

Multilateral Aid Review: Assessment of The Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Summary		
Organisation: OHCHR	Date:	February 2011
Description of Organisation		
<p>The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) was created by a General Assembly Resolution in 1993. It is the institutional home for human rights in the United Nations system. The OHCHR has a critical role to play encouraging engagement with the UN's human rights mechanisms, and in monitoring progress and failures in relation to UN human rights standards. The High Commissioner is the principal human rights official in the UN.</p>		
<p>OHCHR's mandate, created by the General Assembly, is: "to promote and protect all human rights around the world, to empower individuals to claim their rights and to assist states in upholding them". Within this mandate OHCHR's work includes:-</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support to the Human Rights Council, the General Assembly Third Committee, Treaty Monitoring Bodies and Special Procedures (rapporteurs).• Encouraging the integration of human rights standards across UN systems, policies and programmes such as those on development, humanitarian action, peace and security.• Support to Governments and other partners in translating human rights standards and the recommendations and findings of the Council, the treaty bodies and social procedures into operational programmes. This includes thematic work on key issues such as MDGs, gender, health, education, water and sanitation.• Support to governments in strengthening national human rights protection systems and ensuring that human rights standards are incorporated into national laws, policies and practices in country.		
<p>Its strategic management plan covers five main areas: identifying and targeting gaps in the human rights system; standard-setting work, focused on norms and protection; monitoring work; implementation, where support is provided to Governments through field offices; and human rights education and awareness.</p>		
<p>OHCHR's work at a country level is largely to advise and work alongside bigger UN actors. It does not administer significant programme funds. Much of its work is conducted discreetly.</p>		
<p>OHCHR is a department of the UN Secretariat with its HQ in Geneva (503 staff) and has an office in New York (19 staff). It has 12 regional offices/centres, 10 country/stand alone offices and human rights advisers embedded in many UN country teams and peacekeeping operations. At 31 December 2009, OHCHR had 973 staff (451 of whom are in the field)</p>		

supporting 55 field “presences”, as OHCHR’s 2009 report terms it. A further five field “presences” are planned for the current biennium, 2010/11.

The High Commissioner for Human Rights is appointed directly by the UN Secretary-General. Navanathem Pillay (South African) was appointed for a four year term beginning September 2008.

OHCHR has set total resource requirements for the 2010/11 biennium at \$399.3 million, of which \$141.5 million is funded from the regular budget. Total resource requirements have increased by \$86.6m (22%) over the 2008-2009 budget.

The World Summit in 2005 confirmed human rights as the third pillar of UN activity and requested a doubling of OHCHR’s regular budget over a five year period. Regular budget resources have grown by 78% since 2004/5 though, this accounts for less than 3% of the total UN regular budget. Voluntary contributions have also risen sharply, almost doubling over the same period. OHCHR anticipates that the financial crisis and currency depreciations against the Swiss franc will shrink income in future years. The proportion of unearmarked resources has increased sharply, from 23% in 2004/5 to 55% in 2008/9.

The UK’s total voluntary contribution in 2009 was \$5,145,128, making the UK the 8th largest contributor of voluntary contributions to OHCHR. Our overall voluntary contributions to OHCHR have reduced in recent years in real terms (principally through cuts to FCO programme expenditure) and due to depreciation of sterling against the Swiss franc.

100% of earmarked contributions for work in developing countries are classed as ODA.

Contribution to UK Development Objectives	Score (1-4)
<p>1a. Critical Role in Meeting International Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + OHCHR plays a critical role in the context of peace and security and is the only multilateral organisation that focuses exclusively on the promotion and protection of human rights. – OHCHR has a less critical role in development and in poverty reduction but has been active in advocating the integration of human rights issues into MDG programmes. = OHCHR’s criticality is evident in peacebuilding and peacebuilding contexts and in countries recovering from conflict, in addition to its supportive role in development contexts. 	<p>Satisfactory (3)</p>
<p>1b. Critical Role in Meeting UK Aid Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + OHCHR plays a critical role in delivering DFID and broader HMG objectives on strengthened governance and security. Human rights monitors are currently part of 16 UN peace missions. 	<p>Satisfactory (3)</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + MAR country visits have found, and wider donor reports show, that OHCHR has made effective contributions in these areas. - The nature of OHCHR's mandate means that it plays only a supportive role in wider poverty reduction objectives. = Evidence suggests that OHCHR has been critical in fragile states, making important contributions to human rights monitoring and wider peacekeeping and peacebuilding objectives. It plays a supportive, but not critical, role in other DFID priorities. 	
<p>2. Attention to Cross-Cutting Issues:</p> <p>2a. Fragile Contexts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Policy guidelines set out OHCHR's role in fragile states. These are implemented consistently and have led to demonstrated successes. + An established and highly regarded rapid response capability deals with emergencies and has led recent UN investigations into violence. = Engagement in fragile states is a demonstrated strength for OHCHR. <p>2b. Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Gender has a good profile in annual reports and activities reports, including in terms of how OHCHR works with the UN's human rights machinery and other agencies to promote gender issues. - A recent evaluation report on the Office's performance in gender suggests gaps and inconsistencies in terms of how OHCHR is applying gender policies in its programmes. = Gender policies are in place but implementation needs to be strengthened. <p>Climate Change</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Strong (4)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Weak (2)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Not scored</p>
<p>3. Focus on Poor Countries</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Not scored</p>
<p>4. Contribution to Results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + The mandate sets challenging objectives. There is good evidence of OHCHR contributions to human rights work in fragile states and states recovering from conflict. + The organisation is active in assisting Governments to draft legislation in a way that promotes human rights. + OHCHR is highly regarded by FCO for contribution to country-level UN work and human rights processes. - MAR country missions found that OHCHR needs to do more to adequately demonstrate results at country level. MAR country missions found little evidence of a strong 	<p style="text-align: center;">Weak (2)</p>

