Report Number: ICRR0023444

1. Project Data

Project ID P151835	**Project Name** BI-Social Safety Nets (Merankabandi)	
Country Burundi	**Practice Area(Lead)** Social Protection & Jobs	
L/C/TF Number(s) IDA-D1540	**Closing Date (Original)** 30-Jun-2022	**Total Project Cost (USD)** 40,429,968.32
Bank Approval Date 15-Dec-2016	**Closing Date (Actual)** 30-Jun-2022	

	IBRD/IDA (USD)	Grants (USD)
Original Commitment	40,000,000.00	0.00
Revised Commitment	39,713,519.16	0.00
Actual	40,429,968.32	0.00

Prepared by	Reviewed by	ICR Review Coordinator	Group
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2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

As stated in the Financing Agreement and the Project Appraisal Document (PAD), the objectives of the project were to (a) provide cash transfers to poor and vulnerable families with children in select areas, and (b) strengthen delivery mechanisms for a social safety net program.

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

No

c. Will a split evaluation be undertaken?

No

d. Components

1. **Support to the cash transfer program** (Appraisal amount: US$ 26.7 million; Actual amount: US$ 31.64 million):

Develop and implement the first phase of the Merankabandi cash transfer program covering extremely poor and vulnerable (in terms of food insecurity) rural households with children under 12 years in Northern and Eastern regions.

- Transfer BIF 20,000 per household per month (~US$ 145 per year) to stabilize income flow, increasing consumption and investment in children's human capital.
- Promote positive behavior among women and children to strengthen nutrition, early childhood development, and school attendance.

2. **Support to the key delivery mechanisms of a basic social safety net system** (Appraisal amount: US$ 7.50 million; Actual amount: US$ 3.36 million):

Identify the beneficiary database, enhance targeting efficiency, establish the basic management information system, and streamline Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).

- Identify potential beneficiaries in four provinces based on monetary poverty and chronic malnutrition rates, informing analysis for implementing the database and improving targeting.
- Develop core modules of the Management Information System (MIS) encompassing beneficiary journey from identification and registration to payment disbursal and M&E, improving program design and fostering coordination among different programs.
- Institutionalize robust M&E practices including process and impact evaluations, informing program design during phase 2.
- Build capacity across central and local levels to implement the National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS).

3. **Project management** (Appraisal amount: US$ 5.80 million; Actual amount: US$ 5.71 million):

Collaborate with the Ministry of Human Rights, Social Affairs and Gender, Permanent Executive Secretariat, and the National Commission for Social Protection to support the implementation of the program.

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

The amount at approval was US$ 40.00 million through an IDA Grant. However, the actual cost at closing was US$ 40.71 million (ICR Annexure 5, Table 2). The project was approved on December 15, 2016, and became effective on July 27, 2017. The project was restructured in March 2022.

The restructuring was intended to reallocate funds from Component 2 to 1, making additional cash transfers available to beneficiaries, and hence promoting a graduation approach. This reallocation was based on the experience of other countries in the region that showed investing in Income Generating Activities (and obtaining relevant training) made the impacts on consumption last longer. Moreover, the project managed to save in Component 2 by efficiently negotiating large contracts for disbursing cash transfers, reducing costs from the original estimate of 7 percent to 3.75 percent.

The expected results linked to activities remained unaltered with the restructuring.

3. Relevance of Objectives

Rationale

At the time of the appraisal, two-thirds of Burundi's population were classified as poor, making it the second-poorest country in Africa, only behind Malawi. Inequality, as measured by the Gini index, had been increasing, rising from 43.5 percent in 2006 to 46.3 percent in 2012. This indicated a clear need for a basic safety nets program aimed at reducing poverty and inequality.

The social assistance landscape was, at best, characterized by fragmented small-scale programs financed by donors. These included scholarships for tertiary education and subsidies for agricultural inputs and livestock (ICR, p. 6). To potentially fill the gaps, the country put forth the National Social Protection Policy and the Cadre Stratégique de Lutte contre la Pauvreté in 2011. Moreover, with support from the World Bank and UNICEF, a National Social Protection Strategy was developed in 2015. The strategy prioritized access to basic social services, food and income security, natural and social risks management, and addressing children’s chronic malnutrition.

