



## 1. Project Data

<b>Project ID</b> P160717	<b>Project Name</b> Data for Decision Making		
<b>Country</b> Central African Republic	<b>Practice Area(Lead)</b> Poverty and Equity		
<b>L/C/TF Number(s)</b> IDA-D1710,IDA-E1220,TF-A5107	<b>Closing Date (Original)</b> 31-May-2022	<b>Total Project Cost (USD)</b> 13,838,681.65	
<b>Bank Approval Date</b> 31-Mar-2017	<b>Closing Date (Actual)</b> 31-Aug-2023		
	<b>IBRD/IDA (USD)</b>	<b>Grants (USD)</b>	
Original Commitment	10,494,000.00	494,000.00	
Revised Commitment	13,350,134.22	489,762.51	
Actual	13,838,805.80	489,762.51	
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## 2. Project Objectives and Components

### a. Objectives

According to the Financing Agreement dated May 24, 2017 (FA, p. 5) and the Project Appraisal Document (PAD, p. 11), the Project Development Objective (PDO) was:

**“To increase the capacity of ICASEES [1] to produce and publicly disseminate statistics through data recovery, institutional development and support to data production.”**



[1] Central African Institute of Statistics and Economic and Social Studies (*Institut Centrafricain des Statistiques, des Etudes Economiques et Sociales*)

In 2022, a third restructuring provided Additional Financing (AF) of US\$3 million to close a cost overrun but did not revise the project's PDO or components.

For the purposes of this review, the PDO has been parsed as follows:

1. To increase the capacity of ICASEES to produce statistics;
2. To increase the capacity of ICASEES to publicly disseminate statistics.

**b. Were the project objectives/key associated outcome targets revised during implementation?**

No

**c. Will a split evaluation be undertaken?**

No

**d. Components**

There were two components that remained the same during the life of the project. Related indicators/targets also remained the same, except for an intermediate gender indicator added to Component 2 as described below. Additional funding was added at the third restructuring to close a cost overrun.

**Component 1: Statistical recovery, rehabilitation, professionalization and modernization of ICASEES** (Approval: US\$1.99 million; Revised after AF: US\$2.2; Actual: US\$2.80 million) (PAD, Table 1 and ICR A3 for approval; ICR, para 27 for revised and A3 and additional information during ICRR preparation for actual).

This component aimed to strengthen ICASEES capacity in recovering lost databases, archiving databases and making them publicly accessible online; to improve ICASEES' work environment supporting the rehabilitation of its physical and data infrastructure; to strengthen management practices and adequate adherence to procedures in all areas; and to provide technical assistance in support of urgent data access, recovery and renewal (PAD, p. 12-14). There were four sub-components:

- data recovery;
- rehabilitation of ICASEES' physical and data infrastructure;
- professionalization and modernization of ICASEES' management; and
- technical assistance in support of urgent data access, recovery and renewal.

**Component 2: Data collection, production, and dissemination** (Approval: US\$8.50 million; Revised after AF: US\$10.80 million; Actual: US\$11.04 million).

This component aimed to help the Government strengthen national accounts by improving critical source data and to modernize data production and stimulate analysis and dissemination of data in a timely and cost-effective manner and improve quality control (PAD, p. 15-17). There were two sub-components:

- collection of critical data using a Performance Based Financing (PBF) approach; and



- capacity development in support of data production and dissemination.

### Significant changes during implementation

**Restructuring No. 1:** was approved on November 1, 2018 (ICR, p. 9) to transfer the project's fiduciary responsibility from the Economic and Financial Reform Unit (*Cellule de Suivi des Reformes Economiques et Financières*, CS-REF) at the Ministry of Finance and Budget to ICASEES. The closing date of the Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building (TFSCB), applicable to sub-component 1.4, was extended one year from April 15, 2019 to April 15, 2020, (ICR, para 25).

**Restructuring No. 2:** was approved on April 14, 2020 to extend the TFSCB's closing date from April 15, 2020, to October 15, 2020 to allow for completion of activities in sub-component 1.4 financed by the TFSCB Grant and interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic as travel restrictions interrupted TA missions and border closures delayed the delivery of IT equipment. These activities mainly supported revision of the CPI and online data archiving and dissemination (ICR, para 26 and 29).

