Report Number: ICRR0024533

1. Project Data

Project ID	Project Name
P151083	Great Lakes Region Trade Facilitation
Country	**Practice Area(Lead)**
Eastern and Southern Africa	Finance, Competitiveness and Innovation

L/C/TF Number(s)	Closing Date (Original)	Total Project Cost (USD)
IDA-57210,IDA-57220,IDA-57240,IDA-D0890,IDA-E0680	31-Dec-2020	95,601,829.78
Bank Approval Date	**Closing Date (Actual)**	
25-Sep-2015	30-Jun-2024	

	IBRD/IDA (USD)	Grants (USD)
Original Commitment	79,000,000.00	0.00
Revised Commitment	101,883,309.35	0.00
Actual	96,641,418.40	0.00

Prepared by	Reviewed by	ICR Review Coordinator	Group
Nestor Ntungwanayo	Vibecke Dixon	Avjeet Singh	IEGSD (Unit 4)

2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

As per the Financing Agreements on page 5, "The Project Development Objective (PDO) was to facilitate cross-border trade by increasing the capacity for commerce and reducing the costs faced by traders, especially small-scale and women traders, at targeted locations in the borderlands". The PDO statement in the Project Appraisal Document on page 11 was identical and was unchanged during the period of project implementation.

For clarity in the assessment of project efficacy performance, the PDO will be unpacked as follows:

- PDO-1: To facilitate cross-border trade by increasing the capacity for commerce by traders, especially small-scale and women traders, at targeted locations in the borderlands.
- PDO-2: To facilitate cross-border trade by reducing the costs faced by traders, especially small-scale and women traders, at targeted locations in the borderlands.

There were three Results Frameworks (RFs) for this project as follows: (i) the 2015 original RF at approval, (ii) the revised RF during the level 2 restructuring in June 2020, and (iii) the revised RF during the May 2022 restructuring and Additional Financing (AF) approval. The June 2020 RF revisions aimed to refine the results framework to better capture the impact of the project on the ground, and to clarify the definitions of some indicators and how data were to be collected, dropping some indicators and integrating changes due to modifications to the scope of some project interventions. The May 2022 RF included revisions in the context of an AF aimed to fund a resettlement action plan (RAP) and an improved border infrastructure at Petite Barrière in Goma-DRC. The associated Results Framework to the AF changed the end-targets and dates of specific indicators.

This validation review will not use the split methodology to compare achieved results against the three categories of indicators set in the 2015, 2020, and 2022 RFs. Instead, this review will assess the performance of an expanded project based only on the May 2022 RF adopted in the context of an AF of US$23.0 million, following OPCS guidelines, which indicate that " when the project becomes overall more ambitious, generally the operation can be assessed on the basis of the more ambitious revised outcomes and outcome targets"(OPCS 2021). The AF aimed to fund outstanding activities, namely a resettlement action plan (RAP) and civil works for an improved border infrastructure at Petite Barrière in Goma-DRC. The June 2020 RF revision was a course correction aimed at refining the results framework to better capture the impact of the project, while maintaining the 4 initial key performance indicators (KPI), which were unchanged throughout the period of project implementation.

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
19-May-2022

c. Will a split evaluation be undertaken?
No

d. Components
The project provided resources to finance four components which are detailed below.

Component 1: Improving core trade infrastructure and facilities in the border areas (cost at appraisal of US$54.35 million, actual cost of US$76.3 million).

Under this component, the project was to finance improvements to core trade infrastructure and facilities at specific land border crossing points, and an airport in Rwanda that is of regional importance.

Sub-component 1.1: Border infrastructure and facilities. The project was to support improvements to infrastructure and facilities at priority border posts. The priority border posts had been identified and proposed by the authorities based on traffic volumes, importance to supply chains of goods traded most across the borders, relevance to conflict dynamics in the region and the poor state of infrastructure to support cross-border trade. The project was to finance consultancy services, works contracts and goods at the following proposed border posts: (i) DRC: Petite Barrière (Goma) and Ruzizi I (Bukavu); and (ii) Uganda: Mpondwe. Due to the better state of existing infrastructure, but also resource constraints, interventions at the other border posts were to be limited to the following: (i) DRC: Bunagana and Kasindi. (ii) Rwanda: Rusizi I, and (iii) Uganda: Bunagana.

Sub-component 1.2: Development of border markets and logistics platforms. The project was to finance the construction of markets to facilitate market exchanges of agricultural products in the borderlands. The project was to finance consultancy services to provide technical assistance, works contracts and goods at high priority markets in the borderlands of the Great Lakes. As the countries were at different levels of preparation for actual investments in markets as follows: (i) DRC: The project intended to finance two markets in key centers such as Uvira, Bukavu and Goma, (ii) Rwanda: The exact sites of the markets were to be focused on two districts, Nyamasheke and Rusizi. (iii) Uganda: the project was to finance: (a) feasibility studies; (b) the development of architectural designs of border markets; and (c) capacity building for value chain players. Based on the findings of the studies and the designs, the project intended to finance one priority market along the border with the DRC.

Sub-component 1.3: Upgrading Infrastructure at Kamembe airport in Rwanda. Support was to be provided to the Rwanda Civil Aviation Authority (RCAA) to develop navigation infrastructure and improve security at Kamembe Airport. The project aimed to complement the government investment in the runway and finance new navigational aids and weather equipment, aeronautical ground lighting, airport perimeter fencing and lighting and a transit cargo facility. The improvements to the airport were identified as a priority of the government and were part of the country's Strategic Transport Master Plan.

Sub-component 1.4: Feasibility studies. The studies and designs were to cover the following: (i) DRC : two border posts, namely Kavimvira and Mahagi, two ports, Kalemie and Uvira on Lake Tanganyika and Kavumu airport near Bukavu; the scope of the study on Kavumu airport was to rely on the recommendations of the airport Strategic Plan that is under preparation, as described in paragraph 25 above; (ii) Rwanda: Rusizi I border post. The project was to finance a feasibility study and detailed design of the Rusizi I border post. Following the completion of the study and based on the findings, some priority works were to be financed as described previously under Sub-component 1.1; (iii) Uganda: Goli border post (counterpart of Mahagi in DRC).

Component 2: Implementation of Policy and Procedural Reforms and Capacity Building to Facilitate Cross Border Trade in Goods and Services (cost at appraisal of US$ US$9.5 million; actual cost of US$9.5 million).

