

MANAGEMENT COMMENTS TO THE INSPECTION REPORT 01/2012 SMALL COUNTRY OFFICES IN ODC REGION

Note on inspection reports

Inspection reports are produced by the Inspector General under paragraph 20 of the Charter of the Oversight Office which explains that: *“the scope of inspections encompass the provision of objective information to management about field offices, units in Headquarters and processes, in order to assist management in ensuring optimal use of resources and compliance with regulatory instruments and Executive Board decisions, to facilitate accountability and ensure effective monitoring systems, and to recommend actions to promote effectiveness, efficiency and integrity.”*

Inspection reports do not contain specific recommendations but provide observations and opportunities, which are directed to WFP Management for consideration as part of the normal process of examining and reviewing the wide range of ideas, thoughts and suggestions for beneficial change presented for management consideration.

Comments

WFP Management welcomes this thoughtful and insightful review of a selection of small Country Offices led by national officers or junior international staff and reporting to the Cairo Regional Bureau – OMC (formerly known as ODC).

The report is also timely. The key principle of the Framework for Action for strengthening WFP, dated 18 June 2012, is to make Country Offices the center of gravity for reaching the people that WFP serves. The organizational design places Regional Bureaux as the primary platform for managing, overseeing and supporting Country Offices, with the necessary capacity to respond to the needs of the Country Offices. Steps have already been taken to improve support for Country Offices and ensure that WFP’s strategy and policies are implemented. The Management Plan 2013-2015 increased the Programme Support and Administrative resources allocated to the Regional Bureaux.

Furthermore, in recent years WFP Management has undertaken several initiatives to both analyse and then tailor support to smaller Country Offices. These include: (i) actions related to the *Ability and Readiness of Nations to Reduce Hunger: Analysing Economic and Governance Capacities for Hunger Reduction*, which set out to articulate countries’ ability and readiness to reduce hunger and to lay the foundation for engagement with host governments by identifying important capacity-development and hand-over activities; and (ii) the *DSC Transition Package Exercise*, whose goal was to provide adequate technical assistance and the required resources to allow Country Offices to realign their presence in country.

The inspection report makes clear that the management arrangements for these small Country Offices developed in response to different personnel circumstances, necessitating the non-standard use of national officers or junior international staff to act as officer-in-charge and under more direct supervision of the Regional Bureau. The inspection report provides useful positive comments on the effectiveness of these ad hoc arrangements. WFP Management is reassured to hear that these arrangements are working well. The report also identifies a number of opportunities for making these arrangements more effective.

The report’s overall conclusion is that such offices may have a role to play in the future organizational structure of WFP. However, the report wisely recognises that such an approach is predicated on (i) a proper design for such offices and (ii) a framework for oversight, assistance and training by the Regional Bureaux. WFP Management confirms that these are two fundamental caveats that must be further examined before firm conclusions can be drawn about the suitability of these ad hoc arrangements for wider application.

WFP Management will consider this issue and all the suggestions for improvement contained in the report as part of the much wider review of Country Office functions and structures envisaged as part of the implementation of Fit for Purpose — WFP’s New Organizational Design.