INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVOCACY SECTION

UN WOMEN

COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVOCACY SECTION

INDEPENDENT EVALUATION AND AUDIT SERVICES (IEAS)
Internal Audit Service (IAS)
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Audit objective and scope

In November–December 2021, the UN Women Internal Audit Service (IAS) of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) conducted an internal audit of the UN Women Headquarters Communications and Advocacy function (Comms Section) as a strategically important area for the Entity.

The audit objectives were to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the following areas and subareas:

- **Governance arrangements**: clarity of the Comms Section mandate, authority and accountability arrangements, and reporting lines between the communications and advocacy business process owner and other parties involved in communications at headquarters and in the field.

- **Communications strategy**: effectiveness, linkage to the UN Women Strategic Plan, and measurement of its contribution to the UN Women Strategic Plan and strategic initiatives.

- **Work planning and performance management**: effectiveness of workplans, adequacy of working priorities, and performance measurement and reporting.

- **Risk management**: risk identification, reporting and management.

- **Operations**: delegation of authority and Internal Control Framework. Effectiveness of controls over procurement, human resources (HR), data management, finance and budget, and travel.

The audit covered the state of governance, risk management and internal controls, based on a sample of activities from 1 January 2019 to 31 October 2021.

In 2015, the UN Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) issued a report to the United Nations Board, copied to the UN Women Board, on "*public information and communications policies and practices in the United Nations system*" (JIU/REP/2015/4). The JIU report rated UN Women against nine core benchmarks that the JIU had set as essential to meeting an organization's communications obligations. The JIU required all organizations to monitor progress towards compliance. This IAS audit also reviewed UN Women's compliance level with these core benchmarks.

Management is responsible for establishing and implementing effective governance, risk management and internal controls. The responsibility of internal audit is to provide assurance and advise management on the discharge of its obligations.

IAS followed the *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing* in conducting this audit.

Audit opinion and overall audit rating

At the functional section level, IAS found that the headquarters Comms Section had worked hard during a period constrained by resource limitations; a heavy workload exacerbated by a lack of strategic leadership due to a very long period without a Chief of Section; the existence of semi-parallel headquarters communications projects; and difficulties associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The Comms Section developed a well thought out strategic plan covering the period prior to 2021 and, during the period of audit review, was widely held to have performed above its means in terms of communications coverage. The Comms Section has started to address some of the issues raised in this report with ongoing initiatives to improve brand management, working with field offices to create a communications network, and developing a headquarters crisis communication plan.

Nevertheless, at the organization level, IAS assessed the **overall state of governance and strategy** in UN Women with regards to communication as **Major Improvement Needed,** meaning that "*The assessed governance arrangements and risk management practices*

were established and functioning, but need major improvement. Issues identified by the audit could significantly affect the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity/area." The **remainder of the internal controls** were assessed as ***Some Improvement Needed***, meaning that "*The assessed controls were generally established and functioning, but need some improvement. Issues identified by the audit do not significantly affect the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity/area*".

This assessment reflects the fact that despite UN Women having reported in 2017 that the JIU recommendations had been addressed, the Entity has not yet fully met and sustained its commitment to the nine JIU communications benchmarks, with only two being met in full, and no process in place to monitor and report on progress. This is evidenced by the lack of a clear corporate-level accountability structure for communications and the absence of an overarching governance framework with a related communications and advocacy policy, revised strategy, implementation plans and monitoring framework that covers the whole organization.

Key strategic risks identified were: the absence of clear organizational strategic direction for communications activities; lack of a clear mandate for the Comms Section delineating both its and other offices' communications responsibilities; a not yet mature organization-wide communications policy framework; lack of clear guidance at executive level on prioritization criteria; brand visibility and clarity; fragmented functions within UN Women and a lack of coordination across units; and weak integration between headquarters and field offices, particularly the synchronization of messaging and a headquarters-centric approach to messaging.

The lack of organization-wide coordination and management over communication activities presents a significant risk for UN Women. Communication roles are scattered across the Entity with differing levels of responsibility without overall accountability, coherence of 'One Voice' and branding within UN Women, and without knowledge and management of the overall expenditure and costs of communication activities. Effective coordination and quality review of communication activities within headquarters units and between headquarters and field office communications functions is particularly lacking. Both the Comms Section and other communications functions across UN Women have been hampered by a lack of strategic direction and policy framework on what and how to prioritize communications messages and initiatives, as well as weak

monitoring of implementation of the corporate communications policy and strategy. This is especially important given what is frequently described as a confusing and over-populated brand and message landscape.

In addition, IAS also found significant risks arising from what appear to be systemic organizational issues not unique to the section, i.e. the high reliance on short-term contract personnel, many of whom are arguably undertaking core roles in contravention of relevant organizational policy; some of whom have been contracted continuously for up to five years (with the required short contract breaks). Other examples include: workplans dictated by existing funding rather than the capacity and activity-driven funding actually required to achieve objectives; and reporting (and executive acceptance) of the opportunity costs in terms of unachieved objectives.

Performance measurement is also heavily focused on output-level quantitative indicators, such as numbers of views, with very little performance measurement of impact or change achieved. While it is tempting to assign responsibility for workload and outputs to budget constraints, UN Women does manage a large sum of money. Rather than a lack of money, the key issue is how the Entity sets its priorities and chooses to allocate its limited resources.

IAS also found risk issues related to a lack of clarity between communications and advocacy functions.

Recommendations

IAS has made 15 recommendations for actions by the Chief, Comms Section and Director, SPD. Four recommendations are ranked as High (Critical) priority and 11 as Medium (Important) priority.

The four High (Critical) priority recommendations mean that ***"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."*** These recommendations include:

- Recommendation 2: Identifying major communication function objectives within UN Women and establishing an effective coordinated organization-wide

governance and policy framework with clear accountabilities and responsibilities for the custodian of the communication policy and its key contributors including headquarters sections and field offices through a network or matrix of accountability. In addition, ensuring the required staff skillsets and resources are available: the project cycle and communications policy to require that budgets include direct communication costs in related programmes and projects.

- Recommendation 3: Setting clear communications priorities with criteria in the context of scarce resources and finalizing the 2022–2025 Communications Strategy aligned with the strategic plan that will provide a framework for future communications campaigns, initiatives and regular activities from headquarters and field offices.

- Recommendation 4: Developing and implementing a coherent, integrated and coordinated approach to field and headquarters communications activities.

- Recommendation 6: Completing the planned review of brand management to strengthen and grow the UN Women brand.

The 11 Medium (Important) priority recommendations mean that *"action is required to ensure that UN Women is not exposed to risks. Failure to take action could result* in *negative consequences for UN Women".* These recommendations address findings relating to:

- Recommendation 1: Establishing a progress monitoring and reporting process against the JIU communication function benchmarks.

- Recommendation 5: Clarifying the distinction between communications and advocacy activities and objectives.

- Recommendation 7: Updating the Comms Section's biennial workplan for 2022–2023 in light of the recommendations made in this report.

- Recommendation 8: Analysing communications costs throughout UN Women and proposing more efficient allocation and organization of such costs, where possible requesting that offices designing projects and programmes adequately budget communications costs in their non-core funding proposals.

- Recommendation 9: Reviewing and proposing an impact measurement framework, including qualitative as well as quantitative indicators.

- Recommendation 10: Improving the communications policy, guidance and training support available to field offices.

- Recommendation 11: Improving the reporting and management of communications specific risks.

- Recommendation 12: Finalizing the crisis communication plan, and reinforcing the role played by communications in business continuity, humanitarian and crisis planning at headquarters and in field offices.

- Recommendation 13: Reviewing the use of short-term consultancy contacts to fulfil core communications roles and identifying the actual resources (number, skillset and seniority) required to meet communications objectives.

- Recommendation 14: Ensuring the timely filling of vacancies for senior communications posts.

- Recommendation 15: Implementing an effective Digital Asset Management System across the organization.

Low (Desirable) priority recommendations were discussed directly with the responsible managers and were not included in the final audit report; actions have been initiated to address them.

IAS believes it is reasonable and feasible to implement the recommendations contained in this report within a one to two-year period, subject to resource availability, and notes that the Comms Section is already taking steps to begin addressing risks in some areas such as coordination with field offices, brand management and work planning. Nevertheless, improvement in key areas is subject to: sufficient resources being made available or reallocated to enact the changes needed; strong senior management leadership and direction; and an effective governance framework. Investment in this area could help ensure maximum funds available for communication impact; coherent and consistent messaging; adequate branding and advocacy; to sustain donor interest and confidence; and increase Comms Section personnel's motivation.

IAS recommends that management develop an action plan, accompanied by the resources required to implement it, noting the actions to be taken as part of existing workplans and responsibilities, noting the actions which would require additional resources. This action plan with resource estimates should be presented to the Business

Review Committee for its consideration and recommendation for Executive Leadership Team decision.

Management comments and action plan

The Communications and Advocacy Section, and other relevant organizational units at headquarters accepted the above recommendations and provided action plans included in this report. Management comments have been taken into account in this report, where appropriate.

Lisa Sutton

Lisa Sutton, Director
Independent Evaluation and Audit Services

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACRO	Americas and Caribbean Regional Office
AWP	Annual Work Plan
CSD	Civil Society Division
GS	General Service
HR	Human Resources
IAS	Internal Audit Service
IB	Institutional Budget
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEAS	Independent Evaluation and Audit Services
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
PPG	Policy, Procedures and Guidance
PPID	Policy, Programme and Intergovernmental Division
RMS	Resource Management System
SPD	Strategic Partnerships Division
SPRED	Strategy, Planning, Resources, and Effectiveness Division
SSA	Special Service Agreement
UNV	United Nations Volunteer
UN Women	The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
US$	United States Dollar

I. INTRODUCTION

The New York based headquarters Communications and Advocacy Section (Comms Section) is led by a D1 Chief, reporting directly to the Director, Strategic Partnerships Division (SPD). The Communications and Public Advocacy Strategy 2016–2020 notes that the work of the section "*will be integral in sustaining and advancing the momentum for women's empowerment…and the sustainable development agenda, while increasing visibility for UN Women and its work.*" The unit's two strategic objectives are to "*advocate for women's rights, empowerment and gender equality*", and to "*increase UN Women's visibility in support of resource mobilization*".

