINGSAND RECOMMENDATIONS process A. E{ficiencyandeffectiveness ofthe recruitment process B.

Faimess hansparency the recruitment and of V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ANNEX I – Status auditrecommendations of 9-14 | < t < 26 I. INTRODUGTION (OIOS) conducted audit of an I. The Office of Intemal OversightServices the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) recruitment processfor national staff in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The audit was conducted in accordancewith the Intemational Standards for the Professional Practice InternalAuditine. of 2. The recruitment of national staff, i. e. , General Service category (GS) staff and National ProfessionalOfficers (NPO), falls under the authority of the Representative, fully delegated from UNHCR Headquarters.

The Human of Resources Unit in Kinshasadealswith the recruitment nationalstaff in the DRC, and each staff member of the Unit is responsible for monitoring the recruitmentof a portfolio of recruitmentcasesin the different field offices across the country. An Appointments, Postingsand Promotions Committee (APPC) is centralized in Kinshasa and covers three sub-offices  
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(Goma, Bukavu and Lubumbashi) and eight field offices (Buburu, Bunia, Kisangani, Moba, Pweto, for Kalemie, Uvira and Baraka). The APPC is responsible nominating staff to posts and will either endorse recommendations by the recruitment panels or select a candidate of its choice upon review of the interview reports and supporting documents.

The requirements for national staff are determined in the Country 3. of Operation Plan. Upon the approval of the plan and the classification posts at Headquarters and based on job descriptions, positions are advertised internally and externally. Human Resources Unit personnel pre-screen and invite candidates for a written test and an interview. The test and interview results are made for local then submitted to the APPC. Since the recruitment management system of the Management Renewal Project (MSRP) has not yet been rolled out in the DRC, recruitment is manually processed. 4. National staff working in the DRC comprised 226 GS staff and 7 NPOs.

The number of recruitment actions in 2007-2008 covered by the audit was 117. 5. Comments made by UNHCR are shown in the annexes. II. AUDIT OBJECTIVES whether an effective The overall objective of the audit was to determine 6. system of internal control was in place for the recruitment of national staff in the UNHCR operation in the DRC, within the authority delegated to the Representative. the: Specifically, the audit assessed (a) Efficiency and effectiveness of the recruitment process; and, (b) process with UNHCR Staff Rules of Compliance the recruitment and Regulations. III. AUDIT SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY 7. The audit covered recruitment actions for national staff at UNHCR in the DRC for the period 2007-2008.

The field portion of the review included visits to Sub-Office Lubumbashi and the Representation Kinshasa. The audit fieldwork was conducted in December 2008. The audit methodology comprised: (a) review of policies, procedures; (b) analysis of relevant Management System Renewal administrative guidelines; Project (MSRP) data; (c) interviews with responsible personnel; (d) assessment of the effectiveness of controls, and (e) verification of processes, appropriate.

#### IV. AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Efficiency and effectiveness of the recruitment process

Inadequate monitoring and accountability mechanisms impact timeliness of recruitment.

The UNHCR operation in the DRC had experienced significant delays in recruiting staff, which could have been avoided if there had been a stronger focus on monitoring and holding staff accountable for an efficient and effective recruitment process. In many instances the Representation in Kinshasa, while making efforts to monitor the recruitment actions, was dependent on input from field offices who often conducted the interviews. The main delays identified by OIOS pertained to recruitment cases in field offices, as highlighted below:

- (i) Three posts created toward the end of 2007 had not been filled for more than 12 months:
  - (i) An Associate Protection Officer post at National Officer A (NOA) level in Sub Office Lubumbashi;
  - (ii) A Driver post at GS-2 level in Moba; and
  - (iii) A Driver post at GS-2 level in Pweto.
- Another eleven posts created on 1 January 2008 had remained vacant for almost one year:
  - (iv) A Field Officer post at NOA level in Kisangani;
  - (v) An Assistant Security Officer post at NOA level in Kinshasa;
  - (vi) A Senior Protection Clerk GS-5 post in Goma;
  - (vii) GS-6 post in Bukavu;
  - (viii) A Field Assistant

Administration Clerk GS-4 post in Kalemie; (ix) A Telecom Operator GS-4 post in Uvira; and (x)-(xiv) Five Driver posts at GS-2 level in various field offices. . Furthermore, an important post of Associate Supply Officer for Sub-Office Lubumbashi had been vacant for over six months leaving significant procurement to two newly recruited clerks who were yet to be trained. The Sub-Office was also responsible for procurement activities for the Field Offices in Moba and Kalemie. 10.

