UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
Office of Audit and Investigations

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AUDIT

OF

UN WOMEN SUB-REGIONAL OFFICE

IN

INDIA

Report No. 1121

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Report on the audit of UN Women Sub-Regional Office in India
Executive Summary

From 29 October to 16 November 2012, the Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducted an audit of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) Sub-Regional Office in India (the Office). The audit covered the activities of the Office during the period from 1 January 2011 to 30 September 2012. During the period reviewed, the Office recorded programme and management expenditures totaling $9.2 million. The last audit of the Office (limited scope) was conducted by OAI in 2006, when the Office was operating as a United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) Sub-Regional Office.

The audit was conducted in conformance with the *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing*. These Standards require that OAI plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance, risk management, and control processes. The audit includes reviewing and analysing, on a test basis, information that provides the basis for the conclusions and audit results.

Audit rating

OAI assessed the Office 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." Ratings per audit area and sub-areas are summarized below.

Audit Areas	Not Assessed/ Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Partially Satisfactory	Satisfactory
1. Governance and strategic management			X	
1.1 Organizational structure and delegations of authority	Satisfactory			
1.2 Leadership, ethics and values	Satisfactory			
1.3 Risk management, planning, monitoring and reporting	Unsatisfactory			
2. Programmed activities			X	
2.1 Programme and project management	Partially Satisfactory			
2.2 Partnerships and resource mobilization	Partially Satisfactory			
3. Operations			X	
3.1 Human resources	Partially Satisfactory			
3.2 Finance	Partially Satisfactory			
3.3 Procurement	Partially Satisfactory			
3.4 Information and communication technology	Satisfactory			
3.5 General administration	Satisfactory			
3.6 Safety and security	Satisfactory			
3.7 UNDP support to Office	Satisfactory			
3.8 Asset management	Satisfactory			
3.9 Leave management	Satisfactory			

Key issues and recommendations

The audit raised nine issues and resulted in nine recommendations, of which four (44 percent) were ranked high (critical) priority, meaning "Prompt action is required to ensure that UN Women is not exposed to high risks.

Failure to take action could result in major negative consequences for UN Women and may affect the organization at the global level." These recommendations include actions to address:

Risk management, planning, monitoring and reporting (Issue 1)	Insufficient planning to address conversion to multi-country office. The Office was scheduled to change from being a sub-regional office to a multi-country office, following UN Women's regional architecture changes approved by the Executive Board on 12 November 2012. OAI did not find evidence that the Office was taking steps to proactively manage the transition and its implications for space considerations and staffing. OAI recommends that the Office develop, document and implement a plan for its conversion from a sub-regional office to multi-country office to ensure it is able to operate at the level of a multi-country office, by: (a) mapping the regional plan to its specific needs; (b) fully documenting all alternatives for properties that could be leased for the amount of space required; and (c) managing its dependency on service contract holders with large annual leave balances.
Programme and project management (Issue 2)	Inadequate project design and planning. Some project outcomes, outputs and indicators were not clearly defined and the accountabilities and responsibilities between the Office and the implementing partners were unclear. OAI recommends that the Office improve its project design and planning by: (a) redefining and realigning all outcomes, outputs, baselines and deliverables in the existing Strategic Note/Annual Work Plan with the corresponding project documents; (b) determining the feasibility of amending existing agreements with implementing partners to clarify the responsibilities of the Office and the implementing partner; and (c) issuing a memo to all staff indicating the requirement for compliance with the Programme and Operations Manual.
Partnerships and resource mobilization (Issue 5)	Lack of a resource mobilization strategy. OAI found that the resource mobilization strategy was outdated and an action plan had not been developed. OAI recommends that the Office prepare a resource mobilization strategy that includes: specific funding goals; timeframes within which funds are to be secured; and a periodic evaluation of progress toward achieving planned results.
Finance (Issue 7)	Inadequate financial management. The Office did not issue purchase orders for the entire value of the contract to avoid encumbering available funds. Further, expenditures were posted to incorrect projects in Atlas, based on the funds available for the project instead of on the basis of which project the expenditure actually related to. Additionally, rent for the Office had inappropriately been expensed to development projects instead of to the management project that was intended to fund such expenditures. OAI recommends that the Office should: (a) in consultation with the Division of Management and Administration, improve its financial management to ensure that funds are available to meet the obligations of the Office and that only approved budgeted expenses are charged to projects; and (b) comply with the UN Women financial rules by ensuring that postings in Atlas are only for expenditures authorized in the Annual Work Plan, project documents and donor agreements; and (c) in consultation with the Division of Management and Administration, implement a cost recovery methodology for the equitable and transparent computation of rental costs to be billed to development projects.

Management comments and action plan

The Deputy Country Representative and Officer-in-Charge of the Office accepted all nine recommendations and have implemented or are in the process of implementing them.

Helge S. Osttveiten
Director
Office of Audit and Investigations

I. Introduction

From 29 October to 16 November 2012, OAI conducted an audit of the UN Women Sub-Regional Office in India. The audit was conducted in conformance with the *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing*. These Standards require that OAI plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance, risk management, and control processes. The audit includes reviewing and analysing, on a test basis, information that provides the basis for the conclusions and audit results.

Audit scope and objectives

OAI audits of UN Women assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance, risk management, and control processes in order to provide reasonable assurance to the Executive Director regarding the reliability and integrity of financial and operational information, effectiveness and efficiency of operations, safeguarding of assets, and compliance with legislative mandates, regulations and rules, policies and procedures. They also aim to assist the management of the Office and other relevant business units in continuously improving governance, risk management, and control processes.

Specifically, this audit reviewed the following areas of the Office: governance and strategic management, programme activities, and operations. The audit covered relevant activities during the period from 1 January 2011 to 30 September 2012. During the period reviewed, the Office recorded programme and management expenditures totalling $9.2 million. The last audit of the Office (limited scope) was conducted by OAI in 2006 when the Office was operating as a UNIFEM Sub-Regional Office.

