

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
Office of Audit and Investigations



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PERFORMANCE AUDIT

OF

UNDP EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS MANAGEMENT

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Report on the Performance Audit of UNDP External Communications Management Executive Summary

The UNDP Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI) conducted a performance audit of UNDP external communications management from 4 July to 9 September 2016. Performance auditing is an independent examination of a programme, function, operation, project, or the management systems and procedures of an entity to assess whether the entity is achieving economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the employment of available resources.

The overall audit objective was to assess how effective UNDP is in achieving its goals for external communications, including strengthening the voice and credibility of UNDP. The audit focused on the following audit questions:

1. Did UNDP establish appropriate organizational structures, policies and procedures in order to manage external communications effectively?
2. Are conditions in place for UNDP to achieve the objectives outlined in the UNDP External Communications Action Plan?

The audit covered external communications management from 1 January 2015 to 30 June 2016. This was the first audit of external communications management.

The audit was conducted in conformance with the *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing*.

Overall audit rating

OAI assessed UNDP external communications management as **partially satisfactory**, which means, "Internal controls, governance and risk management processes were generally established and functioning, but needed improvement. One or several issues were identified that may negatively affect the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity."

Key recommendations: Total = 7, high priority = 1

The seven recommendations aim to ensure the following: (a) achievement of the organization's strategic objectives (Recommendations 1 through 7); and (b) effectiveness and efficiency of operations (Recommendations 2, 3, and 4).

For high (critical) priority recommendations, prompt action is required to ensure that UNDP is not exposed to high risks. Failure to take action could result in major negative consequences for UNDP. The high (critical) priority recommendation is presented below:

Insufficient resources for external communications (Issue 1)

The Communications Group had a total of 12 vacant positions (out of a total of 44 positions) at the time of the audit. At the Country Office level, from a survey of 65 Country Office communications focal points, 25 percent responded that communication was significantly under-resourced.

Recommendation 1: BERA should develop and implement a plan to justify an increase in resources for external communications. This could include: (a) working with the Executive Office to identify priorities in filling the gaps in resources for communications; and (b) coordinating with relevant Bureaux and

BMS to identify alternative funding mechanisms for external communications, such as allocating a fixed percentage from all Country Office project budgets towards communications, or cost recovery for services provided by BERA to other UNDP units.

Management comments and action plan

The Assistant Administrator and Director of the Bureau for External Relations and Advocacy accepted the six recommendations and the Director of the Office of Human Resources accepted the one recommendation and both are in the process of implementing them. Comments and/or additional information provided have been incorporated in the report, where appropriate.

Issues with less significance (not included in this report) have been discussed directly with management and actions have been initiated to address them.



Helge S. Osttveiten
Director
Office of Audit and Investigations