

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

Internal Audit of WFP Operations in South Sudan

Office of the Inspector General
Internal Audit Report AR/24/25



World Food
Programme

December 2024



Contents

I.	Executive summary	3
II.	Country context and audit scope	5
III.	Results of the audit	7
	Audit work and conclusions	7
	Risk management and management oversight	7
	Observation 1: Issues with assurance action plan implementation and risk management	8
	Strategic and operational planning	10
	Observation 2: Inadequate pre-positioning of food and stringent donor conditions	10
	Targeting and identity management	12
	Observation 3: Challenges in beneficiary prioritization and identity verification	12
	Monitoring	14
	Observation 4: Inadequate monitoring coverage and limited effectiveness	14
	Accountability to affected population	16
	Observation 5: Ineffective community feedback mechanisms	16
	Cash-based transfers	18
	Observation 6: Gaps in the assurance processes for cash operations	18
	Logistics	20
	Observation 7: Discrepancies between system and actual best-before dates	20
	Cooperating partner and vendor management	21
	Observation 8: Partner and vendor selection and performance evaluation issues	21
	Resource management	23
	Annex A – Agreed action plan	24
	Annex B – Definitions of audit terms: ratings and priority	25
	Annex C: Acronyms	27



I. Executive summary

Introduction

1. As part of its annual workplan, the Office of Internal Audit conducted an audit of WFP operations in South Sudan, covering the period from 1 January 2023 to 30 June 2024. The audit focused on risk management and oversight, programme design and implementation, monitoring, and community feedback mechanisms. In addition, the audit carried out tailored reviews of strategic planning and staffing structure, resource mobilization, targeting and identity management, cash-based transfers, cooperating partner management, logistics, procurement, and the implementation of the Global Assurance Project action plan.
2. Audit fieldwork took place from 7 to 25 October 2024 in the country office in Juba and through onsite visits to Maban and Malakal field offices.

Audit conclusions and key results

3. Based on the results of the audit, the Office of Internal Audit reached an overall conclusion of **some improvement needed**. The assessed governance arrangements, risk management and controls were generally established and functioning well but need improvement to provide reasonable assurance that the objectives of the audited entity/area should be achieved. Issues identified by the audit were unlikely to significantly affect the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity/area. Management action is recommended to ensure that identified risks are adequately mitigated.
4. South Sudan continued to face a severe humanitarian crisis driven by a combination of Insecurity, violence, economic hardships, climate change and the spillover effects of the 2023 Sudan conflict. This led to a surge in humanitarian needs, with an estimated 9.4 million people – two-thirds of the population – requiring assistance in 2023. The operating environment remained challenging, characterized by severe access constraints, poor infrastructure, political instability, flooding, and localized violence. These challenges were further exacerbated by funding shortfalls, which in 2023 forced WFP to reduce its beneficiary caseload by 30 percent. Despite these challenges, WFP successfully assisted 5.4 million people in 2023 through the distribution of 184,000 metric tons of food and USD 58 million in cash-based transfers. Total expenditures for the year reached USD 613 million.
5. During the audit period, the country office strengthened its risk management and internal controls through multiple oversight reviews, implementing an assurance plan, and addressing past internal audit recommendations. The country office digitised key operational processes, including beneficiary registration, deduplication, and transfer management. It established interoperability between WFP and partner agency systems, allowing beneficiaries to seamlessly access entitlements using various payment instruments, and transitioned from a status-based to a vulnerability-based targeting for displaced and refugee populations. To optimize resources, the country office completed an organizational alignment exercise, resulting in a reduction of 348 staff.
6. Key stakeholders met during the audit, including donors and UN partner agencies, recognized WFP as a trusted partner, commending its strong leadership and capacity, commitment to transparency, effective risk information sharing, and impactful programme implementation.
7. The audit report contains the following three observations with high-priority agreed actions:
8. Inadequate prepositioning of food and stringent donor conditions (Observation 2): There were logistical and financial challenges in prepositioning food prior to the 2023 and 2024 rainy seasons. By June 2024, delays in food arrivals in-country left 40 percent of the required stock undelivered to prepositioning locations, causing disruptions to planned distributions and critical food shortages. The country office estimated an additional USD 30.5 million in airdrop costs to ensure assistance is delivered as planned. Several factors contributed to these delays, including delayed funding commitments, regional logistical disruptions, donor restrictions on fund usage, and inefficiencies within the country office and headquarters processes. The country office and relevant headquarters units need to improve funding forecast alignment, streamline the advance financing process, and enhance operational planning to ensure timely prepositioning and effective delivery of assistance.



9. Inadequate monitoring coverage and limited effectiveness (Observation 4): Although the monitoring function was well established, there was insufficient coverage, inefficient tools, and weak data analysis and reporting. Distribution monitoring fell short of its targets to monitor 20 percent of all distribution points monthly and to visit each site at least once a year, achieving only 11 percent monthly coverage in 2023, with over 50 percent of crisis response sites unvisited. The inefficient application of tools affected data quality and analysis, while the absence of strategy and updated operating procedures affected the quality of reporting to management and the identification of systemic issues. The country office needs to improve monitoring coverage, efficiently apply corporate monitoring tools, enhance data analysis and reporting, and strengthen the monitoring function. The audit acknowledges the difficulty in achieving the minimum monitoring requirements prescribed by the Global Assurance Project, given the contextual and resource constraints the country office faces.

10. Ineffective community feedback mechanisms (Observation 5): The country office faced significant challenges in receiving and managing beneficiary feedback, with outdated processes, limited staffing, and inefficient feedback channels. Despite certain improvements during the audit period, the mechanisms in place did not effectively manage and analyse beneficiary feedback, limiting the country office's ability to respond to feedback in a systematic manner, identify trends, and address systemic issues. As such, there is a need for improved systems, analysis, reporting, and staff and cooperating partner training.

11. The audit report also contains five observations with medium-priority agreed actions related to risk management, targeting and identity management, cash-based transfer, logistics, and cooperating partner and vendor management (see observations 1, 3, 6, 7 and 8 for details).

Actions agreed

12. Management has agreed to address the reported observations and implement the agreed actions by their respective due dates.

Thank you!

13. The Office of Internal Audit would like to thank managers and staff for their assistance and cooperation during the audit.



II. Country context and audit scope

South Sudan

14. Since independence in 2011, South Sudan has faced prolonged armed conflict marked by subnational violence, economic shocks and consecutive years of extreme flooding and localized drought. Poor transport and communication infrastructure perpetuates marginalization and inequitable access to social and economic opportunities. South Sudan is at the bottom of the Human Development Index, ranking 192 of 193 countries in 2024.¹ A 2016 analysis estimated that 67 percent of the population lived on less than USD 2.51 a day.² Under-five infant mortality was 99 per 1,000 newborns in 2022.³

15. Humanitarian needs remain alarmingly high, far exceeding the available resources. In 2023, an estimated 9.4 million people – two thirds of the population – required humanitarian assistance.⁴ This figure included 5.8 million residents, 1.9 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), 1.4 million returnees and 337,000 refugees. Humanitarian access is constrained by protracted insecurity, threats and violence against humanitarian personnel and assets, operational interference, and extremely poor infrastructure.

16. Since the outbreak of the conflict in Sudan in April 2023, over 905,000 returnees and refugees have fled into South Sudan, with an additional 337,000 people projected to arrive in 2025. The conflict has disrupted markets in South Sudan's border states, driving up the prices of essential commodities, including food, and worsening food insecurity.⁵ According to the November 2024 Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis, 6.3 million people are severely food insecure in crisis levels or worse. This number is projected to increase to 7.7 million people, approximately over 57 percent of the country's total population, during the peak of the lean season from April to July 2025.⁶ This represents an 8 percent increase from the 2024 lean season, where an estimated 7.1 million people were projected to face acute food insecurity.