Sub-component 2.1. Support for implementation of policy and procedural reforms at the targeted border crossings. This subcomponent entailed support for the three countries to implement the COMESA Regulations on the Minimum Standards for the Treatment of Small-Scale Cross-Border Traders. Key activities were as follows: 1) establishment of citizen engagement mechanisms; 2) implementation of the

COMESA Simplified Trade Regime (STR) and 3) extension the COMESA Regulations to small-scale trade in services.

Sub-component 2.2. Training and capacity building for traders and officials to support greater integrity and ethical behavior in trade processes. The aim of this sub-component was to enhance technical capacities and skills of agents working at the border, supporting improved governance, reduced levels of harassment and more efficient control and processing of goods and people. The project was also to cover training for traders and traders' associations.

Sub-component 2.3. Support for regional coordination of the policy and procedural reforms at the targeted border crossings and regional training for traders and officials. This subcomponent included support for dissemination and application of the COMESA Regulations and the STR through Trade Information Desks (TIDs) and support for COMESA to provide regional training for peer learning among traders and officials of the three countries.

Component 3: Performance Based Management in Cross Border Administration (cost at appraisal of US$4.5 million; actual cost of US$4.5 million).

Sub-component 3.1: Professionalization and Change management in the border agencies. This subcomponent supported a functional review of institutional effectiveness and efficiency at the Customs and Immigration offices in each of the three countries to assess the existing organizational functions and staff skills and identify any functional and skills' gap to meet defined institutional targets. The goal was to help senior management to develop strategic organizational functions and staffing plans at the border posts.

Sub-component 3.2: Performance Based Management and Incentive Mechanism. This subcomponent included technical and hands-on support to enhance PBM at customs, the introduction of PBM at other border agencies, and the development of indicators related to improvement of the cross-border environment for small-scale traders as part of performance measurement of officials. This subcomponent also incorporated the development of an evaluation method with a third-party monitoring mechanism using Information Technology (IT) tools to monitor traders' satisfaction and service performance at the borders and to develop appropriate incentive mechanisms for staff.

Component 4: Implementation support, Communication and M&E (cost at appraisal of US$ 10.6 million; actual cost of US$ 11.6 million).

Sub-component 4.1: Implementation Support & Communications. This subcomponent aimed to build the implementation capacity of government agencies and COMESA, and to finance communication activities. COMESA was to produce media programs, and content for websites and social media to raise awareness of the conditions that cross-border traders faced and to familiarize all relevant stakeholders with the Traders Charter and related policy reforms.

Sub-component 4.2: Project Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) and Systems for Monitoring Small-Scale Cross-Border Trade. This sub-component was to fund the design of socio-economic indicators to measure the changing trade patterns and the improved perceptions between traders and state officials with support from the Great Lakes Conflict Facility. The project was to support existing systems for data collection on cross-border trade flows in Rwanda and Uganda and support the pilot of a new small-scale cross-border trade monitoring program at specified border points in DRC. COMESA was to develop standardized data collection methodologies and best practices, and to provide peer to peer learning on

measuring, analyzing and reporting on small-scale cross-border trade, and developing a platform and website for the dissemination of this information.

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

Project Cost: Actual cost of the project is US$95.19 million or 93.3 percent of the committed amount.

Financing: The project was funded by a series of three credits in the amount of SDR 24.4 million to the Democratic Republic of Congo (US$34 million equivalent), SDR 18.7 million to the Republic of Rwanda (US$26 million equivalent), and SDR 10.1 million to the Republic of Uganda (US$14 million equivalent). It was also funded by a series of grants in the amount of SDR 3.6 million to the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (US$5 million equivalent), and SDR 17.2 million to the Democratic Republic of Congo (US$23 million equivalent).

Borrower Contribution: There was no contribution anticipated from the Borrower at appraisal, and there was none during implementation.

Dates: The project was approved on September 25, 2015, and made effective on January 25, 2016, and was expected to close on September 30, 2023. It was restructured four times and closed on the revised closing date of June 30, 2024. A mid-term review was conducted during December 2018 to assess project progress and prepare for restructuring.

Restructurings: The project was restructured four times as detailed below:

- **First Restructuring on October 26, 2020.** This restructuring aimed to enhance the institutional arrangements for the project in DRC by strengthening the capacity in the eastern provinces where most activities were being implemented. This involved decentralizing some of the technical personnel to the provincial level to bring them closer to the project sites and beneficiaries and strengthening the role of provincial coordinators in infrastructure activities by providing them with a coordinating role. This restructuring aimed also to refine the results framework to better capture the results and impact of the project on the ground. The changes involved clarifying the definitions of some indicators and how data were to be collected, dropping some indicators and integrating changes due to modifications to the scope of some project interventions. Finally, this restructuring aimed to extend the closing date of the project by 18 months to 30 June 2022 for DRC, Rwanda and Uganda and by 12 months at COMESA, to December 31, 2021, to overcome the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic that slowed down the infrastructure component of the project.
- **Second Restructuring and Additional Financing on June 09, 2022.** Following the DRC Government's request dated April 27, 2022, the proposed additional financing in the amount of US$23.0 million aimed to cover a financing gap and cost overrun to implement activities envisaged under Component 1, in particular a resettlement action plan (RAP) in Goma and associated civil works for a one stop border post (OSBP) at the site. In addition, the project was to be restructured to introduce changes to Component 1, update the results framework, extend the closing date in DRC by 24 months from June 30, 2022, to June 30, 2024, reallocate funds between disbursement categories, revise disbursement estimates accordingly, and change implementing arrangements. The AF intended primarily to address: (a) the significant delays in implementation that have put people affected by the project (PAPs) and other stakeholders in a situation of

uncertainty, (b) related grievances being raised by community members, and (c) the need to restore trust in the development process by following through on agreed plans.

- **Third Restructuring, on June 09, 2022.** This restructuring paper sought an extension of the closing date of the project in Uganda by 6 months from June 30, 2022, to December 30, 2022. The extension aimed to enable the authorities to: (a) complete the remaining works at the market and border post in Mpondwe; (b) prepare rules for the allocation of space in the market; (c) relocate traders to the new facility making sure the needs of vulnerable groups are reflected; (d) put in place a proper management arrangement for the market and ensure an affordable child development center is accessible to vendors; (e) restore the temporary site that has been used for trading to its owners in accordance with the RAP; (f) continue collecting and reporting data on monitoring and evaluation of the project in Uganda; and (g) train and capacitate the grievance redress committee to support utilization and operation of the market.
- **Fourth Restructuring on April 04, 2024.** This restructuring included the following changes: (i) changes in the implementing agency; (ii) changes in disbursements arrangements; (iii) reallocation between disbursement categories and (iv) changes in disbursement estimates. In particular, the changes to the implementing agency consisted in transferring responsibilities of Ministry of Infrastructure and Public Works (MIPW) as the implementing agency for the Great Lakes Trade Facilitation Project (GLTFP), responsible for Component 1 and Component 4 to the Ministry of Commerce PMU.