II. About the Office

The Office, located in New Delhi, India (the Country), was comprised of nine staff members, 50 service contract holders and two individuals holding special service agreements. At the time of the audit until January 2013, the Office had responsibility over regional programmatic activities being carried out in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka and limited oversight responsibility over Pakistan. The Office had a programme portfolio which included projects in the areas of governance, peace and security, and economic security and rights. Operating in one of the world's leading emerging markets (the Country's Gross Domestic Product in 2011 was $1.96 trillion), the Country was dealing with the inherent challenges of wide income disparity among a population of 1.2 billion (as per the census in 2011)[1] and issues concerning the rights of women. This permitted the Office to engage civil society and government partners in projects aimed at women's empowerment and gender equality. The Country was further enhancing its role as a donor for, and leader in, South-South cooperation. The most direct consequence of this was the changing policy toward aid, where the number of bilateral donors allowed to operate in the Country had been restricted, further compounding the challenges faced by the Office in mobilizing resources.[2] As part of UN Women's new regional architecture, which was scheduled to be rolled out in phases beginning in 2013, the Office was to transition to a multi-country office.

[1] The World Bank Group. World Development Indicators. http://www.databank.worldbank.org. Accessed December 4 2012.
[2] Global Humanitarian Assistance. India Country briefing, January 2012. 23p. http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/India-country-briefing1.pdf Accessed Dec 4 2012.

III. Detailed assessment

1. Governance and strategic management — Partially Satisfactory

1.1 Organizational structure and delegations of authority — Satisfactory

The Office was under the leadership of a Regional Programme Director and a Deputy Regional Programme Director, and had delegated authority and responsibility for UN Women's activities in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka and some oversight responsibilities in Pakistan. The Office had received its delegation of authority in May 2010. However, of the offices under its purview, only Nepal and Pakistan had obtained their full delegations of authority at the time of the audit. The Regional Programme Director was set to retire soon after the end of the audit, having already been extended by UN Women leadership past the mandatory retirement age, using a waiver on her post. The Deputy Regional Programme Director was also approaching retirement in May 2013. As of March 2013, a successor to the Regional Programme Director had been selected and the Deputy Director had been extended until November 2013 with a waiver. In addition, the Office had developed workflows for programming and operational areas to guide personnel and to clarify roles and responsibilities between units. Also, minutes of meetings were maintained and there was adequate evidence of follow-up of staffing issues raised during the meetings.

No reportable issues were identified.

1.2 Leadership, ethics and values — Satisfactory

OAI confirmed with the Human Resources Unit that no staff members were engaged in outside activities, and there were no pending applications from staff to management to engage in such activities.

No reportable issues were identified.

1.3 Risk management, planning, monitoring and reporting — Unsatisfactory

Issue 1 Insufficient planning to address conversion to multi-country office

Institutional transformations call for coordinated efforts between those deciding the nature and scope of the change and on the part of the organization being impacted by those decisions. To facilitate the change process, the Office should adequately plan for expected changes in structure and personnel. Constraints and opportunities inherent to the change that are identified should be well documented and discussed.

In the first quarter of 2013, the Office was scheduled to change from a sub-regional office to a multi-country office, following UN Women's regional architecture that was communicated to the offices in August 2012 and approved by the Executive Board on 12 November 2012. Under the proposed change, the most discernible difference between operating as a multi-country office versus a sub-regional office would be having responsibility over more than one country, and the requirement to represent UN Women on the UN Country Team in each of the countries. Nonetheless, other implications of this change for the Office were significant since those Country Offices falling under its purview at the time of the audit, would be less reliant on the Office for operational purposes in the future, when their delegations of authority would be granted. Despite this impending change, OAI did not find that the Office was taking steps to proactively manage the transition, as evidenced by the following:

- There was an absence of a management plan to map the requirements and logistical needs for the multi-country office from its current status as sub-regional office. The regional architecture communicated by UN Women Headquarters to all staff contained a broad overview of what the role and field presence of each office would be. A reasonable expectation was that each office would then make use of the guidelines to develop a plan for achieving the intended outcomes (for instance, an analysis and implementation schedule for ensuring appropriate adjustment to staffing levels, space requirements and funding for development projects). Management at the Office explained that this 'mapping' had yet to be developed.

- Even though the lease of the Office premises was set to expire in March 2013 and required renewal notice by the end of December 2012, OAI did not find evidence that other locations were being considered and documented. The contractual obligation ($1.1 million for a 3-year lease renewal) may not have been justifiable given the impending changes to reduce the scope of the Office. In addition, the Office lacked documentation of the rationale supporting the use of the current premises as being the best value for money. Furthermore, no analysis was performed to determine whether the same amount of office space would be needed once the multi-country office came into being. Management agreed that such documentation was important but not available at the time of the audit.

- OAI found that the Office had significant reliance on service contract holders with accumulated annual leave and who had been in the Office ranging from one to two years. As of October 2012, 37 of the 50 service contract holders retained by the Office had accrued annual leave balances in excess of 10 working days. Since all annual leave accrued by service contract holders must be used while in service and cannot be commuted to cash, the Office's right to rescind its contractual obligation with service contract holders with two weeks' notice could have potentially brought the operations of the Office to a halt unless adequate planning was undertaken (see Issue 6).

Insufficient planning for the eventual roll-out of the regional architecture may have increased the risks of the Office not being fully prepared to function in its new capacity, and may have negatively impacted motivation and morale for individuals with tenure.

Priority	High (Critical)

Recommendation 1:

The Office should develop, document and implement a plan for its conversion from a sub-regional office to multi-country office to ensure it is able to operate at the level of a multi-country office, by:

(a) mapping the regional plan to its specific needs;
(b) fully documenting all alternatives for properties that could be leased for the amount of space required; and
(c) managing its dependency on service contract holders with large annual leave balances.

Management comments and action plan: __√__ Agreed ____ Disagreed

Management agreed with the recommendation and made the following specific comments:

(a) The Office notes that at the time of the audit, the UN Women Executive Board had agreed to the principles of the Regional Architecture, but not to the details required to support rolling it out. As such, the Office was not in the position to begin evolving into a multi-country office, in the absence of endorsement by UN Women's governing body. An action plan to align the needs of the multi-country office has been initiated based on the results of the realignment exercise undertaken by senior management in Headquarters. The Office would like to note that at the time of the audit, this level of planning was outside the purview of the Sub-Regional Office because the functional analysis by Headquarters was undertaken in December 2012 only after the approval of the Regional Architecture by UN Women's Executive Board in November 2012 and after the audit of the office was complete.