WFP operations in South Sudan

17. WFP operations in South Sudan are guided by the 2023–2025 Country Strategic Plan (CSP), covering the period from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2025. The initial CSP budget of USD 3.7 billion was revised to USD 3.1 billion in August 2024 due to reduced funding forecasts, and the 2024 planned beneficiary caseload was adjusted from 7.3 million to 5.4 million. The CSP is the first in a series of three plans for an integrated, sequenced, and layered approach to WFP operations in South Sudan over the next 12 years to achieve incremental progress in lifesaving, resilience, development, and peace.

18. The CSP is aligned with South Sudan Vision 2040 and the 2021–2024 Revised National Development Strategy. It contributes directly to three of the four collective outcomes of the 2023–2025 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. Activities related to emergency assistance are also driven by the humanitarian response plan of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and informed by an IPC exercise.

19. In 2023, WFP assisted 5.4 million people with 184,000 metric tons (mt) of food and USD 58 million in cash-based transfers (CBT). Under the emergency response, WFP assisted 3.6 million people with general food assistance (including IDPs, refugees and new arrivals from Sudan), 1.5 million children, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and girls with specialized nutritious foods and 469,000 school-going children with school meals. Table 1 presents the actual expenditure for 2023 regarding strategic outcomes and related activities under the CSP.

¹ United Nations Development Programme. 2024. [Human development insights](#)

² World Bank. 2016. [Poverty headcount ratio at USD 2.15 a day \(percent of the population\)](#)

³ World Bank. 2022. [Mortality rate, under-five](#)

⁴ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2023. [South Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan 2023](#)

⁵ The Sudan corridor was key for the delivery of commodities to Upper Nile, Jonglei and Unity States in South Sudan.

⁶ Integrated Food Security Phase Classification. 2024. [Acute food insecurity and malnutrition analysis: September 2024 - July 2025](#)

**Table 1: 2023 expenditure related to CSP outcomes and activities⁷**

CSP – strategic outcome		CSP activities	2023 expenditure (USD in million)
01: Crisis response	01: Provide life-saving food and nutrition assistance to crisis-affected populations		385.7
02: Nutrition and livelihood programming	02: Provide nutrition and health support to targeted groups		105.6
	03: Provide nutritious school meals to schoolchildren and engage vulnerable urban and rural youth in skills training activities		11.2
03: Resilience building	04: Resilience-building activities, including community asset creation and climate adaptation		36.0
	05: Livelihood development and market support activities for food-insecure populations		4.0
	06: Develop, rehabilitate, and maintain essential infrastructure for targeted communities		4.8
04: Supporting national institutions	07: Policy support and technical assistance to the Government and partners		0.1
05: Common services	08, 09, and 10: Air transport, information management, logistics coordination and on-demand services		65.9
			613.3

20. WFP operations in South Sudan employ 1,010 staff members, spread across the country office in Juba and 13 field offices. In March 2024, the country office completed an organizational alignment exercise to optimize an affordable staffing level and field presence focused on critical programme delivery, resulting in a reduction of 348 staff members and the closure of three field offices.

Objective and scope of the audit

21. The objective of the audit was to provide assurance on the effectiveness of governance, risk management and internal controls related to WFP operations in South Sudan. Such audits are part of providing an annual and overall assurance statement to the Executive Director on governance, risk management and internal control. The audit focused on the three main activities implemented during the audit period – activities 1, 2 and 3 – which collectively accounted for 82 percent of the total expenditure and 90 percent of the beneficiaries assisted in 2023 (see Table 1).

22. To minimize duplication of efforts and leverage the assurance work of the second and third lines, the audit partially relied on the oversight and support missions from the Regional Bureau for Eastern Africa (hereinafter also the regional bureau). These included reviews of procurement and food safety and quality (March 2023), support mission for identity management with limited review of CBT (October 2023), logistics (July 2024), finance, management services and cooperating partner management (August 2024, report under draft at the time of audit fieldwork).

23. This resulted in full audit coverage for four areas: (i) risk management and oversight; (ii) programme design and implementation; (iii) monitoring; and (iv) community feedback mechanism. The audit also carried out tailored reviews of seven areas: strategic planning and staffing structure; resource mobilization; assessment, targeting and identity management; CBT; management of cooperating partners; logistics; and procurement. The audit also reviewed the implementation of the country office assurance action plan that resulted from the corporate Global Assurance Project.

24. The audit mission took place from 7 to 25 October 2024 at the country office in Juba and included visits to programme activities under the Maban and Malakal field offices. The audit was conducted in conformance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

⁷ WFP, 2023. [WFP South Sudan: Annual Country Report 2023](#)



III. Results of the audit

Audit work and conclusions

25. The audit report contains eight observations on governance and risk management, strategic and operational planning, targeting and identity management, monitoring, accountability to the affected population, CBT, logistics, and cooperating partner and vendor management. Three observations include high-priority agreed actions, while five contain medium-priority actions. Low-priority issues were discussed directly with the office and are not included in this report.

Risk management and management oversight

26. The country office demonstrated a strong risk management culture, integrating risk information into operational meetings at various levels, regular risk sharing with all stakeholders and the resourcing of a dedicated risk management unit. The country office periodically communicated risk information internally and externally to the regional bureau, headquarters, and donors. The donors interviewed for the purpose of the audit recognized the positive and transparent approach of the country office related to risk sharing.

27. During the audit period, the regional bureau conducted extensive oversight and support missions (as detailed in paragraph 22), while the centralized risk management unit carried out oversight reviews, including spot checks on cooperating partners in various field offices. In August 2024, with the support of the regional bureau, the country office conducted a fraud risk assessment focusing on CBT, identity management, logistics and cooperating partner management.

The Global Assurance Project and country office assurance action plan

28. In 2023, WFP rolled out the Global Assurance Project to ensure effective assurance and good-quality programming across WFP operations. As part of this corporate initiative, South Sudan, classified as one of the 31 high-risk operations, developed key deliverables, including a costed assurance action plan.⁸ The plan, developed with the support of the regional bureau, outlines specific actions that the country office will implement to address critical gaps in the five main workstreams and two cross-cutting areas by the end of 2024, with a total budget of USD 10 million.

29. The audit reviewed the country office's assurance action plan to assess whether it was informed by a gap analysis, designed to mitigate risks, appropriately costed, and monitored for implementation and cost status, with timely escalation of issues. Observations on the implementation of the assurance action plan and related corporate oversight are detailed in [Observation 1](#). The audit reviewed the actions initiated by the country office in 2024 to determine their alignment with the global assurance standards of WFP. Their operating effectiveness could not be tested or confirmed at the time of the audit report.

Operating deficits due to exchange rate disparity

30. In 2024, the country office's CBT operations faced significant challenges due to the widening disparity between the official and parallel market exchange rates for the South Sudanese pound. Between April and August 2024, the official South Sudanese pound exchange rate depreciated by 45 percent, while the parallel market rate dropped by 128 percent. By August 2024, the parallel market rate was 92 percent higher than the official rate, representing a 190 percent increase in the disparity since April.⁹

⁸ The plan is structured around five main workstreams: identity management, assessment and targeting; cooperating partner management; supply chain management; community feedback mechanisms; and monitoring. It also includes two cross-cutting workstreams: digital solutions and integration, and risk management.

⁹ WFP. 2024. Corporate tool for economic and market analysis. [South Sudan exchange rates, data visualized](#)



31. To ensure the purchasing power of beneficiaries, cash transfers disbursed in South Sudanese pounds were adjusted monthly based on market prices using the parallel exchange rate rather than official or United Nations rates. Currency conversions and purchase orders relied on the official exchange rate, creating a significant operational deficit. The country office projected an additional USD 20.9 million in costs for the April–December 2024 period due to this exchange rate discrepancy.