**Restructuring No. 3:** was approved on April 12, 2022 to provide AF of US\$3 million (IDA Grant) to close a cost overrun on relevant activities; finance an extension to the main ICASEES building; extend the project's closing date from May 31, 2022, to August 31, 2023; move the project's Environmental Assessment (EA) category from C (partial assessment) to B; and add an intermediate-level gender indicator to the Results Framework (RF) to fill gender data gaps and support the formulation of evidence-based policies. No new activities were added (ICR, para 27, para 35).

The financial gap was caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and insecurity crises that affected the implementation of the census cartography and other major surveys that represented 85% of the project cost. Project cost increased from US\$1.5 million to US\$2.2 million for Component 1, and from US\$8.5 million to US\$10.8 million for Component 2.

#### e. Comments on Project Cost, Financing, Borrower Contribution, and Dates

**Project Cost:** The project cost at appraisal was US\$10.5 million. The revised cost after AF was US\$13.5 million. The actual disbursed was US\$13.8 million. The differences are accounted for by foreign exchange adjustments.

**Financing:** The project was financed by an IDA grant of US\$10.45 million and US\$0.49 million from a TFSCB.

**Borrower Contribution:** The Central Africa Republic did not provide any counterpart funding.

**Dates:** The project was approved on March 31, 2017, signed on May 24, 2017, and became effective on October 31, 2017. The original closing date was April 15, 2019. The project was extended by a total of 52 months with 3 restructurings. The project closed on August 31, 2023.

### 3. Relevance of Objectives



## Rationale

**Country context.** The Central African Republic (CAR) is a large landlocked country categorized as Fragile and Conflict-Affected States (FSC) due to its long history of political instability and violence. The 2015 Mangui Forum for peace building culminated in a new constitution and democratic presidential and legislative elections in 2016, leading to the establishment of an inclusive government and key check-and-balance institutions (CPF, p.7).

The country's statistical system and memory were severely damaged and lost during conflict due to pillage of archives and servers with master data files lost, including the digital cartography of the 2003 census. Remaining data needed to be recovered from personal computers, except for a large part of paper documents that was saved (PAD, p. 9-10).

ICASEES was under the administrative supervision of the Ministry of Economy, Planning, and International Cooperation but lacked financial autonomy, despite having legal autonomy. It was in charge of producing core statistical indicators, including sector statistics with line ministries. Many of ICASEES staff disappeared after the conflict, but staff who remained were motivated and technically competent. Most databases were obsolete and did not reflect the current economic and demographic reality of the country (PAD, p. 10) This situation not only impaired the institute's ability to support policy decision, but also to inform and monitor the recovery and peace-building process.

The project's PDO 1 was relevant as it would support the production of statistics through the data recovery (digital archiving and physical rehabilitation) and institutional development of ICASEES' capacity to produce statistics. PDO2 was relevant because it would address the problem of data dissemination by increasing the capacity of ICASEES to publicly disseminate statistics. In addition, capacity building focused on updating technical skills in selected areas and strengthening general management would support the two PDOs.

**Bank strategy.** The project was part of the broad World Bank Group's (WBG) strategy to address post-conflict needs in the Central African Republic. It was aligned with the 2014 World Bank early crisis response which included US\$100 million in emergency operations and the 2015 Country Engagement Note (CEN) that described the need to continue with crisis response and potential next steps for recovery and development. Improving the planning capacity of the state through the production of data for policy was fundamental in the WB strategy.

The project was programmed for approval in 2017 with the objective of informing the design of several pipeline projects and strategic exercises such as the Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD) and the Country Partnership Framework (CPF) and providing data to monitoring implementation progress of the national plan. The successful elections in early 2016 and the November 2016 donor roundtable in Brussels were beneficial to achieve these objectives as the Bank had aimed to provide additional support from the IDA Turnaround Regime (2016) to help break the cycle of violence (ICR, p. 6)

At project closing, the PDO was aligned with the Bank's CPF FY21-25. CPF's Objective 1.4 aimed to establish lasting safety nets through using Household Living Conditions Survey data for targeting beneficiaries. CPF's Objective 2.1 aimed to improve Core Government Functions and Institutions for Effective Service Delivery. Activities included increasing the capacity of ICASEES (CPF, p. 70, ICR, para 40).