Following the functional analysis, a detailed functional review mission was undertaken resulting in a clear mapping of the regional plan to the specific needs of the multi-country office. The result of the detailed functional review also provided an implementation plan for ensuring appropriate adjustment of staff capacities and funding for development projects among other areas required for the multi-country office to be adequately aligned to the regional plan.

At the time the current office premises was identified, an extensive search lasting 2.5 years had been undertaken in order to identify an office location that was compliant with the Minimum Operating Security Standards. Documents relating to this search have been shared with the OAI team and the Acquisition Management Review Committee. At the time of the lease renewal, the management judged that the real estate market had not sufficiently changed since the lease had been initially signed based on a comparison of similar premises. Search for a new office premises is currently underway in keeping with the transition to a multi-country office. The management is maintaining a log (with all relevant information such as rent, area, and compliance with the Minimum Operating Security Standards) of potential premises visited. The Office plans to move to a new location as soon as suitable premises are identified within the calendar year.

(b) A memo will be issued to all service contract holders regarding the number of leave days accrued and informing them that accrued leave can neither be commuted to cash nor used during the 14-day notice period. The reliance on service contracts has been streamlined with the newly approved organogram, and current service contracts for core functions are earmarked to be phased out by the end of this calendar year.

2. Programme activities — Partially Satisfactory

2.1 Programme and project management — Partially Satisfactory

The 2012-2013 South Asia Strategic Annual Work Plan, as approved in July 2012, covered the UN Women development programmes in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka. The plan contained five priority areas relating to enacting legislation to address violence against women; increasing political participation of women in parliament; increasing economic opportunities; reducing maternal mortality ratios; addressing women's right to own land; and improving adult literacy to achieve gender equality and education. The single largest Governance Programme, which accounted for $4.2 million or 38 percent (48 percent in 2011) of the portfolio, was funded by one donor and was planned to be implemented in five countries in the region, namely, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan.

The Office had 25 projects with a total budget of $9.4 million in 2011 and $11 million in 2012. For 2011 and 2012, projects were funded through non-core funds of $7.2 million and $7.8 million, respectively, with the remaining amounts funded through core funds. OAI selected five ongoing development projects for detailed review with total expenditures of $6.2 million as of 30 September 2012.

Project No.	Project name	Budget 2012 $	Expenditures 1 January 2012 to 30 September 2012 $	Budget 2011 $	Expenditures 2011 $
72984	Promoting Women's Political Leadership in South Asia	4,203,970	1,161,989	4,571,627	3,227,682

Project No.	Project name	Budget 2012 $	Expenditures 1 January 2012 to 30 September 2012 $	Budget 2011 $	Expenditures 2011 $
77481	Anti-Human Trafficking South Asia	475,818	65,196	24,625	18,464
78131	Anti-Human Trafficking India South	160,121	22,691	126,044	19,624
58615	TF in Support of Action to eliminate Violence Against women	1,130,863	47,776	796,250	762,833
63031	SP-Governance Peace & Security	181,473	129,437	644,872	636,993
Total		**$6,152,245**	**$1,427,089**	**$6,163,418**	**$4,665,596**

In addition, the Office was taking steps to financially close seven projects that had been operationally closed between 2007 and 2010. This process resulted in approximately $11,000 due to be refunded to the Office by implementing partners. The Office was working closely with the Division of Management and Administration as part of an International Public Sector Accounting Standards clean-up exercise. OAI raised a number audit issues discussed below, which contributed to an overall rating of "partially satisfactory" for this area.

Issue 2 Inadequate project design and planning

According to the programme guidance issued in July 2011 as part of the roll-out of the UN Women Strategic Plan 2011-2013, the UN Women Country Programme Document is comprised of a Strategic Note/Annual Work Plan that is approved by the Executive Director. The approved Strategic Note/Annual Work Plan for 2012-2013 is the legal document against which UN Women Country Offices expend resources and it is supported by individual project documents. The Strategic Note/Annual Work Plan is also supported by a Development Results Framework articulated at the country outcome level which presents information regarding three main areas: (a) country level outputs, indicators, targets and baselines; (b) the names of implementing partners for development projects; and (c) resources required for projects further sub-divided into core, non-core, and funds to be raised. The Development Results Framework should have clear linkages to the programme documents with specific baselines, outcomes and outputs in the Strategic Note/Annual Work Plan project documents.

OAI noted the following:

- The baselines and targets in the Development Results Framework were not always well detailed. For example, outcome 2.1.2 and 2.2 did not have baselines. Moreover, for three of the five development projects selected for review, the implementing partner was determining the baselines as the project was being implemented with an outward completion date of November 2012.

- For some projects, indicators to measure achievements were not clearly aligned with programme outputs and deliverables. For instance, Project 72984 spanned five years, but the indicator was set to be achieved only in 2015, and there were no annual targets. The Monitoring and Evaluation Unit had reviewed the Annual Work Plan and had drafted some recommendations to amend the outputs and indicators in the project document to ensure their achievement. However, these recommendations were only made between August and September 2012 and no action had been taken at the time of the audit.

- The Programming Manual requires planning of activities, followed by the preparation of a detailed project document which clearly delineates accountabilities and responsibilities between the Office and the implementing partners. However, the project documents were approved first, and thereafter, the Office conducted detailed planning of outputs, activities and budgets with the assistance of the implementing partners. This resulted in confusion as to the Office's responsibility for monitoring and oversight and for overall project outcomes.

- Chapter 4 of the Programming Manual requires that where the UN Women Office will implement the project, it sign a standard project cooperation agreement with a non-governmental organization, or a letter of agreement with government entities. Where UN Women offices pass on the responsibility for a part of the implementation, the Office may procure the services of another organization/firm using a procurement contract for that specific part of the project activities. Despite this, the Office's development projects were being supported by varying agreements which did not comply with the previously mentioned section of the Programming Manual.