32. This issue has broader implications for all humanitarian actors providing cash assistance in South Sudan. In response, the United Nations country team has taken the lead in advocacy efforts and monitors the situation closely to address these challenges.

Observation 1: Issues with assurance action plan implementation and risk management

Progress in fully implementing the assurance action plan

33. The country office developed its assurance action plan (also action plan) following a gap analysis. The action plan included 33 action points with a target implementation date of December 2024. It was finalized in February 2024 with input and review from the regional bureau and relevant technical headquarters units. The action plan was updated regularly to adapt it to the changing operating context.

34. The country office made notable progress in implementing actions, particularly those related to targeting and identity management. However, as of October 2024, the country office reported limited progress toward the full implementation of the action plan. Only 18 percent of actions had been implemented, with 79 percent in progress and 3 percent not yet started. Given the varying degrees of implementation as of October 2024, it is unlikely that all actions will be fully implemented within 2024, including in key areas such as targeting and prioritization, monitoring, and community feedback mechanisms. Furthermore, multiple regional bureau oversight missions and this audit have highlighted additional gaps not captured in the 2023 gap assessment, which formed the basis for the action plan (see [Observation 3](#), [Observation 4](#) and [Observation 5](#)). The country office would benefit from re-assessing its compliance with assurance standards, and corporate assurance benchmarks to identify and address residual control gaps.

Gaps in risk management processes

35. The 2024 risk register included 38 risks, 10 of which were assessed as high residual risks and 28 as medium residual risks. The country office was aware of the key risks, risk management processes were well established, and risk discussions were embedded in various operational meetings.

36. Various contextual factors outside of WFP control contributed to persistently high residual risks despite mitigation efforts by the country office. However, in some instances, the underlying root causes of risks were not properly assessed, resulting in the formulation of extensive mitigation actions, some of which were sub-optimal in reducing risk levels. The country office risk reviews conducted in July and October 2024, did not adequately assess the impact of evolving contextual factors and effectiveness of the identified actions in reducing risk levels.

37. Four risks identified in the 2024 country office risk assessment exceeded the corporate risk appetite threshold. In the absence of clear guidance, the country office did not escalate these risks and/or adjust mitigation strategies with the support of the regional bureau and relevant headquarters units. Despite the country office implementing identified mitigation actions, which were the same for 2023 and 2024, the residual risks remained high, indicating the need to reassess risk response strategies - whether to accept the risk levels or develop additional mitigation controls. During the audit, the country office indicated that it had begun reviewing additional mitigation actions to ensure they are measurable, time-bound and linked to root causes.



38. The country office utilized various tools to monitor risks and their corresponding mitigation strategies, such as the risk register, global assurance action plan tracker, and fraud risk assessments. In 2024, these tools included 81 risks and 602 mitigation actions. Furthermore, additional mitigation actions related to the annual performance plan were documented in the functional units' action plans. The high number of risks and mitigation actions, particularly in the risk register, and gaps in the formulation of mitigation strategies, not only increased management's workload but also limited management's ability to prioritize high-impact risks and assess the effectiveness of mitigation actions to enable regular adjustment of critical actions.

Underlying causes: Process and planning | Inadequate risk analysis and management process; Process and planning | Rules and process, including for decision making unclear; Pending implementation of recent corporate guidance on alignment between the Global Assurance Project and the WFP Enterprise Risk Management framework.

Agreed Actions [Medium priority]

1. The country office will assess residual gaps related to the Global Assurance Project workstreams, consider implementation challenges, and, where required, implement supplemental actions to meet assurance benchmarks.
2. The country office, in collaboration with the Risk Management Division and the Regional Bureau for Eastern Africa, will:
 - (i) Undertake a focused review of the underlying causes of the high residual risks and risks exceeding corporate risk appetite to develop a streamlined set of effective risk response strategies and risk mitigation measures.
 - (ii) Based on good practices in other high-risk country operations, establish a risk escalation and sharing mechanism for residual risks exceeding corporate risk appetite thresholds.
3. The country office, in collaboration with the Regional Bureau for Eastern Africa, will compile the list of prioritized risks in the risk register and monitor the implementation of specific, measurable, and time-bound mitigation actions.

Timeline for implementation

1. 30 June 2025
2. 31 July 2025
3. 30 June 2025



Strategic and operational planning

39. Timely pre-positioning of food in South Sudan is essential to ensure that stocks are in place and near beneficiaries for distribution ahead of the rainy season, when 60 percent of roads in the country become unpassable (May to September), and to minimize the potential use of expensive food airdrops and airlifts. In 2024, the country office planned to pre-position 104,000 mt of food, meeting 57 percent of the operational requirement of 182,000 mt. The significant proportion of food necessitating pre-positioning underscores its critical role in maintaining uninterrupted assistance and minimizing operational costs during the challenging rainy season.

40. The audit assessed the timeliness, effectiveness, and monitoring of the pre-positioning exercise, focusing on the specific risks and impacts of insufficient pre-positioning on the logistics pipeline and the timely delivery of planned assistance during the rainy season.

Observation 2: Inadequate pre-positioning of food and stringent donor conditions

Inadequate pre-positioning

41. The country office struggled to pre-position required stocks before the rainy seasons of 2023 and 2024 due to delays in food shipments arriving in the country and the closure of the Sudan border. By April 2024, the end of the optimal pre-positioning window, only 46 percent of the planned stocks were in place, with some key locations receiving as little as 21 percent of the required stocks. By June 2024, 40 percent of the required tonnage remained undelivered. Similarly, by June 2023, 40 percent of planned quantities were undelivered in many locations.

42. These recurring logistical constraints resulted in severe programmatic and financial consequences impacting, by country office estimates, nearly 2 million beneficiaries through disruptions to planned distributions. Critical stock shortages were evident in areas like Maban, Malakal and Bentiu where available stocks were insufficient for distributions through to the end of the year, with roads rendered inaccessible due to rain and flooding. By September 2024, the country office had delivered 54 percent of the stock requirements to Malakal field office, 70 percent to Bentiu and 81 percent to Maban. Due to the critical stock shortages, the country office had to adjust ration compositions and distribution modalities in certain areas during 2024. This also necessitated the use of costlier transport options, such as airdrops. The country office estimates that it incurred additional costs of USD 30.5 million in 2024 to deliver 12,500 mt of commodities through air drops due to inadequate pre-positioning.

43. The annual prepositioning exercise relies on timely funding, accurate demand planning, and efficient food sourcing, with success dependent on food arriving by November-December of the preceding year. This requires strong advocacy with external and internal stakeholders to the country office, including donors and relevant headquarters units, for timely food arrival. In-country logistic preparations, including securing staffing, storage, and multimodal transport capacity, are essential to ensure efficient food movement to logistic hubs and cooperating partner's warehouses before road closures, in line with programme distribution plans.

44. In 2024, late arrival of food in-country, primarily due to delays in funding commitments, disruptions to regional logistic routes (e.g., the Sudan corridor closure), planning inefficiencies, and delayed donor in-kind food deliveries, hampered prepositioning efforts. Food arrived in May/June 2024, rendering timely delivery to final destinations challenging.

Donor conditions

45. Donor conditions, such as short terminal disbursement dates (TDDs), prolonged grant approval processes and strict earmarking by geography and activity, often left the country office with limited windows to distribute commodities on arrival in the country. At times, to comply with TDDs, the country office adopted extraordinary measures, including multiple ration distributions within the same month and assisting beneficiaries outside of the original plan.