According to the Comms Section organization chart (see Annex 2), the section is structured so that its senior staff (P5 and D1), finance and admin assistants (GS level) and the heads of the eight 'portfolio' functional subunits (i.e. Media Relations) (P2/P3 level) are either fixed-term or temporary staff appointments. As per the Resource Management System (RMS) HR data as of 13 January 2022, all 13 posts were funded by Institutional Budget (IB) or core funds. At the time of the audit, three of these staff were on secondment elsewhere in the UN system, their posts filled by temporary appointments. In addition, at the time of the audit, the Comms Section had 17 consultants recruited on Special Service Agreement (SSA) contracts, of whom 9 were on full-time contracts and the remainder employed on a retainer basis as needed. The consultants report to the relevant P2/P3 function head. In 2021, some of the SSA consultants were funded by The Gates Foundation at a cost of US$ 403,000.

The Comms Section had a 2020 planned budget of US$ 7.84 million, of which US$ 4.66 million was funded (US$ 2 million of which was a one-time allocation from The Gates Foundation funding for the Generation Equality Forum). RMS and Project Dashboards data shows the trend of planned versus actual budget and spending for 2019–2022 (see Table 1).

Table 1 – Budget (planned versus actual) and spending for 2019–2022 in US$

Years	Planned budget	Actual budget	Funding gap	Expenses
2019	4,239,786	3,507,682	732,104	3,580,726
2020	7,844,038	4,656,614	3,187,424	4,539,748
2021	5,665,202	3,700,564	1,964,638	3,569,897
2022	3,300,887	3,019,736	281,151	-

Source: OneApp RMS and Project Delivery Dashboards, 7 and 11 January 2022.

Table 2 shows actual budget data for the headquarters Communications Unit by year and funding type.

Table 2 – Actual budget by funding type for 2019–2022 in US$

Funding type	2019	2020	2021	2022
Core	1,768,401	1,452,746	1,418,268	1,175,935
IB	1,703,323	1,657,718	1,637,106	1,843,801
Non-core	35,959	186,150	-	-
Generation Equality Forum (non-core)	-	1,360,000	645,191	-
Grand Total	**3,507,682**	**4,656,614**	**3,700,564**	**3,019,736**

Source: Project Delivery Dashboard, 11 January 2022.

A search for personnel involved in communications in the HR Personnel Dashboard as of 19 January 2022 showed more than 180 active personnel in other headquarters and field offices not reporting to the headquarters Comms Section, mostly SSA, service contractors or UN Volunteers (NOTE: data quality depends on how offices enter and validate information on the HR Personnel Dashboard, including the use of accurate job titles).

In 2015, the UN Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) issued a report to the United Nations Board, copied to the UN Women Board, on '*public information and communications policies and practices in the United Nations system*' (JIU/REP/2015/4). The JIU review encompassed most UN organizations, including UN Women, and was undertaken in recognition that communications "*is an essential function for explaining the objectives, values and challenges of the United Nations family and is expected to create global support for its work*". The JIU report rated UN Women against nine core benchmarks that the JIU had set as essential to meeting an organization's communications obligations. These benchmarks were derived from accepted corporate and worldwide best practice standards. The JIU required all organizations to monitor progress towards compliance.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The main objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the Comms Section's governance arrangements, communications strategy, work planning, performance management, risk management and operations. At the time of planning the audit, UN Women in New York had suspended full-time in-person office operations and directed staff to work from home because of the global COVID-19 health security threat. Therefore, the majority of communications were managed remotely, including for this audit.

The audit covered the planning, business processes and transactions for the period from 1 January 2019 to 31 October 2021.

Scope

IAS examined the Comms Section's performance, effectiveness and efficiency in the following areas:

- **Governance arrangements**: clarity of the Comms Section's mandate, authority and accountability arrangements, and reporting lines between the communications and advocacy policy/process custodian and other parties involved in communications at headquarters and in the field.

- **Communications strategy:** effectiveness, linkage to the UN Women Strategic Plan, and measurement of its contribution to the UN Women Strategic Plan and strategic initiatives.

- **Work planning and performance management:** effectiveness of workplans, adequacy of working priorities, and performance measurement and reporting.

- **Risk management:** Risk identification, reporting and management.

- **Operations:** Delegation of authority and Internal Control Framework. Effectiveness of controls over procurement, human resources (HR), data management, finance and budget, and travel.

IAS followed the *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing* in conducting this audit.

Methodology

The audit work consisted of: review of documents and systems; interviews with UN Women personnel at headquarters, regional and country offices; review of documented procedures, records and planning documents; surveys; and an analytical review of reports and samples, based on professional judgement and focusing on key risks and state of internal controls.

Annex 1 provides explanatory information on the audit ratings.

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. COMMUNICATIONS GOVERNANCE AND STRATEGY

Issue 1: UN Women has not fully achieved or sustained its commitment to meet the 'benchmarks for a strategic public information and communications function' outlined by the UN Joint Inspection Unit in 2015

In 2015, the JIU issued a report to the United Nations Board, copied to the UN Women Board, on '*public information and communications policies and practices in the United Nations system*' (JIU/REP/2015/4). The JIU review encompassed most UN organizations, including UN Women, and was undertaken in recognition of the stated fact that communications "*is an essential function for explaining the objectives, values and challenges of the United Nations family and is expected to create global support for its work*".

The JIU report rated UN Women against nine core benchmarks that the JIU had set as essential to meeting an organization's communications obligations. These benchmarks were derived from accepted corporate and worldwide best practice standards. In its report, the JIU stated that UN Women did not yet meet all of the benchmarks. In 2017 UN Women reported in response that action was 'in progress' and therefore the recommendations could be regarded as 'implemented'. The JIU required all organizations to monitor progress towards compliance. IAS was not able to find any further evidence of internal monitoring or reporting against these benchmarks by UN Women.

The benchmarks remain very relevant indicators of the maturity of an organization's communications function. The benchmarks concern organizational goals and priorities, overarching principles of communications, access to executive management, coherent planning and messaging, multilingualism, resources, internal and external

communications, training and monitoring, and oversight – all of which were reviewed during this audit. IAS found that UN Women meets two of the benchmarks in full (access to senior management and multilingualism) but is still in the process of meeting or only partially meets the remaining seven benchmarks. Each of these benchmark topics is discussed separately in this report. Implementation of the recommendations made in this report will ensure that UN Women meets and sustains these nine established benchmarks for organizational communications.

Recommendation 1 (Medium):

The Chief, Comms Section to assess UN Women's progress against the nine JIU benchmarks; establish and monitor an action plan; and report on compliance with the benchmarks to the executive management team.

The JIU benchmarks that need to be monitored as part of the action plan referred to Recommendation 1 are listed in Table 3 below. The benchmarks fully met are not reported in the table.

Table 3 – List of JIU benchmarking principles

JIU benchmark	Benchmark summary	Report issue number(s)
1. Organizational goals and priorities	Public information and communications is embedded in strategic planning at the global, regional and national level to support the organization's strategic goals and priorities defined by Member States, taking into account organizational specificities.	2, 3, 4
2. Overarching principles of communications	Public information and communications has a formal and inclusive organization-wide framework/strategy that cascades down to the communications plans of the departments and offices at various locations.	2, 3, 4, 8
4. Coherent planning and messaging	Public information and communications activities and products are delivered by all parts of the organization through concerted planning and are based on harmonized and coherent messaging.	2, 3, 4, 5, 7
6. Resources	The organization devotes adequate and sustainable resources to public information and communications,	9, 14, 15

	enabling its dedicated corporate entity to coordinate, guide and perform its advisory role at all levels.	
7. Internal and external communications	The organization integrates internal and external communications into a holistic approach, recognizing the role of non-communication staff in public information and communications.	2, 7
8. Training	The organization offers regular public information and communications training, in order to refine the completeness of public information and communication officers as well as of other staff communicating on behalf of the organization.	11
9. Monitoring and oversight	Public information and communications activities and products are monitored and evaluated on a regular basis to assess their impact on intended audiences. Good practices and lessons learned are identified and help management to shape future public information and communications initiatives of the organization.	9, 10

Issue 2: Lack of an overarching communications governance framework with clearly assigned overall accountability, positioning the Comms Section as a policy custodian; and an uncoordinated approach to communications activities at headquarters

Number two of the JIU benchmarks for organizational communications requires a holistic organizational-wide framework that "*cascades down to the communications plans of other parts of the organization*". Benchmark number nine also requires an effective monitoring and oversight process over organization-wide communications activities. IAS found that UN Women has a fragmented approach to communications at headquarters without an overarching framework, policy, and monitoring and oversight process. It is critical that UN Women spells out its principles for the communications function and Comms Section and their role in achieving the Entity's goals.

UN Women lacks a clear, holistic organization-wide communications governance framework to define its communications and advocacy objectives, stating the role of the Comms Section as a policy/process custodian, and key roles and responsibilities of all relevant contributors to the communication function and related activities. This issue was highlighted as a critical risk by respondents to an IAS survey of other international organizations on their headquarters communication functions**.** A major risk/consequence of the lack of an overarching framework is that there is no clear single person accountable for the coordination and quality review of communications activity within UN Women. Responsibilities may be diluted and fragmented, and it becomes difficult to define, cost and monitor overall organizational communications performance (budgeting and performance measurement are addressed further in Issues 8, 9 and 10). At least one senior staff member stated that UN Women would benefit from more '*structural simplicity*' around communications and that the Entity's size did not warrant the fragmented approach to communications.

UN Women currently does not have a clearly appointed and sufficiently resourced equivalent of a communication policy custodian as a part of second line of defence with clear responsibility for setting overall policy and standards for oversight and performing a monitoring role, including authorizing exceptions and deviations from the policy.[1]

Notwithstanding many examples of very effective collaboration between the Comms Section and other headquarters sections, such as the UNITE Campaign/16 Days of Activism, the lack of a holistic approach to communications (evidenced in the fragmentation of communications roles in different sections and the lack of coordination) was consistently raised by staff interviewed at all levels at headquarters. There was felt to be a 'disconnect' between the headquarters Comms Section and the other functions at headquarters; while, on occasion, IAS found confusion as to who does what within the organization. Some examples of the lack of a holistic approach to communication within headquarters are described below (coordination between communications activities at headquarters and in the field is discussed separately in Issue 4, while performance monitoring is discussed more fully in Issue 9).

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[1] 'Three lines of defence' oversight and monitoring model: the first line of defence is front-line decision makers, at a field office or other headquarters sections; the second line of defence is a functional process owner (or policy custodian) who takes charge of setting and monitoring overall policy, strategy and standards, as well as regional offices who are responsible for oversight and supporting countries in their regions; and the third line of defence is independent assurance providers.

