

29 May 2023

## **Management Comments to the Internal Audit Report of WFP Operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (AR/23/05)**

WFP Management welcomes the observations made by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) in its internal audit report (AR/23/05) on WFP operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, covering the period from 1 June 2021 to 31 August 2022. WFP Management appreciates the focus on beneficiary management, cash-based transfers, supply chain and monitoring, including a tailored review of the management of non-governmental organizations, governance and risk management.

During the period under audit, the resurgence of the March 23 Movement (M23) and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) further destabilized the eastern part of the country, leading to increased instability, large-scale population displacement and disrupted humanitarian operations. Affected populations also faced Ebola and cholera outbreaks along with unpredictable weather patterns, which hampered agricultural production. The prices of food and fuel rose out of reach due to global supply chain disruptions. In addition, contextual challenges continued to prevent people from accessing the resources they need to sustain their families.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo country strategic plan (CSP) for the period 2021–2024 focuses on supporting the government’s national priorities for achieving food and nutrition security, through key shifts that include a commitment to translating the triple-nexus approach into stronger partnerships that support peace and development outcomes. It also allows WFP to work with the government and partners to address governance and technical gaps to increase local production and consumption of nutritious foods. Similarly, the CSP addresses the challenges that women and men in rural areas face due to their lack of access to land, markets and nutritious foods, and the risks posed by instability and climate events. It also commits to mainstreaming gender equality measures across all activities.

In 2022, WFP’s most far-reaching portfolio of work, under the first strategic outcome, was emergency food and cash assistance for 3.8 million people affected by crises in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2 million women and 1.8 million men). These figures equate to 15 percent of the population facing ‘emergency’ or ‘crisis’ levels of food insecurity (IPC 3 or 4). WFP pivoted towards cash assistance where markets were accessible and functional, permitting local communities greater flexibility and autonomy regarding their use of assistance. In total, WFP provided cash assistance to 1.4 million people, of which 732,400 were women, which is similar to WFP’s 2021 caseload.

WFP Management acknowledges the report’s overall conclusion of **“major improvement needed”** and agrees with the three high-priority and seven medium-priority observations contained in the audit report. WFP Management notes that the country office has already implemented part of the observation on governance and risk management and work has commenced to address the remaining observations and the corresponding agreed actions.

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 to ensure that WFP's objectives are successfully met in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A road map will be established to fully implement all the agreed actions within the specified timeframes.

WFP Management will undertake regular reviews of outstanding agreed actions and provide updates through WFP's corporate tracking tool. The Regional Bureau for Southern Africa will provide regular guidance and technical support to the country office, as required. WFP Management appreciates the constructive and valuable engagement of the Office of the Inspector General and notes that the implementation of the agreed actions will serve as a valuable instrument to improving operational effectiveness as well as to further strengthen the governance, risk management and internal controls processes of WFP's operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.