Report Number: ICRR0023395

1. Project Data

Project ID P130891	**Project Name** MN: SMART Government
Country Mongolia	**Practice Area(Lead)** Digital Development

L/C/TF Number(s) IDA-54830	**Closing Date (Original)** 31-Dec-2019	**Total Project Cost (USD)** 16,791,664.03
Bank Approval Date 06-Jun-2014	**Closing Date (Actual)** 31-Aug-2022	

	IBRD/IDA (USD)	**Grants (USD)**
Original Commitment	19,400,000.00	0.00
Revised Commitment	18,705,193.20	0.00
Actual	16,791,664.03	0.00

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2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

The Project Development Objective (PDO) was to use information and communication technologies to improve accessibility, transparency, and efficiency of public service in Mongolia.

The PDO was not revised.

For the purposes of this ICR review, the objective will be broken into two parts:

PDO1: to use information and communication technologies to improve accessibility and transparency of public service in Mongolia.

PDO2: to use information and communication technologies to improve efficiency of public service in Mongolia.

The evaluation of accessibility and transparency is combined under one PDO because these two objectives are interlinked, and many or the Results Framework (RF) outcome indicators measure both results.

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

Did the Board approve the revised objectives/key associated outcome targets?
Yes

Date of Board Approval
06-Nov-2019

c. **Will a split evaluation be undertaken?**
No

d. **Components**
1. Original components:

Component 1 - Enhance Civic Engagement and Citizen Feedback Mechanisms (cost at appraisal: US$1.1 million; actual cost: US$1.08 million) – involved the provision of the information technology (IT) systems and technical assistance aimed at the following: (i) upgrading the central citizen services center, including IT hardware and systems; (ii) enhancing the e-Mongolia portal, including the installation of a business analytics system for real-time response to queries; (iii) integrating e-services into the e-Mongolia portal; (iv) designing accountability measures for complaints in the system; and (v) improving agency workflows.

Component 2 - Enabling Foundations for SMART Government (cost at appraisal: US$10.9; actual cost: US$11.92 million) - provided investment and technical assistance for the following: (i) development of the National Enterprise Architecture (NEA) and interoperability framework to align IT systems across Government agencies; (ii) upgrade of the National Data Center (NDC) and the setup of the national data exchange to provide a platform for the e-services delivery; and (iv) set up of the Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) to protect data and mitigate damage in the event of a disaster.

Component 3 - Enabling Open Data (cost at appraisal: US$5.6 million; actual cost: US$4.6 million) – supported the following: (i) design and development of a central and searchable Open Data Portal; (ii) conducting Open Data readiness assessment; (iii) development of the supporting policy and legal framework; and (iv) identification, preparation, and release of open datasets.

Component 4: - Project Management Support (cost at appraisal: US$1.8 million; Actual cost: US$2.4 million) - financed management and oversight of the Project and capacity development to the Cabinet Secretariat and the project implementation unit (PIU) staff.

2. Changes in components and indicators during implementation:

The Project went through five Level 2 restructurings, but only the second restructuring involved changes to the RF, as follows:

1. Second restructuring (approved in November 2019):

a. PDO indicators' replacement. Two PDO indicators — "Number of new 11-11 center users at the aimag level", and "Customer satisfaction with the responses received through the integrated 11-11 platforms"— were removed and three new PDO indicators - "Availability of public services for citizens through digital channels", "Availability of public services for businesses through digital channels", and "Citizen access to information on the resolution process and status of their feedback to the Citizens' feedback centers" — replaced them. This was the result of a strategy shift from physical service centers to a digital service delivery model and a related change in the subcomponent activities, the original indicators were no longer relevant.

b. The intermediate indicator "Number of applications and services developed" was removed, as it was overlapping with the new PDO-level indicators on availability of common public services.

c. Intermediate indicators: the following targets were lowered:

- For the indicator "Number of contacts to the integrated 11-11 platforms": from 1,000,000 to 175,000 contacts to reflect the strategy shift from physical centers to digital service.

- For the indicator "Number of Government Ministries/Agencies that adopted the National Enterprise Architecture (NEA)": from 12 to a more realistic six agencies.