3. Relevance of Objectives

Rationale

Regional Context.

The Great Lakes Region (GLR)—covering parts of DRC, Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda—is historically affected by complex and entrenched conflict dynamics driven by political, security, social, and economic factors. Eastern DRC is particularly fragile due to weak state capacity, ethnic tensions, insecure land ownership, armed groups, and socioeconomic vulnerability. Regionally, conflict drivers include land access issues, displacement, resource exploitation, rapid population growth, and limited economic opportunities. Despite recent conflict disruptions, cross-border trade remained a vital source of income, especially for poor women traders dealing in agricultural goods. At appraisal, DRC faced increasing unrest and displacement, with national growth failing to reach most of the population.

All three beneficiary countries had expressed their commitment to supporting cross-border trade. At the time of appraisal, all three governments targeted by the operation (DRC, Rwanda, and Uganda), had recognized the importance of small-scale cross-border trade for the economic well-being of border communities. The Government of Rwanda had set supporting and developing small-scale trade as a key objective through the launch of a National Cross-Border Trade Strategy. DRC had committed to implementing COMESA's Simplified Trade Regime (STR), and both Rwanda and Uganda had launched the collection of small-scale border trade data to inform border policies. At the time of appraisal, the project design identified air transport infrastructure as critical to support the growth in trade products that could be traded by air.

This operation was aligned with the two pillars of the World Bank Group's Great Lakes Initiative, which sought to address the key socioeconomic dimensions of underlying sources of conflict. The first pillar of the initiative sought to improve community resilience and target vulnerable groups, while the second pillar provided infrastructure support, policy support to remove the barriers for trade and integration, and support for employment and agricultural productivity. The Great Lakes Initiative followed the signature of the regional Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (PSCF) which set out priorities to build peace and stability in the DRC and the region and opened the doors for increased dialogue among the 14 signatory countries around cross-border issues.

COMESA had an established program to support small-scale traders through the Simplified Trade Regime (STR) and Trade Information Desks at border crossings, but more support for rollout and implementation of these initiatives was required. All project countries had expressed their commitment to supporting cross-border trade. At the time of appraisal, all three governments targeted by the operation (DRC, Rwanda, and Uganda), had recognized the importance of small-scale cross-border trade for the economic well-being of border communities.

The PDO was consistent with the WBG strategies in the Region and in the beneficiary countries throughout the period of project implementation until closure. DRC: The project was fully aligned with Focus Area 1 of FY22-FY26 CPF for DRC: Strengthen stabilization efforts for reduced risk of conflict and violence, in particular objective 1.3: Strengthen regional integration and cross-border trade in the Great Lakes Region (GLR). According to the latest CPF, conflict and violence persist, particularly in the GLR, women and girls bear the brunt of this turmoil, with over half of those aged 15 and older experiencing physical violence or Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (SEA/H). The CPF highlighted that despite conflict in the GLR, cross-border trade had continued to be an important source of goods, services, and incomes for conflict-affected populations, and this small-scale trade continues to be dominated by women.

Rwanda: While links with CPF focus areas are not as direct as in the case of DRC, the project is broadly aligned with objectives 2 and 4 of Rwanda's FY21-FY26 CPF: Improved conditions for Private Sector Development and Increased Agricultural Productivity and Commercialization. While the current CPF does not specifically target the GLR, it does have a focus on increasing the exportability of Rwandan agricultural goods.

Uganda: Similarly to Rwanda, even if the CPF does not specifically address cross-border trade, the operation is still aligned with the FY16-21 CPF. Specifically, the operation was aligned with Strategic Focus Area B: Raising Incomes in Rural Areas, in particular the objective to Increase Agricultural Commercialization, and CPF objective 4: enhanced resilience for the poor and vulnerable.

The PDO and activities were pitched at the appropriate level. The identified activities and outcomes were basic and attuned to fit to priorities of populations living across a border region of three countries that has been plagued by fragility, conflict and violence. The main activities aimed at (i) delivering border infrastructure and facilities, (ii) implementing policy and procedural reforms and capacity building to facilitate cross border trade in goods and services, (iii) establishing performance-based management in cross border administration, and (iv) implementation support, communication and M&E. Additionally, this project complemented the COMESA "Trading for Peace" program focused on building the resilience and capacity of small-scale traders in key post-conflict borderland areas. The Great Lakes governments endorsed this as an important activity targeting the most vulnerable groups and likely to show early peace dividends.

Overall, the relevance of objectives is rated high because (i) they were in line with the thrust of regional integration promoted in the context of the EAC and COMESA, (ii) they were consistent with the WBG strategies in the Region and in the beneficiary countries throughout the period of project implementation until closure, and (iii) they were appropriately pitched to address priorities of populations living across a border region of three countries, building on existing integration frameworks.

Rating
High

4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)

OBJECTIVE 1

Objective
PDO-1: To facilitate cross-border trade by increasing the capacity for commerce by traders, especially small-scale and women traders, at targeted locations in the borderlands.

Rationale
Theory of change

There was no explicit theory of change in the PAD or in the restructuring papers outlining the linkage between the project activities and the PDO. The ICR reconstructed a theory of change (on pages 3-4, and in the Annex 6 on page 39), which summarizes the logical chain by which activities of the project were to be transformed into outputs and outcomes. This review outlines below the results chain underlying the process of achieving the project development objective.

Toward PDO-1, the project was to support the following activities:

- To fund consultancy services, works contracts and goods at the following proposed border posts: (i) DRC: Petite Barrière (Goma), Ruzizi I (Bukavu), Bunagana and Kasindi; and (ii) Uganda: Mpondwe, and Bunagana, and (ii) Rwanda: Rusizi I.
- To fund the construction of markets to facilitate market exchanges in the borderlands in the three countries: (i) DRC: two markets in key centers such as Uvira, Bukavu and Goma, (ii) Rwanda: two markets in the two districts of Nyamasheke and Rusizi. (iii) Uganda: the project was to finance: (a) feasibility studies; (b) the development of architectural designs of border markets; and (c) capacity building for value chain players, and
- To finance the upgrade of the navigation infrastructure and improve security at Kamembe Airport-Rwanda, and finally
- To design and conduct selected feasibility studies in the three countries.

