



## 1. Project Data

<b>Project ID</b> P153702	<b>Project Name</b> REGIONAL PROGRAM TO HARMONIZE AND MODERN		
<b>Country</b> Western and Central Africa	<b>Practice Area(Lead)</b> Poverty and Equity		
<b>L/C/TF Number(s)</b> IDA-D1120	<b>Closing Date (Original)</b> 31-Dec-2021	<b>Total Project Cost (USD)</b> 36,376,805.26	
<b>Bank Approval Date</b> 06-Apr-2016	<b>Closing Date (Actual)</b> 31-Oct-2023		
	<b>IBRD/IDA (USD)</b>	<b>Grants (USD)</b>	
Original Commitment	40,500,000.00	0.00	
Revised Commitment	40,500,000.00	0.00	
Actual	40,074,622.62	0.00	
<b>Prepared by</b> Sarosh Sattar	<b>Reviewed by</b> Vandana Chandra	<b>ICR Review Coordinator</b> Donna Kaidou Jeffrey	<b>Group</b> IEGEC (Unit 1)

## 2. Project Objectives and Components

### a. Objectives

According to the Financing Agreement (FA) (Schedule 1, p. 5) and the Program Appraisal Document (PAD) (p. 6), the Program Development Objective (PDO) of the Regional Program to Harmonize and Modernize Living Conditions Surveys Project is "to support the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) Commission at strengthening the capacity of its member countries to conduct living conditions surveys that meet harmonized, regional standards and to make the collected micro-data publicly accessible."



For the purpose of this review, the PDO is parsed into two objectives, reflecting distinct results chains:

**PDO1:** To support the WAEMU Commission at strengthening the capacity of its member countries to conduct living conditions surveys that meet harmonized, regional standards.

**PDO2:** To strengthen the capacity of the WAEMU member countries to make the collected-micro-data publicly accessible.

Note: The eight WAEMU member countries covered by this ICRR are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo.

**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**

24-May-2021

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

No

**d. Components**

To achieve the PDO, the project was structured to deliver results through two components (FA, Schedule 1): (a) Capacity building and survey harmonization and modernization through data collection and dissemination; and (b) quality control and coordination. The project implementing entity (PIE) was the WAEMU Commission.

Component 1: Capacity building and survey harmonization and modernization through data collection and dissemination (Approved: US\$36.3 million; Disbursed: US\$36.9 million) contained the following activities.

- i. Implementing a program of national and regional training events in WAEMU Member Countries with a view to: (i) designing, testing and adopting a set of modernized and harmonized living conditions survey tools, including, *inter alia*, appropriate questionnaires, manuals and protocols (for sampling, data collection, consistency checks, cleaning, compilation of consumption and income aggregates, setting of poverty lines, and calculation of core living standard statistics); (ii) testing and adopting computer assisted personal interviews for data collection; (iii) reviewing sampling methods; and (iv) strengthening PIEs' capacities for data analysis, archiving and dissemination of micro-data.
- ii. Implementing: (i) phase 1 of the harmonized living conditions survey in each WAEMU Member Country; and (ii) phase 2 of the harmonized living conditions survey in each WAEMU Member Country, all with a view to compiling a regional database with comparable national data sets.
- iii. Strengthening PIEs' capacities for preparation and implementation of phases 1 and 2 of the harmonized living conditions surveys and for processing and analysis of collected national data sets, all through the provision of technical advisory services.



Component 2: Quality control and coordination (Approved: US\$4.2 million; Disbursed: US\$3.6 million) contained the following activities:

- i. Supporting (i) the preparation of a draft regulation for the harmonization of living conditions surveys in WAEMU Member Countries; and (ii) establishment and operationalization of a WAEMU joint donor coordination mechanism for implementation of harmonized living conditions surveys, all through the provision of technical advisory services and training.
- ii. Strengthening: (i) partnerships between data producers and data users in WAEMU Member Countries with a view to promoting analysis and utility of, *inter alia*, said micro-data; and (ii) statistical training curricula in regional institutions, all through the provision of training to statistics students and staff from regional and international statistics institutions and research centers.
- iii. Supporting independent and peer quality reviews of said national data sets

Strengthening the capacity of the WAEMU Commission for implementation, coordination and management of Project activities and results, all through the provision of technical advisory services, non-consulting services, operating costs, training and acquisition of goods for the purpose.

**Changes during implementation:**

One restructuring was approved on May 24, 2021, to address the 15-month delay of the start of project activities. The delay was due to the unfilled position of the President of the WAEMU Commission. The two main changes to the original project as a result of the restructuring were:

- (i) the project closing date was extended by 22 months from December 31, 2021, to October 31, 2023.
- (ii) Reallocation of budget between Components 1 and 2. The project costs for activities under component 1 increased from \$36.3 million to US\$36.9 million to cover the additional costs (e.g., health care supplies to project enumerators) accrued due to COVID-19. Costs for the second component decreased from US\$4.2 million to US\$3.6 million.

The following changes were made to the PDO indicator and one intermediate indicator during restructuring (ICR, paras. 15-16):

Indicator	Revised Indicator
PDO: Adoption by the WAEMU's Council of Minister of a ruling committing all member countries to apply WAEMU living conditions survey standards with respect to methodology, contents and periodicity.	PDO: Submission by the member countries to apply WAEMU living conditions survey standards with respect to methodology, contents and periodicity.
Intermediate Indicator: Living conditions survey that have been subject to quality review by peers and by independent external parties.	Living conditions survey that have been subject to quality review by peers and by independent external parties.