**Government strategy.** The project objectives were based on the country strategy outlined in the 2015 Country Engagement Note (CEN) and were fully aligned with the government priorities, based on extensive stakeholder’s consultations. The CEN described the need to continue with crisis response and potential next steps for recovery and development over an 18-month period (July 2015 – end 2016). The project’s PDO was aligned with the objectives of the second, out of two phases, which were on stabilization, reconstruction, and economic recovery, but improving the planning capacity of the state, including though the production of data for policy (ICR, p.8).

The project’s PDO remained highly consistent with the country’s development priorities at project’s end. The project interventions supported a key pillar of the national program to inform government decisions having a direct impact on social contracts (pillar 3: renew the social contract between the State and the population) (ICR, para 40).

During project implementation, CAR was also at a critical political and social inflection point with the signing of an ambitious Peace Accord and a double electoral cycle. The Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation signed in 2019 by the Government and the 14 officially recognized armed groups, articulated the country’s roadmap towards stabilization. The Presidential and General Elections, to be held before April 2021, and local elections in 2022, were a major test for the country’s democratic governance and stabilization (CPF FY21-25, p.3).

**Level of ambition of the project.** The overall level of ambition of the project was appropriate. The PDOs were clear, simple and highly relevant for the government and the World Bank strategy for the country.

The overall relevance of the PDO is rated as High.

## Rating

High

## 4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)

### OBJECTIVE 1

#### Objective

Increase the capacity of ICASEES to produce statistics.

#### Rationale

**Theory of Change.** The project activities aimed to increase the capacity of ICASEES to produce statistics. The causal links between project activities (inputs), outputs and outcomes were logical. The outputs of activities such as data recovery including the digital archiving of statistical publications, improving demographic and socioeconomics statistics through enhanced census cartography, production of the Living Conditions Survey, annual agriculture surveys, revised CPI, communal monographies surveys, and revised national accounts, and improved and modernized data production and dissemination were likely to contribute



to the desired outcome of increasing the capacity of the national statistical institute to produce data (ICR, Figure 1, p. 7).

**Key Outputs.** Data recovery including the digital archiving of statistical publications.

- Two electronic archiving systems have been set up at ICASEES: the data and/or document for 26 surveys were recovery and archived locally and online.
- Improving demographic and socioeconomic data. New data have been collected and used to revise several national accounts components including the enhanced Census Cartography (digital Census Cartography), Household Living Conditions Survey, Annual Agricultural Survey, Communal Monographies Survey, revision of national accounts and revision of the Consumer Price Index.

**Intermediate Results Indicators (IRI) and outcomes:**

- **IRI 1: Newly produced data and documents digitized and stored in a secure, publicly accessible data archive.** This target was exceeded, with six new databases being digitized and stored in a secure, publicly accessible data archive, compared to the target of 4. These include the digital census cartography, household living conditions survey, annual agricultural surveys, communal monographs survey, revision of the national accounts database and revision of the CPI. **Achieved.**
- **IRI 2: Survey questionnaires are reviewed by data users and checked for the possibility for gender disaggregation.** The target was achieved, with all questionnaires including variables for gender disaggregation. **Achieved.**
- **IRI 3: National sampling frame is updated.** The target was fully achieved and exceeded. The project contributed to an update of the national sampling frame and produced additional national sampling frames, including of schools and health facilities. **Achieved.**
- **IRI 4: Statistical data sets produced in accordance with an agreed data production calendar. The target was achieved.** The project supported ICASEES in meeting routine publications for data sets such as the price index and certain directories and quarterly bulletins. **Achieved.**
- **IRI 5: Number of United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) Minimum List Gender I indicators available using data collected within the past five years.** The target of 35 was achieved. The Household Living Conditions Survey data made it possible to calculate the 35 gender indicators, with the capacity for additional indicators to be calculated using this survey. **Achieved.**

**PDO1 Indicator 1:** Rebased national accounts are being published

The revised national accounts were published on May 17, 2023. The revision and rebasing were successfully completed and published. ICASEES technical capacity in national accounting was enhanced with the project facilitating TA by international experts from the World Bank Development Data Group, the Regional Technical Assistance Center of the International Monetary Fund (AFRICTAC), the Economic and Statistical Observatory of Sub-Saharan Africa (AFRISTAT), and the Bank of Central African States (BEAC). In addition, the project facilitated south-south learning and peer review by experts from other NSOs (e.g., Burkina Faso). **Achieved.**

The IRIs for PDO1 suggest that the project made progress toward PDO1. IRI-1 and IRI-3 exceeded the target, IRIs 2, 4 and 5 were met. PDO1 is rated High.