- For the indicator "Number of applications and services developed by women" (which was also renamed as "Number of applications and services developed which includes women team members"): from 12 to a more realistic six.

e. **Comments on Project Cost, Financing, Borrower Contribution, and Dates**
   Project Cost: The appraisal estimate was US$20.0 million, and the actual project cost (the amount disbursed at closure) was US$16.79 million (ICR, page 2). The Project team has informed IEG that the amount undisbursed at closure was US$0.69 million and that the rest of the difference between the appraisal cost estimate and the disbursement at closure was due to the fluctuations of the Special Drawing Rights (XDR)-US Dollar rates (the Project was denominated in XDR).

   Project Financing: The project was financed by an International Development Association (IDA) grant (US$19.4 million at appraisal and US$16.8 million at closure).

Borrower/Recipient contribution: Borrower financing was planned as US$0.6 million at appraisal but was US$0 million at closure.

Changes in project financing due to restructurings:

- At the first restructuring of June 2015, financing was reallocated across components, at the Government's request, to increase the amount allocated to Component 2. The resulting component cost was as follows: Component 1: $0.4 million; Component 2: $12.6 million; Component 3: $4.6 million; Component 4: $2.4 million.
- At the second restructuring of November 2019, financing was reallocated across components, at the Government's request. The resulting component cost was as follows: Component 1: $1.08 million; Component 2: $11.92 million; Component 3: $4.6 million; Component 4: $2.4 million.
- At the third restructuring of October 2020, the Project had budget savings of US$1.6 million, which were reallocated for the COVID-19 needs.

Project Dates: The project was approved on June 6, 2014 and became effective on August 17, 2015. The mid-term review (MTR) was on November 24, 2018. The original closing date was December 31, 2019. The closing date was extended three times: (i) at the first restructuring of June 2015, by 12 months, to December 31, 2020; (ii) at the third restructuring of October 2020, by 10 months to October 2021 (due to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions); and (iii) at the fifth restructuring of October 2021, by 10 months to August 31, 2022. Actual closing was on August 31, 2022.

Split evaluation is not undertaken: the change in the PDO indicators (implemented at the second restructuring approved in November 2019) did not lead to a reduction in the project's scope/ambition. The PDO indicator change was brought about by the modification of the Government approach to service delivery from an in-person option (through physical centers) to a more advanced digital one. Based on this change and following the GoM's request, the Project was restructured to support the modernized (digital) service provision approach, making the original PDO indicators irrelevant. Achievement of the PDO will therefore be assessed based on the revised PDO indicators only, without a split evaluation.

3. Relevance of Objectives

Rationale

Relevance to the national priorities at approval: At the time of appraisal, the PDO was relevant to the country conditions and well-aligned with national priorities, specifically with the commitment to use information and communication technology (ICT) to deliver inclusive and efficient public services. The Government of Mongolia (GoM) recognized the potential of ICT to improve public service delivery, and in 2013 joined the Open Government Partnership to have a more transparent public management, better data management, and e-Government. The GoM planned to enhance the related legal environment, improve information technology (IT) infrastructure, develop e-content of the Government, and provide online public services to citizens, narrowing the digital divide. This vision was stated in a national ICT policy document— a vision of becoming a knowledge-based economy by 2021, using ICT. Another key GoM's document, *Sustainable Development Vision up to 2030*, which was being developed at the time of Project appraisal and was approved by the Parliament in 2016, included an objective of expanding information technology

with a target of providing high-speed internet connections to 70 percent of the population by 2020. The Vision was supported by the previous policy and institutional reforms: the enactment of the Freedom of Information and e-signature laws; the establishment of the National Data Center (NDC) in 2009; and the approval of the law on Information Transparency and Right to Information in 2011. In 2012, the electronic identification infrastructure was completed, and ID cards were issued to over 2.3 million citizens. This infrastructure was used for the delivery of services, and the Project supported a wider access to expanded electronic services.

Relevance to the national priorities at closure: The *Vision 2050*, the country's long-term development policy published in May 2020, outlined the use of ICT in public sector reforms and in building of an "e-Mongolia", "an integrated system of citizens, public and private sectors", through: (i) the development of an e-governance policy and legal framework (2021-30); (ii) mainstreaming ICT across the economy (2031-40); and (iii) focusing on ICT support to human development (2041-50). The GoM's action plan for 2020–24 stated that public services would be "responsive, accountable, and accessible to save the time and money of citizens". The Project was designed to support the GoM's goals of improved accessibility, enhanced transparency, and increased efficiency.