Executive Director's Office

Responsibility for speechwriting for the Executive Director, for media messages on specific emergencies (such as the situation in Afghanistan for example) and for the management of Executive Director field missions and the Goodwill Ambassadors rests within the Executive Director's Office, and not with the headquarters Comms Section. The internal communications focal point also reports within the Executive Director's Office.

Several of these functions had initially been managed from within the headquarters Comms Section but were subsequently transferred to the Executive Director's Office. IAS understands that this transfer was in part due to a perceived lack of capacity within the Comms Section, but also to non-work related issues and disagreements about expectations and approaches. One consequence of this split in responsibilities, especially as it concerns the Executive Director's Office, is that it may confuse overall corporate accountability and coherence for communications activities at headquarters.

Generation Equality Forum

Personnel interviewed by IAS, both inside and outside the headquarters Comms Section, felt that management of communications for new initiatives and projects was often set outside the headquarters Comms Section either because of a lack of resources within the section, through internal competition for recognition; lack of access to non-core resources to fund the required skillsets; or simply through inaction as the current communications process is fully decentralized and allows this to take place.

One example of such an initiative is the Generation Equality Forum, a multi-stakeholder event involving governments, the private sector and international organizations. An international company was contracted at a cost of US$ 1.5 million to undertake the communications work for the initiative, with a senior consultant at the D1 equivalent level recruited to manage the contract from within the Executive Director's Office (later switched to the Civil Society Division [CSD]). The existence of a semi-parallel communications function for the Generation Equality Forum, which was a corporate priority and has a significant communications component, was seen by all interviewed as a major example of fragmentation during the period under review.

IAS understands that the decision to manage the Generation Equality Forum outside the Comms Section was due to several factors: one being a perceived lack of staff and resource capacity within the Comms Section, including a lack of relevant public relations experience. The decision was also affected by long-running issues related to the vacant Chief of Communications post. IAS is not aware of any explicit assessment or decision-making process to explain why the resources to recruit these skillsets and manage the project, along with the relevant accountability, were not assigned to the Comms Section.

Based on feedback from internal stakeholders interviewed by IAS, it is clear that efforts were made to coordinate with the Comms Section and to interact. As a by-product of this collaboration, the Generation Equality Forum consultant drafted a UN Women Public Information and Communications Procedures Manual (still in the draft stage) to assist the organization in the future. Nevertheless, the approach chosen demonstrates the lack of a joined-up approach to communications; a more coherent strategy could enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

Internal communications

Benchmark Number 7 of the JIU benchmarks of UN organizational communications states that the organization "*integrates internal and external communications into a holistic approach, recognizing the role of non-communication staff in public information and communications*". UN Women's internal communications mandate is vested outside of the Comms Section and is not fully integrated under a holistic strategy.

The importance of internal communications, defined as all communications that occur within UN Women, was recognized by the creation of a dedicated Internal Communications Focal Point. However, this role sits within the Executive Director's Office and not within the Comms Section. Originally with a mandate to facilitate internal communication from the Executive Director, the role grew to encompass a broader mandate including the design and management of the UN Women intranet.

During the audit, concerns were raised by both stakeholders and respondents to the audit survey that internal communications within UN Women were insufficiently organized or coordinated with external communications. Nevertheless, IAS found that the focal point had undertaken valuable research into what staff required from internal

communications, including an all-staff survey, and several positive initiatives were under way to develop and make internal communications more effective. IAS also noted that the focal point took part in Comms Section team meetings to forge a closer working relationship with the section. This is a positive initiative that needs to be progressed to aid the coordination of internal and external communications.

Another important issue linked to the lack of overarching governance and policy was the overall role and positioning of the Comms Section within UN Women. While in many of the organizations benchmarked by the JIU there has been a movement towards categorizing the communications function as a policy custodian function, especially where the organization's mandate includes a strong communications and public advocacy role, IAS found the UN Women communications function to be positioned more as a service function.

Recommendation 2 (High):

The Chief, Comms Section, with guidance from the Director SPD, to:

(a) Review the current ad hoc and uncoordinated approach to communications activities at headquarters, including separated internal and external communications.

(b) Propose to the Executive Leadership Team a communications governance framework and policy that enforces a coherent, integrated and coordinated approach to communications; consolidates fragmented resources; and streamlines accountability, positioning the function as a policy custodian in addition to being a service function.

The Executive Leadership Team to provide direction to the Chief, Comms Section on the key expectations to be included in the policy and consider the proposals on streamlining corporate resources allotted to communications activities and repositioning internal communications with external communications.

Issue 3: Lack of strategic and operational guidance on communications priorities, and the need for an overarching communications strategy

In 2015, the Comms Section developed a Communication and Public Advocacy Strategy for 2016–2020; however, it was almost entirely focused on the headquarters section. Although a clearly well thought out and presented document, its focus leant towards modalities and mechanisms for communication distribution rather than an actual vision and strategy across UN Women for effective and integrated corporate communications.

The strategy was due for revision in 2021; however, a decision was taken to delay the process to allow for publication of the new UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025, finalized in September 2021, and the recruitment of a new Chief of Communications. IAS understands that the Comms Section now plans to develop its strategy document for the period 2022–2025 during the second quarter of 2022.

A critical risk issue raised by many staff was the competing communications messages from different initiatives and projects, made especially important by the limited communications resources available and what was described as ever-increasing demand. Strong concern was expressed both at headquarters and in the field that communications activity was impacted by a perceived lack of clarity on UN Women's core strategic communications priorities, and limited guidance on how to prioritize the many messages, initiatives and 'sub-brands'.

It was reported that UN Women personnel requiring support from the Comms Section typically regard their request and need as the highest priority and often link their project's objectives to the high-level objectives in the Strategic Plan to support their argument. This can lead to occasional 'aggressive assertion' or concerns that the relevant communications portfolio is not meeting its service obligations effectively when the Comms Section attempts to prioritize requests without strategic guidance.

IAS found that the Comms Section was often considered a service provider (see Issue 2), which may explain the common concern reported to IAS that communications personnel throughout the organization are not typically or automatically involved during the policy/programme/initiative design phase, where their input can be

invaluable, and where they can add value to communications planning and budgeting from the beginning instead of being called upon at short notice during implementation. The stakeholders interviewed by IAS stated that there needs to be a shift towards a more strategic role for communications whereby communications is integrated into the development stage of programmes and initiatives rather than the Comms Section simply being informed of requirements after the planning stage has been completed.

Recommendation 3 (High):

In conjunction with Recommendation 2, The Chief, Comms Section to:

(a) Obtain from the Executive Leadership Team (or propose) clear criteria for the prioritization of communications work and the implications and actions required to move towards strategic communications.

(b) Coordinate and develop a new Communications Strategy for 2022–2025 to support the UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025 for senior management review and approval. The new strategy to include both headquarters and field dimensions.

(c) Conduct an analysis of the skills and resources needed to achieve the strategy and request the required budget from the Executive Leadership Team.

Issue 4: Lack of strategic approach to, and coordination of, communications activities between headquarters and field offices

The dissemination of strategic planning from headquarters to field offices, and the effective coordination and quality review of organization-wide communications activities, is considered essential for a fully effective communications function in what is a heavily decentralized organization. The UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025 outlines how the Entity intends to strengthen links between its headquarters and field activities and further develop standardized approaches to deliver high impact "*thought leadership and policy advice, capacity development and technical assistance, multi-stakeholder partnerships, and advocacy and communications*". The Strategic Plan also

states that "*good practice in engagement between the field and HQ (is) a basis for scaling up support*", with scaling up being an important strategic objective.

As part of the information gathering exercise for the audit, discussions were held with a sample of field office communications personnel and a survey was issued to gauge the importance of risks and issues pertinent to the relationship between the Comms Section in headquarters and communications functions within Regional and Country Offices.

A search of the HR Personnel Dashboard for personnel involved in communications and design showed that, as of 19 January 2022, there were more than 180 active personnel in headquarters and field offices with some form of communications role stated in their job titles. Although a crude indicator, as many of these roles are undoubtedly part-time and/or project-based, it does demonstrate the fragmentation of communications functions within UN Women. Some degree of dispersion of roles is not unexpected in a decentralized organization, but IAS would expect to find correspondingly strong coordination (not management), support and an overall corporate accountability role for the communications policy custodian at headquarters, which is usually found in other functions, e.g. procurement, security or finance.

The issue of coordination between the various communications functions scattered within UN Women, particularly in the field, was raised as a high-risk issue by many respondents to the survey. The consequences of this risk are duplication of messaging, confused messaging and erroneous communication. As an example, several staff raised the concern that simultaneous campaigns (or close in timing) were organized separately by both headquarters and field offices which could and did confuse donors and intended audiences.

However, the main concern was that the quality and scope of communications in the field was under-resourced and that there was demand for much a greater level of support, guidance and training to deliver effective communications activity. This was particularly important given the staffing levels and resources available to field offices. The point was stressed that UN Women's strategic objectives seemed to be built around communication and public advocacy, but that the Entity was not organized to deliver this effectively in the field through its communications activities.

IAS found that communications functions in the field were generally small, ranging from

part of a personnel's role to occasionally being undertaken by six or seven personnel. The vast majority were employed on a non-staff basis (service contractors, UN Volunteers [UNV] or SSA/individual consultants), often with limited prior experience of UN Women. These short-term contracts can affect business continuity and knowledge management. In most cases the Country Office communications teams were loosely coordinated (or were starting to be so) by the respective Regional Office, with most still formally reporting internally to either the Country Representative or Deputy Representative.

There were mixed opinions about the role of the headquarters Comms Section, with many seeing the section as having, in principle, a strong potential role to play in terms of policy custodian, i.e. guidance provision, standard setting and the provision of training. This was particularly the case for brand management, with this typically signifying management of the UN Women logo. The degree to which offices received support from the Comms Section varied considerably and seemed to depend on whether specific campaign contact had been made or the office had made a conscious effort to seek such help. It was also clear that the level of direct support received, rather than guidance or policy documents being available on the intranet, had decreased noticeably over the last two years.

Discussions with personnel in the Comms Section confirmed that while they were conscious of the need and very supportive of the idea, workloads and time constraints coupled with decreasing budgets meant that they had become increasingly unable to deliver direct support to field offices. Nevertheless, IAS did note that the Comms Section had, in tandem with its 2022 work planning exercise, begun a process of strengthening its links with Regional Offices and that, although hampered by resource constraints, was keen to improve its coordination and support role in this area.

