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Internal Audit Report of Participatory Gender Audit of WFP's Human Resources Division, Regional Bureau in Cairo and Country Offices in Jordan and Sudan (AR/17/07)

Management Comments

WFP Management appreciates and welcomes the findings and observations made by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) in its Participatory Gender Audit of WFP's Human Resources Division, WFP Regional Bureau in Cairo (RBC) and two RBC Country Offices; Jordan and Sudan. The audit was conducted from July to August 2016. As noted in the report, the objective of the audit was to assess the extent of gender mainstreaming into WFP and identifying opportunities for performance improvements based on audit observations and existing practices.

WFP Management appreciates OIG's recognition of a number of positive practices and initiatives as well as significant progress achieved in gender mainstreaming in the areas under review. At corporate level this includes the mandatory inclusion of gender mainstreaming as a key performance indicator in WFP's performance management system for Division Directors and Country Directors; it also includes monthly social media reports on WFP workforce's gender and diversity throughout the world. At regional level: the development of a WFP "Regional Gender Policy Implementation Strategy" to support COs in translating the objectives of the Gender Policy into actions at the local level. At country level, WFP Sudan CO was the first in the region to develop and apply a country-specific gender strategy and has developed gender-responsive programmes which have the potential to contribute to gender equality and the economic empowerment of women. WFP Jordan CO has focused on promoting positive organisational change by creating a more supportive working environment, particularly for men and women with children, through more flexible working arrangements. Further, the Regional Bureau and the Jordan CO have worked to highlight the contribution of women in society by working with women activists and celebrities as WFP Goodwill ambassadors.

The diversity of WFP operations in the Regional Bureau, which span eighteen countries in the Middle East and North Africa, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, presents particular challenges and opportunities to advance gender equality whether through the design and implementation of programmes or through positive organizational change. Sudan, for example, represents a low income country in the low human development category where rural poverty rates are estimated at 58 percent. In contrast, Jordan presents a middle-income country context in the high human development category. In both countries, there are severe gender inequalities in relation to employment opportunity, equality before the law, participation in political and public life, and inclusion in decision making. Further, the effects of displacement are noted to disproportionately affect women with serious implications for their safety and well-being, health and economic opportunities.

Management is committed to leveraging good practices and initiatives in HRM, RBC, Jordan and Sudan COs and to supporting their efforts in the implementation of the agreed actions.

WFP Regional Bureau in Cairo (RBC), the Jordan and Sudan Country Offices (COs) have agreed to address the audit observations in five areas of analysis. Both RBC and the Sudan CO have formulated action plans for 2017 to support the implementation of the agreed actions.

Further progress has been registered at HQ since the completion of the PGA. HRM and GEN have developed and commenced implementation of a corporate gender capacity development plan, encompassing HQ, Regional Bureaux and Country Offices. One of the “flagship” components of the forthcoming corporate Learning Portal (May 2017) will be the ‘Gender Channel’, providing resources, tailored gender ‘learning journeys’ and dialogue space, for employees and partners. Specific measures are strengthening talent acquisition and performance management in order to accelerate progress towards gender parity in staffing and foster a more diverse and inclusive workplace. The Gender Results Network has been revamped and regional trainings have been conducted, including RBC, to strengthen the knowledge and collaboration of members, as well as support their efforts as catalysts of gender mainstreaming in WFP. The review of the Gender Expenditures Analysis process is ongoing to ensure integration with the Integrated Road Map, as well as efficiency and validity.

WFP management would like to thank the Office of the Inspector General for the meaningful collaboration and support. WFP Management considers the audit observations and agreed actions included in Audit AR/17/07 as an important opportunity to build on past achievements and to continue to strengthen gender mainstreaming, even in contexts characterized by high levels of gender inequality. Such improvements will also serve to improve the working environment for WFP staff.