Project No.	Project name	Responsible parties	Agreement/contract modality
72984	Promoting Women's Political Leadership in South Asia	Three Government bodies One international NGO	Project cooperation agreements instead of letters of agreement Procurement contract instead of project cooperation agreement
77481	Anti-Human Trafficking South Asia	Two non-governmental organizations	Procurement instead of project cooperation agreement
78131	Anti-Human Trafficking India South	Four non-governmental organizations	Procurement instead of project cooperation agreement

Using the wrong contract modality to engage development partners has resulted in a lack of ownership by the Office for project outcomes. Office staff members were of the opinion that the partners were responsible for the entire projects. Also, by using procurement contracts instead of other prescribed agreements, the Office does not adequately plan for monitoring the activities of the contractor due to the lack of field presence. Furthermore, there is no provision for auditing the contractors' activities to determine if UN Women's funds are being used as intended, whereas the standard agreements include the requirement for auditing implementing partners.

Inadequate project design and planning for projects compounded by the lack of understanding of the Office's responsibility for oversight and accountability, and the use of inappropriate contractual documents may negatively affect the Offices' ability to ensure the proper use of programme funds. These inadequacies may also have a negative impact on the proper management of programme activities, and/or result in the non-achievement of the programme outcomes.

Priority High (Critical)

Recommendation 2:

The Office should improve its project design and planning by:

a) redefining and realigning all outcomes, outputs, baselines and deliverables in the existing Strategic Note/Annual Work Plan with the corresponding project documents;
b) determining the feasibility of amending existing agreements with implementing partners to clarify the responsibilities of the Office and the implementing partner; and
c) issuing a memo to all staff indicating the requirement for compliance with the Programme and Operations Manual.

Management comments and action plan: __√__ Agreed ____ Disagreed

Management clarified that the 2012-2013 South Asia Strategic Annual Work Plan was approved by the UN Women Headquarters in February 2012, whereas the India Annual Work Plan 2012-2013 was approved by the Government of India in July 2012. The following specific comments and actions were provided:

(a) Management did not agree to immediately redefine and realign all outcomes, outputs and deliverables as most programmes were already underway and contracts had been signed with implementing partners. In addition, many of the project documents reviewed were approved and already a year or two into their implementation when UN Women introduced the Annual Work Plans so it would not have been possible to have full alignment with the language of the Annual Work Plans. A corporate mid-term review of the Annual Work Plans was conducted in December 2012, after the audit, and this provided an opportunity for the Office to further refine the results. The management takes note of the observation about missing baselines and will ensure that this is addressed in the next round of planning for 2014-2017 even though baselines in some areas are not easily available.

(b) Management agreed to ensure strict compliance to the guidelines in the Programme and Operations Manual in the future. In addition, the reason for using the project corporation agreement format for implementing Project 72984 was because some institutional partners did not agree with the standard terminology used in the Letters of Agreements, which refers to partners as “contractors.” The Office sought and received approval from UN Women Headquarters to use the project corporation agreement for contracts with institutional partners.

(c) A memo was issued to all staff for compliance with the new Programme and Operations Manual in November 2012. Subsequently, rounds of trainings have been organized on different components of the manual.

Issue 3 Inconsistent monitoring activities

The Programme and Operations Reference Manual effective during the review period, as well as its replacement Programme and Operations Manual issued in November 2012, require that the Office perform monitoring, reporting, and oversight activities to identify lessons learned and good practices, to strengthen performance, and to influence future policy and programme design.

At the time of the audit, the Office had a Monitoring Unit comprised of two individuals who had overall responsibility for monitoring, research and evaluation activities in India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan. In addition, as part of the programme oversight, the Office was responsible for continuous monitoring of all implementing partners to ensure delivery in accordance with planned project activities. OAI reviewed the project monitoring reports, the monitoring, evaluation and reporting plans and the status of ongoing activities and noted the following:

- Monitoring activities were not consistently applied to all programme units in India. No monitoring activities had taken place for projects funded by the UN Trust Funds. It is noteworthy that approximately 3 percent of project funds collected by the Office were to perform this activity. However the projects were not included in the monitoring plans and no monitoring had taken place during the audited period. This observation was corroborated through discussions with one implementing partner that was a beneficiary of a grant from the Trust Fund.

- Due to insufficient monitoring, the Office was not aware of issues related to reporting by implementing partners. During OAI meetings with two implementing partners, the personnel revealed challenges in meeting the tight reporting timeframes following the month end. Delays in reporting from responsible parties to the implementing partners (30 days to provide reports) impacted the implementing partners’ ability to draft the consolidated reports to the Office. Any subsequent requests for clarification made by the Office further exacerbated the delays in actual disbursements of funds. This issue had also been raised by an independent audit firm in their audit report on Project 72984, where delays ranging from 4 to 108 days in the receipt of reports from implementing partners had negatively impacted the reporting on overall project delivery.

- The Office failed to identify unallowable expenditures of $8,000 that were included in expenditure reports submitted by the implementing partners for Project 72984. The unallowable expenditures were discovered during the review of the project by an independent audit firm.

- As part of the monitoring and evaluation work plan, the Office was in the process of developing a web-based reporting system to streamline reporting on project progress. The Office indicated that due to insufficient resources, the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit had not been able to implement an online monitoring tool that would facilitate the collation of information on results being achieved. Such a system could significantly simplify the process of reporting and the accuracy of reports.

Inconsistent or delayed monitoring of projects may result in operational and financial risks not being detected on a timely basis to facilitate corrective actions.

Priority	Medium (Important)

Recommendation 3:

The Office should improve its monitoring activities to avoid delayed or untimely detection of risks to its operations. Actions should include:
(a) revising its monitoring, evaluation and reporting plans to ensure that all project activities will be subjected to adequate monitoring and evaluation;
(b) continuously monitoring project progress and follow up with implementing partners on a quarterly basis, at a minimum, to ensure that reporting due dates are complied with and that risks and other factors impacting project implementation are identified, and solutions are implemented in a timely manner;
(c) ensuring that the process for review of expenditure reports and liquidation of advances includes verification that the expenditures are allowable per the project agreement, as well as a process for recovery of any unallowable expenditures;
(d) following up with the implementing partners for Project 72984 to obtain a refund of the unallowable expenditures of $8,000; and
(e) reconsidering the resources allocated to development of the online tracking tool for reporting to ensure implementation within a specific and reasonable timeframe.