The Representation explained that for the NOA Associate Protection Officer post in Lubumbashi, an internal candidate who was recommended could not be selected as she did not meet the academic requirement of having a degree in law. Consequently, the post had to be re-advertised. The driver posts had remained vacant due to delays in taking the practical tests in the field. This was due to the fact that the staff members who were to supervise the test had to attend to urgent matters in Kinshasa. The NOA Field Officer post in Kisangani, on the other hand, was divided into two Field Assistant posts and the office was still awaiting post creation to be finalized in Geneva.

The Senior Protection Clerk post in Goma was expected to be re-advertised the Field Office in Goma could as not trace the application forms of the candidates and, hence, no interviews could take place. 11. The explanations provided reinforce the OIOS point that better planning and management oversight are required to improve the efficiency of the recruitment process. Management should devise corrective measures to ensure the posts are filled within an agreed-upon timeframe. The table of advertised and vacant posts that is currently used to track vacancies should be subject to regular management scrutiny. In particular, the planned Entry



on Duty (EOD) date should be used as a monitoring benchmark and both the management and the APPC should be duly informed when there is a risk of the EOD target not being met.

Accountability of the field offices participating in the recruitment process to meet established out deadlines should be clearly spelled and should include, inter to interview panel recommendations the alia, specific timelines for submitting APPC. 1 Recommendations and 2 in The UNHCR Representation Kinshasa should: (1) Taking into account the adverse impact of the protracted vacancies on operations, set performance targets for the recruitment of national staff; and (2) Strengthen the monitoring controls over recruitment activities to reduce the time taken to fill vacant posts. Offices participating in the recruitment process should be held accountable for meeting established deadlines for various stages of the recruitment process. 12.

The UNHCR Representation in Kinshasa accepted recommendation 1 and stated that a comprehensive list of vacant posts has been established with specific target dates for the various actions that are required. Based on the action taken by UNHCR and the documentation provided to recommendation 1 has been enclosed. 1 OIOS, 13. The UNHCR Representation in Kinshasa accepted recommendation 2 and indicated that the matrix of vacant posts will serve as the monitoring tool, and offices will be held accountable according to the deadlines given. The matrix will be frequently reviewed and updated.

Recommendation 2 remains open pending information that posts are being filled within agreed-upon timeframes and that the recruitment process is reviewed regularly by management. Need to ensure timely action is taken when the probation period ends (GS14. f OIOS observed case of the

recruitment the TelecomAssistant a as and emerged the 6) in 2005 in Goma, who went through the interview process him for the post on condition of best candidate with the panel recommending undergoing a probationary period of six months to assess his performance. The staff member was only nominated to the post by the APPC, nearly two years later in June 2007. OIOS notes that the expiry of the six-month probation period should have triggered action by management. In addition, the supervisor of the staff member in question should have been properly informed of the panel's recommendation and respected the probationary period of six months, or alternatively consulted management on the way forward. Improved and field offices is required communication between Branch Office Kinshasa to ensure that vacant posts are filled on a timely basis.

Management took note of the OIOS observation and therefore no action is proposed. B. Fairness and transparency of the recruitment process of Inadequate criteria and vague scoring system reduce transparency recruitment decisions Management Manual 15. In accordance with UNHCR's Staff Administration (SAMM), the criteria to be considered during the oral interview should be determined using the job description as a guide. The same criteria should be weighted in order of importance and used consistently. It is essential that the weighting be completed before the interview takes place. The weightings should be reasonable and take into consideration all important factors needed for the particular post at the given duty station.

The scoring system should be objective score for written and and transparent and the candidate with the highest aggregate oral tests should be

recommended the APPC. to 16. During the audit, a number of critical exceptions were noted where the criteria for selecting candidate a post was not clear and did not meet the for a minimum requirements transparency and objectivity, as described in the of following paragraphs. 17. OIOS came across a case where the highest score in the written test was and three 9. 5 out of 28, i. e. , a mere 34 per cent passmark rate. This candidate just 7. 5 out of 28 (or 26 per cent), were all invited for others, lowest obtaining the the oral interview. The minimum pass mark score must always be determined before the actual interviews.