Regional Offices

None of the Regional Offices sampled were critical of the headquarters section, with all respecting its expertise and appreciative of its workload. It was also apparent that, although not as part of any strategy, the role of Regional Offices was in the process of evolving to offer a greater level of support to Country Offices, including a degree of communications coordination and quality review within regions.

A good example of this approach was found in the Latin America region, where there are 11 Country Offices, ranging in size. Within these offices, the size and resources that can be dedicated to communications work is usually proportionate to the office size; therefore, communications teams can vary from being on occasion as large as six or seven staff to as small as a fraction of one person's time. Even when the team size is larger, the range of specialisms in communications, such as media relations, social media, video, photography, etc. means that it is rarely possible for a single office to be able to meet all types of communication demand.

Regardless of the size of the office, communications and advocacy work is UN Women's core work; therefore, no matter the size of the target population, communications work is essential to the achievement of the Entity's strategic objectives in every country. In recognition of this and of the growing importance of communications, the Americas and Caribbean Regional Office (ACRO) developed a more closely coordinated communications network within the region.

ACRO sees this as a 'café culture' type of organization, whereby the Regional Office coordinates a closer working arrangement, with each Country Office retaining control but collaborating with each other. This is still an evolving process, but the region has bi-weekly meetings of its comms focal points in the Country Offices to share ideas, knowledge, experience and resources. It also provides a forum for ACRO to assist the region in ensuring that a common style and message is used. The region is helped in sharing communications ideas by the predominance of Spanish as a common language in many countries.

Although still early days, some positive examples of sharing ideas and products include: the Mexico Country Office produced guidelines for journalists on writing with a gender perspective, which is now being looked at by other Country Offices to adapt to their own environments. Similarly, the Uruguay Country Office developed a training session for journalists on the recommended use of headlines that may refer to gender issues, which is also being looked at for adaptation by other Country Offices in the region.

IAS is not clear whether this approach is common to all regions, but as another example discussions with the Nigeria Country Office revealed that the West and Central Africa Regional Office managed and supported website development and management for Country Offices in its region.

The Regional Offices spoken to as part of the audit were clear that while they had good relationships with the Comms Section in headquarters, a greater degree of support was needed, especially with regard to training, possibly with the aim of allowing a better resourced regional communications unit to deliver more training to their Country Offices. Respondents to the survey also highlighted a need for improved coordination of campaigns within regions.

Country Offices

IAS found that the degree of investment in communications teams and activities in Country Offices varied considerably, but a common issue was the perception that the functions were under resourced and not given high priority. This finding is reinforced by the IAS meta-synthesis report on field audit results for 2019–2020,[2] which measured the effectiveness of communications and advocacy in 14 field offices and found that most of the Country Offices audited lacked a cohesive approach supported by a mapping of key stakeholders; an accompanying strategy with clear indicators to measure success; and mechanisms for performance monitoring. The report concluded that opportunities were missed to publicize successful interventions in the field and a more structured approach to communications in field offices was required. IAS reiterates the recommendation from its report, particularly in terms of oversight of decentralized communications: *The Strategic Partnerships Division (SPD) to (a) develop guidance on communication-based advocacy to help managers with effective strategy setting and performance measurement; and (b) propose an accountability framework for communication-based advocacy with roles, reporting relationships and monitoring responsibilities between SPD, ROs and field operations.*

Examples include a recent Country Portfolio Evaluation of the Haiti Country Office by the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service reported that a high turnover of staff was compounding a general lack of communications activity both within and external to the office. Between 2017 and 2021 the office had hired seven different short-term communications consultants, demonstrating the lack of a strategic and systematic focus on communications activities. The evaluation found that efforts to use social media and other means of local communication were neither regular nor systematic. The country Office also lacked a website and had limited potential to reach the general public to amplify its message and communicate policy to its programme partners.

From the internal audit of the Somalia Programme Presence Office,[3] communications were a significant finding compromising the visibility of the office's efforts: "*External stakeholders noted that the advocacy, communication and visibility of UN Women interventions were almost non-existent during the period under review. While IAS noticed that several important milestones were progressing and these were mentioned by the stakeholders interviewed, this had not been translated into advocacy and communication activities. This led to lost opportunities to enhance visibility and promote UN Women's mandate. Other UN agencies were proactively working on their visibility and advocacy in the country. All UN agencies interviewed mentioned that their office had a dedicated communication function in the country, or in their regional offices.*"

The same concerns about short-term hiring, and ad hoc communications work were raised by other offices, reflecting a general lack of investment, strategic planning and focus on communications matters in some Country Offices. This was also reflected in communications personnel reporting that they were rarely involved in programme and project planning activities at inception stages and were regularly expected to support activities at the last minute.

When asked how the Comms Section in headquarters might better support communications in the field, the offices surveyed were generally not in favour of a strong centralized control model with the Comms Section managing or controlling their activities. However, there was consensus about the benefits of a looser network with much more structured support from the Comms Section, i.e. more hands-on training, backstopping and help rather than guidance on the intranet (which some respondents felt was not sufficiently tailored to a field environment). Ideas such as staff swaps between headquarters and the field, or secondments from headquarters to field offices, and greater availability of the Comms Section for consultation were strongly favoured.

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[2] https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sec-tions/About%20Us/Accountability/Audit-reports/2021/UN-Women-audit-report-2021-002-Summary-report-Meta-synthesis-of-field-office-audits-en.pdf

[3] https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sec-tions/About%20Us/Accountability/Audit-reports/2020/UN-Women-audit-report-2020-002-Somalia-PPO-en.pdf

The idea of networked support, whereby managerial responsibility remains firmly vested at the Regional Director and Country Representative level, while functional coordination and corporate accountability rests with the Chief, Comms Section fits well with the 'Three lines of defence' model introduced in Issue 2. In this case, the first line of defence would be with the front-line field office decision makers providing input to overall corporate communication plans; the second line would be represented by Regional Offices having overall management responsibility and by the Chief, Comms Section through owning and monitoring communications policy, participatory planning, coordination and quality review.

Respondents also noted that Comms Section personnel had little direct experience of working in a field office, and that this may not be conducive to understanding field staff needs and the development of policies and guidance specifically suited to field environments. IAS is aware that some functions, such as Finance Management Service,[4] have taken effective steps to build virtual networks between headquarters and field office functions. This may be a model for the Comms Section to follow.

Recommendation 4 (High):

The Chief, Comms Section to:

(a) Review and analyse communications roles in the field and develop and apply a coherent approach, ensuring that the relationship between the Comms Section and field offices is defined in the new Communications Policy and Strategy, including a plan to strengthen support and guidance to the field, either through direct support to Country Offices or through increased support to Regional Offices to better support Country Offices.

Once the Communications Policy and Strategy is approved

(b) The Chief, Comms Section, to review the level of field office experience in the

Comms Section and consider this in future recruitment criteria, or integrate Comms Section staff with Regional Office communications networks to bring field experience into the section.

IAS notes that the issue of unclear oversight roles, and the authority of policy custodians to hold other units accountable, as a corporate way of working, has not been fully operationalized. This is not unique to the communications function and has been raised in other IAS reports.

Issue 5: Distinction between communications and advocacy roles and activities is unclear

The full title of the headquarters Comms Section is the 'Communications and Advocacy' Section. Its most recent strategy document was entitled a '*Communications and Public Advocacy Strategy 2016–2020*'. However, IAS found that the section was primarily set up as a communications section and there was confusion within UN Women between communications and advocacy, and more specifically between public and policy advocacy.

Policy advocacy can be defined as an activity that aims to influence the opinion, decisions or actions of an individual, group, organization or government with regards to adopting and implementing policies (or international norms and commitments). This activity can take several forms, but the most commonly associated activity is through communication activities. Therefore, communications activity in and of itself is not always policy advocacy, which is the strategy, planned activity and work to achieve influence and change.

In this regard, the Comms Section's activities were primarily designed to create, distribute and manage message dissemination and relationships with the media; although in some areas there was a stronger role in creating and reviewing a message, such as with social media and web content. Nevertheless, the Comms Section's role is

closer to what may be meant by public advocacy, as stated in the title of the Comms Section's last strategy document, although the document did not define the term. The distinction is important as a communications specialist is not necessarily a (public) advocacy specialist, and vice versa. Not making this distinction clear and accounting for it in policy and strategy documents is a potential risk. It becomes especially important in terms of defining the role of the headquarters Comms Section given the new UN Women Strategic Plan's focus on changing social norms.

Recommendation 5 (Medium):

The Chief, Comms Section, in consultation with relevant internal stakeholders like PPID and CSD, to make clear the distinction between communication and public and policy advocacy. If there is a decision to separate and move advocacy, this should be reflected in the Comms Strategy and Comms Section name.

Issue 6: Strategy, roles and accountabilities for brand management in UN Women not clearly defined and understood

Another issue linked to the absence of an overarching communications strategy is that of brand management. IAS could not find a formal definition of brand management and, although work had recently begun to address the issue, there was no formal strategy, policy or workplan specifically dedicated to the subject.

The contractor recruited by UN Women to undertake communications work for the Generation Equality Forum project defined brand recognition as referring "*to whether an audience is aware of a brand*", while "*brand equity refers to the value of a brand and is determined by an audience's perception of that brand. Brand equity can therefore be negative or positive*". The process of managing brand recognition and brand equity can be called brand management. An organization with high brand recognition and positive brand equity is more likely to attract donors, resources and attention to its messaging.

An audit survey of UN and other international organizations' communications functions found that weak brand management was regarded by many organizations as a high impact risk. IAS also found that staff at all levels in both headquarters and in the field believe that UN Women has a confused and highly fragmented approach to branding with no strategic direction; accountabilities scattered within the organization; and a limited appreciation of the practicalities of managing brand recognition and brand equity. It was widely felt that there was an absence of corporate top-down direction on brand management and the importance of coordinated brand messaging.

As an example, in addition to the 'UN Women' brand, the Generation Equality Forum Communications Report (1 January–15 July 2021) reported that the Generation Equality Forum had '*spearheaded a powerful multi stakeholder communications campaign under the umbrella brand #ActforEqual*'. This is but one of many so-called brands, or rather 'sub-brands' as some refer to them. It was reported that both internal and external audiences are confused by so many so-called brands, others being 'Sixteen Days', 'International Women's Day (IDW)', 'Generation Equality Forum', 'HeForShe', etc. It appears that every project or high-level initiative is afforded its own 'sub-brand', and that these are in competition with each other, confusing what the 'UN Women' brand stands for. There does not appear to be any coordination or control over the introduction of new 'sub brands' or the phasing out of 'sub brands' that may no longer be justified.