Relevance to the WBG's assistance Strategies at approval: The PDO was aligned with WBG's Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) for Mongolia for the period FY13-17, especially with Pillar 3, Outcome 3.2 *Supported better delivery of basic services education, health, justice, and infrastructure),* which included plans to support ICT infrastructure development to improve service delivery. The PDO was also aligned with the World Bank's digital development agenda outlined in the World Development Report (WDR) 2016 *Digital Dividends*.

Relevance to the WBG's assistance Strategies at closure: The PDO was aligned with WBG's Country Partnership Framework (CPF) FY21–25 for Mongolia, mainly with Focus area 1.3 "Strengthening government efficiency and accountability for better service delivery", which included plans to support digital transformation, digital service delivery, and digital solutions for governance. The PDO was also aligned with the World Bank's WDR 2021 *Data for Better Lives*, which had an emphasis on data in advancing development objectives and enabling efficient service delivery.

The relevance of objectives is rated High: the PDO is fully aligned with the GoM's priorities, the CPS FY13-17, and the CPF FY21-25.

Rating
High

4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)

OBJECTIVE 1
Objective

PDO1: to use information and communication technologies to improve the accessibility and transparency of the public service in Mongolia.

Rationale
The theory of change (ToC), developed for the ICR, showed a direct, logical causal chain from inputs to outputs and further to the intermediate and then PDO outcomes. There were four result chains. ***The first results chain*** showed how the launch or enhancement of several IT systems would lead to the intermediate outcome of increased convenience and reduced time and cost of transactions with the government. This intermediate outcome would, in turn, lead to the increased accessibility of public services (PDO outcome 1). ***The second results chain*** demonstrated how the newly provided or upgraded IT systems would result in the following intermediate outcomes: increased efficiency and reduced cost of service provision for the public sector, and the adoption of innovative apps by the public and private sectors. These intermediate outcomes would together amount to the increased efficiency of public services (PDO outcome 2). ***The third results chain*** showed how the development and employment of the Open Data Portal, as well as enhanced citizen feedback and engagement mechanisms, would lead to the following intermediate outcome: increased open government data for public use, enhanced government data production capacity and usage, and increased citizens' access to resolution of complaints and feedback. These intermediate outcomes would amount to the improved transparency of service delivery (PDO outcome 3). ***The fourth results chain*** demonstrated how capacity development activities would result in the intermediate outcome of strengthened government ICT/digital service transformation capacity, thus supporting the long-term transformative outcome of creating a "Citizen-Centered Digital Nation".

The ToC captured the logical cause-effect relationships from the lower-level results to the higher-level ones very well: it is clear from the ToC chart how the multiple outputs, added together, would create intermediate results; and through which processes the PDO outcomes would be achieved (how the outputs were to be applied to solve the problem). The ToC also proficiently presented the interlinks from the intermediate outcomes to the PDO outcomes and across the PDO outcomes, which is essential for understanding the logic of a project. The ToC would have further benefited with the interlinks from the outputs to the intermediate outcomes and across the intermediate outcomes, reflecting their interconnection (specifically, the interlinks across the results leading to improved accessibility and transparency).

PDO outcomes:

Three PDO outcomes were exceeded, and one was achieved. Specifically, the Project:

- Made 72 services digitally available for citizens, exceeding the target of 20.

- Made 37 services digitally available for businesses, exceeding the target of 10.

The ICR reports that the 72 digital services for citizens covered a full range of services, including birth registration, health care appointments, health insurance services, social welfare services and payments, and property mortgage registration. These services were also delivered by mobile phone, increasing accessibility. At Project closing, the e-Mongolia portal was upgraded, and a single portal became available to access government services. A total of two million users accessed the system, with 14.4 million requests processed (this is not an RF indicator).

- Made 107 government datasets available through the Open Data searchable platform, exceeding the original target of 32 datasets. The ICR reports that the Project developed and made operational a central and

searchable Open Data Portal, upgraded data production at the National Statistics Office (NSO), and conducted related training. Data standards and a common framework were established across government agencies.

