Accountability System for the Protection of Civilians
e-Performance

1 SUMMARY

Monitoring individual performance is key to ensuring organizational performance and to linking institutional and individual accountability. As defined by the secretary-general in 2010, "Accountability will be in direct proportion to the responsibility assigned and the authority delegated."[1]

There are two types of tools to track and monitor individual performance of staff at the Secretariat: (1) compacts between the secretary-general and senior officials (assistant secretary-general and above); and (2) the performance appraisal system for staff below the level of assistant secretary-general, called e-Performance (formerly e-PAS).

Instead of focusing just on compliance and evaluation, the e-Performance system aims to address the entire spectrum of performance management, which includes performance improvement, staff development, training, multi-rater systems, and regular performance feedback.

2 RELEVANCE TO THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

UN mandated programs, projects, and tasks inform the work plan, goals, and deliverables of individual UN staff. As a result, in missions that are mandated to protect civilians, the individual work plans and goals of some individual UN staff could include protection of civilians (POC) objectives and tasks. Typically, heads of office, senior POC advisers, POC officers, human rights officers, civil affairs officers, child protection officers, gender advisers, and conflict-related sexual violence team members should have work plans and performance assessments that include POC-related objectives and tasks. Even beyond these substantive civilian staff, POC should be integrated into the e-Performance assessment of a wide range of staff members, including support staff; public information personnel; and political affairs, justice support, and disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) officers. The 2019 POC Policy establishes that

> senior leaders, including Police Commissioners, Chiefs of Staff and Directors/Chiefs of Mission Support (D/CMS) in missions with POC mandates, shall include a priority objective in their workplan reflecting their specific responsibilities for the implementation of the POC mandate, aligned with the strategic objectives of the mission. Similar responsibilities, based on the mission strategic and operational plans, should be included in the workplans and performance appraisals of other key staff, as appropriate, including but not limited to heads of political affairs, human rights, civil affairs, justice and corrections, SSSR and DDR units and Joint Mission Analysis Centres (JMACs), Joint Operations Centres (JOCs), heads of field offices and senior

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[1] UN General Assembly, *Towards an Accountability System in the United Nations Secretariat—Report of the Secretary-General,* UN Doc. A/64/640, January 29, 2010.

POC, child protection and women protection advisers. The responsibility for the implementation of the POC mandate will, as appropriate, be cascaded down through staff management systems and included in the workplans and appraisals of all relevant staff.[2]

It is unclear, however, whether POC is systematically taken into consideration for all staff involved in the implementation of POC mandates and whether the e-Performance evaluation would ensure real accountability for POC shortcomings, given the flaws of the system. To date, there is no widely known case of a staff member being dismissed or having a salary increase withheld because of POC-related underperformance.

Moreover, the tasks included in work plans are often related to specific outputs, such as participation in POC coordination mechanisms or the production of daily reports, rather than outcomes, which makes it difficult to hold staff members accountable for the mission's impact on POC.

3 RULES, GUIDELINES, AND METHODOLOGY

Governing rules

The Performance Appraisal System was introduced in 1995, and the e-PAS electronic tool was created in 2003. In 2010, the Performance Appraisal System became the Performance Management and Development System.[3] In 2012, the UN launched e-Performance, which replaced e-PAS.

The process and guidelines for the performance-evaluation process are set out in UN Staff Rule 1.3 and Administrative Instruction ST/AI/2010/5.[4] UN Staff Rule 1.3 establishes that:

(a) Staff members shall be evaluated for their efficiency, competence and integrity through performance appraisal mechanisms that shall assess the staff member's compliance with the standards set out in the Staff Regulations and Rules for purposes of accountability"; " (b) The Secretary-General shall seek to ensure that appropriate learning and development programmes are available for the benefit of staff"; and "(c) Performance reports shall be prepared regularly for all staff members, including at the

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[2] UN Department of Peace Operations, "Policy on the Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping," November 2019.

[3] Namie Di Razza, "People before Process: Humanizing the HR System for UN Peace Operations," International Peace Institute, October 2017.

[4] UN Secretariat, *Administrative Instruction: Performance Management and Development System*, UN Doc. ST/AI/2010/5, April 30, 2010.

Assistant Secretary-General level and above, in accordance with procedures promulgated by the Secretary-General.[5]

Primary responsibility for the execution and implementation of e-Performance rests with the head of department, office, or mission.