This lack of coherence and organization has been recognized by UN Women and a process of review and coordination has begun, undertaken by the Generation Equality Forum senior consultant and the new Deputy Chief of the Comms Section. As part of this process, in October 2021, the Generation Equality Forum contractor worked on a pro bono basis (outside of the main Generation Equality Forum contract) to "*audit the UN Women brand to understand current brand equity, peer set, benchmarks and positioning opportunities*" to "*define strategic overhauls to improve the UN Women approach to brand building and define tactical ideas to improve campaign activation.*"[5]

As discussed above, this work is much needed. IAS found that a very high number of those interviewed equated brand management simply with management of the

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[5] The Sustainability Practice presentation by the contractor to UN Women October 2021.

UN Woman logo and actions at a similar level to differentiate the Entity, rather than as a wider focus on reputation and brand equity management. This is reflected in the Comms Section where the brand management role is restricted to just one of three duties assigned to one P3 staff member, with the focus restricted to visual branding.

Recommendation 6 (High):

As a matter of urgency, the Director SPD to finalize the brand management review process and prioritize the development and implementation of a policy and strategy on brand management that creates a more coherent, coordinated and effective approach. This should be communicated to all staff and appropriately resourced. The policy and strategy should also be included in the Comms Section mandate and responsibilities (in the Comms Policy and Strategy) with the necessary resources and skillset provided.

B. WORK PLANNING AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Issue 7: Workplans are developed without clear strategic guidance and complete information on activities to be devolved to the section

Prior to 2022, headquarters units were required to submit an annual work plan (AWP) which included a risk register, detailed activities, budget staffing plans and a cover note. IAS reviewed the Comms Section's submissions for 2020 and 2021 and found them to be well formulated with a clear description of risk issues and intended mitigation measures.

The 2022–23 Headquarters Work Plan Step-By-Step Technical Guidance document issued in October 2021 revised the above as part of a process to "*strengthen strategic planning and results management within UN Women to facilitate the effective implementation of UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022–2025*".

Units were required to submit a Biennial Workplan for 2022–23 plus a brief cover memo to the relevant Deputy Executive Director by 1 December 2021. The development of the Biennial Workplan was to be collaborative within the unit and should include a brief summary of key unit-level risks. The Biennial Workplan was to be included in, and edited, if necessary, in a new four-year Strategic Note 2022–25 to be submitted by June 2022.

The Comms Section is sub-divided into eight 'portfolios' according to function, such as Social Media, Multimedia and Digital, etc. Each portfolio is headed by a P2/3 portfolio manager funded from IB or core budgets, with between one and four consultants reporting to each portfolio manager. At the time of writing, the Comms Section's Biennial Workplan 2022–23 was still under submission; however, IAS found that development of the workplans had been an inclusive process (within the section).

While some key future activities requiring communications input can be predicted, because the Comms Section is not automatically included at the planning and development stage of new initiatives and programmes, workplans often have to be developed without clear guidance on the responsibilities and accountabilities to be

assigned to the Comms Section. For example, at the time of writing, the Comms Section had no clear idea what level of support it needs to provide to the Generation Equality Forum, which is expected to be a resource-intensive initiative.

In conjunction with Recommendation 2, the Comms Section would also benefit from having a separate strategy for its own activities, differentiated from the communications policy and strategy for the whole organization, in order to develop more specific and measurable workplans.

Recommendation 7 (Medium):

Following implementation of Recommendation 2, the Chief of the Comms Section to:

(a) Update the Comms Section's Biennial Workplan for 2022–2023, to the extent possible reflecting expected contributions to key ongoing initiatives and campaigns planned by other divisions.

(b) Provide guidance on how to involve communication teams in the design of programmes and initiatives.

(c) Set minimum expected standards to be respected when campaigns are designed, including budgeting sufficient resources for communications support costs.

Issue 8: Workplans are built around estimated budgets; therefore, the full cost of strategic objective achievement is not subject to senior management review, nor is the total cost expended by UN Women on communications activities available or disaggregated for information or review

Table 2 in the Background Section shows the Comms Section's budgets for the past three years. IAS understands that, once again, for 2022 (and indicative for 2023) the Comms Section has been advised there will be a real terms reduction in its IB and core funding. IAS was informed that the current level of funding does not enable the section to fulfil its core functions. For example, the Comms Section cannot subscribe to a news monitoring service which is a key function within media relations. The availability of

resources is also likely to have been a driver of some of the issues raised in this report (i.e. the reliance on SSA contracts, discussed in Issue 13).

The Comms Section's 2021 budget equates to just over one half of one per cent of the total UN Women 2021 budget. Although a crude indicator that does not take into account the costs of other communications activities across UN Women, this may be below average for the international organizations sampled, where the (unverified) responses averaged around 1 per cent. The results of the organizational survey concerning staff numbers were somewhat inconclusive: although staff numbers for the largest organizations were some six times greater than that of UN Women, this was commensurate with their total size and funding; and while communication functions for some respondent organizations were only half the size of the UN Women unit, without details on relevant organization mandates and devolved practices it is not possible to draw meaningful conclusions.

IAS was informed that the Comms Section has to set its Annual Work Plans according to its expected budget. Although a pragmatic approach to an organization-wide planning and budget-setting problem, a budget-driven approach to work planning means that a full inventory of all communications objectives required by UN Women and how much this would cost has not yet been undertaken. IAS notes that the Entity is in the process of reviewing its planning and budgeting processes.

This situation is compounded by the fact that over 80 per cent of the Comms Section's expenditure is on staff costs; and that in 2021 some basic functions were funded through the Gates Foundation to support Generation Equality Forum activity, masking funding deficiencies for some core functions.

At the same time, IAS also found that communications budget expenditure has been heavily decentralized into other offices' workplans and staff complements. According to UN Women's Trial Balance for 2019, communications costs amounted to US$ 11.7 million in 2019 and US$ 14.5 million in 2020, while similar non-personnel costs incurred by the Comms Section amounted to US$ 361,000 in 2019 and US$ 322,000 in 2020. This demonstrates how extensively decentralized the communications function and budgets have become. While these costs exclude personnel costs, they include communication costs incurred by UN Women's programme partners. Using the HR Personnel Dashboard IAS was able to identify more than 180 personnel outside the Comms Section with titles

that included 'communications'. Most of these personnel were on SSA or service contracts, and many are likely to have a part-time communications role; however, eight staff members at P level and several national officers and senior consultants were also identified.

While it is tempting to assign responsibility for workloads and outputs to budget constraints, UN Women does overall manage a large sum of money. Rather than a lack of money, a key issue is how the Entity sets its priorities and chooses to allocate its limited resources.

Recommendation 8 (Medium):

In conjunction with Recommendation 2, the Chief, Comms Section to undertake a high-level review of key communications costs throughout the organization (particularly personnel costs) and propose how to better:

(a) integrate some of these costs to achieve maximum efficiency and effectiveness; and

(b) inform the organization of its full communications costs.

Issue 9: Performance measurement focuses on output indicators with little or no qualitative outcome-level reporting

Issue 2 noted that one consequence of the lack of an overarching communications strategy is diluted accountability and the inability to effectively measure and monitor corporate communications performance. A key requirement of the effective measurement of corporate communication performance is the use of outcome indicators that focus on change and impact rather than activity levels.

A review of communications performance reporting from the Comms Section showed that the indicators used are almost always quantitative and output-level derived, and that this is repeated in the key performance indicators outlined in past planning documents. For example, the 2020 Snapshot of Advocacy Results includes indicators such as the number of news articles, media contact occasions, the number of social

media followers, the number of posts, volume of website traffic and the number of subscribers to various forums. This may account for the perception from some stakeholders interviewed that the Comms Section was concerned with 'transmission rather than communication'.

Similarly, as a very recent example, 'quick' observations on 'the impact' of communications activities on the commemoration of the 16 Days event (issued in December 2021) reported the number of media articles published, the number of relevant posts on social media, visitors to websites and viewings on other media – all quantitative indicators to measure an output.

The reported quantitative output-focused data is very useful and a good measure of performance, but it is only one aspect of performance. It does show the efforts made by the Comms Section and other contributing actors and does support the view that the Comms Section is achieving results with its limited resources, but it does not evidence the quality and effect of the communications work undertaken. It is arguable that in the initial developmental stages of an organization, outcome-focused quantitative data is more useful and will reflect UN Women transition to a more mature governance environment.

However, moving towards more meaningful impact measurement is neither easy nor simple. The results from the survey of other international organizations found that the search for more qualitative outcome or change indicators, consequently with less focus on volume data, was a common risk issue and problem for headquarters communication functions. One potential reason for this is that programmes and initiatives may not always be designed with a view to generating easily reported qualitative outcome-level performance indicators. As stakeholders commented, it is not just about better communications but better results and impact stories to communicate. Issues relating to enhancing results-focused reporting have been discussed in the thematic audit of compliance with donor requirements, where the audit raised several recommendations to improve the quality of reports. Field audits also often identify the need to enhance results-focused reporting to demonstrate the achievement of objectives agreed with donors.

A move towards more outcome and impact-focused performance measurement will need acceptance (both within the Comms Section and UN Women as a whole, as well as its stakeholders) that quality and impact may be associated with a decrease in pure quantitative data, as communications become more targeted. It will also require a strong understanding of the relevant 'levers of change' and effective data/messages collection and monitoring processes.

Recommendation 9 (Medium):

As part of implementation of Recommendations 2 and 3 on policy and strategy, the Chief, Comms Section to develop a costed plan to increase outcome and impact-related performance measurement indicators to measure the effectiveness of the communications and advocacy strategy, which should be embedded into each communications campaign with clear linkages. In addition, consideration should be given on how the design of outcome performance measures is built into the design stage of projects and initiatives (see Recommendation 7). Clearer guidance is also needed in the Project Cycle Policy on what would be considered impact indicators.

Issue 10: Lack of policy guidance and training available to other offices on communications activities

Knowledge management is recognized as central to the achievement of UN Women's strategic goals. Knowledge management refers to "*a set of practices and processes that enable an organisation to generate, systematize and share cutting-edge knowledge internally and externally*". [6] Knowledge products are the vehicles used to share knowledge and can be in the form of policies, publications, guidance notes, tools, etc.

