

25 October 2021

Internal Audit Report of the WFP Innovation Accelerator (AR/21/18)

Management Comments

WFP Management acknowledges the observations made by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) in its internal audit report (AR/21/18) covering the period from 01 January 2020 to 30 April 2021.

The WFP Innovation Accelerator was established in Munich in 2015 to identify, support and scale innovations to disrupt global hunger. By the end of 2020, innovations supported by the WFP Innovation Accelerator had positively impacted the lives of 3.7 million beneficiaries across WFP operations. This number is forecasted to be close to 6 million people by the end of 2021. Key successes include innovations like Building Blocks, the largest humanitarian blockchain network, which now supports over 1 million people every month, and to date has processed transfers of USD 271 million in humanitarian cash-based assistance or the fundraising app ShareTheMeal, named one of the Best Apps of 2020 by Google and Apple, which has raised over 125 million shared meals since inception.

WFP Management appreciates the overall conclusion of the Office of Internal Audit of effective / satisfactory. The assessed governance arrangements, risk management and controls are adequately established and well-functioning to provide reasonable assurance that issues identified by the audit are unlikely to affect the overall achievement of the purpose of the WFP Innovation Accelerator. Innovation management processes and practices are effectively supporting innovations across WFP and facilitating collaboration with organizations of the humanitarian and development ecosystem like the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Humanitarian Grand Challenge or other United Nations agencies. The WFP Innovation Accelerator's strategy has aligned its activities with corporate objectives; moreover, actively identifying solutions to address organizational needs.

WFP Management acknowledges and agrees with the audit's observations of the three areas where further strengthening is required to bring additional value to WFP. Out of the three observations, all medium priority, first actions have already been taken. The need to increase the stability of critical positions and reduce the risks of loss of knowledge and expertise is recognized and work is underway to competitively advertise more stable roles.

Furthermore, the team is refining the strategy to scale and mainstream promising innovations to a corporate level or externally to WFP, increasing the entry requirements to enter the Scale Up Enablement programme and enforcing those new rules for teams entering the programme this year. We are reinforcing key processes along the innovation process including signing of dedicated agreements with WFP directors or external owners to ensure buy-in from an early stage and improving stakeholder maps to strengthen projects' path to scale. Results from these shifts are evident in the increases of our impact in terms of beneficiaries reached and funds raised by the projects supported in scaling phase, which have almost doubled this year.

WFP Management is confident that the implementation of the agreed actions by the respective due date will strengthen the impact of the WFP Innovation Accelerator for the organization.

WFP Management would like to thank OIG for the collaborative and supportive approach to this audit and for its constructive and useful observations.