46. For instance, in November 2023, the office distributed 444.3 mt of stock under emergency measures to avoid exceeding its December 2023 TDD. Similarly, in August 2024, the office implemented an exceptional plan



to distribute 1,900 mt of nutrition commodities ahead of the October 2024 TDD. These efforts, while ensuring compliance with donor requirements, highlight the operational strain and potential risks associated with such stringent conditions.

Underlying challenges and contributing factors

47. To address the funding gap, the country office requested advance financing of USD 59 million from headquarters, of which only USD 30 million was approved as Macro Advance Financing.¹⁰ Another request for the additional USD 29 million in January 2024 was rejected in March 2024. In both cases, the lead time for processing the advance financing request was a month. There was a misalignment between the country office, regional bureau, headquarters partnerships and corporate financing divisions regarding funding forecasts and collateral feasibility for advance financing, leading to prolonged negotiations and different expectations and interpretations between all stakeholders. There is an opportunity to streamline the funding forecast process, enhancing visibility and predictability to optimize the advance financing mechanism and improving the review process across headquarters units. Relevant headquarters units, including the Partnerships and Innovation Department and the Budgetary Policy and Strategic Financing Service, are already working to streamline these processes.

Underlying causes: External factors – beyond the control of WFP | Late funding availability, supply chain disruptions due to conflict and access; Process and planning | Planning inefficiencies; Process and planning | Rules and processes for funding forecasts and advance financing unclear.

Agreed Actions [High priority]

1. The country office will:
 - (i) Establish a prepositioning committee to be chaired by the Deputy Country Directors.
 - (ii) Conduct an annual prepositioning review exercise.
 - (iii) Develop a prepositioning strategy and planning cycle document that incorporates the interplay between upstream and downstream processes, forums, and stakeholders. This strategic document should include timelines, a cross-functional responsibility assignment matrix, and clearly defined triggers and escalation mechanisms for issues requiring attention from country office management, regional bureau, and relevant headquarters divisions.
2. The Partnerships and Innovation Department will undertake measures to enhance the implementation of WFP contribution forecasting procedures and will streamline the process of providing inputs for advance financing decisions.¹¹ This will ensure that country offices, regional bureaux and partnership teams across headquarters and global offices have unified information and insights on donor intelligence.
3. The Programme Budget Management Service, in coordination with the Budgetary Policy and Strategic Financing Service, will update the 2023 standard operating procedure for the advance financing mechanism to include clear and transparent criteria for approving macro advance financing, and expected lead time for financing requests.

Timeline for implementation

1. 31 May 2025
2. 31 December 2025
3. 30 June 2025

¹⁰ Country offices with sufficient collateral can request Internal Project Lending, while advance financing without collateral includes the Immediate Response Account for emergencies and Macro Advance Financing, which is allocated based on contribution forecasts and resource availability rather than demand.

¹¹ Partnerships and Advocacy and Resource Management departments' joint directive of 2019



Targeting and identity management

48. Needs assessments were informed by the WFP food security and nutrition monitoring system (FSNMS+) and integrated phase classification analysis. Targeting and identity management processes were well-established and functioning, with WFP relying on the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Organization for Migration (IOM) for joint targeting processes and identity management of refugee and IDP populations through data sharing and interoperable beneficiary management systems.

49. The country office used SCOPE¹² to register resident beneficiaries directly and import beneficiary data for refugees and IDPs from the UNHCR and IOM systems. With 7.4 million people registered on SCOPE – 54 percent with biometric data and 46 percent with biographic information – WFP successfully digitized transfer management for all population groups and identified 85,777 duplicate identities among host and IDP populations.

50. During the audit period, the country office made significant strides in digitizing transfers, with cash-based transfers fully digitized and 85 percent of food distributions managed digitally.¹³ The use of mobile point-of-sale devices was expanded to digitize transfers through WFP-issued SCOPE cards, SCOPE light cards, and identity cards issued by IOM and UNHCR. At the time of the audit fieldwork, the country office was piloting an enhanced SCOPE in-kind module to strengthen in-kind food reconciliation processes with the technical support of the regional bureau and relevant headquarters units.

51. The audit reviewed controls related to needs assessments, targeting, prioritization and identity management.

Observation 3: Challenges in beneficiary prioritization and identity verification

Host population targeting and prioritization

52. In 2023, the country office planned to transition from blanket assistance to vulnerability-based targeting for host, refugee and IDP populations. By 2024, it had transitioned to vulnerability-based assistance for the IDP and refugee caseloads supported by joint assessments conducted with UNHCR and IOM.¹⁴ However, the country office faced challenges in transitioning to vulnerability-based targeting for one million host population beneficiaries in locations with physical access constraints.¹⁵ During the audit fieldwork, the country office developed a plan to complete the prioritization of this caseload in 2025.

Challenges in IDP identity verification and authentication

53. The country office enabled inter-operability between the UNHCR, IOM and WFP systems, allowing beneficiaries to use UNHCR- and IOM-issued identity cards to redeem cash and food entitlements through WFP mobile point-of-sale devices. At the time of distribution, while UNHCR verified refugees biometrically, the absence of biometric verification for IDPs weakened identity verification controls, potentially allowing untargeted individuals possessing an IDP identity card to redeem assistance. During audit visits to multiple distribution sites, there were instances where individuals other than the registered household head or authorized alternates redeemed cash or food entitlements successfully, highlighting vulnerabilities in the verification and authentication process.

¹² SCOPE is the beneficiary information and transfer management platform of WFP.

¹³ In September 2024, the country office approved an emergency, no-regrets approach to flood response assistance for populations in locations initially deprioritized for general food distribution.

¹⁴ In September 2024, the country office operationalized refugee prioritization in Maban.

¹⁵ In 2014, WFP and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) established the rapid response mechanism to enable operational access in locations with physical access constraints. WFP initiated the transition of locations supported by this mechanism to field offices in 2019, finalizing the transition in 2024.



Limited beneficiary awareness of household size changes

54. The country office implemented a data quality process to identify and remove duplicate identities before distributions. For the IDP caseload, the deduplication exercise resulted in changes to the household size eligible for entitlements that were not reflected on IOM-issued identity cards. In many cases, this resulted in a mismatch between the printed household size on the cards and the actual household size eligible for entitlements. This led to beneficiary complaints as beneficiaries were unaware of the changes and expected entitlements based on the card information.

Underlying causes: External factors beyond the control of WFP | Limited access to host populations due to conflict and insecurity; Resources – third parties | Limited availability and capacity of cooperating partners to implement targeting/retargeting exercise; Process and planning | Inadequate identity verification process; and Process and planning | Inadequate community sensitization process.

Agreed Actions [Medium priority]

1. The country office will:
 - (i) Finalize and implement the targeting and prioritization plan, including a conflict-sensitive risk assessment, to operationalize vulnerability-based targeting for the host population in all geographically targeted locations.
 - (ii) Review the identity verification process for internally displaced people assistance and strengthen controls to accurately identify the registered household head or alternate during distributions.
2. The country office, in coordination with the International Organization for Migration, will assess the feasibility of timely reissuing identity cards reflecting the accurate household size of beneficiaries or introducing WFP instruments and implementing a community sensitization plan.

Timeline for implementation

1. 31 August 2025
2. 31 December 2025



Monitoring

55. The Research, Assessments and Monitoring unit, overseen by the Deputy Country Director, coordinates the country office's monitoring and community feedback mechanism processes. The audit assessed the country office's capacity to monitor the delivery of assistance, generate evidence for programme improvement and achieve desired results. Specifically, the audit reviewed the monitoring strategy, staffing, planning, coverage, reporting, escalation procedures and resolution of monitoring issues.