As noted elsewhere in this report, field office staff require clear and relevant policies, guidance and training on all communications matters (social media management, media relations, videography etc.) to be able to fulfil their roles effectively. While appreciative of the assistance already provided, field office staff consistently expressed the need for further assistance, especially as a risk mitigation measure for the lack of resources and

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[6] KM intranet site, PPID.

high staff turnover in field communications positions. In addition, staff highlighted the need for policies and guidance that were better suited to the field office context, rather than the headquarters environment. This issue is partially due to the absence of an overarching policy framework on communications and advocacy, as well as no clearly defined Comms Section mandate for policy implementation, support and oversight.

From discussions with Comms Section staff, it is clear that the section is conscious of its mandate to provide global guidance and training on specialist communications functions (noting that these may need to be tailored to differentiate between headquarters and field environments) and this will again be stated as an objective in the Comms Section's 2022–23 Biennial Work Plan.

The Comms Section staff interviewed were aware of this unmet demand, and staff have worked to alleviate it. However, they have been hampered by headquarters workloads, the high turnover of field staff and recently by COVID-19 restrictions. The level of support that can be provided is also heavily dependent upon the resources available and the Comms Section's support and coordination role being clearly recognized as a core function. These considerations strengthen the case for the development of stronger virtual networks as recommended in Issue 4.

IAS has not seen a specific Comms Section plan detailing what and how such guidance will be developed for field office communications functions or by whom and to what timetable. A comprehensive plan based on a review of stakeholder needs would allow the section to better meet its obligations against this objective.

The importance of knowledge products is well recognized within UN Women with the development of a Knowledge Management Strategy; and in May 2020 a comprehensive Guidance Note on Developing Knowledge Products was issued by PPID. Although at an early stage, discussions have started within the Comms Section and with PPID on the development of a policy on publications for organization-wide dissemination through the knowledge product guidance note process. In addition, and also evidencing gaps in the policy and guidance available, a draft UN Women Public Information and Communications Procedures manual has been developed by the Generation Equality Forum Communications Adviser. IAS understands that there is no specific post within the Comms Section dedicated to communications policy, procedures and guidance (PPG), with individual portfolio managers undertaking such functions for their subject areas dependent on other workloads.

Recommendation 10 (Medium):

The Chief, Comms Section to:

(a) Undertake a gap analysis of communications PPG which supports the Comms Section's clarified mandate, and related change management such as training, monitoring of PPG effectiveness and the "helpdesk".

(b) Develop a comprehensive communications strategy and plan to meet headquarters and field office demand. Progress against this plan should regularly be reported to the Director, SPD.

C. RISK MANAGEMENT

Issue 11: High-risk communication issues identified by the Comms Section could be better reported and managed

Prior to 2022, the UN Women planning process required the Comms Section to identify and detail planned mitigation measures for significant risk issues in its Annual Work Plan submissions, in addition to updating the organizational risk register with high risks and planned mitigation measures.

IAS found that prior years' risk registers (prepared annually for mandated attachment to Annual Work Plans) were well-developed with logical mitigation measures; although work and staff pressures meant that identification and development of the issues and management measures was restricted to input from a just a few staff members. However, IAS found no references to continuous updates or actions taken directly in response to the risks identified. There was no evidence of a continuous risk management process outside of the required annual planning exercise.

UN Women is in the process of introducing a new streamlined work planning and risk management process. The 2022–2023 Headquarters Work Plan Step-by-Step Technical Guidance requested that units validate and, if necessary, revise and update the risks related to their mandate already noted on the Risk Management OneApp system. The risks contained in this register are required to be "*unit-level risks that need to have a visibility at a Divisional/Independent office level*". In addition, units were asked to keep a record of the internal risk validation process and to include a brief summary of key risks in their 2022–2023 Biennial Work Plan. A new corporate risk register is to be introduced early in 2022.

IAS found that the development of the risks elaborated upon in the 2022–23 Biennial Work Plan were, in general, an inclusive process involving all portfolio managers within the Comms Section, and that the requirements of the planning process had been complied with.

IAS reviewed the risks identified in the Biennial Work Plan and the planned mitigation measures. A survey was issued to other UN organizations to obtain key communications

risk issues relevant to their functions to compare these to the risks identified by the UN Women Comms Section. IAS also compiled risk issues identified through audit interviews with staff in different roles and offices within UN Women. A full listing of these risks, and those identified by a separate survey of all headquarters Comms Section staff, was shared with the section.

As the likelihood and potential impact of a risk issue can differ between organizations it is normal for there to be differences; however, there was a great deal of commonality in the risk issues identified in the other organizations, by the Comms Section in its planning documents and by staff within UN Women through audit interviews. Many of the key risk issues, where IAS considered that additional mitigating action is required, have been incorporated into this report as issues with recommended mitigating actions.

Key strategic risks identified were the absence of clear organizational strategic direction for communications activities; the lack of a clear mandate for the Comms Section delineating both its and other offices communications responsibilities; an immature communications policy framework; lack of clear guidance from senior management on prioritization criteria; brand visibility and clarity; fragmented functions and lack of coordination across units; and weak integration between headquarters and field offices, particularly the synchronization of messaging and a headquarters-centric approach to messaging.

Common operational risks included under-resourcing, particularly with regard to staffing; a lack of coherent messaging; an over-reliance on output-based quantitative performance indicators; and a lack of professional standards, guidance and training.

While the above strategic risk issues were also rated highly by Comms Section personnel in a separate survey, other issues rated as very high by personnel included a perceived misalignment of posts' terms of references with actual responsibilities; weak communications capacity in the field; an understaffed unit with heavy reliance on long-term SSA contracts (due to a misalignment between contractor and staff terms of employment), which also endangers business continuity (because institutional memory and skillsets were not embedded full time in the section); reliance on full-time consultants; and a mismatch of financial resources with expected outputs.

As the above audit information demonstrates, the current risk management process does not adequately allow for meaningful risk and mitigating actions monitoring and reporting. Almost none of the above risks are specifically reported upwards in the organization or their management monitored.

In addition, where operational risks relate to resourcing decisions, the costs of mitigating actions which include reduced outputs and less effective results need to be fully reported on to comprehensively inform strategic decision-making and align results with corporate expectations and accountabilities.

Recommendation 11 (Medium):

To follow implementation of Recommendations 2 and 3 the Chief, Comms Section to introduce a more comprehensive risk management mechanism so that key identified risks to the Communications Policy and Strategy, and Comms Section objectives are continually monitored and acted upon, with medium-rated risks managed and reported upwards to the Director, SPD for information and action, and high-rated risks and mitigating actions added to and updated regularly in the corporate risk register and escalated to the Business Review Committee if outside the Comms Section's control and require senior management decision.

Issue 12: Delays to implementation of an overarching mature and tested organization-wide crisis communication plan and lack of communications involvement in field business continuity planning

Immediate, effective and clear communications are an essential part of any business continuity planning and humanitarian and operational crisis response planning. This requirement became very clear to all organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic and, given the often difficult country situations that UN organizations by default operate in,

is central to UN Women planning. IAS would usually expect to find the Comms Section playing a central role in this process, with field office communications functions also centrally involved in Regional and Country Office-level business continuity planning.

IAS understands that UN Women has separate policies and procedures to guide responses to either humanitarian crises, reputational or other types of crises, and business continuity planning, all of which are under the direction of different policy holders. In addition, the Peace, Security and Humanitarian Section is leading on the development of 'Standard Operating Procedures for Crisis Response' to coordinate field office programme responses to humanitarian crises. The communications in crisis policy has been drafted by the Comms Section and approved. However, work on integrating these different policies into an overarching organizational crisis communications policy is still under way, and there is a risk that not all interested parties have been consulted in this process. In addition, during interviews with field office staff, IAS observed that field office communications functions were not closely involved in business continuity planning or crisis communication planning. This topic requires further review by UN Women to ensure that communications functions are closely involved in the development and introduction of regularly reviewed and updated crisis management plans at headquarters and in the field.

Recommendation 12 (Medium):

The Comms Section to liaise with key contributors to crisis management policies and procedures and ensure that communications functions in all offices, including coordination between the sections at headquarters, are fully involved in the development and regular updating of crisis communication plans. The overarching UN Women Crisis Communication Policy needs to be rolled out and understood by all with immediate effect.

D. OPERATIONS

Issue 13: SSA personnel engaged to fill core roles in contravention of the UN Women SSA contract policy

As mentioned in the Background section, the Comms Section's personnel – senior staff (P5 and D1), finance and admin assistants (GS level), and the heads of the eight 'portfolio' functional sub-units (i.e. Media Relations) (P2/P3 level) – are either fixed-term or temporary staff appointments. All 13 of these posts are funded by IB or core funds. At the time of the audit, three of these staff were on secondment elsewhere in the UN system, with their posts filled by temporary appointments.

At the time of the audit, the Comms Section had 17 consultants engaged on Special Service Agreement (SSA) contracts, of whom 9 were on full-time contracts and the remainder employed on a retainer basis as needed. The consultants all (except for one) report to the relevant P2/3 function head. Approximately half of SSA funding is sourced from IB/core funds and half from non-core funds.

Around half of the Comms Section's personnel are therefore employed on consultant contracts. The section's organizational structure and use of SSA consultants has been inherited by the new Chief. The structure is consistent with the Comms Section's primary functions and the use of SSA personnel appears to be driven by funding and post-creation constraints. The Comms Section makes good use of retainer contracts to engage qualified consultant personnel in an efficient manner on specialist activities with time-limited and non-permanent time frames. However, IAS found examples of consultants who had been engaged on an almost full-time basis for four–five years (with the required short gaps to remain within the strict sense of the regulations) in roles that can be classified as core functions (such as media relations, web editing or social media functions).

SSA contracts are not intended to cover full-time or core roles. Continuing to use SSA contracts year after year in full-time roles stretches compliance credulity. It is hard to

argue that a role is not a 'core' function when it is constantly required and is always described in submissions as 'essential' to the achievement of section objectives. In addition, reliance on consultants and short-term contracts creates separate risks as institutional memory and expertise can be lost at short notice. It is also not fair or equitable to those who work under such contracts.

The UN Women SSA policy is clear: SSA contracts should be used in circumstances where "*the assignment is results-oriented and can be completed outside the office or within the office on intermittent or _part-time_ basis*" (article 5.1(b)). Similarly, the policy also states that SSA contracts "*cannot be used simply as a cost-saving measure, to fill regular and continuing functions in an office*" (article 5.2). IAS was informed that the principle reason for using SSA contracts is because of limited resources, i.e. as a cost-saving measure.

This issue is not unique to the headquarters Comms Section and has been noted by IAS in other sections and offices and represents a corporate problem. IAS raised this issue in its audit of individual consultants.[7] The UN Women SSA policy and related new contract modalities are scheduled to be revised in 2022.