Expected outputs included (i) the infrastructure for new border facilities in Uganda (Bunagana, Mpondwe), and DRC (Kasindi, Bukavu/Rusizi 1), the infrastructure facilities at the Bunagana and Petite Barriere border

posts in DRC, and (iii) the civil works at Kamembe Airport. Expected outcomes included: (i) the increase in value of goods handled through core trade infrastructure, and (ii) the number of direct project beneficiaries

The ICR identified a few assumptions that were essential to achieving the PDO, including (i) a combination of hard infrastructure and policy/procedural trade reforms, (ii) the need for improved border management that would reduce community resentment towards state authorities and enhance the professionalism of border agents. The key assumption that was not pinpointed was the need for an improved security in the borderlands zone, and a higher level of trust and collaboration among the political leaderships of the three countries. When the last assumption was not met starting mid-2022, project implementation was hindered, and the level of results was impacted negatively.

Overall, there was a logical chain linking the identified activities and expected outputs and outcomes, and there was a consistency between this theory of change and the RF discussed under Section 9. However, the reconstructed theory of change had weaknesses as follows: (i) the reconstructed result chain did not show explicitly the achieved outputs (the annex 6a on page 39 of the ICR has no column devoted to expected outputs), (ii) identified assumptions did not include the importance of trust and partnership among the three countries which is a key ingredient for the project success, and (iii) it did not discuss the attribution of achieved outcome, especially that this project was implemented in parallel to efforts by the beneficiary countries toward the similar outcomes.

Outputs

Below are the outputs and outcomes achieved against the revised RF adopted in the context of May 2022 AF and restructuring.

- The revised target for the total daily average number of traders processed through the borders was exceeded by 25 percent, reaching 7,481 against a target of 6,000. The total result is the sum of the latest data for 3 border posts between: Kasindi/Mpondwe and Mahagi/Goli between Uganda and DRC, Rusizi 1 and Petite Barriere/Poids Lourds betwen DRC and Rwanda. There was no data for Bunaga border post due to the security situation.
- The revised total number of border officials receiving training was achieved, reaching 1,201, against a target of 1200.
- The revised target for the total number of facilitators trained on the delivery of training to traders and border officials was largely exceeded, reaching 293, against a target of 60.
- The revised target for the completion of the project communications strategy developed and executed was fully achieved for Uganda, Rwanda, DRC, and COMESA.
- The revised target for the total number of traders receiving training was not achieved, reaching 2,516, against a target of 4,000.

Additional outputs which were generated by the project include the following:

- **Rwanda**: The two border markets at Bugarama and Nyamasheke were officially launched in March 2022, and all civil works at Kamembe Airport were completed in June 2022. The Bugarama market was operating at full capacity as of November 2023. The Nyamasheke Market was operating at 90% capacity as of March 2022.

- **Uganda**: The three planned infrastructure works at Bunagana and new border facilities and a market at Mpondwe were delivered by December 2022. The Mpondwe crossing and the new market at Mpondwe were operational as of June 2024.
- **DRC**: The infrastructure activities (border posts at Kasindi, and Bukavu/Rusizi 1) were completed before June 30, 2022), the Bunagana border post (completed at 85%), and the construction of a one-stop border post at Petite Barrière in Goma, which was substantially delayed initially, was at 40% completed, and the rest of the works were transferred to the new Great Lakes Trade Facilitation and Integration Project approved in FY22.

Outcomes

- **The overall outcome related to the trade of goods is unknown because of the war outbreak along the DRC/Rwanda and Uganda border since mid-2022 until now**. The total value of goods handled through core trade infrastructure by mid-year 2022 between DRC on the one hand, and Rwanda/Uganda on the other hand reached US$298.0 million, falling short of the baseline level of US$302 million in 2015, and missing the target of US$352 million. The value of goods handled between DRC and Uganda at Kasindi and Bunagana totaled US$78 million not achieving the target of US$235 million, while the value of goods between the DRC and Rwanda at Ruzizi 1 and Petite Barrière totaled US$210 million, exceeding the target of US$117 million. Achieved results between DRC/Uganda trade, and DRC/Rwanda represented only 33 percent and 56 percent of the targets respectively. Two key elements explaining the shortfall in trade among DRC and both Uganda and Rwanda are the worsening security starting mid-2022 on their common border, which led to reduction of trade flows and inability to get reliable data. Without the impact of war along the frontier between DRC and both Rwanda Uganda, the targets might have been exceeded, based on results achieved by mid-2022, two and a half years before the project closure.
- **The target for the direct project beneficiaries was exceeded by 23 percent, reaching 1,356,496.00 against a target of 1,100,834**. The total number of direct project beneficiaries reflects actual numbers for Rwanda and Uganda as of April 2022 data as the grants/credits for both countries were completed and closed, while the DRC data are an update of June 2022 data, because of the worsening security situation in Bunagana and the panic generated at other sites. Direct project beneficiaries by country were as follows: (i) DRC: 573,285.00, exceeding the target of 403,434.00 (ii) 469,031.00 exceeding the target of 403,434, and (iii) Uganda: 314,180.00, exceeding the target of 293,966.
- **The target for the percentage of female beneficiaries in the three countries was slightly exceeded reaching 68 percent against a target of 66 percent.** The results related to targets for the percentage of female beneficiaries varied from country to country as follows: (i) DRC with a percentage of female beneficiaries of 65, not achieving the target of 75 percent, (ii) Rwanda, with percentage of female beneficiaries of 70, not achieving the target of 75 percent, and (iii) Uganda with percentage of female beneficiaries of 70 against a target of 43 percent.
- The target for the number of passengers flying through Kamembe airport, in Rwanda not achieved, reaching the number of 3,370 against a target of 92,800.

Efficacy performance toward increasing the capacity for commerce by traders, especially small-scale and women traders was overall **Substantially** achieved with shortcomings though, possibly arising from a difficult environment marked by pandemics and extreme insecurity. The increased level of trade of goods and the increase in direct project beneficiaries are attributable to the combination of hard infrastructure investments, capacity building and training of border agents, the rollout of COMESA's regulations, and the awareness

raising training and campaigns among traders on their rights and obligations. On the lower side, the performance of the Kamembe airport fell short of the target, as that indicator is determined by many factors, beyond the border trade business. But in all, achieved results had a tangible effect on the lives of small-scale traders, most of them women, as illustrated by the Gender impact of the efficacy performance.

Rating
Substantial

OBJECTIVE 2
Objective
PDO-2: To facilitate cross-border trade by reducing the costs faced by traders, especially small-scale and women traders, at targeted locations in the borderlands.