The country also faced a humanitarian and emergency context in some areas in addition to dealing with the structural vulnerability of its poorest members. Safety nets interventions were, therefore, needed to address both these tracks. As mentioned above, government funding for safety nets was limited, and the PAD (p. 4) reported that donor funding was decreasing.

The project objectives, aiming at providing cash transfers to poor and vulnerable families with children in selected areas, and strengthening delivery mechanisms for a social safety net program, were in tandem with both the National Social Protection Strategy and the Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) at entry. In particular, the project contributed to (a) the second and fourth goals of the Government’s Second Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP II) from 2012, and (b) Pillars II and III of the World Bank Group’s Burundi Country Assistance Strategy for FY 13-16 (Report 72334-BI). However, the objectives were output-oriented and not adequately tied to the to the overarching development challenges faced by Burundi such as those related to human capital and nutrition.

At project closing, objectives remained aligned with the Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for the period FY 19-23, specifically with CPF Focus Area I on “Building Human Capital and Inclusion” under CPF Objective 1.1 to “expand social protection and economic inclusion for poor and vulnerable groups”. While both the project and the above CPF objectives used similar indicators related to increased numbers of beneficiaries of safety net programs, enrollment percentages, and social registry, the project’s result framework did not include indicators related to human capital development. Moreover, the CPF explicitly highlighted the importance of linking social assistance to cognitive development, with longer-term effects on learning, health, and nutrition of individuals and ultimately their income-earning capacity.

Rating
Substantial

4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)

OBJECTIVE 1

Objective
To provide regular cash transfers to extremely poor and vulnerable households with children in selected areas.

Rationale
A precursor to the national program, the project was to be implemented in phases. Phase 1 entailed providing cash transfers to poor and vulnerable households with children under 12 years in Northern and Eastern regions. Poor and vulnerable households were to be identified using community-based targeting followed by a basic proxy-means test. To begin with, four provinces, i.e., 16 communes were selected based on monetary poverty rate and chronic malnutrition rates. These communes were further sub-divided into zones and collines, with an average 535 households per colline. The household-level selection targeted 30 percent of the poorest households within the colline, where poverty was to be measured using access to land, dependency index, and welfare indicators including food security.

Implementation was further phased, starting with 8 selected rural communes of Kuruzi and Ruyigi (PAD, p.12). Beneficiary households would receive BIF 20,000 per household per month. Initially, funds were to be transferred every three months for operational purposes. To ensure regularity of transfers, the project prepared a schedule that was set-up in the operational manual.

The theory of change assumed regular cash transfers would stabilize incomes of poor and vulnerable households, and potentially increase investment in children's human capital, including nutrition. The latter was assumed to be facilitated by behavior change communication activities. Beneficiary households were enrolled for three years in the program which included two and a half years with cash and behavior change activities, and 6 months with behavior change activities only. Behavior-change activities included promotion of positive behavioral change towards maternal and child health, nutrition and early childhood development, and retention of school age children in school, and were conducted by local non-governmental organizations. Examples include household sessions for members above 15 years of age, mothers' and father's sessions; and targeted messaging to community leaders and service providers. While beneficiary households were required to attend, community leaders were encouraged to voluntarily participate. In the initial phase, participation was tracked, however, the transfers were unconditional. The intended outcomes were planned to be measured by the number of beneficiaries who received cash transfers, and those who participated in complementary activities. While aligned with objective 1, these indicators were more output-oriented and didn't capture the changes in intended outcomes.

<u>Outputs and intermediate results</u>

- Provision of cash transfers to poor and vulnerable women with children under 12 years. The target population included extreme poor and vulnerable (in terms of food insecurity) rural households with children under 12 years of age in Northern and Eastern regions of the country.
- Provision of behavior change communication activities, both via community assemblies and gatherings, and additional house visits and follow-ups to ensure solid comprehension and adoption of measures.
- 98% (target: 70%) of the community members reported to be satisfied with this targeting process.
- 100% of beneficiaries (target: 80%) received payments as per schedule in the manual.
- 96% of beneficiary households (target: 80%) participated in complementary behavior change activities. Beneficiary households (both husband and wife) were expected to participate in all sessions, and the delivery partner (NGOs) tracked attendance. The estimate is based on average participation rate.
- In terms of regularity of cash transfers, 100 percent of beneficiaries received payments on the schedule set-up in the operational manual, exceeding the target of 80 percent. This consisted of a total of 15 payments received with the right frequency as planned (ICR, p. 34).