## Rating

High

## OBJECTIVE 2

### Objective

Increase the capacity of ICASEES to disseminate statistics.

### Rationale

#### Theory of Change.

The project activities aimed to increase the capacity of ICASEES to disseminate statistics. The causal links between project activities (inputs), outputs and outcomes were logical.

The outputs of activities such as improving the professionalization and modernization of ICASEES' management; rehabilitation of ICASEES physical and data infrastructure; and support for urgent data access, recovery and renewal were likely to contribute to the desired outcome of increasing the capacity of the national statistical institute to disseminate data (ICR, Figure 1).

The intended outcomes were monitorable.

**Key Outputs.** Professionalization and modernization of ICASEES' management. The relevant texts and documents have been drawn up and updated, notably:

- The National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) for 2021–2025;
- The ICASEES quality control manual, the procedure manual;
- The PBF Manual;
- Data dissemination policy; and
- The capacity building plan for ICASEES staff.
- The safety manuals for ICASEES staff and consultants were also developed.
- The ICASEES statute was revised and adopted by the Council of Ministers.
- The national statistics council is now established.
- The ICASEES Board of Directors is operationalized.
- Rehabilitation of ICASEES' physical and data infrastructure.
- The project purchased computers, laptops, and other modern information technologies throughout ICASEES and improved the information network in the ICASEES with the purchase of a Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) software and accessories.
- The project also built a digital map production laboratory, the country's only public sector reference laboratory.
- TA to support urgent data access, recovery, and renewal. The ICASEES website was set up and launched in April 2019 and surveys and old and new publications are accessible to the public on the website.

### Intermediate Results Indicators (IRI) and outcomes



There were three IRIs that informed the achievement of PDO 2:

- **IRI 1: Board of Directors for ICASEES meets at least twice a year.** The Board was reestablished in December 2016, and renewed by Decree No. 20.201 of June 2020. The Board of Directors has played a vital role in monitoring the overall performance of ICASEES in achieving the agreed annual targets and indicators. **Achieved.**
- **IRI 2: Physical work environment rehabilitated.** The rehabilitation of the ICASEES building was completed, including the extension which was approved as part of the AF. The building is being utilized by staff of the ICASEES, with the staff/office ratio being reduced from an average of 7 per office to 3 per office. **Achieved.**
- **IRI 3: ICASEES website provides online public access to databases and reports.** The website launched in April 2019 with the ability for data to be downloaded on request from the National Data Archives (NADA) platform. **Achieved.**

Key activities were expected to contribute to the desired outcome of increasing the capacity of the National Statistical Institute to disseminate data. The objective is measured using the following two indicators:

**PDO Indicator 1: A secure electronic data archive exists:**

The project specific activities were expected to contribute to an improvement in the capacity of ICASEES to produce data.

The secure electronic data archive was set up in November 2020 with two electronic archiving systems having been set up at ICASEES: local and online electronic archiving. Important documents that were retrieved and newly produced documents are archived locally. However, surveys and other publications (old or new) are accessible to the public via the NADA platform (<https://icasees.org/nada/index.php/home>) via the ICASEES site (<http://icasees.org>). **Achieved.**

**PDO Indicator 2: Statistical data sets are publicly disseminated online:**

Several new data were produced and published online. These included twelve databases which were published online, including the digital census cartography, Household Living Conditions Survey, annual agricultural surveys, communal monographs surveys, revision of national accounts databases, the revision of the CPI, the trade and service turnover index, and the survey on unregistered cross-border trade and surveys of structures (motorcycle taxi, trade margin, media, and health facilities). **Achieved.**

The project also contributed to the professionalization and modernization of ICASEES. The project stimulated the analysis and dissemination of data by updating the Integrated Maintenance Information System (IMIS), Retrieval of Census DATA for Small Areas by Microcomputers (REDATAM) and strengthening the interactive dissemination of data through the NADA platform (an open-source software designed for researchers to browse, search, compare, apply for access, and download research data) (ICR p. 14).