Rationale
Theory of change

There was no explicit theory of change in the PAD or in the restructuring papers outlining the linkage between the project activities and the PDO. The ICR reconstructed a theory of change (on pages 3-4, and in the Annex 6 on page 39), which summarized the logical chain by which activities of the project were to be transformed into outputs and outcomes. This review summarizes the results chain underlying the process of achieving the project development objective.

Toward PDO-2, the project resources were intended to support the implementation of policy and procedural reforms and capacity building, to facilitate cross border trade in goods and services, and promote performance-based management in cross border administration. Main activities were as follows: (i) to provide support for implementation of policy and procedural reforms at the targeted border crossings, (ii) to provide training and capacity building for traders and officials to support greater integrity and ethical behavior in trade, and (iii) to support regional coordination of the policy and procedural reforms at the targeted border crossings and regional training for traders and officials. Finally, the project was to provide implementation support, Communication and M&E.

Expected outputs included (i) the small-scale traders, and trainers trained on COMESA's policy and procedural reforms, (ii) the Trade Information Desk Officers hired, (iii) a cluster trading system operational through distribution of motorized tricycles among associations of small-scale traders. Expected outcomes included: (i) a reduction in the time and costs associated with border crossings and (ii) an improved border management system, and (iii) an improved perception of traders regarding the quality of services provided by border agencies.

The ICR identified a few assumptions that were essential to achieving the PDO, including (i) a combination of hard infrastructure and policy and procedural trade reforms, (ii) the need for improved border management that would reduce community resentment towards state authorities and enhance the professionalism of border agents. The key assumption that was not pinpointed was the need for an improved security in the borderlands zone, and a higher level of trust and collaboration among the political leadership of the three

countries. When the last assumption was not met starting mid-2022, project implementation was hindered, and the level of results was impacted negatively.

Overall, there was a logical chain linking the identified activities and expected outputs and outcomes, and there was a consistency between this theory of change and the RF discussed under Section 9. However, the reconstructed theory of change had weaknesses as follows: (i) the result chain annex did not show explicitly the achieved outputs, (ii) identified assumptions did not include the importance of trust and partnership among the three countries, which was a key ingredient for project success, and (iii) it did not discuss the attribution of achieved outcomes, especially that this project was implemented in parallel to efforts by the beneficiary countries toward the similar outcomes.

Outputs

Below are the outputs and outcomes achieved against the revised RF adopted in the context of May 2022 AF and restructuring.

- The revised target for the number of traders being subjected to any other non-tariff barrier during the period of the survey was not achieved as the achievement remained the same as the baseline value on 20 percent, missing the target of 10 percent.
- The revised target for the average number of registered complaints from traders was largely exceeded, reaching 271 against a target of 2,500, and a baseline of nil. The results are average for the post of Bunagana, Kasindi/Mpondwe, Rusizi and Petite Barriere.
- The revised target for daily average number of traders processed through the borders (entry and exit) was exceeded, reaching 7,481 against a target of 6,000, compared to a baseline of 4,400.

Additional achievements supported by the project were as follows:

- Technical assistance and capacity building activities funded by the project allowed: (i) the establishment of Joint Border Committees (JBCs), the implementation of the training plan for small-scale traders, the training of 200 trainers on COMESA's policy and procedural reforms, the production of communication materials, trade data compilation, and the recruitment of 24 Trade Information Desk officers.
- The project served as a platform for increased policy dialogue and regional cooperation. In 2018, the DRC and Uganda signed an MOU setting a framework for promoting bilateral trade, and the DRC and Rwanda signed an agreement for the joint management of the border posts. In 2021, Uganda reached an agreement with DRC to improve roads in Eastern DRC to expand the reach of the border infrastructure financed by the project. However, difficult bilateral relationship between the countries hampered the efficacy of regional cooperation
- The project pioneered a "cluster trading" system that enabled small-scale traders to continue trading during the COVID-pandemic. The system consisted in pooling goods of the same type from different traders and transporting them through the formal border crossing procedure using a larger cart or vehicle. The Project made 30 motorized tricycles available to associations of small cross-border traders and to people living with disabilities in Goma, Bunagana, Kasindi and Bukavu for this purpose.

Outcomes

- The revised target for improved perception of traders regarding the quality of services provided by border agencies was exceeded, reaching an average of 95 percent (Petite Barriere, Rusizi 1, and Kasindi/Mpongwe), against a target 80 percent.
- The revised target for the average time for traders to cross border crossings was exceeded, reaching 6.33 minutes against a target of 10 minutes, and a baseline of 18 minutes. The result is an average for data for all cross borders except Bunagana given the security situation since June 2022.
- The revised target related to the incidence of physical and/or verbal harassment of traders was partially achieved, reaching 18 percent, against a target of 10 percent, and a baseline of 92 percent. The total result was calculated as the average of results for 3 border posts as reported in the breakdown sub-indicators for Kasindi (DRC), Mpondwe (Uganda), Rusizi 1 and Petite Barrière. No data for Bunagana given the security situation since June 2022.
- The revised target related to the incidence of harassment of small-scale traders among female traders was almost achieved, reaching 12.30 percent against a target of 10 percent, and a baseline of 96. The results for this sub-indicator for gender are calculated as average for data for all cross borders except Bunagana.

Efficacy toward reducing the costs faced by traders, especially small-scale and women traders was overall **Substantially** achieved, with shortcomings through, as two outcome targets were exceeded, while two others were partially achieved. The ICR reported and the project team confirmed that the time-savings in customs procedures, and the reduced instances of harassment of traders, and women traders in particular, and the improved perception of traders regarding the quality of services provided by border agencies are attributable to the capacity building and training of border agents, the rollout of COMESA's regulations, and the awareness raising training and campaigns among traders on their rights and obligations.

Rating
Substantial

OVERALL EFFICACY

Rationale
Toward increasing the capacity for commerce by traders, especially small-scale and women traders at targeted locations in the borderlands (PDO-1), efficacy was substantial, based on the increased level of trade of goods and direct project beneficiaries, despite lower-than-targeted performance of the Kamembe airport.

Toward reducing the costs faced by traders, especially small-scale and women traders at targeted locations in the borderlands (PDO-2), efficacy was also substantial, based on achieved time-savings in customs procedures, despite lower-than-targeted performance regarding the instances of harassment of traders, and women traders in particular, and the perception of traders regarding the quality of services provided by border agencies.

On balance, efficacy of the project is rated as Substantial with shortcomings.