56. The country office has a well-established monitoring function, utilizing various tools to monitor programmes at activity/process, output, and outcome levels. Twice-yearly post-distribution monitoring measures outcome and process indicators, while food assistance activities (general food distribution, food for assets, school feeding and nutritional support) are monitored monthly. During the audit period, the country office utilized a corporate risk-based monitoring tool to plan monitoring activities and Mobile Operational Data Acquisition (MoDA) was effectively used to digitize the collection of process monitoring data.

Observation 4: Inadequate monitoring coverage and limited effectiveness

Monitoring coverage challenges and gaps

57. With over 2000 active sites in the year, the country office set a target to monitor 20 percent of all distribution points for each activity monthly and to visit each site at least once a year.¹⁶ During the audit period, the targets for process monitoring coverage were not achieved. In 2023, the monthly average coverage was 11 percent, and 55 percent of crisis response distribution points, such as general food distribution and the blanket supplementary feeding programme sites, were not even visited once. As of September 2024, 45 percent of sites in hard-to-reach locations also remained unvisited.

58. The audit recognized the inherent challenges of operating in South Sudan, including restricted access due to various factors, an absence of strong government counterparts and limited options for engaging third parties. These constraints significantly impeded the country office's ability to achieve consistent monitoring coverage throughout the year. Considering the monitoring coverage achieved in 2023 and 2024, along with the contextual and resource constraints impacting the operations in South Sudan, the country office is unlikely to be able to achieve the minimum monitoring requirements introduced by the Global Assurance Plan of conducting distribution monitoring at each distribution site and health center at least once every quarter.

Inefficiencies in monitoring tools, data quality, analysis and reporting

59. Area offices used an Excel-based tool to manage monthly monitoring plans, resulting in over 100 manually updated spreadsheets. To gain effective insights, the country office was required to consolidate these sheets. This approach proved inefficient and error-prone, leading to substandard data quality and hindering comprehensive analysis. Numerous errors in sample spreadsheets required repeated adjustments of the coverage analysis for audit purposes. The tool's inefficiencies affected the accuracy of coverage tracking, increased the workload for staff and impeded data-driven decision-making.

60. While the country office generated extensive evidence from process and activity monitoring, its analysis and reporting were predominantly operational and did not have strategic depth with minimal emphasis on identifying trends, risks, or systemic challenges. There were several specific gaps. First, determining the baseline number of active sites was difficult due to fluctuating variables and inconsistent updates to the risk-based Excel tool. The country office lacked a single reliable source for this crucial information. Second, a comprehensive coverage analysis was only conducted in 2024 with support from the regional bureau as part of the Global Assurance Plan. A similar analysis for 2023 did not exist and had to be performed retrospectively for audit purposes. Third, multiple monitoring coverage dashboards presented skewed results and did not capture key indicators defined in operating procedures, overlooking deficiencies identified in the comprehensive reviews for 2023 and 2024. Finally, the monthly monitoring reports submitted to management focused on documenting

¹⁶ As specified in the 2020 monitoring guidance note by the country office. The corporate minimum requirements leave the percentage of monthly coverage to be set by country offices, and it is recommended that each site be visited at least once a year.



completed actions rather than providing analysis of results, identifying emerging trends, and proactively addressing potential risks and systemic issues.

61. These gaps limited management's ability to fully understand critical challenges, and the country office may not have effectively leveraged the extensive evidence generated for programmatic improvements and addressing root causes.

Outdated operating procedures and reporting lines of field monitors

62. The monitoring function did not have a clear strategy and operated under an outdated SOP from 2020. Competing priorities prevented the country office from conducting lessons-learned exercises to thoroughly assess challenges, gaps, and opportunities. As a result, there is limited clarity on the function's direction, strategic objectives, management expectations, thresholds, and application of various tools.

63. In 2024, the monitoring function was decentralized to field offices, with field monitors reporting to field office staff while also handling other programme duties. While the country office monitoring function is independent, replicating this at the field office level might be challenging. To improve monitoring quality and identify training needs, a dual reporting line could be established for field monitors, allowing the country office monitoring and evaluation team to provide technical input during performance evaluations.

Underlying causes: Strategy, mandate, and authority | Unclear direction for planning, delivery, or reporting; External factors – beyond the control of WFP | Conflict, security, and access; Oversight and performance – insufficient oversight from the management; Oversight and performance | Performance measures and outcomes are inadequately measured/established; Tools, systems, and digitization | Inefficient application of tools and systems.

Agreed Actions [High priority]

1. The country office, with the support of the Regional Bureau of Eastern Africa will:
 - (i) Develop a prioritized action plan to address monitoring gaps, focusing on high-risk and underserved sites. This could include employing increased remote monitoring tools and partnering with third-party monitors or other organizations where feasible.
 - (ii) Enhance the functionality of the Excel-based risk monitoring tool by (a) systematic consolidation of multiple Excel sheets from all field offices; (b) incorporating automated quality checks to minimize errors and improve data reliability; and (c) establishing a centralized and regularly updated list of active sites with unique codes to streamline programme planning, monitoring, and food deliveries.
 - (iii) Improve monitoring analysis and reporting by (a) conducting regular in-depth data analysis (including coverage analysis) to generate actionable insights and identify trends, risks, and opportunities for improvement and (b) improving the content and format of monitoring reports to management. Reports should be actionable, helping management make informed decisions that address root causes and drive continuous programme improvements.
 - (iv) Develop a comprehensive monitoring strategy with clear objectives, methodologies and performance indicators aligned with the country office's priorities. Additionally, update the current standard operating procedure to reflect best practices and the new strategy, ensuring all monitoring staff are trained for consistent and effective implementation.

Timeline for implementation

1. 30 June 2025



Accountability to affected population

64. The country office actively participated in programme implementation, focusing on community sensitization and engagement. There was a well-executed prioritization exercise for the refugee population in August 2024 in the Maban area, which reduced the assisted population from 250,000 to 92,000 beneficiaries. Interviews with community leaders, beneficiaries and government stakeholders highlighted a high level of awareness about the programmes, entitlements, eligibility criteria and funding challenges of WFP. The government counterpart acknowledged the consistent efforts of WFP in sensitizing stakeholders and fostering effective community engagement to reach an agreement on the prioritized caseload. These observations aligned with the country office's post-distribution monitoring reports.

65. The audit reviewed the country office's community feedback mechanism against WFP corporate standards, focusing on reach and accessibility, minimum data collection, case handling procedures, information management systems, analysis, reporting, feedback tracking and quality assurance procedures.

Observation 5: Ineffective community feedback mechanisms

Limited capacity and outdated procedures

66. The community feedback mechanism procedures established in 2018 are outdated and do not align with updated corporate standards. The community feedback mechanism team at the country office was understaffed to implement and maintain a robust community feedback mechanism system effectively. At the time of the audit, the team included only three staff members, and an international consultant position was still vacant.

Inefficiencies of feedback channels

67. The country office recorded a significant rise in feedback cases, from 3,874 in 2022 to 11,987 in 2023, largely due to incorporating beneficiary feedback from cooperating partner operated helpdesks into the SugarCRM.¹⁷ The two primary feedback channels – helpdesks and a centralized hotline – had notable limitations:

- The centralized hotline is operated by three staff on two landlines and is available during business hours. Its utility is further hampered by South Sudan's low mobile access, with only 36 percent market penetration in 2024.¹⁸
- Helpdesks operated by cooperating partners at distribution sites, which accounted for 85 percent of recorded feedback in 2023, operated without standardized guidelines or training for cooperating partners. At distribution sites visited for the audit, feedback was manually recorded in open, non-confidential settings, less accessible to women beneficiaries and showed inconsistent practices. All the beneficiaries interviewed during the audit expressed a preference for raising complaints with community leaders instead of using the helpdesks or WFP hotline.

