

MOPAN

2017-18 ASSESSMENTS

Organisational Performance Brief

**Office of the United Nations
High Commissioner for Human
Rights (OHCHR)**

Published April 2019

OHCHR's performance at a glance

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has demonstrated a strong commitment to its normative mandate and a proven ability to respond and adapt to emerging political, technological and socio-economic trends and policy developments. It has a clear and realistic understanding of the needs and growing demands it faces. However, it is a challenge for OHCHR to keep up with growing demand and an expanding mandate, given its constrained ability to allocate resources in line with its organisational priorities and other goals. This is likely to undermine OHCHR's delivery capability.

OHCHR has strengthened its strategic leadership and management and created an inclusive corporate identity. The MOPAN assessment has covered two successive, coherent OHCHR Management Plans (OMP, 2014-17 and 2018-21), both of which are guided by the overarching Strategic Frameworks adopted by the UN General Assembly. The OMPs are based on robust context analysis, broad-based consultations, evaluations, audits and other lessons learned. They provide a clear and coherent vision and roadmap for the organisation, and demonstrate how the Office positions itself vis-à-vis other stakeholders within the UN system and beyond. They also lay out the results to which the Office intends to contribute; and identify improvements needed to bolster its effectiveness. OHCHR's strategy is firmly anchored in its mandate and informed by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sustaining Peace Agenda, and the UN Secretary-General's Reform Initiative.

OHCHR applies a strongly developed, outward-looking partnership focus in all its work streams. The OMP 2018-21 is firmly rooted in partnerships as a way to support mainstreaming of human rights. OHCHR's strategic focus on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is seen as critical in that regard, in view of the relevance of human rights and inclusivity for the SDGs. To date, OHCHR has been working in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders both as an objective in itself and as a means to an end. The notion of working in partnership is ingrained in the Office's and staff's culture. Many of the existing partnerships have therefore grown organically and pragmatically. For OHCHR, partnerships and capacity building are effective ways to build a stronger constituency to protect and promote human rights. However, not all of OHCHR's partnerships are equally strategic, and new ones will become necessary in view of its emerging challenges. As part of the development of the OMP 2018-21, the Office created an action plan on partnerships, and is planning to develop and implement a corporate partnerships strategy. This new framework is expected to allow the Office to take greater advantage of potential synergies with not only existing but also new partners across the organisation.

OHCHR KEY FACTS

MISSION AND MANDATE: OHCHR was created in 1993 by UN General Assembly resolution 48/141. It is mandated to promote and protect the enjoyment and full realization, by all people, of all rights established in the UN Charter and in international human rights laws and treaties.

GOVERNANCE: As part of the UN Secretariat, OHCHR is directly accountable to the Secretary-General and the General Assembly. The High Commissioner is appointed by the UN General Assembly.

STRUCTURE: OHCHR is headquartered in Geneva, and has a small office in New York, 11 regional offices, 15 country offices, 12 human rights components of peace missions and 27 human rights advisors in UN country teams. Of its 1 300 staff, 53% are based in Geneva, 4% in New York, and the remaining 43% in the field.

FINANCE: OHCHR's expenditure in 2017 was USD 246 million. About 45% of its overall funding is covered by the UN regular budget (assessed contributions). The remaining 55% is sourced from voluntary contributions. As new responsibilities were assigned to OHCHR without commensurate additional resources, about 10% of OHCHR's mandated activities is covered by voluntary contributions.

OHCHR's commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women is widely acknowledged and highly regarded. Over 60% of partners surveyed rated OHCHR's efforts to promote gender equality in its work as excellent or very good. In this regard, the Office successfully contributed to advocacy efforts to include Goal 5 in the 2030 Agenda and has identified gender equality as a main area of its future work across all its strategic pillars. OHCHR has well-established policy and strategic frameworks to this end. Its OMP sets clear targets to ensure that "a gender perspective is effectively integrated in all OHCHR policies, programmes and processes". Strong leadership drives the implementation of these ambitions. OHCHR has developed and improved guidance, tools and checklists for integrating and promoting gender equality in all areas of its work, including its evaluations. These illustrate some of OHCHR's successes: its Regional Gender Advisor Structure in particular is generally relevant and effective.

OHCHR consistently applies a results-based approach. Its management culture and systems provide strong support for this. The organisation's RBM system is designed to link planning, budgeting, and monitoring to the overarching outcomes defined in OHCHR's four-year OMP. In other words, the OMP is a detailed, coherent and results-based roadmap to guide lower-level planning and monitoring. OHCHR's monitoring systems are of high quality. They are effectively used to inform management decisions. OHCHR's reporting structures are coherent and time-bound. They include monthly field-level monitoring reports, biannual mid-year reports, end-of-year progress reports and end-of-cycle reports. They report on achieved global targets, planned vs. achieved results, implementation status, activities performed, mid-year expenditure and other financial data. At headquarters level, various staff ensure data quality. This common framework for planning and reporting its activities has reinforced the coherence among mandated responsibilities, priorities and actions at all levels. It has also enabled the Office to achieve and demonstrate results and to mobilise scarce human and financial resources as efficiently as possible.