Overall Efficacy Rating

Substantial

5. Efficiency

At appraisal, economic benefits of this project to poor households were estimated to be substantial, and potential impacts on producers and consumers were identified in the PAD on pages 34-35, including annual consumption savings of US$5.87 million for the most vulnerable households residing close to the borders of the beneficiary countries, but an Economic Rate of Return (ERR) and Net Present Value (NPV) were not calculated, due to the complexity of the exercise. The ICR economic and financial analysis was based on disbursements under components 1, 2, and 3 of US$68.4 million, equivalent to approximately 77 percent of the full project disbursement of US$88.57 million. The ICR used a combined approach to calculate the project NPV and the ERR which are respectively estimated at (i) US$14.9 million at a 15 percent discount rate, (ii) with an Economic Rate of Return (ERR) of 21 percent over a twenty-year period. The analysis was based on the assumption that reducing the time required for trade transactions leads to an increase in trade value. Other potential externalities identified in the ICR include increased economic and trading activity, growth of key value chains in agriculture and other sectors, use of local content for downstream goods and services, female empowerment, and a possible reduction in entrepreneurial barriers for women.

Operational efficiency

Project implementation lasted about 10 years, and closed in June 2024, about 48 months after original closing date. The actual cost of project implementation exceeded the budgeted amount by 9.4 percent. The project experienced several delays which impacted overall efficiency, including those related to (i) data reporting for PDO indicators, (ii) construction works at the Kamembe Airport in Rwanda, (iii) effectiveness and procurement in Uganda, (iv) institutional complexities in DRC, and (v) the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overall, the project demonstrated relative operational efficiency in a very difficult implementing environment. However, given the above-described delays, overall efficiency is rated Modest despite the positive NPV and ERR results.

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 (%)
Appraisal		0	0 ☐ Not Applicable

ICR Estimate	✓	21.00	77.00 ☐ Not Applicable

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

6. Outcome

The relevance of objectives was high, because (i) the PDOs were in line with the thrust of regional integration promoted in the context of the EAC and COMESA, (ii) the PDOs were consistent with the WBG strategies in the beneficiary countries until closure, and (iii) they were appropriately pitched to address priorities of populations living across a border region of three beneficiary countries.

Overall efficacy performance was rated substantial, reflecting (i) the increased level of trade of goods and direct project beneficiaries, and (ii) achieved time-savings in customs procedures. There were lower-than-targeted levels regarding the performance of the Kamembe airport, and the instances of harassment of traders, and women traders in particular, and the perception of traders regarding the quality of services provided by border agencies.

Finally, the project was implemented in a very difficult environment, which led to implementation delays, reducing overall efficiency to a Modest rating, despite positive NPV and ERR numbers, and resulting in a Moderately Satisfactory rating of the project's outcome.

a. Outcome Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

7. Risk to Development Outcome

The ICR did not discuss the risks to development outcome. This review identified the risks described below.

Security and political risks: Conflict and insecurity worsened toward the end of project implementation in 2022 in DRC's North and South Kivu, following political tensions between Rwanda and DRC, which stalled the trade dialogue and volume of trade between the two countries. Moreover, the borders between DRC and Uganda were also closed to small scale trade while those between DRC and Rwanda remained open but only to limited traffic. These developments directly impacted project outcomes and impeded the collection of data on key project indicators. While efforts from the international community are under way to settle the disagreements among DRC and its neighbors, the security situation among them remains volatile, and achieved development outcome will suffer from the security and political tensions which are still prevailing.

Technical capacity and coordination risks, particularly in DRC: During project implementation, low capacity of government counterparts was exacerbated by the involvement of several line ministries and agencies in each country. Project implementation in the DRC faced significant delays due to technical capacity and coordination challenges. Key issues included weak commitment and capacity of the Ministry of Commerce, poor coordination between provincial and central teams, an imbalanced institutional setup, slow

procurement processes, and delays in assembling the Project Management Unit (PMU). These problems threaten the efficiency and sustainability of development outcomes.

Regional health risks: The project faced significant disruptions due to regional health crises. The Ebola outbreak in Uganda delayed infrastructure works, increased border crossing times, and led to more harassment due to stricter checks. Despite these challenges, project interventions improved control and facilitation. Later, the Covid-19 pandemic caused further delays in Rwanda and DRC, as contractors paused work and border closures affected small-scale trade—especially between DRC and Uganda, while limited traffic continued between DRC and Rwanda. Overall, the region is still prone to epidemic diseases and the latter might continue to negatively impact the achieved development outcome.

On the positive side (ICR, p. 21), the Great Lakes Trade Facilitation and Integration Project (P174814) approved in FY22 builds on the interventions under this project and focuses on facilitating small scale trade in the GLR, scaling up some of the activities under the GLTFP. The new project explicitly includes improvements to transport connectivity, the regulation and facilities for trade in agricultural products, and aims to maximize synergies between policy and procedure reforms and infrastructure improvements to facilitate trade, especially by small producers and scale traders.

8. Assessment of Bank Performance

a. Quality-at-Entry

The project was strategically aligned with broader initiatives to enhance resilience and address fragility in the Great Lakes Region. It was well-grounded in the complex socio-political context, with a strong focus on poverty, gender, and social development. The design incorporated a gender-informed approach and emphasized improving trading conditions through infrastructure, institutional capacity building, and trader awareness. While the initial risk assessment was appropriate, there were minor shortcomings in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and implementation arrangements.

While the project was strategically sound, its implementation arrangements were overly complex for the fragile regional context. Despite strong initial country commitment to regional cooperation, the structure—featuring multiple committees at national, regional, and provincial levels—proved difficult to manage, especially in DRC where capacity was low. The setup included Joint Border Committees, national Project Steering Committees, a Regional Coordination Committee, and additional provincial reporting layers. Originally envisioned as a Series of Projects (SOP), a more manageable approach would have been to focus on fewer countries or to adopt a phased implementation strategy.

Implementation was designed to be executed through existing organizational entities instead of ad-hoc Project Implementation Units (PIUs), with the objective of ensuring program sustainability and building capacity within existing government entities. An agreement for a Project Preparation Advance (PPA) was signed with the Government of DRC in June 2015 in order to increase their capacity for project implementation and management, but it was likely insufficient to compensate for the risks stemming from the lack of a strong provincial-central government rapport, low government capacity, and no trade data collection experience at the border posts. The small project size also made it difficult for the

project to get enough attention from an already stretched out PIU within the Ministry of Infrastructure and Public Works.

The project's M&E strategy was underdeveloped during preparation, especially in DRC, which lacked systems for monitoring small-scale cross-border trade. While innovative methods like mobile phone surveys and regional linkages were proposed, their implementation remained unclear. Each country was responsible for its own data collection, with various agencies and PIUs overseeing different components. The role of Joint Border Committees in M&E was vaguely defined. COMESA was tasked with coordinating and standardizing regional M&E efforts, but its capacity was overestimated, and no dedicated M&E staff were included in the initial staffing plan.