Absence of a robust feedback management process and limited trend analysis

68. The country office lacked a systematic approach to issue categorization, escalation, response, and closure. Case management relied on manual email systems; escalation and resolution pathways were unclear and outdated. While the country office recently received training from WFP headquarters aimed at aligning case management with corporate standards, efforts are needed to improve escalation processes, categorization, and staff training.

¹⁷ SugarCRM is an enterprise customer relationship management platform, a corporate digital solution for CFM management that facilitates the intake, management, analysis, actioning, and resolution of feedback received by affected populations.

¹⁸ GSMA. 2024. [Mobile Connectivity Index 2024](#)



69. Beneficiary feedback was primarily handled on a case-by-case basis, with limited analysis to identify trends and inform programmatic improvements. The 2023 accountability to affected population performance report did not have actionable insights, offering only generic and high-level operational information. This may have limited management's ability to identify systemic issues and make timely adjustments.

Inadequate community feedback mechanism visibility at distribution sites

70. There were limited awareness materials related to community feedback mechanisms at distribution points. The existing visibility posters were in English, limiting effective communication and accessibility of information to beneficiaries. Process monitoring reports repeatedly highlighted the absence of visibility posters at distribution and registration points. Enhancing the accessibility of information through multilingual posters and exploring other methods for localized contexts would significantly improve beneficiary awareness and engagement.

Underlying causes: Process and planning | Rules and processes, including for decision making, not timely updated; Policies and procedures | Absence of updated local guidelines; Oversight and performance | Insufficient oversight over partner organizations; Resources | Absence of/insufficient staff training; Tools, systems, and digitization | Absence of tools and systems; External factors – beyond the control of WFP | Contextual challenges related to mobile usage.

Agreed Actions [High priority]

1. The country office, with the support of the Regional Bureau of Eastern Africa, will:
 - (i) Conduct a gap assessment of the feedback mechanism processes and augment the capacity of the team handling the feedback mechanism.
 - (ii) Develop an action plan and update standard operating procedures to align with corporate standards and address identified gaps in feedback collection, case management and resolution processes. This would include upgrading the hotline infrastructure with interactive voice response capability and procedures to follow-up calls received but not attended and establishing minimum standards and oversight mechanisms for partner-operated helpdesks.
 - (iii) Develop a standardized feedback management framework with clear categorization, escalation and resolution protocols and automate the manual case management system.
2. The country office will conduct quarterly trend analysis of feedback information and develop actionable recommendations for reporting to management.
3. The country office will develop and distribute visibility materials on accountability to the affected populations, including community feedback mechanisms, in local languages at all distribution points.

Timeline for implementation

1. 30 June 2025
2. 30 September 2025
3. 30 June 2025



Cash-based transfers

71. In 2023, cash transfers accounted for 14 percent of the WFP assistance. The country office distributed USD 58 million¹⁹ in CBT to 1.8 million beneficiaries. Of which USD 52 million (95 percent) was distributed as unrestricted cash through financial service providers (FSPs) and USD 6 million (5 percent) in value vouchers under the school feeding programme.

72. Positive practices include the complete digitization and deduplication of the CBT caseload through the SCOPE system, monthly adjustment of CBT transfer values to align with market price fluctuations safeguarding beneficiaries' purchasing power, and cross-functional collaboration on CBT-related matters supported by regular weekly coordination meetings.

73. The audit reviewed specific controls, focusing on distribution planning, payment instructions and instruments, and transfer reconciliations. It relied on the limited review of CBT by the regional bureau support mission (see paragraph 22). The mission highlighted gaps in the use of SCOPE for refugees, delays in payments due to the heavy reconciliation process, offline payments to beneficiaries, segregation of duties and the absence of a CBT scale-up strategy. At the time of the audit fieldwork, the country office had implemented all the regional bureau recommendations.

Observation 6: Gaps in the assurance processes for cash operations

Inefficiencies in governance and oversight

74. The SOP guiding CBT processes in the country office, approved in 2022, had not been updated to reflect current operational practices and recent corporate guidelines. Though the country office carried out weekly coordination meetings for CBT operational issues, the cash working group meetings did not convene in accordance with its approved terms of reference, as it only met seven times during the 18-month audit period. Moreover, the cash working group was not regularly updated to reflect staff changes.

75. Country offices are required to prepare and approve timely transfer reconciliation reports for each distribution cycle. During the audit period, although transfer reconciliations were prepared regularly, they were not reviewed and endorsed by the reconciliation task force regularly. The cash working group often received and approved the reconciliation reports three to six months after distribution cycles, increasing the risk of financial and programmatic inaccuracies and limiting effective oversight.

76. The country office did not record CBT expenditures in the corporate financial system in a timely manner, leading to discrepancies between actual and recorded cash transfers to beneficiaries. Between January and June 2024, recorded transfers were 22 percent (USD 5 million) lower than actual transfers. At the time of the audit, the country office was addressing these gaps to ensure compliance with International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS).

77. The audit recognized the inherent challenges in operating in South Sudan, including internet connectivity issues and accessibility challenges that not only limited staff movements but also limited real-time data sharing and affected timely reconciliations. At the time of the audit, the country office planned to procure and deploy internet connectivity kits to improve the availability of real-time transaction data for timely reconciliation.

Financial service provider concentration risk and inadequate financial guarantee

78. During the audit period, the country office relied on a single FSP to facilitate 60 percent of its cash transfers out of the three pre-selected FSPs through a financial sector intelligence evaluation conducted in 2021. This created a concentration risk that could potentially impact operations should the provider experience disruptions or financial difficulties. The country office financial sector assessments identified South Sudan as a high-risk market environment, with a limited number of FSPs meeting WFP requirements. To mitigate the concentration risk, the country office had implemented various compensating controls and during the audit fieldwork, the country office was in the process of updating its financial sector intelligence to broaden its FSP base.

¹⁹ [WFP South Sudan: Annual Country Report 2023](#)



79. WFP's service agreement with FSPs stipulated a guarantee requirement based on projected monthly transfer values allocated to each FSP, with a base value of USD 1.2 million. This amount could be adjusted if projected transfers exceeded the base by 25 percent for three consecutive months. During the audit sample period, average monthly transfers exceeded these limits. For example, KCB bank received an average of USD 2.1 million per month from September to December 2023, exceeding the base value by 70 percent. Similarly, Equity Bank received USD 1.6 million in December 2023. The country office neither required FSPs to adjust the guarantee amount as per the service agreement nor documented its decision to maintain the existing level and accept the associated risks.

Risk of double redemption in certain cases

80. In September 2023, the country office introduced a mechanism to enhance interoperability between the UNHCR, IOM and WFP digital platforms for refugee and IDP operations. This approach enabled beneficiaries to use identity cards issued by UNHCR and IOM, featuring barcodes, instead of WFP-issued SCOPE cards for cash or food transfers, processed through the WFP mobile point-of-sale devices. The mechanism created a risk of multiple redemptions due to the offline nature of mobile point-of-sale devices and internet connectivity challenges. The country office initially identified USD 31,000 as potential double redemptions through the reconciliation process but cleared 45 percent of this amount as misreading by the WFP digital system. The country office deployed a digital solution in December 2023 to address the issue, but persistent connectivity challenges left USD 17,000 in potential over-redemptions even after its deployment. The country office was analyzing physical receipts from the FSPs to determine the real nature of these transactions flagged as over-redemption and was piloting an updated software to address the system gap moving forward.

Underlying causes: Process and Planning | Competing priorities, operational challenges, and fragmented CBT processes; External factors | Contextual factors including limited FSP geographical coverage and unpredictable financial landscape; Process and Planning | Inadequate process – delayed recording of expenditure by technical unit due to delayed reporting by FSPs and validation from field offices; and Tools, system, and digitization | Connectivity issues in the field.