Management comments and action plan: __√__ Agreed ____ Disagreed

Management agreed with the recommendation and indicated the following specific actions:
(a) The Monitoring and Evaluation Plan 2012 has been revised to include UN Trust Fund project activities.
(b) As noted by the Audit, delayed quarterly progress reports for the Project 72984 are being followed up with the implementing partners. To strengthen the monitoring of project progress across all programmes, programme staff received training in May 2012 on project monitoring and management, a follow-up training is scheduled in end-May 2013. A web based system is being launched in May 2013 to ensure regular and systematic monitoring of all programme activities.
(c) There is a systematic process of reviewing expenditure reports, or Funding and Certificate of Expenditure (FACE) forms and liquidation of advances. The Office has ensured this through quarterly review of FACE forms with the programme units and recording the allowable expenditures. Where expenditures were not approved by the programme unit, it has either been adjusted or recovered.
(d) The unallowable expenditure of $8000 was noted by an audit of Project 72984 in Q3, 2012. The amount has subsequently been recovered.

(e)	Core funds have been allocated for the development of the web-based monitoring and tracking tool. The tool is being launched for all staff in May 2013.

Issue 4 Delayed liquidation of long outstanding project advances

UN Women Administrative Memo 2011/01 issued in July 2011 provided guidance on the change in the accounting policy for cash advances to implementing partners. The new procedures required completion of FACE forms for all advances, disbursements and reporting on expenditures. It also required that for project agreements issued subsequent to 15 July 2011, all advances be posted to account 16005. This guidance has since been formalized into the Programme and Operations Manual effective December 2012.

Reconciliations of transactions posted to account 16005 were undertaken. However, actions taken by the Office were insufficient to ensure liquidation of reconciling items or amounts which had been outstanding in excess of six months, such as $156,170 paid to vendor 40148 on 7 December 2011; $161,546 paid to vendor 39689 on 24 November 2011; and $173,410 paid to vendor 39637 on 23 November 2011. None of these amounts had been liquidated at the time of the audit. As of 30 September 2012, the balances in account 16005 amounted to $2.1 million.

Delayed liquidation of project advances may result in inaccurate and/or delayed reporting of the project delivery and untimely identification of accounts receivable, which may not be recoverable over time.

Priority	Medium (Important)
Recommendation 4: The Office should comply with the Programme and Operations Manual and take action to reduce the values of long-outstanding unliquidated and receivable balances, ensuring that advance accounts are reviewed and reconciled on a quarterly basis, at a minimum, and in accordance with the Division of Management and Administration’s year-end procedures, including requesting refunds from implementing partners as necessary.	
Management comments and action plan: __√__ Agreed _____ Disagreed Management agreed with the recommendations and indicated that since the last quarter of 2012, a detailed analysis of partners’ outstanding advances (uploaded monthly on the intranet by HQ) is being done regularly. The advances monitoring reports on the Finance Share Point show a significant reduction in outstanding advances issued under the Operating Unit of the Office. Follow-up of the outstanding advances has been shared with the audit team. Additional information provided by the Office has been reflected in the audit observation.	

2.2 Partnerships and resource mobilization **Partially Satisfactory**

Issue 5 Lack of a resource mobilization strategy

The financial stability of a Country Office hinges on its ability to develop partnerships and mobilize resources. UN Women offices in the field are required to establish an effective partnership and resource mobilization strategy in conjunction with its corresponding action plan.

OAI found that while the resource mobilization function was staffed at the time of the review, it had been un-staffed for almost a year. Additionally, the person hired to perform this function was tasked with developing a new strategy, since the old one was outdated. The action plan, to be based upon the updated resource mobilization strategy, needed to be developed as well.

The Office management explained that the existing pool of potential donors in the Country was shrinking, due in large part to government-imposed restrictions to bilateral donors and their expected level of contributions. Management also highlighted the challenges of hiring qualified personnel to assist with strategizing on effective resource mobilization since those skills were in high demand. Management also indicated that UN Women salary scales relating to service contracts for this type of position were not competitive when compared to non-UN salaries. OAI reviewed two contracts offered to highly qualified candidates with more than ten years of experience in resource mobilization who later declined the offers for financial considerations. In at least one case, the amount offered by the Office was about 30 percent of what the person was earning elsewhere.

The lack of a resource mobilization strategy and corresponding action plan might jeopardize the Office's ability to sustain long-term operations, thus compromising development results. Furthermore, there is a risk that if financial resources are insufficient, it may adversely affect the achievement of programme objectives.

Priority	High (Critical)
Recommendation 5: The Office should prepare a resource mobilization strategy that includes: specific funding goals; timeframes within which funds are to be secured; and a periodic evaluation of progress toward achieving planned results.	
Management comments and action plan: __√__ Agreed ____ Disagreed Management agreed with the recommendation and indicated that a Resource Mobilization Action Plan has been developed and the Office is pro-actively targeting the Government, bi-laterals, multilaterals, the corporate sector and foundations. In addition, relevant headquarters divisions have also increased close monitoring of the development and implementation of resource mobilization plans and activities of all the field offices.	

3. Operations — Partially Satisfactory

3.1 Human resources — Partially Satisfactory

The Human Resources Unit was led by a staff member in the General Service category and was supported by two service contract holders. Of the three international fixed-term appointment posts at the Office, two were filled by nationals serving in their own country (one post was the Deputy Regional Programme Director and the other was the Gender Responsive Budgeting Specialist, both at the P-4 level). The motivation for approving such appointments, as explained by UN Women Human Resources in New York, was that the function performed by these staff members was similar to those of staff in UN Commissions, which were highly technical in nature, and further that the work portfolios of these two individuals included the necessary regional scope of experience. Lastly, OAI also noted that personnel holding service contracts were asked to sign the UN Declaration, which is intended for staff members only. Management agreed to end this practice.

Issue 6 Incorrect use of contractual modalities

The UN Women Internal Control Framework requires that in order for management of the Office to ensure good governance, there must be an adequate number of staff to support and carry out its functions. Staff must also be retained under an appropriate contractual modality that reflects the nature of the tasks to be performed and upholds a strong internal control environment.

