



13 June 2019

Management Comments to the Internal Audit Report of WFP Operations in Liberia (AR/19/09)

WFP Management appreciates the observations made by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) in its audit report AR/19/09 on Liberia operations (T-ICSP implementation) covering the period January – December 2018.

Violent conflict and civil war spanning three decades (1979 to 2003) and the outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease in 2014-2015 led to a complete collapse of the Liberian economy, making it one of the poorest and most fragile countries globally and one with serious concerns for food insecurity and malnutrition. WFP's current interventions in Liberia aim to improve food and nutrition security through the provision of productive safety nets in line with a nexus approach, with synergies sought between humanitarian, resilience/development and peace interventions to support the most vulnerable, alongside investments to build and strengthen national capacity for national stakeholders to own and implement hunger-solutions. These activities are being undertaken through a Transitional Interim Country Strategic Plan (T-ICSP), covering the period from January 2018 through to June 2019¹. The WFP portfolio is aligned with Government priorities as outlined in the national development plan (Pro-Poor Agenda for Development and Prosperity - PAPD) and the UNDAF, in support of the achievement of Agenda 2030.

Following the end of the Ebola crisis in 2017 the Country Office started to face persistent funding shortfalls, which have resulted in critical pipeline breaks. This situation has led to a series of drastic cost containment measures that have included a substantial reduction in staffing. To address these challenges, the Country Office in collaboration with the Government has embarked on a vigorous advocacy and resource mobilization effort that has reached out to traditional and non-traditional donors. Additional initiatives have also been undertaken to enhance WFP's strategic and operational positioning, including the completion of a Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey (CFSNS) in 2018 that contributed to filling data gaps for decision makers in the food security and nutrition sectors, the provision of support to an ongoing digitalization of beneficiary data, and support provided to link small holder farmers directly to schools through an innovative pilot cash transfer programme.

WFP Management acknowledges the overall conclusion of ineffective/unsatisfactory in the audit report and has taken proactive and appropriate steps to address the agreed eight high and three medium priority observations. The recommendations are being given due priority, with all actions expected to be implemented by agreed dates. WFP Management

¹ Liberia's CSP document will be submitted for approval at EBA/2019 in June.



undertakes to provide updates on the implementation status of agreed actions to OIG on a regular basis.

WFP Management is pleased to report that key actions have already been taken to address some of the high-risk observations, as indicated below:

Observation 1

(i) In the wider perspective of an organizational structure review, progress has already been made in addressing gender parity ratios as demonstrated in the recruitment of three female staff for the positions of: REACH Facilitator, Programme Assistant and M&E Assistant.

Observation 2

(ii) Oversight and support missions to field offices have been scaled-up since March 2019, and; (iii) A mechanism has been put in place to track the implementation of agreed oversight and audit recommendations.

Observation 3

(iv) A recent RMM headquarters mission to Liberia (27-29 March 2019) facilitated the review of the Country Office Risk Register, with a focus on the development of key risk metrics to measure and monitor risks in line with risk appetite, and to identify thresholds and parameters for alerts and to define risk escalation mechanisms.

Observation 4

(v) Management immediately enhanced monthly cooperating partner distribution reporting to ensure compliance with corporate requirements;
(vi) An implementation plan for the deployment of a light version of SCOPE has been completed.

Observation 5

(vii) More than 10 SOPs, including SOPs for Complaints and Feedback Monitoring (CFM), have already been drafted and are being reviewed;
(viii) Dissemination and awareness creation about CFMs are ongoing in project beneficiary communities.

Observation 7

(ix) The Country Office and PGG in headquarters have worked on a Partnerships and Resource Mobilization Overview (March 2019), which will inform a Donor Mobilization Strategy and Action Plan. Salesforce has been updated, both for opportunities in 2019 as well as 2020, whereas a Partnership Action Plan (PAP) is under review and expected to be operational by the end of May 2019.



(x) Resource mobilization has been expanded to cover all outcomes, including the development of proposals for joint UN programmes on social protection, youth employment and women's empowerment, peace building (Outcome 2) and capacity strengthening in disaster risk management (Outcomes 1 and 6).

Observation 9

(xi) Expressions of interest have been floated and the assessment process is ongoing, following which the vendor list will be updated.

Management wishes to thank the OIG for the constructive engagement that existed throughout the audit exercise and for the valuable observations which will help WFP Management improve its internal control and oversight of activities in the Country Office.