

11 November 2021

## **Management Comments to the Internal Audit Report of WFP Operations in Bangladesh (AR/21/17)**

WFP Management welcomes the observations and recommendations made by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) in this internal audit report (AR/21/17) on WFP operations in Bangladesh, covering the period from 1 January 2020 to 30 April 2021.

WFP Management acknowledges the complexity of the Bangladesh operation coupled with the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, that reshaped the way WFP delivers assistance to affected populations. Movement restrictions enacted as a result of the pandemic unduly impacted upon partner capacities and led to market disruptions, escalating food prices, an upsurge in the use of negative coping mechanisms and a corresponding increase in food insecurity.

WFP operations in Bangladesh are defined through its Country Strategic Plan (2017–2021), which was extended by a further 12 months to support the government’s COVID-19 response. Key interventions of WFP’s programme include: (i) capacity strengthening and technical assistance to the government around safety net programming; (ii) food distributions to Rohingya refugees and highly vulnerable populations; (iii) innovative approaches to enhance the resilience of food-insecure households; (iv) support to national emergency preparedness and response capacities; and (v) provision of mandated and on-demand services to support the humanitarian response in Cox’s Bazar.

WFP Management acknowledges the report’s overall conclusion of **“partially satisfactory/some improvement needed”** and agrees with the seven recommendations related to three high priority and four medium priority observations. WFP Management shall commence with implementing the agreed actions and is committed to meeting the deadlines.

WFP Management is determined to leverage the benefits availed by this report to ensure structures and processes are reinforced in the areas of governance, risk management, workforce planning, beneficiary management including complaints and feedback mechanisms, cash-based transfers set-up and delivery and supply chain contract management.

An ongoing organizational structure review will ensure the involvement of Human Resources (HR) Division in strategic workforce planning. The related process of designing and implementing a learning and development strategy to identify and address capacity gaps as well as to ensure harmonization of processes across functions and operational locations will be completed in 2022. A monitoring and evaluation (M&E) strategy will be finalized, while a complaints and feedback mechanism for the country office will also be put in place. Additional recommendations linked to overall cash-based transfer implementation, supply chain processes and regional oversight missions are also being addressed.

The implementation of the three high priority internal audit recommendations shall be given maximum priority together with the ongoing work related to retailer contracts. WFP Management will undertake



regular reviews of the agreed actions and provide updates through WFP's corporate tracking system. The country office will also seek regular guidance and technical support from the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific in taking these actions forward.

WFP Management appreciates the constructive and useful engagement of the Office of the Inspector General for its thorough analysis, receptive engagement, and collaborative support. WFP Management considers the observations and the agreed actions presented by this internal audit report (AR/21/17) as a valuable instrument to improve operational effectiveness and to further strengthen the governance, risk management and internal controls process of WFP's operation in Bangladesh.