OAI found that core functions at the Office, including procurement, finance, programme and resource mobilization, among others, were being performed by holders of special service agreements and service contract holders. According to management, this was due to lack of funding for establishing fixed-term appointment posts. Many of the consultants had been retained under contractual arrangements and for periods of time inconsistent with the usual rationale for using such modalities. For example, the position should be related to a specific project with a fixed duration or to a short term assignment focused on attaining key deliverables.

Failure to use the approved contractual modality is not only unfair to those performing the tasks (since some modalities do not provide additional benefits or annual leave), but can also lead to increased staffing costs. This is the case with special service agreements, which are contracted at daily rates and thus can command substantial payments when compared to those holding a service contract, which is not an efficient use of resources.

Priority	Medium (Important)
Recommendation 6: The Office should ensure that all personnel are retained under an appropriate contractual modality, including ensuring that all personnel holding service contracts and/or special service agreements and who are performing core functions, are regularized.	
Management comments and action plan: __√__ Agreed ____ Disagreed Management agreed with the recommendation and further clarified that the Office had been using service contract and special services agreement contract modality in absence of resources for fixed term staffing. In addition, in view of the transition from UNIFEM to UN Women and pending the regional architecture exercise, the Office could not proceed with establishing and recruiting staff on appropriate contracts. Following the functional review exercise, a new organogram has been approved for the multi-country office which will be the basis for ensuring appropriate contracting modalities as the alignment process is being finalized.	

3.2 Finance — Partially Satisfactory

The Finance Unit was comprised of six staff. The Unit was supported by UNDP Finance for final disbursements for all payments since the Office had no bank account. During the audit period, the Office raised 7,299 accounts payable vouchers with a total value of $12.6 million. OAI selected a sample of 55 vouchers amounting to $4.6

million, which included payments and advances to implementing partners, as well as accounts payable journal entries for booking of project expenditures reported by implementing partners.

OAI found the finance staff to be well informed regarding all financial activities. In line with recognized best practices, the Office had a process in place to provide financial information to programme staff as well as implementing partners. OAI indicated to the staff that the quantum of documents attached to most payment requests were excessive, as documents such as purchase orders and signed contracts were housed in other units within the Office. It was agreed by management that reviewing, and reducing the required supporting documents would help the Office's "green practices." Moreover, the Office was implementing a computer based records management system which would permit easy retrieval of all supporting documents, thus removing the need for several versions and copies of documents to exist within the Office. The Office had difficulty with financial management throughout the period, and as a result this section was rated as "partially satisfactory."

Issue 7 Inadequate financial management

UN Women Financial Rule 1402 indicates that programme activities and expenses are approved and implemented subject to the availability of funds. In addition, adequate financial management of projects requires that all relevant costs be properly charged to the assigned donor and project expense code in Atlas to ensure that costs allocated to individual projects are accurate and represent approved project activities.

From a randomly selected sample of 55 vouchers (total expenditure of $4.6 million), OAI noted that:

- Purchase orders were not always initiated at the time of contractual obligation, but rather upon the receipt of a payment request, and the payment voucher was prepared immediately after the purchase order. The sample included six such vouchers totalling $112,175. The finance staff explained that if a purchase order was initiated to meet the full liability at the time of the contractual obligation, the funds would be encumbered and the Office would not have adequate funding available to meet other expenditures.

- Two payments to the same vendor totalling $118,230 were posted to the project accounts in Atlas of two separate projects. However, the expenditures did not relate to either of these projects, nor were they included in the respective Annual Work Plans. The finance staff indicated that where project funds were not immediately available, the amounts were paid from another project which had sufficient funding as an interim measure to prevent delays in project implementation. The staff further indicated that the amounts were to be reversed when sufficient funding became available for the project to which the expenditures actually related. The Office was unable to provide documentation of the systematic tracking of all such interim charges. Therefore, OAI could not verify the number of, or the amounts relating to these interim allocations, or whether they were reversed to the correct accounts. Payments for the rent of the Office were charged to development Project 72984 ($218,615), Project 77481($8,037) and management Project 59267 ($323,927), instead of management Project 81252, to which operating expenses should be posted. The finance staff explained that this was due to a lack of funds in the appropriate project to meet the costs of the Office rental. Management, in their response to this issue indicated that given the limited budget under the management project, it was not possible to charge the entire rent to the management project and that only a portion of the total Office rent had been charged to development projects. In addition, management commented that any charges of rent to a development project are in line with the pertinent cost-sharing agreement signed for the project as part of cost recovery. While OAI noted that it could be justifiable to charge a percentage of the rent to the development projects based in the Office premises, it is necessary to ensure that such charges are equitable and well defined according to the space occupied per project and core Office staff.

Inappropriate financial management increases the risks of ineligible expenses being charged to projects and of funds being unavailable to meet obligations of the Office. Also, unreversed charges may cause project and financial reporting to be inaccurate and unreliable as a basis for decision making or assessment of delivery.

Priority	High (Critical)
Recommendation 7: The Office should: (a) in consultation with the Division of Management and Administration, improve its financial management to ensure that funds are available to meet the obligations of the Office and that only approved budgeted expenses are charged to projects; (b) comply with the UN Women financial rules by ensuring that postings in Atlas are only for expenditures authorized in the Annual Work Plan, project documents and donor agreements; and (c) in consultation with the Division of Management and Administration, implement a cost recovery methodology for the equitable and transparent computation of rental costs to be billed to development projects.	
Management comments and action plan: __√__ Agreed ____ Disagreed (a) Management agreed with the recommendation and further acknowledged that in certain cases the funds are not fully encumbered so as to meet other obligations to avoid delay in project implementation. Going forward, management will ensure that the funds are fully earmarked for the contractual obligation and that the process of initiation of encumbrance is done when the purchase order is prepared. (b) Agreed. (c) Management will ensure that that the apportionment of rental costs among projects and the Office (core) is formalized and agreed to by the project and office management. Additional information provided by the Office has been reflected in the audit observation.	