All staff below the level of assistant secretary-general and who hold their appointment for at least one year develop an annual work plan for performance monitoring. Entities involved include the staff member under evaluation, a first reporting officer, and a second reporting officer. The first reporting officer and second reporting officer are the main evaluators of the staff member, and supervisors are consulted during the evaluation process.

Process and functioning

There are three main stages of the performance-evaluation cycle: (1) development of an individual work plan; (2) midpoint review; and (3) end-of-year performance appraisal.

Staff members develop their individual work plan for the period April 1st–March 31st, in accordance with the Performance Management and Development System. Programs mandated by the General Assembly or Security Council have to be linked to departmental, divisional, and ultimately individual work plans.

Individual work plans include individual performance-evaluation criteria. This requires (1) setting goals, key results, and achievements; (2) defining core competencies, managerial competencies, and job-related competencies; and (3) formulating a personal development plan. All information is stored in the e-Performance system online for easy access.

Over the course of the year, the first reporting officer is expected to hold informal conversations and dialogue with the staff member under evaluation. A midpoint review is conducted six months after the creation of the work plan. The review covers progress made and serves to justify any updates to the work plan goals.

Within three months of the end of the performance cycle, the reporting officer evaluates the extent to which staff members have achieved their goals, key results, and achievements as set out in the work plan. They then assign an overall rating of performance, which is then approved by the second reporting officer. An individual staff member can receive one of four ratings: (1) exceeds performance expectations; (2)

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[5] UN Secretariat, *Secretary-General's Bulletin: Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations*, UN Doc. ST/SGB/2018/1, January 1, 2018.

successfully meets performance expectations; (3) partially meets performance expectations; and (4) does not meet performance expectations.

Staff members who disagree with a "partially meets performance expectations" or "does not meet performance expectations" rating may write a rebuttal statement, which is then sent to a rebuttal panel for evaluation.

4 ANALYSIS

The performance-appraisal process enables managers to clarify individual goals at the beginning of the work plan cycle, keep performance on track through ongoing dialogue, and evaluate performance at the end of the cycle, in accordance with the unit's goals and work plan. Departmental compliance with the performance-appraisal system is monitored through the human resources management scorecard.

Timing		
Regular process	X	The full performance-evaluation cycle occurs over the course of the year, from April 1st to March 31st of the following year.
Extraordinary measure after incident		

Actors and answerability structure

e-Performance seeks to hold UN staff accountable to their work plan and responsibilities, which should be aligned with their unit, section, or department.

Held accountable by		Individuals	Unit			Mission	Secre-tariat	Contri-buting countries	Security Council/ 5th Com-mittee	Member states	Population	Other
			Military	Police	Civilian							
Individuals		X			X	X	X					
Unit/ section/ component	Military											
	Police											
	Civilian											
Mission												
Secretariat												
Contributing countries												
Member states												
Security Council/ 5th Committee												

The purpose of e-Performance is to (1) establish responsibilities for individuals working in the Secretariat through the development of a work plan and (2) track and evaluate responsibilities over the course of the annual work plan, including through the development of a performance-improvement plan if needed.

Collect best practices and lessons learned		
Track performance	X	The performance-evaluation process tracks the performance of a UN staff member against an agreed-upon work plan that takes into consideration the mission's mandates, tasks, and goals.
Establish facts and circumstances		
Establish responsibility	X	The work plan sets responsibilities and goals that the UN staff member under evaluation is expected to deliver on. These are informed by tasks mandated by the General Assembly. The work plan clarifies roles and responsibilities for projects and deliverables.
Identify structural and systemic issues		

Type of accountability

The e-Performance evaluation process holds UN staff accountable for their performance and is thus a form of internal performance accountability pursued by the UN. The performance of staff is evaluated against the work plan devised at the beginning of the year and is monitored throughout the course of the year. When there is a shortcoming in performance, remedial actions are taken.

Outcome

The e-Performance system includes possible actions to remedy shortcomings such as counselling, transferring, training, or establishing a performance-improvement plan. If performance shortcomings are not rectified, administrative measures such as the withholding of a salary increase or the non-renewal or termination of a contract can in theory be taken.

