

21 October 2021

Internal Audit of WFP Operations in Mali (AR/21/16)

Management Comments

WFP Management welcomes the observations made by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) in its internal audit report (AR/21/16) on WFP operations in Mali, covering the period from 1 January 2020 to 30 April 2021.

WFP Management acknowledges the complexity of the Mali operation coupled with the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The period covered by the internal audit was exceptionally challenging due to political instability, increased insecurity across WFP areas of intervention and the COVID-19 pandemic that reshaped the way we deliver assistance to affected populations. In addition, movement restrictions and poor telecommunications infrastructure have negatively impacted upon the timely delivery of assistance and the deployment of effective oversight missions to WFP's project areas in central, northern and eastern parts of the country.

WFP Management notes that the Mali Country Office launched its Country Strategic Plan (CSP) in January 2020, and has since been scaling-up its operations to reach vulnerable populations in the remote and hard to reach localities of the country. The country office has continued to leverage its partnerships with relevant government institutions, where possible, to assist 2.9 million people affected by armed conflict, climate change and the pandemic in rural and peri-urban areas.

WFP Management observes that the Country Office has continued to explore and pursue the most appropriate life-saving interventions, while supporting recovery and building the resilience of vulnerable communities through emergency food assistance, nutritional support and asset creation initiatives. The country office has also increased efforts to strengthen national capacities on food security analysis.

WFP Management acknowledges the report's overall conclusion of **"ineffective/ unsatisfactory"** and agrees with the six high and four medium priority recommendations to strengthen WFP operations in Mali.

WFP Management has already commenced the implementation of the internal audit recommendations on governance and management oversight, humanitarian access, beneficiary management, monitoring, competitive procurement and risk management. Priority is also been given to cash-based transfer (CBT) delivery and reconciliation processes.

WFP Management is determined to leverage the benefits availed by the internal audit report to build a robust internal control environment and to embed effective risk management practices to ensure that WFP's objectives are successfully met in Mali. A road map will be established to fully implement all the recommendations within the agreed timeframes.

WFP Management will undertake regular reviews of outstanding agreed actions and provide updates through WFP's corporate tracking tool. The Regional Bureau for Western Africa will provide guidance and technical support to the country office.

WFP Management appreciates the constructive and valuable engagement of OIG and notes that the implementation of the agreed actions will further strengthen the governance, risk management and internal control processes of WFP's operation in Mali.