



August 2019

Management Comments to the Internal Audit Report of WFP Operations in Niger (AR/19/13)

Management Comments

WFP Management appreciates the observations made by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) in its audit report AR/19/13 of WFP operations in Niger covering the period January – December 2018.

In 2018, WFP deployed significant efforts to scale-up resilience operations with the government and partners, while ensuring that adequate humanitarian emergency response was considered an utmost priority. During this period, WFP operations were implemented in a context of: i) deterioration of the security situation, especially in the Diffa region (Lake Chad basin) and along the borders with Mali and Burkina Faso leading to access issues; ii) a first-ever pre-emptive L3 Corporate Emergency Response i.e. Sahel Shock Response (SSR) during the lean season in the G5 countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger); iii) a reduction in funding levels in comparison to previous years; and iv) an IRM roll out process including finalization of the 2019 transitional interim country strategic plan (T-ICSP) and the preparation of the new 2020-2024 CSP.

WFP Management acknowledges the overall conclusion of *partially satisfactory / some improvement needed*; WFP Management has taken measures to ensure that identified risks are adequately mitigated. The recommendations from the audit are being given due priority, with all actions at CO and HQ/RB levels expected to be implemented by agreed dates. WFP Management undertakes to provide updates on the implementation status of agreed actions to OIG on a regular basis.

WFP Management is pleased to report that a number of key actions have already been taken to address the agreed actions:

- ✓ Observation 1 (medium priority):

The upcoming CSP 2020-2024 has been designed based on evaluations and lessons learned from previous operations and has anticipated the needs in



term of funding prospects, staffing and delivery modalities. Recent reassignments, including senior management positions, have contributed to strengthen the office's skills to support the scale-up of resilience activities while maintaining emergency preparedness and response as a top priority. The CO has also proceeded with a thorough revision of its staffing structure and training plan to align its capacities with CSP requirements, including for enhanced multi-sectoral coordination efforts (e.g. CBT; Nutrition; etc.). Continuous revision is planned during the T-ICSP/CSP's implementation. The CO has already initiated corrective action concerning the delegation of authority and its post-factum regularization.

On the procurement scale-up plan, training of procurement staff, local procurement committee members and requesting units on procurement rules and regulations, as well as the implementation of useful tools and guidelines in French, is a top priority, which is already being rolled out by the CO.

✓ Observation 2 (medium priority):

The CO has revised its operational model of delivering cash, spreading the caseload across additional financial service providers (FSPs) and minimizing distribution by NGOs only to small caseloads as a last resort, where distribution by FSPs is not feasible or cost-effective. The CO had started to explore opportunities to work with Financial Service Providers (FSPs) offering mobile-based transfers.

✓ Observation 3 (medium priority):

The revision of the CO staffing structure ensures greater attention to the integration of resilience package activities at all levels, including various activity committees at community level.

The FFA Assets maintenance plan was under review and is being updated at the time of the audit mission. This is a continuous and top priority process taking into account lessons learned and good practices. Attention is dedicated to this priority at the design and planning stage and throughout FFA activity implementation, with the support of partners, and through a strong



community-based participatory approach. also involving technical services, local leaders and authorities.

On the smallholder farmers initiative, the CO has planned a workshop in early August to draw lessons from the current approach and to revise its local purchase strategy for better alignment with the programme objectives and needs.

✓ Observation 4 (high priority):

The CO has already taken numerous decisions regarding the priorities for digitalization, including the scale-up of SCOPE, in line with the corporate guidance and Niger T-ICSP/CSP and available resources, and with support from the Regional Bureau regarding biometrics and beneficiary privacy. Under the coordination of a dedicated CO Task Force, the CO strategy for digitalization will be documented and implemented in a phased approach and will link closely to the CO CBT strategy in terms of both delivery mechanism selection, and overall assurance that WFP is reaching the right beneficiaries at the right time.

✓ Observation 5 (medium priority):

The CO has already taken action to activate and expand the Complaints and Feedback Mechanism (CFM) and will participate in the standardized CFM roll-out in September 2019. The CO will ensure that complaints are addressed consistently and on a timely basis in all regions, thus including it on Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) reports. The CO is enhancing efforts to ensure full compliance with PSEA through ongoing training of implementing partners and identifying their focal points. Development of a joint WFP-NGO action plan shall be finalized within the end of the year.

✓ Observation 6 (medium priority):

The CO has already taken action to address the audit observations on programme monitoring, including the creation of a geographic information systems (GIS) staff position which will support the consolidation of GPS coordinates with a view to strengthening use of satellite monitoring, and the



identification of a consultant who will support the CO to digitalize its process monitoring tools and set up a centralized M&E case management system. Steps are also being taken to ensure a more systematic coverage of monitoring activities, using third-party monitoring (TPM), where needed, and creating – with the support of partners- stronger linkages with national authorities. The CO will also continue testing complementary indicators for resilience measurement and providing substance to this area of work to support the elaboration of corporate guidance on the subject.

✓ Observation 7 (medium priority):

The CO is in the process of enhancing its capacity strengthening strategy, including aspects related to donated assets tracking, the impact of capacity strengthening efforts and funding-based prioritization criteria.

✓ Observation 8 (medium priority):

Losses are recorded in a timely manner, and the only pending issue identified during the audit mission is being closely monitored by Management for a prompt resolution. An internal Memo nominating the Food Incident Management (FIM) focal point and the creation of the FIM Committee has been issued by the CO Management. All food incident issues will be treated in line with corporate guidelines.

An SOP for food quality and safety process has already been developed for specialized nutrition food (SNF) in 2014 and is in the process of being updated. The CO is also working on another SOP related to locally procured food items (i.e. cereals and beans). Both SOPs will be available before the end of this year. Agendas of supply chain working group meetings have been enhanced to ensure a better food procurement strategy, taking into account storage time issues. As far as the inspection companies are concerned, meetings have been held and actions will be taken to ensure a closer monitoring of their activities. The evaluation of the inspection companies' capacities will be undertaken jointly with the Regional Bureau, which is monitoring the Regional LTA.

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.