In practice, however, the process is too cumbersome to be effective. As highlighted by IPI's 2017 report on the human resources system for UN peace operations:

> OHRM policies require managers to document examples of underperformance, put in place performance improvement plans "initiated not less than three months before the end of the performance cycle," review progress against these plans, and take remedial actions. This twelve-step process is often perceived by field staff as too heavy and time-consuming. Concrete outputs, deadlines, and deliverables need to be defined in the performance improvement plan to give a chance to the underperforming staff to improve his or her

performance, and management also has to demonstrate it undertook supporting measures to help the staff member improve. Staff members can also contest their assessment on e-PAS through rebuttal panels that can overturn ratings, delaying the process. As a result, managers often report being scared of complaints and of the internal justice system, which explains the low level of reporting of underperformance.[6]

The e-Performance system is therefore widely regarded as not indicative of performance, as staff tend to always be rated as meeting their performance goals due to a general apprehension of potential complaints that would lead to litigation through the UN's internal justice system. In recent years, less than 0.5 percent of Secretariat staff received an e-PAS rating of "partially meets expectations" or "does not meet expectations."[7] Even when ratings are poor, there seems to be little accountability attached to them, with very few cases of underperformers being dismissed or sanctioned. Since 2007, administrative action was taken in only seventy-four cases (twenty-four withholdings of a salary increment, thirty-nine non-renewals of contracts, and eleven terminations).[8]

In addition, the system is often criticized for its limitations when it comes to evaluating managers' performance. The UN has piloted 360-degree evaluations, but these have not yet been systematized. "Since staff members are only rated by their supervisors, and not by their peers or their supervisees, it is often difficult to address cases of underperforming managers."[9]

The UN Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance is piloting a new agile performance-management approach that increases "focus on promoting behavioral changes by a) enabling a more agile approach; b) fostering a culture of ongoing dialogue and feedback; c) enabling goal alignment and shift from compliance to integrating performance management; and d) promoting collaboration and greater accountability for results across teams."[10] Through ongoing dialogue and feedback, the new approach is expected to better address performance issues as they occur, on a continuous basis. Enhancements to the performance-management framework were planned to be rolled out in 2021. Ongoing dialogue and feedback are intended to enhance the engagement of staff, ensure good performance, and proactively address performance issues, if any, as they occur, thereby dealing with underperformance issues immediately.

Learn	**Disseminate and integrate internally**		
	Account for publicly		

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[6] Di Razza, "People before Process."

[7] UN, "Integrated Peacekeeping Performance and Accountability Framework," September 2020.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Di Razza, "People before Process."

[10] UN, "Integrated Peacekeeping Performance and Accountability Framework," September 2020.

Correct	**Improve internal processes**		
	Inform the selection of personnel	X	E-performance evaluations can be made available to hiring managers and can therefore inform the selection of UN staff. They can also prompt the non-renewal or termination of the staff member's contract.
Sanction	**Recommend sanctions**	X	If the performance shortcoming was not rectified following the remedial actions, a number of administrative actions such as the withholding of a within-grade salary increment, the non-renewal of an appointment, or the termination of an appointment for unsatisfactory service can be taken. When at the end of the performance cycle the staff member "does not meet performance expectations," the appointment may be terminated as long as the remedial actions included a performance-improvement plan.
	Establish incentives		According to the administrative instructions, a positive or satisfactory rating on the e-Performance evaluation may correspond to the granting of a salary increase. In practice, however, 99.5 percent of staff have received a satisfactory rating in recent years, and most staff are given step and salary increases every twelve months. There is no incentive to perform beyond the "satisfactory" level.

Independence and impartiality

The evaluation process is jointly conducted by individual staff members, who evaluate themselves, and the first and second reporting officers. There is no mandatory or systematic 360-degree evaluation system that would enable peers and supervisees to contribute additional feedback.

Inclusivity

The e-Performance evaluation applies to all staff members below the level of assistant secretary-general. There is no mandatory or systematic 360-degree evaluation system that would enable peers and supervisees to contribute additional feedback.

Transparency

Evaluations are internal and made accessible to staff, their managers and supervisors, and hiring managers.

Follow-up mechanisms

Possible follow-up mechanisms	X	The e-Performance evaluation process includes mid-term reviews and the possibility of following up with performance-improvement plans.
Available enforcement measures	X	When a performance shortcoming is identified during the performance cycle, the first reporting officer takes actions to remedy the shortcomings through remedial measures, which may include counselling, transfer to a more suitable function, or additional training. If shortcomings are not addressed, remedial actions can also include sanctions such as the partial withholding of salary increases and the non-renewal or termination of contracts.
Transmissibility to other mechanisms	X	Staff can use rebuttal panels and the internal justice system to challenge an e-Performance evaluation.