<p>results culture.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Results above the level of activities are sometimes difficult to establish. = The political sensitivity of OHCHR's work means that the organisation has a challenging mandate. It cannot always make its work public, which constrains the evidence base available for analysis. Nevertheless, OHCHR has acknowledged that it needs to do more on results. It is taking steps to improve RBM approaches. Progress at HQ level in strengthening results reporting needs to be more widely translated to country programmes. 	
Organisational Strengths	Score (1-4)
<p>5. Strategic and Performance Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + OHCHR has a clear mandate. Each section and unit produces an annual workplan based on the strategic management plan. + HR policies are satisfactory. Leadership at senior levels is effective. - There is a weak results culture, resulting in a lack of standard methodology and lack of in-house capacity for lesson learning. This has slowed the uptake of RBM approaches. - An Office of Internal Oversight Services report has said that OHCHR could be more strategic in planning entry and exit strategies for field operations. - MAR country missions found that OHCHR is not consistently strategic in its planning, with consequences for results tracking. = Strategic and Performance Management, notably on management for results, remains weak. 	Weak (2)
<p>6. Financial Resources Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + An active Financial Monitoring Committee, regular senior management review of costs, and clear financial thresholds are in place and trigger examinations by Directors. - There is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that OHCHR has processes in place that manage poorly performing projects and programmes. = Project evaluation and control needs to improve. 	Weak (2)
<p>7. Cost and Value Consciousness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + There is a dedicated mechanism to ensure that the "Best Value for Money" principles are applied to funds channelled to external parties, as well as for financial and procurement functions. + There is some evidence that the Senior Board (PBRB) rejects projects that do not consider VFM. - OHCHR is tied by UNDP and Secretariat financial 	Weak (2)

<p>processes over which it has little control.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is insufficient evidence that UNDP is driving forward cost control across its programme and administration. - As part of the Secretariat, OHCHR does not have flexibility on the Secretariat's policy on admin costs. This affects OHCHR cost outcomes. = OHCHR's scope for cost controls is limited. 	
<p>8. Partnership Behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + OHCHR has a strong record of capacity-building of National Human Rights institutions and civil society, particularly dealing with vulnerable groups. + Despite being a junior partner, OHCHR has developed new mechanisms to integrate human rights into UN work. + There is evidence of strong performance in building up civil society and National Human Rights Institutions, including in politically sensitive contexts. - OHCHR can be sidelined in politically volatile situations. - OHCHR needs to be more strategic and systematic in order to improve effectiveness. It also needs to be more strategic in partnerships and improve follow-up. = OHCHR has a good record working in partnership with others, including with civil society groups and those directly affected by conflict and violence. Its record on beneficiary voice is good. 	<p>Satisfactory (3)</p>
<p>9. Transparency and Accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + There are good levels of transparency in terms of processes for translating the mandate into a framework of activities which is negotiated at inter-Governmental level. + A strategic management plan is published annually along with an annual report outlining much of its programmes and projects. + OHCHR is obliged to present updates on its human rights activities to the General Assembly and to the Human Rights Council. + Regular donor consultations allow good access to senior management, who are keen to encourage dialogue and engagement. - There are concerns that OHCHR could be more transparent in providing information and detail on project performance. = Formal processes are in place that allow for a good degree of transparency at the inter-Governmental level in OHCHR activities. Requirements for OHCHR to report to the GA and to the HRC mean that there is good oversight of its work at a strategic level. Donor engagement is good. At the level of operations, the very nature of OHCHR's work, and the extremely political context in which it operates, means that the constraints are very considerable in terms 	<p>Satisfactory (3)</p>

of the detail OHCHR is able to enter into.	
Likelihood of Positive Change	Score (1-4)
<p>10. Likelihood of Positive Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + OHCHR has been very responsive to partners' calls for improved delivery, results monitoring and performance management. + Annual reports are now published (a UK initiative). This is increasing OHCHR's emphasis on delivery and producing a more sustained attention to RBM approaches, despite the very political nature of its work. This is in turn leading to more accountable management. - The nature of OHCHR's work means that there are limits to progressing transparency and accountability. The views of some member states mean that political blockages will limit the scope for reform. = Despite governance constraints, a number of recent reforms in OHCHR have already led to improvements in delivery and strategic management. Prospects for further improvements in delivery and strategic performance are good, although political constraints in the UN system will limit the scope and pace of reforms. 	<p>Likely (3)</p>