

Background

The process of recruiting and hiring area staff in UNRWA is governed by Area Personnel Directive No. PD/A/4/Part II: UNRWA Area Staff Selection Policy, effective 1 July 2000 which clarifies the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the selection process, and outlines the procedures involved through a combination of competitive recruitment, and making optimal use of roster candidates. The PD is supplemented by GSC No. 01-2018 (Candidate Assessment using Competency-Based Interviewing) with guidance on the competency assessment methods and rating of candidates, and GSC No 05-2010 Hiring of Daily Paid Workers (DPWs) which provide further detailed instructions for hiring of daily paid workers and managing rosters for area staff posts with recurring needs. Lastly, recruiting and hiring in Syria field office is also subject to specific agreement with the host government on their participation. Field HR Office Syria serves 3,500 staff, and comprise 22 staff under the management of the Head, Field HR Office.

Objective and purpose of Audit

DIOS assessed the adequacy and effectiveness of risk management, governance, and internal control processes over specific recruitment sub-processes on hiring Fixed Term/ Limited Duration Contract staff and Daily Paid Workers, and to determine whether relevant UNRWA rules

and regulations have been complied with for the period 2019-2020.

What DIOS concluded

DIOS assessed the recruitment process at SFO as "Partially Satisfactory - Major Improvement Needed", which means "The assessed governance arrangements, risk management practices and controls were generally established and functioning but need major improvement to provide reasonable assurance that the objectives of the audited entity/area should be achieved".

DIOS noted the immediate need to ensure adherence to requirements for administering tests, validation and verification of candidates' credentials and references, and related to hiring of spouse/immediate family, to ensure objective and transparent process.

Other need for enhancement related to the shortlisting process, acting appointments, and hiring daily paid workers contributed to determination of the overall rating.

On the other hand, DIOS noted proactive detailed monitoring by HR SFO of the field office's compliance against requirements from the EO Instruction No. 03 human resources action plan on gender parity January 2018 by using a standardized form. SFO is meeting the parameters in ensuring gender balance in interview panel composition, and in conducting the interviews.

What DIOS recommended

DIOS made 10 recommendations, out of which 3 are high risk (#2, #4 and #5), and 6 are medium risk:

① SFO should consistently conduct the evaluation and substantive assessment of all applications against requirements, including relevant authorization for equivalency determination, to ensure transparency of the shortlisting process.

② SFO should take immediate measures to ensure and demonstrate compliance with the PD related to the pre-employment tests: appoint at least two staff members to grade the tests, ensure appropriate criteria for grading is consistently used and moreover to ensure evidence of tests and grading are retained.

③ SFO should ensure all competencies to be used in the candidate interview are duly included in the vacancy announcement.

④ SFO should take immediate measures to ensure effective reference checks, validation, and verification are completed prior to finalizing the recruitment in compliance with the PD.

⑤ SFO should take prompt measures to ensure adherence to the PD on engaging spouse/immediate family member and ensure no equally well-qualified candidate can be recruited before appointment or placement on roster.

⑥ SFO is recommended to seek HRD guidance on additional proactive due-diligence measures to better monitor immediate family relationships such as cross-referencing and annual relationship surveys.

⑦ SFO should review the existing rosters and re-assess their validity.

⑧ SFO should ensure appropriate fair assessment and selection is completed and documented to ensure equal opportunity to all eligible staff before acting appointment and extension of appointment, through clarifying the procedure for acting appointment leveraging off good practice identified in Jordan field.

⑨ SFO should ensure minimum verification is conducted and documented on the credentials/grade of the candidates proposed by the hiring department for daily paid workers

⑩ SFO should develop clear timeframe for effective rollout of DPMS and its full usage.

In addition to the recommendations, DIOS also noted various opportunities to improve including i.a. the need for VAs to include minimum competencies; to provide instructions to graders on retention of the tests after grading, to ensure accurate compilation and appropriate documentation of valid change of the Overview of Interview Panel Assessment of Candidate. In order to better implement the EO Instruction No. 03 human resources action plan on gender parity January 2018, DIOS noted to management opportunities to ensure (strong) justification for the hiring departments efforts to attract more female applicants, and for when male candidate is selected over female candidate with comparable scores.

What management is doing to address DIOS recommendations

Management accepted the recommendations and is in the process of implementing them, including i.a. ensuring that equivalency determination is duly approved to address the high-risk

recommendation, the relevant competency is included in upcoming vacancy announcements, and that the summary selection report is quality assured.

Methodology, Approach and Disclosure

DIOS assessed the adequacy and effectiveness of risk management, governance, and internal control processes over specific recruitment sub-processes on hiring Fixed Term/ Limited Duration Contract staff (evaluation of applications/shortlisting; administration of pre-employment tests and conducting interviews including composition of Interview panels; selection of the candidates and candidate due diligence checks; appointment of staff on acting positions; and filling vacant FT posts with DPWs and LDC staff) and Daily Paid Workers (identifying suitable daily paid candidates; and selecting from ranking order of the rosters), and to determine whether relevant UNRWA rules and regulations have been complied with for the period 2019-2020.

In light of the continued commitment to embrace gender mainstreaming, DIOS also assessed the implementation of the several provisions of the EO Instruction No. 03 human resources action plan on gender parity - January 2018 on achieving gender parity in management and leadership positions.

The approach included review of control processes and relevant documents, selection of transaction samples for analysis and examination, enquiries and interview with staff, and other procedures deemed necessary.

The assignment was conducted in accordance with DIOS standards which are designed to conform to the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing. It was completed in conformity with the approved work plan and took into consideration the risk assessment exercise conducted prior to the assessment.