Despite being limited, available evaluations provide a positive picture of the Office's relevance and unique role in protecting and promoting human rights. The evaluations point to the importance of its field presences in supporting member states in fulfilling their commitments to make progress on and report on progress against

international human rights standards and mechanisms. For instance, OHCHR's Regional Office for Central Asia was found to have delivered effective and timely support for the creation of national human rights structures in the countries of residence. The evaluations also note a modest increase in ratification of human rights treaties by member states. Notably, OHCHR's strategies to strengthen gender equality were evaluated positively.

As it is looking to the future, however, OHCHR's organisational architecture is sub-optimal and likely to undermine its delivery capability. The other areas that merit attention in particular are its risk management, financing partnerships, and human resources.

OHCHR is struggling to meet the demands of a broadening mandate, its stakeholders in the field, and engagement at UN level with its current level and distribution of resources. A large part of its headquarters-based activities entails supporting the Human Rights Council, treaty bodies, and special procedures mandate holders. The workload and tempo is determined by the growing demand from and busy meeting calendar of the human rights bodies, member states, the UN Secretariat and General Assembly. Meeting their expectations requires an already large and yet ever-growing part of OHCHR's capacity, such that about 10% of OHCHR's officially mandated activities have to be covered through additional, voluntary contributions. This affects the Office's ability to respond to the growing demand from its various stakeholders who seek its support to achieve compliance with international obligations often arising from these very bodies. Setting priorities in the use of the limited resources from the UN's regular budget to cover both mandated activities at headquarters and, especially, those in the field, all the while aligning organisational capacities with OHCHR's strategic priorities, is a challenging exercise. The current weakness of its presence within the UN Secretariat in New York affects the extent to which OHCHR can contribute to mainstreaming a human rights-based approach in UN system-wide policies and strategies and beyond, and building the vital partnerships, as noted above, in which the OMP 2018-21 is rooted.

Despite recent progress to assess and manage risk, there is still room for improvement to strengthen the Office's corporate risk management policy and strategy. OHCHR's regional and country programmes appear to be well-rooted in context analysis. However, risk management is perceived mostly in terms of contextual

trends and developments and of their impact on the human rights conditions. Potential risks to OHCHR itself - i.e. political, reputational and institutional risks - do not receive adequate attention. Also, the Office has not always routinely undertaken thorough analyses on the capacity of partner organisations, nor has it always developed appropriate mitigation strategies. Capacity assessments and risk management have only recently been included in corporate guidance for country and regional programming, and further progress is needed in this area.

OHCHR does not yet have a clear vision for strengthening its resource partnerships for the future and this constitutes a strategic risk to preserve independence and ensure predictability. The Office relies on voluntary funding for more than half of its resources (53% in 2017). For 2018-19, its appropriation from the regular budget is USD 201.6 million (3.7% of the total UN regular budget). General Assembly decisions have led to a number of reductions recently, including across-the-board reductions of between 5% and 25% in several budget lines. OHCHR launches Annual Appeals to raise voluntary contributions from donors. Nonetheless, it has not yet been able to significantly expand its donor base beyond donor governments, and among those, beyond the Western Group that currently covers over 90% of OHCHR's total extra-budgetary funding. On the contrary, 13 member states discontinued their funding in 2017. The remaining voluntary contributions have become increasingly earmarked. Support from private donors is still low at less than USD 1 million (0.8% of its total income). The 2017 Human Rights Report acknowledged that "additional efforts will need to be deployed to establish additional partnerships with the private sector, foundations and individuals". The Office recognises that it is vulnerable to unpredictable funding and the risk of discontinuation by one or more large donors. To redress its voluntary contributions – if possible multi-year and unearmarked – and bolster its delivery capability, the Office has now developed partnership, resource mobilisation and external communications strategies as part of the OMP 2018-21. A more strategic and innovative perspective on the nexus between partnerships, external communications and fundraising will put OHCHR on a better path, even though the political environment will likely remain difficult for human rights.

OHCHR's human resource management is insufficiently aligned with the needs and requirements of the Office.

The OMP 2018-21 recognises that OHCHR's operating model is constrained by the Office's limited authority over strategic direction and by the underlying human and financial resource management. Improving human resource management, and talent management in particular, is one of the nine organisational effectiveness action plans of the OMP 2018-21. The Office admits that it has not kept pace with growing demands in areas such as recruitment, staff mobility, talent management, staff development, performance management and diversity. OHCHR's partners generally have a very high regard for the expertise and continuity of staff, which testifies to its capacity to work effectively at country level. However, in-country staff are overstretched and unable to respond to the growing demand for OHCHR's services and support from governments and other stakeholders. The Office needs to help staff to develop their competencies, skills and knowledge to deliver on the OHCHR Management Plan's priorities.