Agreed Actions [Medium priority]

1. The country office will:
 - (i) Update the cash-based transfer standard operating procedures in line with the recent corporate guidelines.
 - (ii) Regularize the cash working group and monthly reconciliation task force meetings for effective oversight of the transfer reconciliation reporting process and expenditure recognition alignment with the actual transfers in a timely manner.
 - (iii) Evaluate and document the risks associated with cash balances with financial service providers and decide on the adequacy of the financial guarantee in line with the increased cash transfer values. Further, establish a risk-based mechanism to allocate cash transfers among financial service providers to mitigate the risks associated with over-reliance on a single provider.
2. The country office will reinforce the monthly reconciliation process as a detective control by actively monitoring the risk of double redemption after finalizing the verification process of the un-reconciled items.

Timeline for implementation

1. 30 April 2025
2. 30 September 2025



Logistics

81. South Sudan presents one of the world's most challenging logistical operations, with the lowest road density in Africa – just 15 kilometers per 1,000 square kilometers of arable land. Heavy rains and poor upstream water management cause severe flooding, destroying infrastructure and isolating communities, leaving them vulnerable, with limited opportunities for livelihood and reduced access to food. The conflict with Sudan disrupted supply chain operations along the northern corridor, prompting a shift to the southern corridor, relying on food supplies flowing from Kenya and Uganda into South Sudan.

82. The audit reviewed controls related to inventory management, high logistical costs, pre-positioning planning and commodity accounting and relied on the regional bureau's oversight review finalized in October 2024 for other logistical processes. The oversight review identified 2 high-risk and 16 medium-risk observations, with recommendations to address key areas, including (i) tackling staffing gaps; (ii) strengthening segregation of duties in fleet management; (iii) conducting comprehensive market assessments to enhance logistics service rosters; (iv) avoiding non-standard contracting modalities for transportation; and (v) improving logistics budget management for better visibility of food transfer costs and their components.

83. The logistics unit continues to implement optimization strategies for warehouses and transport operations.

Observation 7: Discrepancies between system and actual best-before dates

84. The best-before dates (BBDs) recorded in the Logistics Execution Support System varied from the actual BBDs printed on the commodities. Due to this, in Maban, commodities with varying BBDs were stacked together, resulting in cases of non-adherence to the best practice of issuing inventory by order of expiry dates. It is required that inventory is clearly labelled and stacked by BBD for easy identification at issuance to minimize potential expiry and food safety issues.

85. In Juba, the country office identified these discrepancies in August 2024, where 32 food commodity batches were found to have BBD variance of up to 242 days. In one instance, expired items were identified upon receipt at the Malakal field office, as reported in a food loss report.

86. These discrepancies were partly attributable to the receipt of commodities with mixed BBDs from suppliers, requiring additional effort from the country office to segregate mixed batches. During the audit fieldwork, headquarters halted stock swaps in the system and the country office initiated a comprehensive stock clean-up exercise in all field locations.

Underlying causes: Inadequate process | Stock swaps, upstream vendor packaging Issues; Unintentional human error | Ineffective repackaging processes within WFP locations.

Agreed Actions [Medium priority]

1. The country office will conduct a full clean-up of existing stock to ensure alignment between physical best-before dates, and the Logistics Execution Support System records and establish a mechanism to identify discrepancies at the point of receipt.
2. The country office, in coordination with the Supply Chain and Delivery Division will develop a mechanism to ensure that suppliers deliver commodities properly labelled and segregated as part of delivery requirements.

Timeline for implementation

1. 31 December 2025
2. 31 December 2025



Cooperating partner and vendor management

87. Goods and services vendors are primarily profit-driven commercial entities that supply market-available goods and services. Cooperating partners are WFP's operational partners, and they play a crucial role in implementing WFP programme activities. Beyond the field-based relationship, WFP and cooperating partners engage strategically to improve the partnership model, processes, and framework. Despite having distinct selection and management processes as well as specific SOPs, common issues were identified indicating the need to improve third-party risk management.

Selection processes of cooperating partners and vendors

88. The country office engaged 65 cooperating partners in 2023 and managed 109 field-level agreements (FLAs) with a total budget of USD 70 million. In 2024, these numbers decreased to 55 cooperating partners and 87 FLAs with a total budget of USD 59 million. The country office has improved its processes by consolidating multiple FLAs into single agreements, optimizing budgets to differentiate fixed and variable costs, and digitizing workflows through digital tools. The regional bureau review in August 2024 identified gaps in operational procedures, capacity reassessments and the balance between direct and open calls for FLAs. Efforts to address these issues, including updates to the United Nations partner portal, were ongoing during the audit.

89. During the audit period, the value of food procured by the country office amounted to USD 126 million.²⁰ The value of goods and services procured was USD 101 million. The regional bureau conducted a review of the procurement activities in 2023, which improved certain processes. These included partially updating the procurement roster, minimizing post-factum and waived procurements, and fostering strong collaboration with business units for procurement planning.

90. The audit reviewed controls related to selection, capacity assessment, contract and FLA management, and performance evaluations, including tailored tests on key controls governing the contracting of goods and services vendors.

Observation 8: Partner and vendor selection and performance evaluation issues

91. The following gaps were identified in the competitive selection, due diligence, and risk management processes related to contracting cooperating partners and goods and services vendors:

- The country office awarded 80 percent of FLAs (69 out of 87) through direct calls without a competitive process. While this approach complies with corporate policies and maintains continuity with high-performing cooperating partners, it limits opportunities to identify potentially more cost-efficient and innovative partners. It is also recognized that the competitive selection of cooperating partners would be difficult to achieve due to certain factors, such as the use of UNICEF partners under joint nutrition programme implementation, a limited pool of context-appropriate partners, risks of losing established investments and community networks, and security issues in various locations.
- In 2024, 61 percent of FLAs were signed post-factum, that is, after the start of the implementation period, with 4 percent signed 90 days after the FLA start date. Such delays may affect the effectiveness of monitoring and implementation.
- The last comprehensive review of vendor rosters for goods and services was conducted in 2022 (except for engineering services, which was updated in 2024). While vendor rosters were reorganized into defined categories through ad hoc reviews, a complete and systematic review and update has not been undertaken. At the time of the audit, the country office indicated that it had initiated the expression of interest for the local food suppliers, civil construction, road works (jointly with UNOPS), and financial service providers.
- While the country office carried out the UN sanction checks on a regular basis, the vendor sanctions and suspensions roster, maintained in Excel, was not updated regularly, or endorsed formally by the

²⁰ A total of 74 percent of food was procured through the Global Commodity Management Facility, and 25 percent was in-kind contribution.



country office Vendor Management Committee.²¹ The country office expected to improve management of the suspension list through a smart sourcing tool rolled out by headquarters. Additionally, some vendors' legal documents had expired post-contracting, and no mechanism was in place to track and maintain their validity.

92. The following inefficiencies existed in the performance evaluation processes for both cooperating partners and vendors:

- Cooperating partner performance evaluations were not completed in a timely manner, with some evaluations for 2023 still pending as of October 2024. The mechanism for tracking actions resulting from these evaluations was inadequate, lacking specific timelines and accountability measures. At the time of the audit, the country office was in the process of moving the non-governmental organization performance evaluation process to a digital tool.
- The country office did not conduct progressive performance evaluations of vendors on an annual basis, instead evaluating performance only at the end of the contract. This approach may limit the ability to proactively address vendor performance issues and reduce accountability in vendor management. It also affects operational efficiency during the contract term, particularly as long-term agreements are issued to vendors for key categories such as fuel, engineering, facilities, security, and CBTs.

