

22 October 2024

Management Comments to the Internal Audit Report of WFP Operations in Mali (AR/24/13)

WFP Management welcomes the observations made by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) in its internal audit report on WFP operations in Mali (AR/24/13), covering the period from 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024. WFP Management appreciates the audit's focus on risk management and oversight, assessment and beneficiary targeting, identity management, cooperating partner management, monitoring, community feedback mechanisms, cash-based transfers and humanitarian access management. The audit team also carried out a tailored review of the country office global assurance plan and conducted a field visit to the sub office of Segou.

Mali is affected by a complex and protracted crisis. Food insecurity as well as chronic and acute malnutrition remain persistently high, fuelled by escalating conflict and displacement, an environment threatened by land degradation and the effects of climate change, high food prices, and unequal access to basic social services. The country has also been facing an energy crisis which has had a severe impact on the economy. Furthermore, in January 2024, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) began the liquidation process following its withdrawal on 31 December 2023 after ten years of operation, leading to further challenges for humanitarian access and security. Through a strong partnership with the Government of Mali and continued support from donors and partners, WFP has implemented interventions focusing on three distinct pillars: emergency food and nutritional assistance; resilience building; and capacity strengthening, as outlined in the Mali country strategic plan (2020-2024). During the period under audit, WFP assisted over 2.4 million beneficiaries with a budget of USD 120 million.

WFP Management appreciates that the audit report acknowledges the significant efforts and improvements carried out by the country office since the last audit conducted in 2021. It recognizes that governance, assurance, risk management and internal controls were generally established and functioning. The audit report also highlights the efforts made on digitalizing the provision of assistance and the implementation of SCOPE (the WFP beneficiary information and transfer management platform). Furthermore, WFP Management values that the country office is supported by the Regional Bureau for Western Africa through regular missions and oversight activities to strengthen internal controls and processes.

WFP Management recognizes the audit's overall conclusion of **"major improvement needed"** and agrees with the three high- and three medium-priority observations contained in the audit report. WFP Management endorses the corresponding agreed actions and has initiated their implementation, with completion expected within the agreed timelines. The observations and agreed actions are closely aligned with existing management priorities and country and regional-level control strengthening efforts.

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, as required.

WFP Management would like to express its appreciation to the Office of the Inspector General for its

constructive engagement, comprehensive analysis, and efforts to ensure that the audit observations and agreed actions reflect the operating context. Implementing the agreed actions in the audit report will play a crucial role in improving operational effectiveness, as well as further strengthening the governance, risk management, and internal control processes of WFP's operations in Mali.