3.3 Procurement — Partially Satisfactory

Under the direction of the Operations Manager, the Procurement and Travel Unit was made up of three holders of service contracts and one holder of a special service agreement. During the period under review, the Office had processed 1,643 purchase orders worth $13 million. OAI reviewed a sample of 44 purchase orders worth $3.1 million.

The Office's procurement planning had shown improvement in 2012 compared to 2011 since, at the time of the audit, about 75 percent of the plan had been executed for 2012.

OAI reviewed 10 special service agreements, noting that in all 10 cases the personnel had been retained by the Office after conducting desk reviews as opposed to conducting open procurement processes aimed at considering any and all qualified applicants. OAI noted that the candidates generally commanded the highest daily rates, calling into question the whole purpose of a procurement process. While staff argued that it helped shorten the contracting time frames, OAI explained that a similar view could be used to hold restricted procurement processes for any good and service, which would not ensure the best value for money, which is obtained through a competitive bidding from qualified vendors. OAI reiterated that compensating consultants at the highest rates made the operations of the Office more costly. In addition, the level of turnover among the consultants made the Office's position supporting payment of higher salaries less compelling since it apparently was not an incentive to stay. Management explained that the level of compensation for some consultancies was generally on the lower end of the competitive range, which explained some of the departures of consultants.

Management agreed to revisit the way it hired its consultants by having open processes and being less reliant on desk reviews of existing candidates.

Issue 8 Weaknesses in the operation of the Local Acquisition Management Review Committee

Being an independent review body for procurement, the Local Acquisition Management Review Committee (LAMRC) is responsible for ensuring that the Office adheres to the core principles of best value for money and procurement processes that are fair and can hold up under scrutiny. To guide this work, the Committee has detailed terms of reference.

Of 282 LAMRC cases, OAI sampled 10, and found that in four cases, the minutes of the Committee meetings identified: systemic problems relating to a lack of clarity in the terms of reference; raised questions about the motivation for conducting desk reviews as opposed to inviting external vendors; and commented on incomplete budget allocations for the processes being reviewed. In addition, OAI found that concerns raised by the Committee would not favor endorsing a procurement process, but some were forwarded for endorsement to the Head of the Office. During discussions with procurement personnel, OAI learned that in many instances, and due to impending deadlines, the importance of obtaining the good or service being procured was emphasized over the adequacy of the procurement process itself.

Failure to adequately review procurement processes not only precludes proper controls, it increases the risk that procurements will not provide the best value for the money or comply with the requirements for transparency and competitive fairness.

Priority	Medium (Important)

Recommendation 8:

The Office should improve the operations of the Local Acquisition Management Review Committee by ensuring that:

(a) the Committee members be informed of their duty to comply with the terms of reference of the LAMRC and the importance of the function; and
(b) the advice of the LAMRC is taken into account and that any doubts or concerns expressed by the LAMRC are properly addressed by the unit requesting the procurement action before a contract is signed.

Management comments and action plan: __√__ Agreed ____ Disagreed

Management agreed with the recommendations and provided the following specific comments:

(a) All LAMRC members are informed of the importance of their role and updated terms of reference have been shared with all members. To ensure that members have read and are aware of their roles and responsibilities, a copy of their designation as member of LAMRC, duly acknowledged with their respective signatures is maintained on file. The terms of reference were shared with all members in August 2011 and again in January 2013 when a new chair was appointed.
(b) All LAMRC cases go to the Head of the Office for approval. In some exceptional cases, the LAMRC recommends cases for “consideration” rather than “approval.” In such cases, according to the LAMRC guideline FEM/ADM/ED/08/02, the Head of Office may diverge from the LAMRC with clear justifications. The office will ensure that the concerns raised by the LAMRC are taken into consideration before a contract is signed noting however that the role of the LAMRC is to provide recommendations to the Head of Office, who may with clear justifications, and taking into consideration the best interest of the office, divert from the recommendations of the LAMRC as provided for in the guidelines.

Issue 9 Non-compliant terms of payment in procurement contracts

UN Women Financial Rule 2407 indicates that except where normal commercial practice or the interests of UN Women so require, no contract shall be made on behalf of UN Women that requires a payment or payments in advance of the delivery of products or the performance of contractual services. In addition, the Programme and Operations Reference Manual, and its successor, the Programming and Operations Manual, indicate that payment shall be made on receipt of invoice as well as receipt and acceptance of goods, civil works or services. Advance payments may only be considered in accordance with UN Women's relevant policy, which requires the use of standard project cooperation agreements and letters of agreement. Also, expenses are recognized when goods or services are received, regardless of cash transfer.

The Office had signed procurement contracts with four responsible parties, which collectively, when disbursed, would result in approximately 90 percent of all project funds. Also, while the payments were planned over a three to four-month period, the activities were to be implemented over a period of 19 months. For example, the fixed price contract with vendor 3388 for (Indian Rupee) INR 3,825,000 ($74,000) had the following payment schedule: 10 percent in August 2012 – INR 382,500; 80 percent in October 2012 – INR 3,060,000; 10 percent in February 2014 – INR 382,500. The programme personnel explained that this was done to facilitate use of the donor funds prior to the expiration of the donor agreement. Also, the amounts were posted in Atlas as expenditures, not as advances, even though recording as an advance would be required under the International Public Sector Accounting Standards, and UN Women policy. Moreover, there was no evidence that the Office had increased its monitoring activities of the contract deliverables to ensure that the vendor fulfilled its obligations to the Office. Management indicated in their response to the draft audit report that the decision to disburse 90 percent advance payments had been made through consultation and written communication with Headquarters. However, documentation of this communication had not been provided to the audit team.

The disbursement of funds without proper advance agreements and prior to the performance of services is not in compliance with UN Women Financial Rules, Policies and Procedures or the International Public Sector Accounting Standards and may increase the risk that the Office would have no legal or financial recourse should responsible parties not perform as contracted.

Priority Medium (Important)

Recommendation 9:

The Office should comply with UN Women Financial Rules, Policies and Procedures regarding advance payments. Actions should include:
(a) refraining from signing contracts that require payment prior to receiving services;
(b) seeking guidance from the Division of Management and Administration as to the correct treatment of prepayments under International Public Sector Accounting Standards; and
(c) implementing a process for detailed monitoring and tracking of the contract deliverables to ensure fulfillment of project objectives.

