

Management Comments to the Internal Audit of WFP Operations in Namibia (AR/25/11)

WFP Management welcomes the observations made by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) in its internal audit report (AR/25/11) on WFP operations in Namibia. The internal audit covered the period from 1 January 2024 to 31 March 2025 and focused on organizational structure and staffing, risk management and oversight, programme design and implementation, procurement, resource management and monitoring. The internal audit also included tailored reviews of the strategic planning and performance and structured interviews with key stakeholders. WFP Management appreciates the constructive engagement of the internal auditors and the opportunity to reflect on the audit outcomes.

The operational context in Namibia during the audit period was shaped by substantial challenges that affected programme delivery. As part of WFP's ongoing efficiency efforts and need to address global funding constraints, a decision was made to close the Regional Bureau for Southern Africa. While a broader footprint review across 31 countries, including Namibia, is currently taking place, the country office is now organizationally located within the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office located in Nairobi. During the period in question, the country experienced a severe El Niño-induced drought, prompting a state of emergency in May 2024 where the Government scaled up its drought relief programme, with support from United Nations agencies including WFP. These efforts coincided with preparations for the November 2024 national elections, thus complicating the operating environment. Despite these challenges, the country office remains committed to supporting national priorities, particularly in drought response, school feeding, and food systems transformation, while navigating staffing and resource limitations.

WFP Management appreciates that the audit report acknowledged several strengths and good practices in the Namibia Country Office. These include strategic alignment with government priorities, meaningful contributions to national systems through technical assistance and digital transformation, and leadership in United Nations wide efforts to consolidate procurement and improve operational efficiencies. The country office introduced innovative field mission support mechanisms and strengthened internal capacity through surge staffing and on-the-job training. These initiatives reflect a proactive and adaptive approach to delivering operations. Lessons learned from pilot projects and gap analyses have informed ongoing improvements in targeting, identity management, and community feedback mechanisms.

WFP Management notes the audit's overall conclusion of major improvement needed to provide reasonable assurance of achieving objectives. WFP Management acknowledges the eight observations raised and has agreed to implement all recommended actions within the stipulated timelines. Several actions have already been initiated, and the country office remains committed to ensuring full implementation across all priority

areas. With regard to the four (4) high-priority observations, WFP Management recognizes the need to refine strategic planning and positioning, particularly in relation to food systems. The country office is taking steps to reassess WFP's comparative advantages and update the Country Strategic Plan accordingly. In response to oversight and risk management observation, internal controls are being strengthened, a fraud risk assessment support mission will be supported by headquarters during first quarter of 2026, and oversight committee functions are being formalized. In addition, a hybrid strategic workforce planning and organisational alignment exercise is underway to address structural and capacity gaps. Programme design improvements are also in progress, including stakeholder consultations and documentation of lessons learned.

The country office is updating the risk register and strengthening internal controls to address weaknesses in oversight, procurement, and advance management. CFO will strengthen the advance payment process by updating related guidance and tools, enhancing oversight through the existing country office dashboard, and introducing additional risk mitigation measures based on a revised risk assessment. These actions are expected to reinforce governance, enhance programme delivery, and strengthen risk management. The country office acknowledges that addressing some of the issues raised will require substantial support from various WFP global functional divisions. Prioritizing and coordinating this support is essential, especially in light of the country presence footprint review, which may result in an alternative presence model.

In conclusion, while the audit identified areas requiring major improvement, it also affirmed WFP Namibia's commitment to national priorities and its capacity to adapt under challenging circumstances. WFP Management valued the audit's constructive approach and considers the outcomes a valuable roadmap for strengthening operations and enhancing WFP's impact in Namibia. WFP Management remains dedicated to continuous improvement and to delivering on its mandate with integrity and effectiveness.

WFP Management thanks OIG for their constructive engagement and thorough analysis. Implementing the agreed actions will significantly enhance operational effectiveness and strengthen WFP's governance, risk management, and internal control processes in Namibia.