<u>Outcomes</u>

- 56,106 (target: 48,000) beneficiaries received unconditional cash transfers, of which over 95% (target: 50%) were female recipient households. Here, when a selected household had female member who was chosen as the direct recipient of cash transfers, the household was tagged as female recipient.
- 96% (target: 40%) of beneficiary mothers of children under 2 breastfed according to the recommended protocol. The ICR does not report on the proportion of mothers who were breastfeeding prior to the intervention due to unavailability of baseline date. However, the team estimated impact by comparing treatment vs. control post intervention (15% vs. 95%).
- In addition, the ICR reported that 76.1% (target: 40%) of beneficiary households increased their food consumption by more than 10%. Impact was estimated based on a UNICEF evaluation comparing treatment vs. control post intervention. However, no impact on nutritional status has been reported.

Achievement is rated Substantial as the targeting helped to benefit the intended beneficiaries in selected areas through the provision of regular cash transfers. While impact evaluations on complementary activities were limited, the ICR reported that there was a significant increase in food consumption and positive behavior change associated with breastfeeding based on ex-post studies comparing treatment vs. control and third-party evaluations.

Rating
Substantial

OBJECTIVE 2

Objective
To strengthen delivery mechanisms for the development of a basic social safety net program.

Rationale
The first step in building the delivery mechanism for the social safety net program is to identify a pool of potential beneficiaries. The project planned to develop a database for registry using a proxy-means testing approach. The project used a formula that was developed by international consultants with limited in-country appropriation. To get the process running, the project planned to develop core modules for the Management Information System (MIS), set up a monitoring and evaluation framework, and put up the payment mechanisms for cash transfers using a mobile platform. Lastly, to ensure smooth implementation, the project intended to build capacity of implementing agencies. The intended outcomes were to be measured by the proportion of households enrolled in the beneficiary database.

Outputs and intermediate results.

- 100% (target: 90%) of households in the registry had updated information.
- Reports and modules were available in the management information system.
- Targeting processes were put in place, and payment disbursal via mobile phones were tested.
- A grievance and redress mechanism was institutionalized, which ensured that 40% of the grievances registered were resolved in a timely manner.
- Several process evaluations were initiated during implementation; however, not completed.

Outcomes

- 135,872 households were recorded in the household database of whom 56,106 households benefitted from cash transfers and accompanying measures.
- Data showed that 99.4 percent of households enrolled in the beneficiary database were living below the extreme poverty line, exceeding the target of 70 percent, and that registered beneficiaries belonged to the lowest quintile (poorest 20 percent) of the income distribution.
- The project helped authorities update the National Social Protection Policy in 2022.

Key pillars and building blocks of the delivery system were set up such as targeting and payment mechanisms, and registry development. These also helped to inform the Social Protection Policy. Going forward, the country could benefit from in-country appropriation for key components of a basic social safety net programs, as the transfer of knowledge was weak.

Rating
Substantial

OVERALL EFFICACY

Rationale

Both the objectives of providing regular cash transfers to extremely poor and vulnerable households in selected areas and strengthening delivery mechanisms for the development of a basic social safety net program were almost fully achieved and rated substantial. The project's interventions were logically and plausibly connected to observed outcomes, however, the PDO was output focused.

Overall Efficacy Rating

Substantial

5. Efficiency

The PAD's economic analysis highlighted both the direct and indirect impact of the cash transfer program. The former included the short-term effects of increasing income and consumption, and long-term effects of investing in children's human capital. The analysis quantified these potential impacts, for example, household income was expected to increase by 15% over the transfer period and the monetary poverty gap was to shrink in half. In addition, empirical evidence from other countries in the region suggested that cash transfers could lead to increases in productive investment. The indirect impacts included (a) sharing economic gains associated with higher demand, which was expected with higher income, and (b) increasing investments in productive capacity of beneficiaries and improving their risk management capacity.

The ICR presented a cost-effectiveness analysis, which highlighted that the cost-effectiveness to deliver cash transfers to beneficiaries were below the estimates at appraisal as the amount disbursed to households was lower than estimated (US$ 124 vs. US$ 145 per household). Disbursing cash transfers costed 3.75% of the amount disbursed as compared to 3.4% from international experience. Costs associated with updating and maintaining the registry were well below the estimated costs at appraisal (US$ 6 vs. US$ 14 per household). In addition, the cost efficiency gains associated with digital payments was estimated to be US$ 82 per household as compared to the expected US$ 90 over three years. Project management costs, including administrative costs and capacity building, were at the upper end of average operating costs. However, the ICR justified these given it's a first of a kind engagement in Burundi.