- Created citizens' access to information on the resolution process and status of their feedback, thus achieving the binary ("Yes"-"No") indicator. The ICR reports that the Project enhanced and integrated the 11-11 call center to the e-Mongolia portal so that citizens are able to track the status of their feedback and public officials can track responses in real time.

Intermediate outcomes and outputs:

All outputs under Objective 1 were achieved or exceeded, including:

- By Project closure, 329,751 of contacts to the integrated 11-11 platforms occurred, as compared to the target of 175,000 contacts. The target was exceeded.

- The business analytics system was established as planned. The target was achieved.

- The Project provided 30 public services with incorporated citizen consultations/feedback, as compared to the target of 20. The target was exceeded. The gender disaggregated sub-indicator (services where at least half of the beneficiaries consulted were women) was also exceeded: all 30 services as compared to the 15 targeted.

- Six government ministries/agencies adopted the National Enterprise Architecture, the same as the target. The target was achieved.

- Fifty agencies hosted databases at the National Data Center, as compared to the target of 45. The target was exceeded.

- Fourteen teams that develop applications and services included women, as compared to the target of six. The target was exceeded.

- Forty-one provinces/UB districts rolled out the e-Property Registration System, as compared to the target of 30. The target was exceeded.

Overall, under Objective 1, all expected Project outcomes and outputs were achieved or exceeded by Project closure, some significantly. The efficacy rating is therefore High.

Rating
High

OBJECTIVE 2
Objective
PDO2: To use information and communication technologies to improve the efficiency of the public service in Mongolia.

Rationale
PDO outcome:

- The average number of days needed to issue a property ownership certificate was five, as compared to the target of seven. The target was exceeded.

Beyond the RF, the Project also enabled significant time savings in registering new business entities: from the previous process requiring two-three trips to government offices to submit 10-13 sets of paper documents to the estimated maximum of 60 minutes of digital submission of three documents. The ICR also mentions that government agencies report significant time savings. Specifically, the General Authority for the Labor and Welfare Service stated that the digitalization of services led to an 80 percent reduction in the number of paper documents processed and resulted in material benefits to welfare recipients who could submit the welfare applications online, with benefits credited directly to their bank accounts. The Project-enabled delivery of key government services on mobile phones, including health insurance and hospital appointments, also significantly increasing the efficiency of services.

Intermediate outcome:

- While 54.8 percent of 11-11 platform queries were resolved within three to seven days, the target was 80 percent. The target was not achieved.

Overall, under Objective 2, the Project created the data architecture necessary for the increase in the efficiency of public services - the national enterprise architecture and the Interoperability Framework were developed, the National Data Center was upgraded, the National Data Exchange and the DRC were set up, and the databases of key agencies were integrated to enable data sharing - leading to an improvement in the efficiency of public services on many fronts (as the ICR clearly reflects (ICR, pages 14-15)). However, the RF provides very limited data on efficiency, making it hard to evaluate the achievements. Out of the two RF indicators reflecting improved efficiency, one (a PDO indicator) was exceeded and one (an intermediate outcome indicator) not achieved.

Efficacy rating for Objective 2 is Substantial due to the non-achievement of one intermediate indicator and limited RF data supporting the ICR description of the results.

Rating
Substantial

OVERALL EFFICACY
Rationale
The overall efficacy is Substantial. The Project achieved or exceeded all but one of the expected outcomes and outputs.

Overall Efficacy Rating

Substantial

5. Efficiency

Economic analysis. At appraisal, economic analysis for the Project was not performed. The ICR presented economic analysis conducted at closure. The resulting net present value (NPV) was estimated at US$17.0 million, the internal economic rate of return was 30 percent, and the benefit/cost ratio was 2.69. The analysis included four types of benefits: (i) from the establishment and operation of the DRC and the establishment of the State Information Exchange System (XYP) for the NDC; (ii) from the establishment of the Open Data system; (iii) from increased public sector productivity due to digitalization of services and improved digital skills of the government staff and citizens; and (iv) from time and cost saved by businesses and households, as a result of the digitalization of services. The ICR noted that the estimates were conservative because not all benefits were included: that "would require significant inputs from across government agencies at different levels of the public administration, and from various demographic and occupational groups across citizens and businesses". The ICR also pointed out that the objective of the analysis was to show that the Project will deliver sufficient impacts to justify the investments. (ICR, page 44-45)