This ensure that UNHCR not only gets the best candidates but also does not compromise on quality while ensuring the transparency the recruitment process. OIOS is pleased to note that subsequent of to to the audit, the minimum passmark has been established be 50 per cent of the OIOS is of the total marks and has been applied since March 2009. Nevertheless, opinion that the above mentioned post should have been re-advertised. score 15/20 was with the higher aggregate 18. [In another case, candidate the not ranked first by the panel. Instead, the candidate who came second with a endorsed by the APPC lower score 13/20 was recommended, and subsequently without being questioned. Both candidates had UNHCR experience. The circumstances the decision for were not clear. 19.

In another case, a candidate selected a GS post in a sub-office had for three weeks earlier been rejected for an identical post in a field office on the grounds that he had ' never been trained in the use of MSRP so rare'. This criterion appears to have been ignored by the APPC when he was nominated for the sub-office post, a much larger office, where knowledge of

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MSRP should have been deemed During the interview for the same vacancy in even more important. MSRP had undergone the sub-office, one of the other shortlisted candidates training but was not selected. Notably, the APPC did not select this first-ranked candidate who had a combined score of 14.16 from the written test and oral with a score of 13.33 candidate interview.

Instead, picked the second-placed it without providing an adequate explanation on the criteria for selection. 20. The Representation Kinshasa in sought clarification from the sub-office following the OIOS observation. The supporting documents they received contradicted the panel summary even more, whereby the selected candidate could not be actually come in third place with a score of 13.0. The discrepancy explained. OIOS is further concerned by the fact that the same candidate who was selected for the sub-office post had earlier been interviewed for another post in another field office, although he had not even applied for the post. OIOS noted that the interview panel had made the correct decision not to consider the candidate for that post.

Recommendations to 4.3 The UNHCR Representation Kinshasa should: in (3) In order to ensure that the selection of candidates is transparent and objective: (a) determine the criteria to be considered during the oral interview using the job description as a guide; (b) weight the criteria, in order of importance, while taking into consideration all important factors needed for the particular job at the given duty station, and use this weighting consistently throughout the recruitment process; and (4) Ensure that (a) the candidate with the highest aggregate score of written and oral tests is recommended to the Appointments, Postings and Promotions Committee

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(APPC), using a comparative table to support the recommendation and showing how each panelist scored the interviewed candidates on the various criteria. If a candidate other than the one with the highest score is selected for whatever reason, this should be properly justified in both the table and the report of the panel; (b) the APPC scrutinizes each case it receives carefully. If the APPC decides to select a different candidate other than the recommended candidate or other than the highest-scoring candidate, this must be properly justified and explained in the APPC minutes.

21.

The UNHCR Representation in Kinshasa accepted recommendation 3 and stated that during the interview process WHCR Kinshasa uses the interview forms provided by Geneva and used by all offices for submission to the APPC. The various assessments however not weighted but are graded in terms of three levels. A guideline will be established on the recruitment process which will be applied by each office to include the criteria to be considered during an oral interview and the weighting of these criteria. Recommendation 3 remains open pending receipt of the guideline on the recruitment process, including the criteria to be considered during an oral interview and the weighting of these 22.

The UNHCR Representation in Kinshosa accepted recommendation 4 and stated that, except for cases highlighted by the auditors, all recommendations to the APPC are made in accordance with the established procedures. To ensure that these procedures are followed a team has been established in the Human Resources Unit in Kinshosa to review all recommendations made before they are submitted to the APPC. The audit

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recommendations were shared with members of the APPC during their first and second meetings in 2009 and are being applied by the Committee. Recommendation 4 remains open pending receipt of the Terms of Reference of the team established in the Human Resources Unit in Kinshasa to review all recommendations made before they are submitted to the APPC and a copy of the minutes of the APPC meetings held so far in 2009.

Incomplete background checks for NPOs could lead to selection of unqualified candidates<sup>23</sup>. The growing demand for college degrees, the globalization of the education market, and the Internet are combining to create a risk of proliferation of the so called "diploma mills" educational institutions without proper accreditation. This makes the conduct of personal background checks even more important especially for staff occupying National Professional Officer posts. OIOS review indicated that basic internal controls in the area of background checks were in place. The Representation in Kinshasa attaches copies of original certificates to the file of newly appointed staff members only when such copies have been agreed to the originals.

It also obtains three references. (DHRM) at 24. The UNHCR Division of Human Resources Management Headquarters issues regularly a black list of universities and colleges to be used for background checks. OIOS found that the Representation does not have this list and, as a result, it could not be ensured that selected staff in the NPO category obtained a degree from accredited universities and colleges. Recommendation 5 (5) The UNHCR Representation in Kinshasa should ensure that background checks for National Professional Officers systematically involve checking that staff taken