The project faced some minor design and implementation challenges, including procurement. The project kick-off was delayed by four months due to delays in recruitment of a project coordinator, and complementary activities were on hold due to suspension of international NGOs by the government. These were resolved over time. Accountability issues on the government side stemmed from limited access to the government-owned MIS. Access was limited in the sense that the project team could not update beneficiary information.

Overall, efficiency is rated as substantial in view of the cost-effectiveness of cash transfers delivery and because project implementation was overall adequate with some shortcomings and delays.

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 ☐ Not Applicable
ICR Estimate		0	0 ☐ Not Applicable

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

6. Outcome

Relevance of Objectives is rated Substantial, as the PDOs were aligned with government's priorities, and the Country Partnership Framework at project closing, however, they were not sufficiently linked to the overarching development needs of the country (outcomes vs. outputs). Achievement of Objectives is rated Substantial as development objectives were almost fully achieved. Efficiency is rated Substantial as the cost of disbursing cash transfers was aligned with international experience. Taken together, the outcome is rated Satisfactory.

a. Outcome Rating

Satisfactory

7. Risk to Development Outcome

A well-rounded infrastructure for a social safety net program has been set up in Burundi with over 135,000 households registered in the database, a grievance redress mechanism, and a payment disbursement process. However, there was high dependency on international consultants for the formulas used, with a lack of in-country appropriation, limiting the country's capacity to scale-up, both geographically and demographically.

In addition, as emphasized in the ICR, the viability of the project was at risk from limited institutional capacity, weak governance, fiduciary risks, and existing gender-based norms. In response to these, the project undertook measures to build local capacity, appointed an internal auditor, and provided support to address issues with gender norms.

In the larger context, the project contributed to the government's efforts to place social protection at the center of the national development agenda and contributed to institutional strengthening. Technical support and intensive dialogue with the World Bank and other Development Partners on the implementation of the National Social Protection Strategy helped the main actors in charge of social protection and reinforced coordination mechanisms. However, the transfer of knowledge regarding the MIS and the payment platform fell short according to the ICR (p. 19). In terms of mobilizing the private sector, the latter contributed to the project by investing in the mobile operator's infrastructure to increase service accessibility (ICR, p. 19).

8. Assessment of Bank Performance

a. Quality-at-Entry

The project was in line with government priorities as highlighted in the Cadre Stratégique de Lutte contre la Pauvreté (PRSP) and the National Social Protection Policy (PNPS) (2011). The government had also set up an inter-ministerial coordinating body in 2013, a secretariat in 2014, and developed the National Social Protection Strategy in 2015. The project brought together key international partners working in the country. For example, UNICEF was to provide technical assistance for behavior change curriculum, and African Development Bank was to complement efforts in the Ministry of Civil Service, Labor, and Social Security.

The preparation of the project was based on an assessment of social safety nets in the country in 2014 and a vulnerability assessment, however, the country had limited experience in cash transfers. The design was, therefore, informed by pilots run by NGOs and donors in the country, including those implemented by Concern Worldwide, Belgian Technical Cooperation, and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Lessons learnt from other countries such as Nicaragua, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania were also incorporated, such as the merits of good targeting, supporting the extremely poor, MIS development, donor coordination, partnerships with the civil society and NGOs, and providing cash to women to ensure that a larger share is spent on food and children's needs (PAD, p. 16-17).

The PDO formulation was closer to the output level rather than the outcome level, and the Results Framework did not fully capture the expected results of increased access to cash transfers and strengthened delivery mechanisms for a social safety net program. The ICR highlighted the shortcomings of the results framework at the design stage as well as the absence of a true impact evaluation study (ICR, p. 24). In addition to the lack of outcome-orientation, the ICR noted that outcome-level indicators did not measure all parts of the PDO, and that the core reporting indicators (beneficiaries of social safety nets) and their disaggregation were incorrectly interpreted (household level instead of individuals) and taking 50 percent "of which, female" instead of having a separate indicator to track female recipients within the household (ICR, p. 23)

By and large, the design of implementation arrangements was adequate, with implementation to be led by the Permanent Executive Secretary under the authority of the Ministry of Human Rights, Social Affairs and Gender, and under the guidance of a steering committee. The Project Implementation Unit (PIU) included a central team, provincial and commune-level teams (PAD, p. 38). In addition, the Permanent Executive Secretariat of the National Protection Commission and the Directorate for Social Assistance and National Solidarity in the Ministry of Human Rights, Social Affairs and Gender were mobilized for coordination (PAD, p. 18).