Administrative efficiency. The Project's closure was extended for 32-months overall from the original closure date. This was mainly due to a delay in effectiveness; procurement-related inefficiencies in the first half of implementation; the necessity to restructure the Project due to the change in government strategy towards increased digitalization of government services; and the need to utilize Project savings to make further upgrades in the country's ICT systems (the ICR noted that the latter could not be considered an inefficiency (ICR, page 17)). Procurement issues comprised a delay in the large contracts for the Disaster Recovery Center, National Enterprise Architecture, and National Data Center; also, the data production solution contract had to be canceled as none of the three bidders met the qualification criteria. The inefficiencies experienced in the first years of implementation were balanced by the high Project efficiency after the second restructuring in November 2019, resulting in cost savings (while most of the RF targets were exceeded) and in a high disbursement rate (despite the COVID-19 restrictions) (ICR, page 16).

Efficiency is rated Modest given significant inefficiencies experienced by the Project in the first half of the implementation.

Efficiency Rating

Modest

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 (%)

		0
Appraisal	0	☐ Not Applicable
ICR Estimate	✓ 30.00	83.00 ☐ Not Applicable

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

6. Outcome

Relevance of objectives is rated as High, efficacy as Substantial, and efficiency as Modest. Therefore, the overall outcome is Moderately Satisfactory.

a. Outcome Rating
Moderately Satisfactory

7. Risk to Development Outcome

The ICR reported that there were two main risks to Project sustainability. First, the Project's investments in the digital infrastructure including the National Data Center, the Data Exchange Center, and the Disaster Recovery Center, might be insufficiently managed and maintained. This risk was mitigated though the design of these facilities based on the best international standards and training of the IT staff who manage them. Also, the delivery of the e-services was a key priority of the GoM, and the Project's investments were therefore expected to me maintained. Second, the Open Data Portal and datasets might not be kept updated. However, the GoM had signed the Open Government Partnership and remained committed to this undertaking, and the NSO had demonstrated a strong commitment to release more datasets. (ICR, page 27)

8. Assessment of Bank Performance

a. Quality-at-Entry
The ICR reported that the Bank team undertook good preparatory work prior to appraisal and engaged in a comprehensive dialogue with the GoM to ensure the PDO was in line with the GoM's reform agenda. The Bank team had worked extensively with the GoM on the Project implementation arrangements to mitigate the identified risks, including setting up a Project Steering Committee (PSC) with participation of beneficiary agencies and the leadership of the Cabinet Secretary, and staffing the PIU with experienced specialists. There were shortcomings in addressing the acknowledged risks. Complex IT procurement, inadequate capacity, weakness in monitoring, potentially waning interest within the Government and piloting of procurement through the Government Procurement Agency (GPA), were recognized as major risk factors. (ICR, page 25) Despite risk identification, significant efforts were required during implementation to adapt the project to the challenges of a low-capacity environment. While this ultimately led to delays, the premises of the design was sound and focused on the right elements to ensure impact.

Quality-at-Entry Rating
Satisfactory

b. Quality of supervision

The ICR reported that overall, the Bank team closely managed the implementation and dealt with challenges resulting in five Project restructurings, to ensure its continued alignment with the GoM's priorities and the PDO. The fifth and final restructuring allowed the GoM to utilize its budget savings before project closure. During ICR interviews, the PIU and agencies highlighted the need for flexibility in the design of ICT projects given the rapid advancements in technologies. The quality and adequacy of the Bank's supervision decreased during 2016 - mid-2019 due to staff changes, and this negatively affected performance ratings. The Banks' quality of supervision significantly improved after a new Bank Team was assigned in October 2019 and successfully turned the project around and brought it to completion. The new task team was able to quickly re-orient the project to focus on key activities and PDO indicators. The team's day-to-day close supervision led to the improvement in the disbursement ratio by 246 percent in the period from October 2019 to June 2020. The adaptation needed due to COVID-19 was implemented successfully: the Project managed to avoid supply chain delays. All aides-mémoires were submitted in a timely fashion, and the ISRs candidly presented the key issues and detailed key actions for management attention. Sustainability of outcomes and continuity of operations were ensured though the maintenance contracts for the hardware and software and capacity building of relevant government officials. (ICR, pages 25-26)