Overall, the project was aligned with regional resilience and fragility agendas in the Great Lakes, grounded in context and focused on poverty, gender, and social development. It embedded gender-informed design and targeted trading conditions via infrastructure, institutional capacity, and trader awareness. Initial risk assessment was broadly appropriate, but M&E and implementation arrangements had gaps. A narrower country focus or phased rollout would likely have been more manageable than the series of projects (SOP) vision given the FCV context.

Quality-at-Entry Rating
Satisfactory

b. Quality of supervision

Project supervision was strong and sustained, with regular implementation support missions conducted twice a year. The team effectively identified and escalated issues proposed concrete action plans to address challenges and adapted to evolving circumstances. Notable efforts included decentralizing implementation in DRC, supporting health campaigns during Ebola and Covid-19, and launching the innovative cluster trading program. Although Uganda was not included in early missions, later visits helped accelerate parliamentary approval. The team also processed restructurings promptly, though a planned partial cancellation was delayed, leaving $3 million undisbursed. Remaining works, including the Petite Barriere border post, were transitioned to the new Great Lakes Trade Facilitation and Integration Project (P174814).

The project team demonstrated proactive and adaptive supervision throughout implementation. They identified threats to development outcomes early, proposed solutions, and initiated restructurings when needed. The team was transparent in reporting, acknowledging internal challenges and escalating issues appropriately. Notably, they engaged high-level government officials in DRC to negotiate the RAP for the Petite Barriere site, although it was ultimately not implemented due to macroeconomic and political constraints. During periods of restricted travel due to conflict, the team maintained regular virtual check-ins to monitor border site conditions.

The project responded swiftly to the Ebola and Covid-19 outbreaks by implementing just-in-time health and safety measures to keep trade flowing across borders. Actions included hygiene awareness campaigns, temperature screening equipment, washing stations, and hiring a hygiene specialist

to support both health crises and gender-based violence (GBV). These timely interventions helped reduce border crossing delays and facilitated dialogue with Rwandan authorities to keep borders open.

In an FCV environment, the oversight of the fiduciary compliance needed to be stepped up. At the time of this review, the final external audit was not completed yet, due to delays in closing the project's accounts, and the inability of auditors to access the offices of the PIU officed located in Bukavu.

The performance of the Bank supervision was mixed. Semiannual missions provided sustained support, and the team identified issues early, escalated appropriately, and proposed actionable plans, and adapted to changing conditions. Creative actions included: (i) decentralized implementation in DRC; (ii) backed Ebola/COVID-19 health campaigns; and (iii) launching of a cluster trading program to keep commerce flowing. Restructurings were processed promptly, and continuity was assured during insecurity through regular virtual check-ins sustained site oversight when travel was restricted by conflict. Finally, fiduciary controls needed further strengthening.

In all, the Bank team performed fairly well under difficult circumstances. However, there were moderate shortcomings in quality at entry and during implementation, specifically in the projects M&E and implementation arrangements, and in the oversight of the fiduciary compliance. Given the team's proactivity and the difficult FCV context, the overall Bank performance is rated as Satisfactory.

Quality of Supervision Rating
Satisfactory

Overall Bank Performance Rating
Satisfactory

9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization

a. M&E Design
The project's M&E strategy was insufficiently defined during preparation, particularly in DRC, which lacked systems for monitoring small-scale cross-border trade. While the PAD emphasized the importance of a robust M&E framework, implementation relied on building new capacity and exploring innovative methods like mobile phone surveys and regional linkages—though these were not clearly realized. Each country was responsible for its own data collection, with unclear roles for Joint Border Committees. COMESA was tasked with regional coordination and IT system rollout, but its capacity was overestimated, and no dedicated M&E staff were included in the initial staffing plan.

Many project indicators were output-oriented rather than outcome-focused. Several were later dropped because they were better suited for inclusion in implementation reports. These included indicators related to physical infrastructure completion, feasibility studies, performance evaluations, and standardized data practices. This shift highlights the need for more outcome-driven metrics in future project designs.

Some project indicators lacked baseline data, such as the one measuring traders' perceptions of border agency services. While informal trade was not a formal objective, early data from Rwanda and

Uganda showed it made up 40–60% of total trade value, highlighting the need for a strategy to incorporate informal trade data into the M&E framework. Additionally, the indicator measuring border crossing time was defined in minutes, whereas trade literature typically uses days, suggesting a misalignment with standard practices.

At inception, some indicators lacked a specific timeframe that would allow for more accurate measurement, specifically the number of officials receiving training and the number of traders receiving training. These indicators were revised during restructuring to make them more specific (officials/traders receiving training for the year because of the project).

b. M&E Implementation

A workshop in August 2019 with COMESA and the three implementing countries led to several key changes as follows: (i) the PDO-level indicator on direct beneficiaries was narrowed to include only traders using border crossings, excluding passengers, trained officials, and market users due to lack of data, (ii) This change resulted in no data on how financed markets were used by target groups, (iii) Data collection practices varied across countries, with inconsistent timeframes and sampling methods, (iii) Mechanisms were lacking for collecting data on trade value outside border crossings, (iv) Risks of double-counting traders crossing multiple times daily were identified, (v) Several indicators lacked data and capacity for measurement, including those related to COMESA STR transactions, customs revenue changes, performance evaluations, and regional workshops.

The findings from the August 2019 workshop informed a project restructuring that simplified the results framework by reducing the number of indicators. While this made progress tracking more manageable, no further efforts were made to implement data collection mechanisms for indicators that previously lacked data. This limited the ability to assess the utilization and impact of certain project components, such as border markets and airport facilities.

Attempts were made to collect informal trade data at DRC border posts, drawing on Rwanda and Uganda's experience. However, due to lack of funding, sustained data collection was not possible. A pilot was conducted at Ruzizi 1 (Bukavu) and Petite Barrière (Goma) in July and September 2018, each for one week.

c. M&E Utilization

Initially, M&E data were not consistently used to inform project management and decision-making, largely due to weaknesses in the M&E design and implementation framework. However, after project restructuring, the use of M&E data improved. The team proactively revised targets to reflect disruptions caused by the Ebola and Covid-19 pandemics and worsening security conditions. For example, trade volume targets were adjusted to account for a 70–90% drop in border activity, and border crossing times increased due to stricter controls. Despite these challenges, improvements were noted in indicators such as reduced harassment and bribery, attributed to decreased contact between traders and officers under Covid-19 protocols.