The project also helped address institutional capacity constraints and weaknesses. Key contributions included the update and development of texts and documents relating to the professionalization and modernization of ICASEES' management, particularly the document of the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (2024–2029); the data quality control manual; the administrative, accounting, and financial procedure manual; the PBF manual; the revision of the statistical law; the revision of the status of ICASEES; the data dissemination policy; the capacity building plan for ICASEES staff; the ICASEES staff and consultant safety





manual; the establishment of the national statistics council; and the operationalization of the ICASEES Board of Directors (ICR p. 14)

The IRIs for PDO2 suggest that the project made progress toward PDO2. IRI-1 and IRI-3 were achieved. PDO2 is rated High.

**Rating**  
High

## **OVERALL EFFICACY**

### **Rationale**

The overall efficacy rating is High, given that outcomes were achieved despite the challenges related to COVID-19 and the security crisis that impacted the implementation of certain activities.

Of the 8 IRIs, 2 were exceeded, and 6 achieved their targets, supporting substantive progress that the project made towards PDO1 and PDO2. PDO1 and PDO2 are rated High.

### **Overall Efficacy Rating**

High

## **5. Efficiency**

An Economic rate of return (ERR) was not conducted at appraisal. A conventional cost-benefit analysis could not be made because of ICASEES legal status that did not allow it to self-finance most statistical activities. Nonetheless, the underlying assumption at project appraisal was that investment in statistics infrastructure and production would have a positive return but needed to be compared to the project's financial returns. Budget support from the government was marginal and official statistics had always been financed by contribution from partners and donors. The project's disbursement rate was 99.56 percent, with a completion rate of 100 percent (ICR, para 60-61).

The ICR assessed economic benefits of the project by linking the achievement of the project objective and project activities to the positive impact of ICASEES strengthened capacity to carry out large statistical operations and data production on decision-making and economic policy, planning and investments, and monitoring of economic growth, transparency, and accountability.

In addition, the ICR pointed out that expenses devoted to the production of statistics generate a good return on investment and availability of quality, transparent, and timely macroeconomic and financial data reduces sovereign borrowing costs in international capital markets for middle-income countries.



Fiduciary supervision was transferred from CS-REF (Ministry of Finance and Budget) to ICASEES one year and six months after the project approval. In January 2020, a Mid-term Review rated fiduciary performance and progress toward achieving the goal as Moderately Satisfactory.

**Operational Efficiency:** The duration of the project was from 2017 to 2023 and its overall financing was US\$10.5 million at approval, US\$13.5 million after AF, and US\$13.8 million at project closing. It was restructured three times. By the closing date, 99.6% of the approved allocation was utilized with a completion rate of 100 percent.

There was good value for money invested, given difficulties related to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and a new phase of violence in 2021 that interrupted project activities and resulted in additional cost. The overall approach to the project and financial management (FM), use of resources, and achievement of the desired results were commendable and the project’s implementation yielded some positive outcomes. The project required additional financing compared to the cost estimated at appraisal, but it reflected a clear need to close cost overruns.

### Efficiency Rating

Substantial

a. If available, enter the Economic Rate of Return (ERR) and/or Financial Rate of Return (FRR) at appraisal and the re-estimated value at evaluation:

	Rate Available?	Point value (%)	*Coverage/Scope (%)
Appraisal		0	0 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
ICR Estimate		0	0 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable

\* Refers to percent of total project cost for which ERR/FRR was calculated.

### 6. Outcome

The PDO was highly relevant to the government strategy and the Bank strategy for CAR. Overall efficacy is rated as High, given that the outcomes were realized for the most part. Efficiency is rated as Substantial as the project demonstrated good value for money in a challenging context and despite cost overruns that led to the third restructuring. Taking these into account, overall outcome is rated as Highly Satisfactory.

#### a. Outcome Rating

Highly Satisfactory

### 7. Risk to Development Outcome



The risk to the sustainability of the development outcome is assessed as Moderate. The project secured strong progress, but it needed to be sustained, consolidated, and built upon in a context with security, financial and technical challenges. Development outcomes could be constrained by the following factors.

### **Technical risk**

- The inability of ICASEES to retain and attract qualified human resources which was already a problem before the project started as ICASEES had no financial autonomy (ICR, p.25).
- The ICR failed to mention the need to ensure continuation of training support as well as exchanges with pairs which were central to sharing experiences and helping revise the CPI and the national accounts.