Quality of Supervision Rating
Satisfactory

Overall Bank Performance Rating
Satisfactory

9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization

a. M&E Design

Overall, the Project's RF adequately reflected the Project interventions and was sufficiently linked to the PDO. Most of the indicators were quantitative, and all had baselines and targets and were time-bound and attributable to the Project. There were gender disaggregated indicators. The RF was linked to the ToC and was measuring the PDO outcomes, as well as the intermediate outcomes and outputs. The RF adjustment that was required at the second restructuring in November 2019, was done well, and the two new PDO indicators reflected both the new priorities of the GoM and the Project's PDO. There was a shortcoming: the RF provided very limited data on the efficiency of public services, making the assessment of outputs and outcomes under the "efficiency of public services" PDO difficult.

b. M&E Implementation

The ICR reported that there were some inadequacies in the M&E data collection during the earlier phases. Due to the slow implementation progress prior to 2020, and the lack of capacity at both the PIU and beneficiary agencies, data collection was inadequate and not timely. There was also an incident of inaccurate reporting on the value of one PDO level indicator, which was dropped subsequently. However, starting in 2020, all M&E data were regularly collected and analyzed. The new bank team which took over in October 2019, acted quickly by working with the PIU to: (i) map agencies responsible and their relevant activities for each results indicator, (ii) convene a workshop with the beneficiary agencies to explain the RF and why it mattered for their activities, and (iii) collate data for every indicator. The implementation of the M&E indicators—records, supporting evidence, analysis, and explanatory comments—was managed well. (ICR, page 23)

c. M&E Utilization

The ICR reported that the M&E indicators were well utilized to inform project restructurings. The team was proactive in using the data collected to improve the project. For example, the PDO-level indicator that measured the number of new users visiting the 11-11 centers showed a steady decline, indicating that physical 11-11 centers had lost thier relevance. This information was tracked and used by the team for the second restructuring of the Project, which was aligned to the GoM's shift to digital services. M&E indicators were utilized for the design of the follow-on Smart Government II project; and the use of citizen consultations prompted the inclusion of human-centric services as a key PDO-level indicator in that project. (ICR, page 23-24)

M&E Quality Rating
Substantial

10. Other Issues

a. Safeguards

Environmental Safeguards. At appraisal, the Project was classified as Environmental Category C, and Environmental Assessment was not required. However, as the ICR reported, in January 2020, it was identified that the Disaster Recovery Center would require additional works (several hundred meters of cable and associated trenches, a concrete foundation for a substation, two concrete bases for gensets, and concrete bases for cooling towers). This triggered a change in the Environmental category from C to B, and Partial Assessment was now required. This change was formalized through a Level 2 restructuring approved in September 2021, and an Environmental Assessment was conducted. The Environmental Management Plan's implementation was satisfactory during the small-scale civil works for the Disaster Recovery Center. The overall environmental safeguard performance of the Project was satisfactory during implementation.

Social Safeguards. At appraisal, the Project triggered one social safeguard: Indigenous Peoples Policy. The PAD stated that given the type of activities and the Project's location in Ulaanbaatar and Aimag centers for Component 1, the benefits were to be equitable across ethnic groups. Separately, a project-specific

Grievance Redress Mechanism was established and became operational in December 2018. No occupational health and safety incidents were recorded. (ICR, page 25)

b. Fiduciary Compliance

<u>Financial Management (FM)</u>. The ICR reported that the Project's overall FM performance was rated as Satisfactory at Project closing. In the beginning of Project implementation, shortcomings in compliance with the World Bank's FM requirements were noted. These included late submission of quarterly interim financial reports, manual recording of project transactions and financial reporting for a prolonged period, and slow progress in disbursement. However, with the continuous support of the World Bank team, the capacity of the PIU and the implementing agency was built up, and the FM performance improved, which was reflected in a consistent Satisfactory rating. During that period, all required interim financial reports and annual audited financial statements were submitted to the World Bank on time and had sufficient quality, all financial audits were of an unqualified opinion, and the FM staffing was sound. World Bank implementation support and supervision missions regularly reviewed project accounts and procedures to ensure compliance with the World Bank's FM and disbursement requirements, as well as judicious use of project funds. An FM Manual was prepared and followed. The final audited financial statement was submitted to the World Bank by June 30, 2023, as planned, and filed in the Portal. (ICR, page 24)