The main risk identified at the appraisal was related to the fact that the project was the first of its kind in Burundi. Additionally, both the Permanent Executive Secretariat for the National Social Protection Commission and the Direction for Social Assistance and National Solidarity were relatively unfamiliar with the World Bank's procurement rules and financial procedures. To mitigate these risks, several strategies were employed, including leveraging the project implementation unit to ensure a smooth run, developing a manual of procedures aligned with the World Bank's processes, and appointing an internal auditor. These mitigation measures proved to be largely adequate.

Quality-at-Entry Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

b. Quality of supervision

The ICR (p. 22) reported that the World Bank significantly contributed to the success of the project by adopting a participatory approach, improving communication and coordination among partners. The World Bank Team was proactive, restructured the project, and facilitated the adoption of a graduation approach for beneficiary households. This effort was informed by lessons learnt in other countries in the region that suggested that investing in Income Generating Activities (and obtaining relevant training) makes the impacts on consumption last longer.

The World Bank provided close monitoring and supervision missions throughout the life of the project in close collaboration with government counterparts. The World Bank Task Team carried out nine supervision and implementation support missions with 3 virtual missions following the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (ICR, p. 23). These were followed by good quality reporting and recording, including comprehensive Aide-Memoires and recommended actions to government counterparts, and ISRs (ICR, p. 27). The missions were adequately staffed, with experts who provided technical assistance on social protection issues and training the PIU staff on fiduciary aspects. A Mid-Term Review (MTR) was conducted on schedule in November 2019 and came up with restructuring recommendations that strengthened project activities. The Task Team was proactive in facilitating the work of government counterparts in addressing implementation challenges, including procurement and financial management, and in facilitating mitigation measures, including the hiring of an accounting assistant and reviewing of manuals.

Quality of Supervision Rating

Satisfactory

Overall Bank Performance Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization

a. M&E Design

As mentioned in the Quality at Entry section (section 8.a) the PDO formulation was closer to the output level rather than the outcome level. The M&E arrangements included process and impact evaluations, spot checks and beneficiary surveys. The process evaluations during the first phase were intended to inform expansion, and the impact evaluations were to be conducted using randomized control trials. The key delivery mechanism set up, i.e., the MIS was to enable regular M&E. M&E tools such as setting up the dashboard were appropriate as they allowed regular tracking of progress, and a dedicated M&E specialist was hired at the outset (ICR, p. 23).

b. M&E Implementation

M&E was adequately implemented in some areas, but with shortcomings in others. Throughout implementation, there was systematic updating of the results framework to monitor progress (ICR, p. 27). While impact evaluations were kick-started, they were not completed during implementation. The project also carried out a technical audit of payments to assess the technical quality of the targeting and payment system (ICR, p. 24). Additional indicators were incorporated into the Complementary Activities Operations Manual developed by NGOs to monitor behavior change among beneficiaries. Other shortcomings included misinterpretation between household and individual beneficiaries; limited access to MIS that delayed the updates of beneficiary information in the system; and the poor quality of baseline data of the pilot that limited the robustness to establish the relationship between cash transfers and increased food consumption.

c. M&E Utilization

The World Bank worked closely on M&E with the government and development partners. M&E utilization was extensive and adequately used for project monitoring. The ICR (p. 24) reported that data were consistently used to inform project management and decision-making on implementation progress and arising issues, and that the government and World Bank teams met regularly through videoconferences and frequent meetings to review and discuss M&E findings. Actions were mutually agreed to improve performance in areas that were lagging. The project informed and supported the National Social Protection Policy in 2022 (ICR, p. 16). In particular, it provided support to the government to build capacity for implementing and updating its social protection strategy.