Underlying causes: Process and planning | Inadequate risk management; Oversight and performance | Insufficient management oversight; External factors | Underdeveloped markets for the publication of expression of interest; Third parties – insufficient due diligence; and Process and Planning | Inadequate process.

Agreed Actions [Medium priority]

1. The country office will:
 - (i) Adopt a pragmatic and risk-based approach to cooperating partner selection with the aim to increasing the proportion selected through competitive processes. Additionally, it will evaluate and document the risks associated with direct partner selection due to operational and contextual factors.
 - (ii) Streamline field-level agreement workflows by defining clear timelines for renewals and approvals, ensuring alignment with corporate guidance on the partnership lifecycle and monitoring progress against deliverables.
 - (iii) Review and update the vendor roster for major procurement categories by issuing expressions of interest.
 - (iv) Establish a structured approach to conducting partner and vendor performance evaluations annually and ensure that all stakeholders contribute in a timely manner to enhance the overall effectiveness of the performance management system.
2. The country office, in coordination with the Supplier Relationship Management unit in headquarters, will adopt a mechanism to monitor multiple sources of sanctions and to ensure timely updates and endorsement of the sanctions and suspension roster for enhanced compliance and risk management.

Timeline for implementation

1. 30 June 2025
2. 31 December 2025

²¹ The United Nations Global Marketplace is the procurement portal of the United Nations system that allows the country offices to check whether suppliers have been sanctioned by other United Nations entities. The headquarters vendor management committee also tracks certain types of vendor sanctions.



Resource management

93. The audit reviewed selected key controls of the country office's processes, including (i) the resource mobilization strategy and action plan, (ii) the contribution forecasting process and (iii) the overall management of donor relations. Key controls were established and operating effectively.

94. The Resource Management Committee, chaired by the Deputy Country Director, was functional and met regularly. The partnership unit held monthly briefings with the resource partners, maintained a donor mission calendar and undertook various donor engagement missions during the audit period. The country office partnership action plan, prepared in 2022, was being updated and the country office was in the process of drafting a government engagement plan for 2025. Findings related to contribution forecasting and negotiations for the terminal disbursement dates are covered in [Observation 2](#).



Annex A – Agreed action plan

The following table shows the categorization, ownership and due date agreed with the audit client for all observations raised during the audit. This data is used for macro analysis of audit findings and monitoring the implementation of agreed actions.

The agreed action plan is primarily at the country office level, and two headquarters entities.

#	Observation title	Area	Owner	Priority	Timeline for implementation
1	Issues with assurance action plan implementation and risk management	Risk management and management oversight	Country office Risk Management Division Regional Bureau for Eastern Africa	Medium	1. 30 June 2025 2. 31 July 2025 3. 30 June 2025
2	Inadequate repositioning of food and stringent donor conditions	Strategic and operational planning	Country office Partnership and Innovation Department Programme Budget Management Service	High	1. 31 May 2025 2. 31 December 2025 3. 30 June 2025
3	Challenges in beneficiary prioritization and identity verification	Targeting and identity management	Country office	Medium	1. 31 August 2025 2. 31 December 2025
4	Inadequate monitoring coverage and limited effectiveness	Monitoring	Country office	High	1. 30 June 2025
5	Ineffective community feedback mechanisms	Accountability to the affected population	Country office	High	1. 30 June 2025 2. 30 September 2025 3. 30 June 2025
6	Gaps in the assurance processes for cash operations	Cash-based transfers	Country office	Medium	1. 30 April 2025 2. 30 September 2025
7	Discrepancies between system and actual best before dates	Logistics	Country office	Medium	1. 31 December 2025 2. 31 December 2025
8	Partner and vendor selection and performance evaluation issues	Cooperating partner and vendor management	Country office	Medium	1. 30 June 2025 2. 31 December 2025



Annex B – Definitions of audit terms: ratings and priority

1 Rating system

The internal audit services of UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS and WFP adopted harmonized audit rating definitions, as described below.

Table B.1: Rating system

Rating	Definition
Effective/ satisfactory	The assessed governance arrangements, risk management and controls were adequately established and functioning well, to provide reasonable assurance that issues identified by the audit were unlikely to affect the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity/area.
Some improvement needed	The assessed governance arrangements, risk management and controls were generally established and functioning well but needed improvement to provide reasonable assurance that the objective of the audited entity/area should be achieved. Issues identified by the audit were unlikely to significantly affect the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity/area. Management action is recommended to ensure that identified risks are adequately mitigated.
Major improvement needed	The assessed governance arrangements, risk management and controls were generally established and functioning, but needed major improvement to provide reasonable assurance that the objectives of the audited entity/area should be achieved. Issues identified by the audit could negatively affect the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity/area. Prompt management action is required to ensure that identified risks are adequately mitigated.
Ineffective/ unsatisfactory	The assessed governance arrangements, risk management and controls were not adequately established and not functioning well to provide reasonable assurance that the objectives of the audited entity/area should be achieved. Issues identified by the audit could seriously compromise the achievement of the objectives of the audited entity/area. Urgent management action is required to ensure that the identified risks are adequately mitigated.

2 Priority of agreed actions

Audit observations are categorized according to the priority of agreed actions, which serve as a guide to management in addressing the issues in a timely manner. The following categories of priorities are used.

Table B.2: Priority of agreed actions

High	Prompt action is required to ensure that WFP is not exposed to high/pervasive risks; failure to take action could result in critical or major consequences for the organization or for the audited entity.
Medium	Action is required to ensure that WFP is not exposed to significant risks; failure to take action could result in adverse consequences for the audited entity.
Low	Action is recommended and should result in more effective governance arrangements, risk management or controls, including better value for money.

Low-priority recommendations, if any, are dealt with by the audit team directly with management. Therefore, low-priority actions are not included in this report.

Typically audit observations can be viewed on two levels: (a) observations that are specific to an office, unit or division; and (b) observations that may relate to a broader policy, process or corporate decision and may have a broad impact.²²

²² An audit observation of high risk to the audited entity may be of low risk to WFP as a whole; conversely, an observation of critical importance to WFP may have a low impact on a specific entity, but have a high impact globally.



3 Monitoring the implementation of agreed actions

The Office of Internal Audit tracks all medium-risk and high-risk observations. Implementation of agreed actions is verified through the corporate system for the monitoring of the implementation of agreed actions. The purpose of this monitoring system is to ensure that management actions are effectively implemented within the agreed timeframe to manage and mitigate the associated risks identified, thereby contributing to the improvement of WFP's operations.

The Office of Internal Audit monitors agreed actions from the date of issuance of the report, with regular reporting to senior management, the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee and the Executive Board. Should action not be initiated within a reasonable timeframe, and in line with the due date as indicated by management, the Office of Internal Audit will issue a memorandum to management informing them of the unmitigated risk due to the absence of management action after review. The overdue management action will then be closed in the audit database and such closure confirmed to the entity in charge of the oversight.

When using this option, the Office of Internal Audit continues to ensure that the office in charge of the supervision of the unit which owns the actions is informed. Transparency on accepting the risk is essential and the Enterprise Risk Management Division is copied on such communication, with the right to comment and escalate should they consider the risk accepted is outside acceptable corporate levels. The Office of Internal Audit informs senior management, the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee and the Executive Board of actions closed without mitigating the risk on a regular basis.



Annex C: Acronyms

BBD	Best-before date
CBT	Cash-based transfer
CSP	Country strategic plan
FLA	Field-level agreement
FSP	Financial service provider
IDP	Internally displaced person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
mt	Metric ton
SOP	Standard operating procedure
TDD	Terminal disbursement date
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WFP	World Food Programme