### **Financial risk**

- The government's desire to finance statistical activities is not sufficient as the suspension of budget support to the country and the cash flow tension have resulted in a low financial commitment from the government to strengthen the statistical system. This could undermine support for the continuation of project activities (ICR, p. 25).
- However, financial risk would also be attenuated by an IDA grant of US\$60 million over five years after the project's end (2024-2029) to further strengthen ICASEES capacity and support the construction of a new ICASEES building complex as part of the World Bank Harmonizing and Improving Statistics in West and Central Africa Series of Projects Two (HISWACA - SOP2) project - P180085 (ICR, p. 25).

### **Government Commitment/ownership**

- The government is highly committed to the project and the Prime Minister chaired most of the project activities launch and dissemination events (ICR, p. 27). However, the ICR failed to mention how would a change in government affect budget commitment to ICASEES in particular once the five-year funding from the regional project ends (2024-2019).

### **Security/ FCV settings**

- The ICR failed to mention that there is a moderate risk of new security crises. Previous violent disruptions required adaptation and flexibility from the government to launch surveys gradually to cover all areas, hire more field staff and reduce the time required for data collection activities. This was possible with the project's additional funding.

The risk to development outcome is rated as moderate.

## **8. Assessment of Bank Performance**

### **a. Quality-at-Entry**



The project design was relevant to the government's development objectives and responded to the specific needs of ICASEES, particularly after the security crisis had severely weakened the statistical system (ICR, para 97). The PDO was clear and simple.

At the time of appraisal, there was no national development strategy or Bank CPF. In fact, the project aimed to inform the design of pipeline projects and the SCD and CPF (PAD, para 12). The CPF became available for FY21-25 and helped sustained government ownership.

The project's design benefited from the task team being based in Bangui and its technical expertise and extensive knowledge of ICASEES. Partners and stakeholders were also involved in the design and implementation. This contributed to the project being well-grounded in the local context (ICR, para 91, 99).

The project benefitted from a Performance Based Framework (PBF) that mitigated the weak institutional capacity of ICASEES while bringing major management reform, in particular, the decentralization of decision-making authority, simplification and streamlining processes, and greater accountability and transparency (ICR, para 84).

Government ownership and commitment was strong due to successful coordination with government authorities and the Prime Minister's direct involvement in the project (ICR, p. 27).

Nonetheless, there were moderate shortcomings at quality of entry. ICASEES had shortcomings in FM at the start of the project, although it was strengthened during implementation and project management was good by project's end. However, the ICR failed to mention what were the specific shortcomings in FM (ICR, para 96, 100). ICASEES also had shortcomings in personnel. The inability to retain and attract qualified human resources was high and persistent from the start to the end of the project (ICR, para 109).

The results framework was not adjusted, except for a gender intermediate indicator which was added during the third restructuring. Most indicators were within the project's control, measurable, and had realistic targets.

The ICR notes that risk assessment identified mitigation measures, which proved highly relevant.

### **Quality-at-Entry Rating**

Satisfactory

### **b. Quality of supervision**

The Bank's team conducted regular implementation support missions, provided regular advice to ICASEES and benefitted from the task team members being based in Bangui which allowed for closer interaction with the government. There were at least three implementation support missions per year (2017-2023) and one MTR mission as evidenced by the series of 12 project ISRs produced over the project's life (ICR, para 103).



The supervision of the project was satisfactory due to: (i) consistent engagement with the client and regular supervision missions; (ii) adequate documentation of supervision missions according to Bank procedures (12 ISRs); (iii) timely solutions to the security challenges which led the Bank's team to adapt to the changing circumstances; (iv) support for peer learning for improved project performance; and (v) timely responsiveness to the challenges emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic which led the Bank's team to conduct virtual supervision missions to maintain support for project implementation and extend the project's end date to allow for the completion of some activities.

However, there were minor shortcomings. The third restructuring in 2022 to provide AF and move the project's EA category from C (partial assessment) to B could have been done much earlier.

In addition, the ICR notes that throughout the life of the project there were problems related to retaining and selecting quality staff and there is no mention to how this could have been resolved over time.

Despite these weaknesses, the project was fully disbursed and the impact on unachieved targets was minimal.