Management comments and action plan: __√__ Agreed _____ Disagreed

Management agreed with the recommendations and clarified that the aforementioned case was an exception as it pertained to non-core funds received from a donor for the anti-human trafficking programme in Jan 2010 for a period of three-years. In June 2012, the Office was informed by Headquarters that there would be no extension of the grant period and that the Office should disburse all funds by December 2012 rather than return unspent funds.

The Office has implemented a detailed monitoring system, financial and results based, to ensure that vendors are fulfilling their obligations to the Office under this project. The Office will also seek guidance from the Division of Management and Administration on the treatment of prepayments under IPSAS.

Additional information provided by the Office has been reflected in the audit observation.

3.4 Information and communication technology — Satisfactory

The Office had outsourced the information technology function to a local firm which had its own staff located on site. The disaster recovery plan was understood by the Operations Manager and the Manager of the contracted information technology company, as evidenced by an interview conducted by OAI, and attended by the Office and the company to which the function was outsourced. The contract with the firm stipulated that the server data would be backed up to a data tape, on a weekly basis. According to the Office, these data tapes were sent to UNDP India for offsite storage on a regular basis. The Office management was generally satisfied with the level of service provided and the Operations Manager did not flag any deficiencies in the service. OAI noted that there was adequate staffing (two service contract holders on site) to resolve potential information technology problems at the Office. Therefore, no issue has been raised.

3.5 General administration — Satisfactory

OAI reviewed documentation related to 22 trips, a sample of about 5 percent of all travel undertaken by the Office during the audit period. OAI also reviewed the standard agreement with the travel agency contracted by UNDP India on behalf of participating UN agencies, including UN Women. OAI also reviewed the contract for the lease of the Office premises that was soon to expire (see Issue 1). No issue has been raised.

3.6 Safety and security — Satisfactory

The Office had conducted a security self-assessment of its premises and operations to determine their level of conformity with both UN Women global security requirements and Minimum Operational Residential Security Standards and Minimum Operating Security Standards as mandated by the United Nations Department of Safety and Security. UN Women's global security assessment requires the Office to determine the presence or absence of nine dimensions, including the designation of a focal point for security, the existence of an office security plan, and the existence of an up-to-date business continuity plan. OAI verified the following elements: the completion by personnel of two courses related to training in field security; and the evidence of a rehearsal of an evacuation plan for the Office, and found them to satisfy the requirements set forth in the security assessment. As such, no issue has been raised.

3.7 UNDP support to Office — Satisfactory

The Office had dedicated procurement, finance, and human resources units and had outsourced information technology and travel services. UNDP India was providing the pay cycle for all accounts payable since the Office did not have a bank account. Finance staff did not identify any areas serviced by UNDP as areas of concern.

3.8 Asset management — Satisfactory

OAI reviewed a sample of 11 assets valued at over $112,000 located at the Office. Three of the assets, valued at $20,000, were incorrectly labeled as being in India when in fact they were assigned to the UN Women Office in Kathmandu, Nepal. The remaining assets flagged for inspection were found, but the locator identifier used in Atlas for proper identification of assets did not follow the prescribed mandatory convention to be used by all UN

Women offices. OAI raised this with management for follow-up; they explained that since Nepal had been granted a delegation of authority in June, it would remove those assets from the list since Nepal would have its own business unit and would be able to certify those assets directly to Headquarters in 2013. Management also took note of the requirements for correcting the asset location convention in Atlas. OAI also inspected 20 laptops that had been purchased by Headquarters, but assigned to the Office; although the Office had not recorded them on its asset list, pending instructions form Headquarters. OAI was able to track all of the laptops, and advised management to take steps to record them on their asset register.

Since no assets were missing, those located elsewhere would now be reported under a separate business unit, and the Office had taken steps to include the laptops in the asset register, no issue has been raised.

3.9 Leave management — Satisfactory

The Office had put in place a sign-in book that was for compulsory use by all staff members of the Office. Entrance and exits to the office were tracked, and absences of more than two hours were flagged. The leave monitor copied the pages of the sign-in book daily to record attendance (or absences) as necessary. These records were then reviewed by the supervisor of each staff member or contractor. A spot check of days in office/out of office for select staff, based on the attendance book and the records held by the Office yielded no variance. No reportable issues were identified.

ANNEX Definitions of audit terms - Ratings and Priorities

A. AUDIT RATINGS

In providing the auditors' assessment, the Internal Audit Services of UNDP*, UNFPA, UNICEF, and WFP use the following harmonized audit rating definitions. OAI assesses the Country Office or audited HQ unit as a whole as well as the specific audit areas within the Country Office/HQ unit.

- **Satisfactory** Internal controls, governance and risk management processes were adequately established and functioning well. No issues were identified that would significantly affect the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity. *(While all UN Women offices strive at continuously enhancing their controls, governance and risk management, it is expected that this top rating will only be achieved by a limited number of business units.)*

- **Partially Satisfactory** 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. *(A partially satisfactory rating describes an overall acceptable situation with a need for improvement in specific areas. It is expected that the majority of business units will fall into this rating category.)*

- **Unsatisfactory** Internal controls, governance and risk management processes were either not established or not functioning well. The issues were such that the achievement of the overall objectives of the audited entity could be seriously compromised. *Given the environment UN Women operates in, it is unavoidable that a small number of business units with serious challenges will fall into this category.)*

***** The Internal Audit Services of UNDP provides audit services to UN Women on the basis of a Service Level Agreement

B. PRIORITIES OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

The audit recommendations are categorized according to priority, as a further guide to UN Women management in addressing the issues. The following categories are used:

- **High (Critical)** Prompt action is required to ensure that UN Women is not exposed to high risks. Failure to take action could result in major negative consequences for UN Women and may affect the organization at the global level.

- **Medium (Important)** Action is required to ensure that UN Women is not exposed to significant risks. Failure to take action could result in negative consequences for UN Women.

- **Low** Action is desirable and should result in enhanced control or better value for money. Low priority recommendations, if any, are dealt with by the audit team directly with the Office management, either during the exit meeting or through a separate memo subsequent to the fieldwork. Therefore, low priority recommendations are <u>not included in this report</u>.