The ICR (p. 24) concluded that M&E implementation shortcomings did not significantly affect the project team's ability to monitor progress and to assess the achievement of the stated objectives on the provision of cash transfers to intended beneficiaries, and on strengthening delivery mechanisms for a social safety net program. M&E arrangements, findings, close monitoring, and utilization were sufficient to assess the achievement of the stated objectives.

M&E Quality Rating

Substantial

10. Other Issues

a. Safeguards

The project was classified under environmental category B. Safeguards issues are often minimal in social protection projects with no physical construction. However, given that one percent of the population was indigenous, OB/ BP 4.0 on indigenous people was triggered and the government prepared an Indigenous Peoples' Planning Framework. The plan aimed to ensure the dignity, rights, interests, and cultural specificities of the Batwa population were respected, and they benefited from the project in the same way as other citizens. Activities included support for child and marriage registration, home improvements, capacity building in modern pottery and distribution of school kits. The project also developed a grievance and redress mechanism for all beneficiaries including the Batwa population. For ease of access, the project placed confidential complaint boxes at the colline level, complaint tables at payment sites, and set up a toll-free number for complains. Availability of field level personnel from the PIU also helped in handling complains in person for the Batwa population (ICR p. 25).

In addition, promotional activities were developed to provide safeguards against possible adverse social impact arising from providing cash transfers to women, which went against the gender norms in Burundian society. The overall safeguards rating was recorded as Satisfactory in the Operations Portal.

b. Fiduciary Compliance

The ICR reported that Financial Management was handled effectively throughout implementation. While there were challenges associated with limited capacity, discrepancies between manuals and contracts, and poor quality of monitoring reports, the World Bank managed to mitigate most of these. The only recommendation from the financial supervision mission which was not incorporated was to host the MIS database on the project local server vs. cloud due to travel restrictions associated with the pandemic.

Procurement performance was rated moderately satisfactory during implementation. While most procurement was as planned and the project effectively saved US$ 3 million, there were some shortcomings associated with contract management and procurement processes.

c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)

While mobile payments per se were intended according to the PAD to promote accessibility and financial inclusion, and the payment study identified potential bank and mobile providers in all provinces, the ICR (p. 19) reported that the project helped in mobilizing private sector financing. In particular, the private sector contributed to the project by investing in the mobile operator’s infrastructure to increase service accessibility and connectivity by installing new antennas and strengthening existing ones. According to the ICR (p. 20), more than 326 agents and super-agents were created by the payment agency during the implementation of the project.

d. Other

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11. Ratings

Ratings	ICR	IEG	Reason for Disagreements/Comment

Outcome	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	
Bank Performance	Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	The PDO formulation was closer to the output level rather than the outcome level and the Results Framework did not fully capture what was expected as a consequence of increased access to cash transfers and strengthen delivery mechanisms for a social safety net program
Quality of M&E	Modest	Substantial	M&E implementation was inadequate for capturing the expected results of increased access to cash transfers and strengthened delivery mechanisms for a social safety net program, but it was generally sufficient for assessing the achievement of the stated objectives. For this reason, as per IEG and OPCS guidance, M&E is considered Substantial.
Quality of ICR	---	Substantial	

12. Lessons

The ICR (pp. 29- 30) identified “lessons” or insights that emerged from the experience of this project. A few of these are echoed here.

- Pilots are useful for effectively scaling up targeted interventions to larger portfolios.
- Regular cash transfers work well with complementary behavior change activities/support to promote investment in households’ human capital and productive inclusion.
- Providing cash transfers to women under the social safety net program helps in empowering them and in addressing children’s needs and nutrition. However, appropriate efforts need to be taken to mitigate any risks associated with going against existing gender norms.
- Participatory approaches can work well in complex environments, especially when the project is first of its kind in the country as it helps in ensuring different development partners are working in tandem towards in building the country’s social safety net.

13. Assessment Recommended?

No

14. Comments on Quality of ICR

The ICR was clear and candid. It adequately conveyed the storyline associated with laying the foundation of a social protection system while lucidly articulating complex issues around governance and capacity prevalent in Burundi. The evidence was of adequate quality, although it was output-oriented. The evidence supported arguments made by the ICR and was sufficient to reach conclusions in assessing the achievement of stated objectives. Lessons and recommendations were derived from project experience. The ICR was internally consistent and followed guidelines, although its narrative was moderately lengthy and occasionally repetitive.

a. **Quality of ICR Rating**
   Substantial