<u>Procurement.</u> The ICR reported that procurement implementation of the Project was satisfactory throughout implementation, based on the high-quality work of experienced professionals on the PIU team and the strong leadership of the Cabinet Secretariat. There was no delay in procurement operations starting from 2020, after the restructuring of November 2019. All planned activities were procured before the Project's closing even amid the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which included strict lockdowns, border closures, and shortages of raw materials in the IT industry. (ICR, pages 24-25)

c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)
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d. Other
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11. Ratings

Ratings	ICR	IEG	Reason for Disagreements/Comment
Outcome	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	
Bank Performance	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	
Quality of M&E	Substantial	Substantial	

Quality of ICR	---	Substantial

12. Lessons

The following lessons are based on those provided in the ICR, with minor adjustments.

1. The need to collaborate with multiple government agencies who have varying interests and capacity levels creates risks to project outcomes. For that reason, stakeholder management was identified as a major risk for the Project. To mitigate this risk, a Project Steering Committee (PSC) comprising representatives from the beneficiary agencies and headed by the Chief Cabinet Secretary was established and provided oversight and across key stakeholders. The appointment of the Chief Cabinet Secretary was strategic, leveraging the PSC's authority and sphere of influence to achieve alignment and collaboration across the whole of government. Such implementation arrangements proved to be good practice and could be replicated in projects implemented in similar circumstances.

2. Complex project design can create implementation challenges. The Project was complex, covering a wide spectrum of technically complicated activities that ranged from the installation of large-scale IT systems and networks to data standards and productions, portal development, policy and regulatory frameworks for open data, and digitalization of public services. Managing the Project required the Bank team to provide technical assistance to different agencies on a day-to-day basis, as well as to coordinate and collaborate across different implementation agencies. This became critical at the second restructuring of November 2019, when the Project needed to be turned around. The team supported the PIU and beneficiary agencies through weekly project meetings and many ad-hoc meetings with the agencies related to both technical and implementation issues. It is important that sufficient budgetary resources are available for task teams to provide this implementation support with close follow-ups. The lesson is that such assistance could have been anticipated and sufficient resources made available to support the client with capacity and technical know-how.

3. Monitoring and implementation is critical for the achievement of project objectives. The Bank team closely supported the implementation agencies in strategically re-orienting their focus on project disbursements and result targets. The Bank team worked with the implementing agency and the PIU to help them understand the importance of disbursements and associated results targets, explained the relevance and measurements for each result indicator, prioritized and sequenced the various project activities, and undertook the necessary actions on the prioritized activities to improve Project's performance. Achievement of Project objectives would not have been possible without this emphasis on M&E.

13. Assessment Recommended?

No

14. Comments on Quality of ICR

The ICR provides sufficient technical detail to understand the value-added of the activities and the outcomes of the Project; a good justification of the PDO relevance; robust evidence; a clear linking of evidence to findings; and sufficient basis for the ratings. The ICR has internal consistency. The lessons learned are linked to the narrative and the ratings and are useful for ICT operations in other client countries.

In addition, the description of the project design and the changes it underwent during implementation are very clear and logical despite all the complexities that had to be reflected. The analysis is strong and links well with the nature of the interventions and how it supports the service provision.

However, there are two minor deficiencies. First, the efficacy analysis did not take into account that one intermediate target was not achieved, resulting in a "High" rating for the "efficiency of public service" PDO, while it should have been "Substantial" according to the IEG/OPCS guidelines. However, this did not affect the overall outcome rating. Second, the presentation of the Project costs in the ICR had weaknesses, including inconsistencies, such as the differences between Annex 3 cost data at closure and the total disbursement in the data sheet, as well as the unexplained discrepancy between the sum of the Project components' cost in component description and the total disbursement. Despite these shortcomings, the overall quality of the ICR is substantial.

   a. Quality of ICR Rating
     Substantial