In all, the M&E performance is assessed as Modest because of the following: (i) M&E design lacked precision in the selection and definition of indicators and their measurement, and (ii) there were challenges in the implementation arrangements and operations which persisted throughout the project implementation, particularly in DRC.

This Modest rating of the M&E function was predominantly triggered by external shocks (COVID -19 and regional insecurity) and inadequate implementation arrangements in DRC. The project team used all means available to monitor (i) the completion of all major infrastructure (airport, border markets and facilities) and TA outputs, and (ii) the 4 KPI which provided sufficient evidence supporting an efficacy rating of Substantial with shortcomings.

M&E Quality Rating

Modest

10. Other Issues

a. Safeguards

Environmental assessments addressed proximity to sensitive areas like Lake Kivu, and the project was classified as a Category B operation, which could have site-specific and mitigable impacts. The project triggered three World Bank safeguard policies - OP 4.01 (Environmental Assessment), OP/BP 4.04 (Natural Habitats), and OP 4.12 (Involuntary Resettlement) - due to the fragile environment and dense populations near border posts. At preparation, consultations were still ongoing in Rwanda and DRC, delaying the start of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and Resettlement Action Plans (RAPs). Uganda prepared a Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF) and Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) in anticipation of land expropriation. Shortly after Board approval, the DRC-Rwanda border was redefined, leading to demolitions near Petite Barrière, raising the project's safeguards risk rating from Substantial to High. The Involuntary Resettlement policy was triggered due to potential livelihood impacts.

Capacity gaps in agencies like DRC's Ministry of Commerce led to the hiring of additional staff and consultants. In Rwanda, technical assistance was provided to strengthen safeguard management. However, significant delays occurred in finalizing safeguard documents, especially in DRC. The RAP for Goma was not implemented due to lack of government funding, and the Bank's review process added further delays.

The project had an appropriate GRM in place, which effectively addressed issues such as complaints about building demolitions at Ruzizi 1 and labor disputes during border market construction in Nyamasheke, Rwanda. Beyond the formal GRM, the project also conducted perception surveys, stakeholder consultations, and implemented training for border personnel to better support people with disabilities involved in cross-border trade.

Overall, compliance with OP 4.01 included (i) the preparation of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and Environmental and Social Management Frameworks (ESMF) in all three countries. Compliance with OP 4.12 (Involuntary Resettlement) included (i) the preparation of GRMs, and (ii) the compensation of project affected people (PAP) when carrying out the construction of border markets and facilities. While OP/BP 4.04 (Natural Habitats) policy was triggered, in practice, there was no need to comply with it.

b. Fiduciary Compliance

Financial Management. Early in the project implementation, the FM rating was downgraded to moderately unsatisfactory due to concerns in the DRC where the Financial Officer was named acting Project Coordinator, creating potential FM related conflicts of interest. This situation has persisted for at least another 2 years since it was first reported by the project team. By the project closure, the financial management was rated MS, because of challenges to oversee financial operations due to the worsening of security environment where most of the infrastructure was constructed.

Overall, the ICR analysis of the financial management function lacked substance, and requests for additional information yielded insufficient input. By the time of this review, the final external audit was not completed yet, because of difficulties for auditors to access the PIU's offices in the DRC's Eastern region.

Procurement. The main factor creating delays in project implementation was slow procurement processes in all countries and COMESA. These processes were mostly carried out in accordance with agreed procedures, except for a few issues with procurement contracts. For example, early during project implementation in Rwanda, agencies modified a few contracts without revision of the Procurement Plan and without obtaining the Bank's clearance. The government and the Bank team agreed to use the new procurement management instrument, STEP, to track and manage procurement process better. In DRC, the Ministry of Commerce tended to micro-manage the procurement process for which the PIU should normally be responsible. By the project closure, procurement was rated Satisfactory, based on closure of all contractual works related to the funded infrastructure in the three countries.

c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)

There were no unintended impacts.

d. Other

There were no other impacts.

11. Ratings

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

12. Lessons

The ICR identified several findings, recommendations and lessons presented on pages 21-22. This review has selected four lessons which are summarized and rephrased below.

Strong countries' commitment to regional cooperation from the outset and throughout project implementation is a prerequisite for successful regional projects, especially in FCV environment. In this project, the multi-level coordination across regional, national, and provincial levels strained limited capacities and consumed excessive time and resources. Regular fora for experience-sharing among participating countries can help maintain alignment and commitment to project goals, especially when security and political tensions emerge in the meantime. A narrower scope or phased approach would have been more manageable, particularly in the early stages before capacity-building efforts took effect. Simplifying implementation arrangements is crucial, especially in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

Project preparation and appraisal phases could be used to advance technical infrastructure designs and environmental and social framework (ESF) documentation, and this could reduce delays in generating results on the ground. In this project, delays were largely due to incomplete infrastructure planning. For complex regional IDA projects, alternative operational configurations should be considered to improve manageability. This includes evaluating financing structures and simplifying project design to better align with the capacities of participating countries.

Identifying and implementing "quick win" activities early in project implementation can help deliver immediate benefits to target beneficiaries. For infrastructure projects, temporary

improvements—such as lighting and enhanced security—can positively impact the environment even before permanent infrastructure is completed. In this project, DRC successfully installed temporary infrastructure at Ruzizi 1 and Petite Barriere border posts, which significantly improved conditions for small-scale traders.

Project teams need to devote even more time and resources to building a robust M&E framework to ensure the achievement of satisfactory results, particularly in FCV settings. In fragile and low-capacity settings, it's essential to allocate sufficient time and resources from the outset to build a robust M&E framework. This includes anticipating data collection challenges and establishing alternative strategies to ensure reliable tracking of project progress. Clear roles and communication channels among participating agencies are critical to effective M&E implementation.

13. Assessment Recommended?

No

14. Comments on Quality of ICR

The ICR is concise, evidence-based and internally consistent. It provides a comprehensive storyline of the operation context and the achieved results. Strengths of the ICR include the concise analysis of the efficacy and efficiency parts of the document, complemented by adequate tables and annexes. However, there were moderate weaknesses in some sections of the ICR as follows: (i) the theory of change figure was not explicit regarding expected outputs (Annex 6a), (ii) the reporting of the fiduciary compliance lacked substance, and (iii) the discussion of the risk to development outcome was inadequate. Some of the missing information in the above sections was provided by the project team upon request. Overall, the quality of the ICR is rated Substantial.

a. Quality of ICR Rating
Substantial