### **Quality of Supervision Rating**

Satisfactory

### **Overall Bank Performance Rating**

Satisfactory

## **9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization**

### **a. M&E Design**

The results framework was clear and the theory of change clearly articulated the causal links between project activities, outputs and outcomes. The indicators were for the most part appropriate for monitoring project performance. The baseline and targets were clearly specified at design. However, there were some project activities not tracked by specific indicators. For instance, there were no indicators for selection and retaining qualified staff.

### **b. M&E Implementation**

Project M&E institutional arrangements were adequate, and the M&E framework was also used for monitoring utilization of funds. The implementation of the project was overseen by a Committee of Directors and benefited from a PBF approach that integrated an M&E mechanism. The Bank's team evaluated the ICASEES performance based on the PBF deliverables previously approved by the ICASEES Board of Directors. Associated payments were linked to high-quality results (ICR, para 87).

The Board of Directors for ICASEES was critical in monitoring the overall performance of ICASEES with respect to achieving project objectives. In turn, the Committee of Directors, comprising of the Director General and the departmental Directors of ICASEES, was responsible collectively for monitoring and



evaluating the implementation of activities as well as FM protocols. Implementation on a day to day basis was the responsibility of a designated director once the project was approved by the Committee of Directors. (PAD, para 53-54)

Data helped inform project decision-making, such as the three restructurings and the mitigation of delays related to the security crises and the COVID-19 pandemic which introduced gradual survey implementation in the country's territory, virtual missions and extended the project's closing date to complete the implementation of ongoing project activities.

The Project Implementation Unit (PIU) at the Ministry of Finance and Budget was responsible for the project's fiduciary during the implementation of the Project Preparation Advance (PPA) and until fiduciary responsibility shifted to ICASEES. This PIU was responsible for all procurement activities (PAD, para 50).

The project planned to engage a fixed term staff or full-time consultant in Bangui to enhance supervision of the project and provide implementation support, in particular with respect to the introduction and supervision of the performance-based financing (PBF), but the ICR does not confirm these positions were filled.

### c. M&E Utilization

The M&E data on performance and progress against project's targets were satisfactorily used to inform strategic project direction, resource reallocation, monitoring utilization of funds, project management, and decision-making. The Annual Work Plans of the project were approved by the project's Board of Directors. The activities in these work plans were aligned with the project's results.

M&E data was also used to guide decision making, such as the implementation of gradual survey coverage by areas during the insecurity crises and virtual missions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In sum, overall M&E is rated as High, in view of the minor shortcomings in the M&E framework.

### M&E Quality Rating

High

## 10. Other Issues

### a. Safeguards

**Environmental/ Social Safeguards:** The project was classified under Category C (no assessment project) under the World Bank safeguard policies at appraisal, as it did not include any activities that involved environmental or social risks. However, due to the activities related to the completion of the ICASEES building extension, the project category passed from C to B during implementation and safeguard policy OP/BP 4.01 was triggered.

**Social Safeguards:** At appraisal, the project had no negative social impact and was classified under Category C. However, during implementation, the project category passed from C to B and safeguard policy



OP/BP 4.01 was triggered. Two social instruments (safety manual and grievance redress mechanism) were developed and implemented as part of rehabilitating an ICASEES building and an Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) was developed to minimize social risks. These aspects included sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS, COVID-19, child labor (forced labor and exploitation), and other social accidents.

## b. Fiduciary Compliance

**Financial management.** The project effectively complied with the financing agreement covenants and Financial Management (FM) was rated as Satisfactory. The residual FM risk was assessed as high at the start of the project but was moderate by project's end. The execution rate of the Annual Work Plan and the project disbursement rate were generally satisfactory. The project submitted the interim financial reports (IFR) and external audit reports with an unmodified opinion on time. Disbursement rate at project's end was 99.6 percent (ICR, para 96).

**Procurement.** Procurement was carried out in accordance with Bank procedures and priority was given to competitive bidding process in awarded contracts. No critical issues were identified by the ICR in the implementation of the procurement plan (ICR, p. 95).

## c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)

The ICR noted unintended positive impacts that contributed to the overall PDO (para 71-80). The project collected data that allowed for the disaggregation of statistics by gender which could be used on the formulation of gender policies and programs and for implementing gender analysis.

The project activities also helped the institutional strengthening of ICASEES by supporting the first time revision and adoption of its Statutes. ICASEES Statutes were adopted for the first time by the extraordinary Council of Ministers on August 18, 2023 (ICR, para 73).