Although OHCHR's evaluation function has been improved, the Office's evaluation culture is not yet established, and the evaluation function is under-resourced. OHCHR has taken steps to professionalise its evaluation function, following the release of its first evaluation policy in 2014. The number of evaluations is increasing but at a low level; and their quality is gradually increasing as well. Mechanisms are in place to ensure that results are shared within the Office and that management responses are tracked and implemented. However, the evaluation function has yet to meet all United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) standards. It has few staff, and the available budget for centralised evaluations remains low. Consequently, there are very few independent external evaluations, especially at the global level, of OHCHR's results performance, in areas like advocacy, or of the standard setting, monitoring and reporting activities carried out in the context of the UN human rights mechanisms. This makes it more difficult to communicate, both internally and externally, about how the organisation is advancing in the eyes of independent experts. The launch of OHCHR's evaluation policy marked an important step forward; it will now be important to ensure that evaluation becomes an integral part of operations and consistently informs decision-making at the policy and strategy levels.

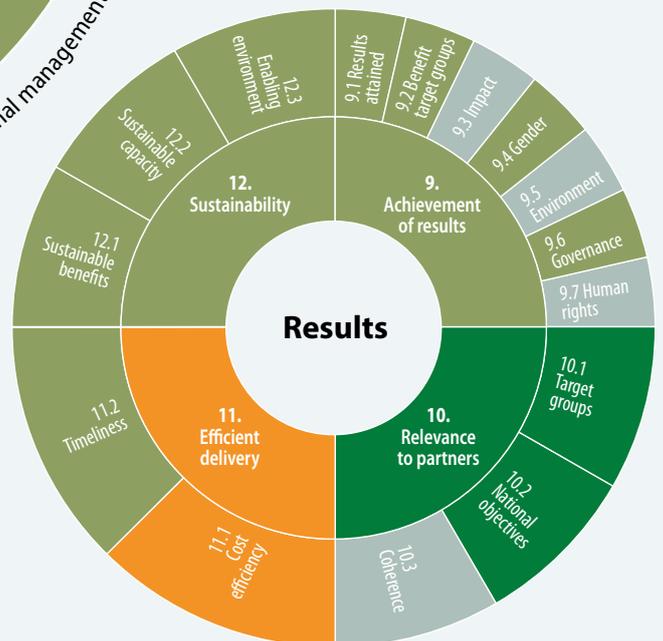
Key findings

OHCHR is the main designated, principle-based UN entity on human rights. It has a broad and expanding mandate. It covers standard setting, monitoring, advocacy and mainstreaming of human rights. The mandate also provides for capacity building of member states' governments, agencies and civil

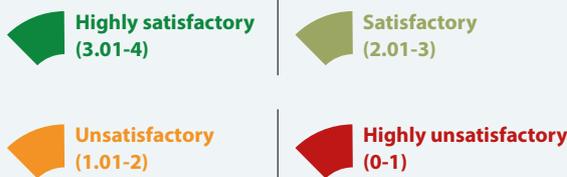
society organisations to support the implementation of a fast-growing number of recommendations, human rights obligations of member states, and strengthening of accountability.

However, its expanding mandate and corresponding ambitions are not matched by a proportionate growth in resources. OHCHR's budget relies increasingly on voluntary contributions from Western donors, most of which are earmarked for field operations. This puts OHCHR at a certain risk of being perceived as insufficiently independent and less predictable. The assessment therefore notes that OHCHR needs to forge new partnerships, including those entities and countries that have not been among its traditional donors.

PERFORMANCE RATING SUMMARY



Key



About this assessment

The Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) is a network of 18 countries¹ that share a common interest in assessing the effectiveness of the major multilateral organisations they fund, including UN agencies, international financial institutions and global funds. The Network generates, collects, analyses and presents relevant and credible information on the organisational and development effectiveness of the organisations it assesses. This knowledge base is intended to contribute to organisational learning within and among the organisations, their direct clients and partners, and other stakeholders. Network members use the reports for their own accountability needs and as a source of input for strategic decision-making.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is one of the 14 organisations assessed by MOPAN in 2017-18. This was the first MOPAN assessment of OHCHR. Finland championed the assessment of OHCHR on behalf of the Network.

This brief accompanies the full assessment, published in early 2019, which can be found on MOPAN's website at www.mopanonline.org. OHCHR's management response will be made available on that website as well.

The assessment of performance covers OHCHR's headquarters and regional and country field presence. It addresses organisational systems, practices and behaviours, as well as results achieved during the period 2016 to mid-2018. It relies on three lines of evidence: a document review, interviews with staff and small groups, and an online partner survey.²

MOPAN's evidence lines for OHCHR

- Review of 131 documents
- 79 staff interviews
- 126 partners surveyed in 12 countries

The MOPAN 3.0 methodology entails a framework of 12 key performance indicators and of micro-indicators. It comprises standards that characterise an effective multilateral organisation. More detail is provided in MOPAN's methodology manual.³

Organisations assessed by MOPAN in 2017-18:

- ADB
- GEF
- IFAD
- OHCHR
- UNESCO
- UNHCR
- WFP
- FAO
- GPE
- IOM
- UN Women
- UNFPA
- UNRWA
- WHO

1: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States – and two observers, New Zealand and the United Arab Emirates.

2: The online survey was conducted among partners of OHCHR in Bangladesh, Bolivia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Guinea, Lebanon, Mexico, Myanmar, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Tunisia, and Turkey.

3: Available at www.mopanonline.org