Recommendation 13 (Medium):

The Chief, Comms Section to:

(a) Review the use of SSA contracts in the section to determine the suitability of the current policy and its compliance with wider ethical practices.

(b) Propose a different HR approach to the Comms Section's staffing structure, which will depend on corporate priorities, communications strategy and sufficient funding.

Issue 14: Chief of Comms Section post effectively vacant for over two years, leading to high levels of stress for staff and lack of strategic leadership

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[7] https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/UN-Women-audit-report-2021-005-Individual-consultant-management-in-UN-Women-en.pdf

A survey of headquarters communications functions in other international organizations found that the majority of units were headed by a manager at D1 or equivalent level, and that this role either had a direct reporting line or easy access to the head of the organization. In this regard UN Women was broadly equivalent, although the Chief, Comms Section has a formal reporting line to a post two levels below the head of the organization.

The Comms Section operated for considerable periods of time (over two years) without a Chief in post and for other long periods without the P5 Deputy Chief. Staff had to back-fill these posts in an acting capacity, or other personnel were recruited on temporary appointment contracts. This situation existed throughout 2020 and most of 2021. A new Chief was appointed in late 2021, and a temporary appointment was made to the P5 Deputy Chief post (November 2021). IAS has previously highlighted and reported[8] on the risks in leaving key strategic posts vacant in other UN Women functions and made a recommendation in this regard to the Business Review Committee to "*periodically review and consider risks of prolonged senior vacancies and temporary replacements.*"

Another notable issue, also partly explaining the above, is that key staff have been allowed to leave the Comms Section on secondments within the UN system without prior arrangements having been made to ensure satisfactory, immediate cover.

The gap in strategic leadership greatly increased the pressure on existing staff in covering two vacant posts. It has no doubt been a significant contributing factor in the Comms Section not developing its strategic plan after the expiry of its previous plan; not being sufficiently engaged in planning and coordinating communications around major campaigns; and therefore not having the capacity to fully meet its mandate and objectives. It was also noted that complex corporate responsibilities were being undertaken by staff at relatively junior P2/3 grades, and that the Comms Section had no staff at the P4 level.

Not being able to recruit, appoint or staff the Comms Section at a management level has been raised as a significant risk to the achievement of the section's core objectives by stakeholders interviewed; and despite the hard work put in by the section's

personnel and others to provide cover, it is one of the drivers behind several of the issues raised in this report. Action is needed by the Chief of Section and senior management to plan and better manage the effective and efficient future staffing of the key posts in the section, especially for seconded positions.

Recommendation 14 (Medium):

As a part of Recommendation 2 on functional staffing analysis, the Chief, Comms Section and the Director, SPD to plan the effective and efficient future staffing of the key posts in the section.

Issue 15: Lack of an organization-wide secure digital asset storage and management system

An important risk raised by staff in both the headquarters Comms Section and communications staff in the field is the potential loss of, or damage to, digital media assets such as photographs, videos and audit recordings, and the availability of an archived repository for quick reference. At headquarters, digital assets are stored by the relevant staff members on their drives (cloud, internal or external). Therefore, they are not easily referenced or retrieved by other staff and are dependent upon the specific staff member in question. A similar issue was also raised by one of the Regional Offices interviewed.

IAS was informed that a Digital Asset Management System was introduced some years ago but fell into disuse because of its complexity and the amount of supervisory time needed to manage it. Problems were experienced with users uploading materials of inadequate quality or for which UN Women did not own the rights.

IAS understands that resources for a Digital Asset Management System have not been available due to budget constraints. As a trial/interim solution, in 2021 the Photo and Video teams at headquarters proposed piggybacking on an existing contract with the external Digital Asset Management System provider used by the UN Secretariat and

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UNICEF, with an estimated annual fee of US$ 20,000, and to initially trial the system at headquarters before rolling it out under supervision to the field after training had been provided. Additional staff resources would also be required to manage the system for long-term asset security and to provide the relevant training.

Given the continually increasing importance of digital media, safeguarding these assets and enabling a speedy search and retrieval process could significantly enhance communications efficiency within UN Women.

Recommendation 15 (Medium):

As a priority, the Chief, Comms Section and Director, SPD to seek funding for the development and implementation of a UN Women Digital Asset Management System.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

Issue	Recommendation	Responsible unit	Priority	Process	Action Plan	Estimated implementation date
Issue 1: UN Women has not fully achieved or sustained its commitment to meet the 'benchmarks for a strategic public information and communications function' outlined by the UN Joint Inspection Unit in 2015	**Recommendation 1:** The Chief, Comms Section to assess UN Women's progress against the nine JIU benchmarks; establish and monitor an action plan; and report on compliance with the benchmarks to the executive management team.	Chief, Comms	Medium	Governance arrangements	Agree with this recommendation. The Communication Section will draft a status report on the compliance with JIU recommendations and provide an updated action plan to implement relevant recommendations within a reasonable timeframe.	June 2022
Issue 2: Lack of an overarching communications governance framework with clearly assigned overall accountability, positioning the Comms Section as a policy custodian; and an uncoordinated approach to communications activities at headquarters	**Recommendation 2:** The Chief, Comms Section, with guidance from the Director SPD, to: (a) Review the current ad hoc and uncoordinated approach to communications activities at headquarters, including separated internal and external communications. (b) Propose to the Executive Leadership Team a communications governance framework and policy that enforces a coherent, integrated and coordinated approach to communications; consolidates fragmented resources; and streamlines accountability, positioning the function as a policy custodian in addition to being a service function. The Executive Leadership Team to provide direction to the Chief, Comms Section on the key expectations to be included in the policy and consider the proposals on streamlining corporate resources allotted to communications activities and repositioning internal communications with external communications.	Chief, Comms Director, SPD	High	Communications strategy	Agree with this recommendation. In consultation with EDO and HR, SPD is developing an action plan to integrate communication resources across the organisation. Following discussions with EDO and HR, SPD will develop a governance framework aimed at consolidating communication resources and streamlining accountability. As part of the work on improving governance and serving as a policy custodian, the Communication Section will propose a Strategic Communications Review Committee or a similar governance structure to bring about transparency, coherence and strategic alignment in various comms and outreach and advocacy activities.	June 2022
Issue 3: Lack of strategic and operational guidance on communications priorities, and the need for an overarching communications strategy	**Recommendation 3:** In conjunction with Recommendation 2, The Chief, Comms Section to: (a) Obtain from the Executive Leadership Team (or propose) clear criteria for the prioritization of communications work and the implications and actions required to move towards strategic communications. (b) Coordinate and develop a new Communications Strategy for 2022–2025 to support the UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025 for senior management review and approval. The new strategy to include both headquarters and field dimensions. (c) Conduct an analysis of the skills and resources needed to achieve the strategy and request the required budget from the Executive Leadership Team.	Chief, Comms	High	Communications strategy	Agree with the recommendation. The Section has started working on a communications strategy that will support the implementation of the strategic plan (2022-2025). The new strategy will cover HQ as well as field offices and will include an assessment of the resources needed.	December 2022
Issue 4: Lack of strategic approach to, and coordination of, communications activities between headquarters and field offices	**Recommendation 4:** The Chief, Comms Section to: (a) Review and analyse communications roles in the field and develop and apply a coherent approach, ensuring that the relationship between the Comms Section and field offices is defined in the new Communications Policy and Strategy, including a plan to strengthen support and guidance to the field, either through direct support to Country Offices or through increased support to Regional Offices to better support Country Offices. Once the Communications Policy and Strategy is approved (b) The Chief, Comms Section, to review the level of field office experience in the Comms Section and consider this in future recruitment criteria, or integrate Comms Section staff with Regional Office communications networks to bring field experience into the section.	Chief, Comms	High	Communications strategy	Agree with this finding. We have started working on building the foundations of a global communications function by integrating the regional offices in the planning of communications, with a view to building a globally matrixed network of communications personnel. A regular meeting with regional communications officers. The Communication section will also take into account field experience in new recruitments.	December 2023
Issue 5: Distinction between communications and advocacy roles and activities is unclear	**Recommendation 5:** The Chief, Comms Section, in consultation with relevant internal stakeholders like PPID and CSD, to make clear the distinction between communication and public and policy advocacy. If there is a decision to separate and move advocacy, this should be reflected in the Comms Strategy and Comms Section name.	Chief, Comms	Medium	Communications strategy	Agree with this recommendation. In the context of the development of the communication strategy, SPD will co-lead a corporate effort to clarify the distinction between policy advocacy and strategic communications and clarify the remit of the Section.	December 2022
Issue 6: Strategy, roles and accountabilities for brand management in UN Women not clearly defined and understood	**Recommendation 6:** As a matter of urgency, the Director SPD to finalize the brand management review process and prioritize the development and implementation of a policy and strategy on brand management that creates a more coherent, coordinated and effective approach. This should be communicated to all staff and appropriately resourced. The policy and strategy should also be included in the Comms Section mandate and responsibilities (in the Comms Policy and Strategy) with the necessary resources and skillset provided.	Director, SPD	High	Communications strategy	Agree with this finding. We have started working on a brand audit with the support of an external consultant. The brand audit will provide a basis for a new brand equity strategy and architecture.	December 2022
Issue 7: Workplans are developed without clear strategic guidance and complete information on activities to be devolved to the section	**Recommendation 7:** Following implementation of Recommendation 2, the Chief of the Comms Section to: (a) Update the Comms Section's Biennial Workplan for 2022–2023, to the extent possible reflecting expected contributions to key ongoing initiatives and campaigns planned by other divisions. (b) Provide guidance on how to involve communication teams in the design of programmes and initiatives.	Chief, Comms	Medium	Workplanning and performance management	Agree with this recommendation. The Section will review its workplan in line with the new strategic plan, management priorities once the new Signature initiatives have been approved.	December 2022