The government of CAR further prioritized budget support for statistics production and dissemination thanks to the project's performance. In the 2024 Finance Law, ICASEES budget more than doubled from XAF220 million in 2023 to XAF500 million in 2024.

The project financed the Household Living Conditions Survey which greatly contributed to the preparation of the national development plan 2024–2028, served to track progress toward poverty reduction goals and measure contributions of project interventions to shared prosperity, and construct poverty maps.

Finally, during the COVID-19, the project financed a price monitoring mechanism which helped the government to take measures to protect households from inflation and, on the other hand, to help more vulnerable households. The same applied during the electoral crisis that led to blocking goods transport flows on the Bangui-Garaboulaye corridor, causing prices to increase in Bangui.



**d. Other**

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**11. Ratings**

Ratings	ICR	IEG	Reason for Disagreements/Comment
Outcome	Satisfactory	Highly Satisfactory	The PDO was highly relevant. Efficacy was High. Efficiency was Substantial.
Bank Performance	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	
Quality of M&E	High	High	
Quality of ICR	---	Substantial	

**12. Lessons**

The ICR draws the following three main lessons from the experience of implementing this project.

- 1. The introduction of the Performance-Based Financing (PBF) system proved to be an innovative approach to enhancing performance within a fragile country context.** This system provided incentives to ICASEES staff participating in project activities based on their performance, fostering competition among departments and leading to production of quality statistics. In addition to motivating staff, the PBF system also strengthened project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes and enhanced accountability within ICASEES management. PBF emphasized results rather than processes and led to ICASEES developing a comprehensive PBF manual where all aspects of implementation have been defined and can be adapted to various project contexts in fragile countries or not. The success of PBF in ICASEES highlights its potential for enhancing performance in fragile and low-capacity contexts. A similar approach could also be implemented for government staff, ensuring continuity beyond project's end. For example, existing staff allowances in CAR could be transformed into performance bonuses tied to key results.
- 2. Collaboration with other development partners is fundamental to enhance project's performance.** The project included collaboration and coordination with other development partners from the start. This allowed the project team to prevent duplication, share responsibilities, and adopt a unified approach to strengthening ICASEES's capacity. While this proved to be a good lesson, it also highlighted the need to establish a common framework for consultation and harmonizing support for the national statistical system among development partners.
- 3. Human capacity building during project implementation.** The project helped assess the capacity-building needs of ICASEES staff and capacity-building activities were carried out through the project's technical assistance. Exchanges with pairs were central to sharing experiences and greatly helped revise the CPI and the national accounts. However, selecting and retaining quality personnel at ICASEES was a challenge from the project's start to the end because of ICASEES lack of financial autonomy. Therefore, this review complements this lesson by highlighting the need to revise and improve the legal framework on personnel





selection, promotion and remuneration along with necessary budget adjustments to ensure that capacity building has the greatest impact within the institution.

### 13. Assessment Recommended?

No

### 14. Comments on Quality of ICR

The ICR presented a clear, coherent and well organized narrative of the project. The theory of change clearly shows the causal links between project activities, outputs and the intended outcomes which were quantifiable. The analysis discussed in the text provides sufficient evidence for assessing project performance. The text adheres to the ICR guidelines and methodology. The ICR draws good lessons from the experience of implementing this project that logically flow from the data and analysis provided in the ICR. However, the lessons could have been better explained and developed as some of them are close to factual statements.

There were minor shortcomings. There are discrepancies in costs in the ICR Financing Table (p. 2) and Annex 3 (Project Cost by Component). The original amount in the Financing Table (p. 2) (US\$13.49 million) is the revised project cost which includes US\$3 million approved at restructuring. In addition, the actual amount at project closing is correct in the Financing Table (US\$13.84 million) but different in Annex 3 (US\$13.49 million). The difference had to do with foreign exchange adjustments.

The percentage for operation management (OSU cost) is not given in the Efficiency Section in the ICR. Additional information confirms that the OSU cost was included in component 1 (subcomponent 1.3. Professionalization and modernization of ICASEES' management). The cost represented 6% of amount at approval.

There is a discrepancy between the rating for M&E. While overall M&E was rated as High on page 2 in the ICR (Executive Summary), in paragraph 92 is rated as Substantial.

#### **a. Quality of ICR Rating** Substantial