	(c) Set minimum expected standards to be respected when campaigns are designed, including budgeting sufficient resources for communications support costs.				
Issue 8: Workplans are built around estimated budgets; therefore, the full cost of strategic objective achievement is not subject to senior management review, nor is the total cost expended by UN Women on communications activities available or disaggregated for information or review	**Recommendation 8:** In conjunction with Recommendation 2, the Chief, Comms Section to undertake a high-level review of key communications costs throughout the organization (particularly personnel costs) and propose how to better: (a) integrate some of these costs to achieve maximum efficiency and effectiveness; and (b) inform the organization of its full communications costs.	Chief, Comms	Medium	Workplanning and performance management	Agree with this recommendation. The Section will conduct, resources allowing, an analysis of the comms spending in the organisation.	June 2023
Issue 9: Performance measurement focuses on output indicators with little or no qualitative outcome-level reporting	**Recommendation 9:** As part of implementation of Recommendations 2 and 3 on policy and strategy, the Chief, Comms Section to develop a costed plan to increase outcome and impact-related performance measurement indicators to measure the effectiveness of the communications and advocacy strategy, which should be embedded into each communications campaign with clear linkages. In addition, consideration should be given on how the design of outcome performance measures is built into the design stage of projects and initiatives (see Recommendation 7). Clearer guidance is also needed in the Project Cycle Policy on what would be considered impact indicators.	Chief, Comms	Medium	Workplanning and performance management	Partially agree with recommendation. The Section will work with the Change Management Unit and SPRED to develop an impact measurement framework with a focus on outcomes in the context of the development of a new communication strategy. As work on integration of outcome measures into the design stage of projects depends on a clear business process for project design and approval which is currently lacking, the Communications Section is dependent on PSMU finalizing work on the project life cycle.	June 2023
Issue 10: Lack of policy guidance and training available to other offices on communications activities	**Recommendation 10:** The Chief, Comms Section to: (a) Undertake a gap analysis of communications PPG which supports the Comms Section's clarified mandate, and related change management such as training, monitoring of PPG effectiveness and the "helpdesk". (b) Develop a comprehensive communications strategy and plan to meet headquarters and field office demand. Progress against this plan should regularly be reported to the Director, SPD.	Chief, Comms	Medium	Workplanning and performance management	Agree with this recommendation. Following the development of a communication strategy, the Section will review its procedures and policies and develop a plan to provide support to HQ and field offices.	October 2023
Issue 11: High-risk communication issues identified by the Comms Section could be better reported and managed	**Recommendation 11:** To follow implementation of Recommendations 2 and 3 the Chief, Comms Section to introduce a more comprehensive risk management mechanism so that key identified risks to the Communications Policy and Strategy, and Comms Section objectives are continually monitored and acted upon, with medium-rated risks managed and reported upwards to the Director, SPD for information and action, and high-rated risks and mitigating actions added to and updated regularly in the corporate risk register and escalated to the Business Review Committee if outside the Comms Section's control and require senior management decision.	Chief, Comms	Medium	Risk management	Agree with this recommendation. The Section will review its risk management process and develop a regular process of review.	December 2023
Issue 12: Delays to implementation of an overarching mature and tested organization-wide crisis communication plan and lack of communications involvement in field business continuity planning	**Recommendation 12:** The Comms Section to liaise with key contributors to crisis management policies and procedures and ensure that communications functions in all offices, including coordination between the sections at headquarters, are fully involved in the development and regular updating of crisis communication plans. The overarching UN Women Crisis Communication Policy needs to be rolled out and understood by all with immediate effect.	Chief, Comms	Medium	Risk management	Agree with this recommendation. We have developed a crisis communication plan. We will ensure that that the crisis communication work is aligned with similar crisis management workstream, including the one led by the Chief of Humanitarian Action.	December 2022
Issue 13: SSA personnel engaged to fill core roles in contravention of the UN Women SSA contract policy	**Recommendation 13:** The Chief, Comms Section to: (a) Review the use of SSA contracts in the section to determine the suitability of the current policy and its compliance with wider ethical practices. (b) Propose a different HR approach to the Comms Section's staffing structure, which will depend on corporate priorities, communications strategy and sufficient funding.	Chief, Comms	Medium	Operations - HR	Partially Agree. The Section does not have a policy. We will work with HR to ensure that the use of SSAs is fully aligned with HR best practices within the institutional framework.	December 2022
Issue 14: Chief of Comms Section post effectively vacant for over two years, leading to high levels of stress for staff and lack of strategic leadership	**Recommendation 14:** As a part of Recommendation 2 on functional staffing analysis, the Chief, Comms Section and the Director, SPD to plan the effective and efficient future staffing of the key posts in the section.	Chief, Comms Director, SPD	Medium	Operations - HR	Agree with this recommendation. We will develop a staffing plan for the future.	December 2022
Issue 15: Lack of an organization-wide secure digital asset storage and management system	**Recommendation 15:** As a priority, the Chief, Comms Section and Director, SPD to seek funding for the development and implementation of a UN Women Digital Asset Management System.	Chief, Comms Director, SPD	Medium	Operations - ICT	Agree with this recommendation. We will explore the availability of new resources and ways to develop the Digital Asset Management System.	December 2023

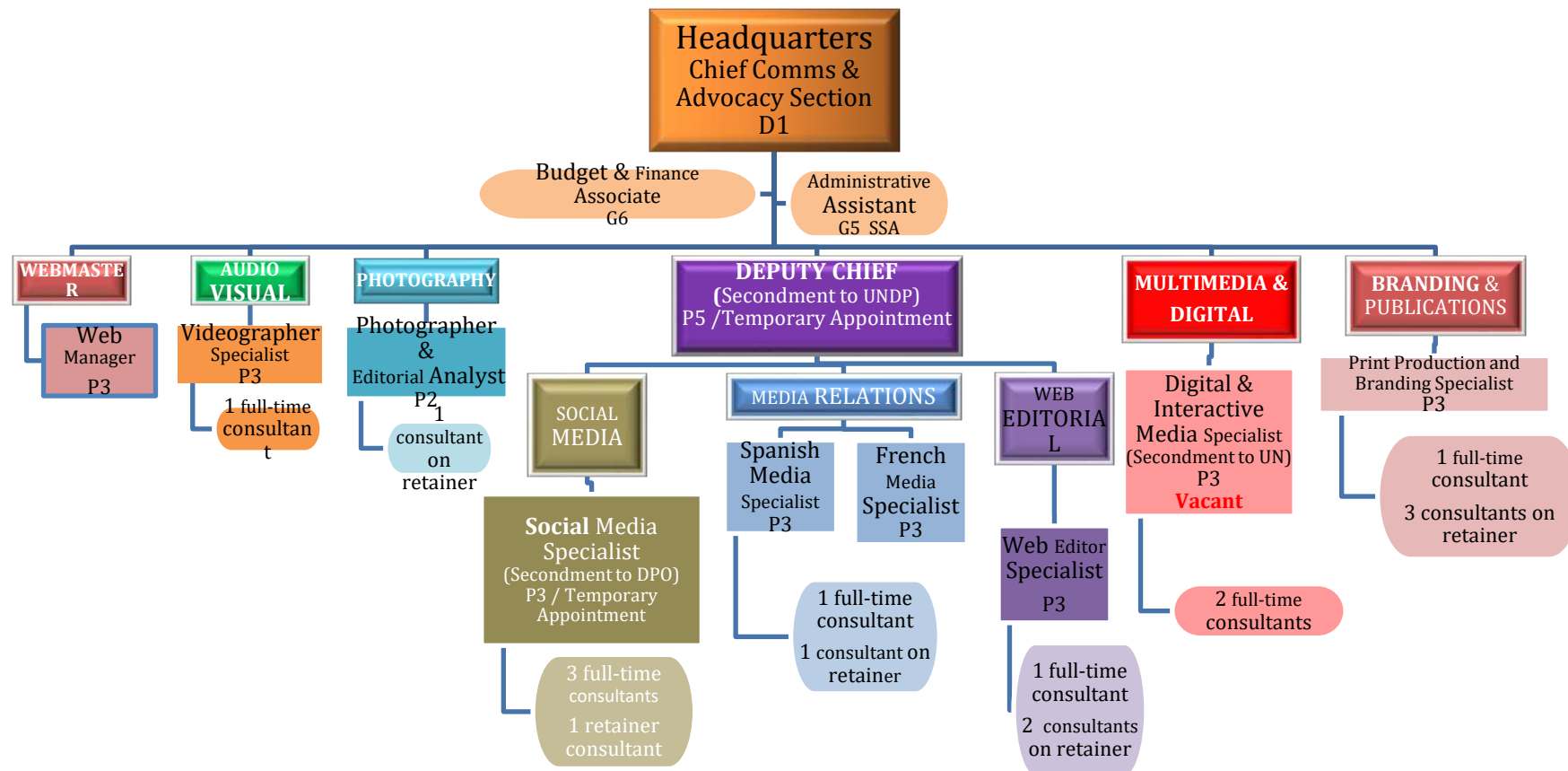# Annex 1: DEFINITIONS OF AUDIT TERMS, RATINGS AND PRIORITIES

A. AUDIT RATINGS

Satisfactory	The assessed governance arrangements, risk management practices and controls were adequately established and functioning well. Issues identified by the audit, if any, are unlikely to affect the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity/area.
Some Improvement Needed	The assessed governance arrangements, risk management practices and controls were generally established and functioning, but need some improvement. Issues identified by the audit do not significantly affect the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity/area.
Major Improvement Needed	The assessed governance arrangements, risk management practices and controls were established and functioning, but need major improvement. Issues identified by the audit could significantly affect the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity/area.
Unsatisfactory	The assessed governance arrangements, risk management practices and controls were either not adequately established or not functioning well. Issues identified by the audit could seriously compromise the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity/area.

B. PRIORITIES OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

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.
Medium (Important)	Action is required to ensure that UN Women is not exposed to 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 management, either during the exit meeting or through a separate memo subsequent to the fieldwork. Therefore, low priority recommendations are not included in this report.

Annex 2 – Organization chart: Headquarters Communications and Advocacy Section (November 2021)[9]

Headquarters Chief Comms & Advocacy Section D1

Budget & Finance Associate G6

Administrative Assistant G5 SSA

WEBMASTER

Web Manager P3

AUDIO VISUAL

Videographer Specialist P3

1 full-time consultant

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photographer & Editorial Analyst P2

1 consultant on retainer

DEPUTY CHIEF (Secondment to UNDP) P5 /Temporary Appointment

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media Specialist (Secondment to DPO) P3 / Temporary Appointment

3 full-time consultants

1 retainer consultant

MEDIA RELATIONS

Spanish Media Specialist P3

French Media Specialist P3

1 full-time consultant

1 consultant on retainer

WEB EDITORIAL

Web Editor Specialist P3

1 full-time consultant

2 consultants on retainer

MULTIMEDIA & DIGITAL

Digital & Interactive Media Specialist (Secondment to UN) P3 **Vacant**

2 full-time consultants

BRANDING & PUBLICATIONS

Print Production and Branding Specialist P3

1 full-time consultant

3 consultants on retainer

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[9] Sourced from the headquarters Comms Section (amended to delete names).