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

The program was approved on April 6, 2016, and became effective three months later, on July 8, 2016. The Mid-Term Review was conducted on November 25, 2019. The original closing was December 31, 2021. The Program was restructured on May 24, 2021, to (i) change the Results Framework, (ii) change the loan closing date, (iii) reallocation between disbursement categories, (iv) change in implementation schedule, and (v) other changes. The actual closing occurred on October 31, 2023.



The original project cost remained at US\$40,500,000. This amount excluded borrower contributions. The Borrower/Recipient originally committed to providing US\$1.5 million (3.7 percent) of the total program cost. As this amount was revised to zero, there was no counterpart funding. However, according to the PAD (p. 10), “the WAEMU Commission contributes in kind to the financing of coordination activities (component 2.4) *inter alia* by designating a project coordinator, other staff (procurement; statisticians).” Although the financial contribution amount changed, the borrower provided in-kind contributions.

The project was financing with a grant from the International Development Association (IDA). The grant was for Special Drawing Rights (SDR) 29.4 million (US\$40.5 million equivalent). The payment currency was in Euros. The final amount disbursed was US\$40,074,623. This was due in part to underspending caused by recruitment delays, exchange rate gains, and fewer activities and missions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 3. Relevance of Objectives

#### Rationale

With 46 million people in the eight WAEMU member countries living below the international poverty line in 2016 (US\$1.90 per person per day in 2015 PPP), the extreme poverty rate was close to 40 percent. The WAEMU member countries had a population of 116 million at the time of project appraisal in 2016. Except Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, and Senegal (which are lower-middle-income countries), the other five countries are low-income economies faced continued insecurity in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger that had spread to the northern parts of Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, and Togo. In addition to extreme poverty, countries grappled with huge development challenges such as high under-five and maternal mortality, low primary school enrollment rates, poor access to electricity etc., as well as high regional disparities. The WAEMU member states had poverty reduction as an overarching goal but lacked good household-level data to monitor and identify the drivers and trends in poverty and other socio-economic development indicators. Reducing poverty in a setting with multiple challenges required informed policy making which, in turn, was dependent on reliable poverty statistics and other socio-economic data generated from household surveys.

Low financing and inconsistent design of household surveys had led to data gaps and difficulty in comparing poverty indicators over time. National Statistics Offices (NSOs) had been conducting household surveys for many years, some of them for more than 30 years at the time of this operation’s appraisal. But the surveys, were not conducted regularly and resulted in data gaps. In addition, the design of the surveys varied, making it difficult to produce consistent poverty trends. While comparability over time was difficult, it was even more challenging across countries. The data produced was poorly disseminated, leading to low usage. This regional project was designed to address these issues.

The WAEMU member countries suffered from weak statistical systems in 2016. The average overall score of the Statistical Performance Index was 48.1 which fell in the second lowest quintile globally and was only slightly above the low-income country average of 45.4. WAEMU’s member country scores ranged from 32.3 for Guinea-Bissau to 53.6 for Niger. The timing of the project was appropriate since the World Bank, the WAEMU Commission and the member countries were aligned on the need to harmonize and improve household statistics.

#### Relevance to WBG’s priorities



The weaknesses in the statistical systems of the WAEMU members were highlighted as obstacles to development in the respective Country Partnership Strategies (CPSs) and/or Interim Strategy Notes. Thus, this project was well aligned with the priorities identified by the Bank for each of the countries. The ICR (para. 5) notes various examples taken from the CPSs such as:

- Benin CPS FY13–17 (Report No. 75774-BJ) “identifies, under the component on Governance and Public Sector Capacity, the need to provide technical assistance (TA) and capacity building to the *Institut National de la Statistique et de l’Analyse Economique (INSAE)*.”
- Niger CPS FY13–16 (Report No. 76232-NE) “identified the need to support the INS to boost capacity in the collection of quality living conditions survey data and monitoring of service delivery.”
- Mali CPF FY16–19 (Report No. 94005-ML) “highlighted the need to improve the quality of statistics and to invest in a household survey program.”

The project would contribute to filling the data gap leading to corporate requirements of the World Bank (WB) analytical work which could have not been done without those data, including poverty assessments, poverty and vulnerability maps, Poverty and Social Impact Analysis (PSIA), Commitment to Equity and Gender assessments, and Country Climate and Development Reports (CCDRs).

The choice of the IPF instrument was appropriate as it served as a channel for global knowledge transfer and TA to build national statistical capacity in these eight countries. The project addressed critical gaps in the statistical system through its two components: (i) capacity building and improved living conditions survey quality for better data collection and dissemination, and (ii) quality control and coordination through improved regulations encouraging data harmonization, better donor coordination, development of regional statistics training programs, and strengthened relationship between producers and users of data. The PAD noted that international good practice had shown the importance of *combining* technical assistance (know how) with survey design and implementation, and data collection, archiving, and dissemination (outputs) — thus, following a “learning by doing” approach.

The regional approach to the project was appropriate as it had the advantage of scale and efficiency, in terms of (i) delivering training and capacity building in the areas of data collection, processing, archiving, and dissemination for living condition surveys; (ii) improving harmonization of surveys and poverty measurement across WAEMU; and (iii) opportunities for financial sustainability through pooling resources. These activities were fundamental to strengthening statistics institutions, creating a professional statistics community, encouraging peer-to-peer learning, and increasing demand for data.

### **Relevance to WAEMU development agenda**

The direct recipient of this project was the WAEMU Commission which would use the project to advance regional integration in West Africa and improve statistics. The project was aligned with the WAEMU regional statistical program (2015–2020) which had four axes: (a) consolidate gains realized in statistical harmonization; (b) improve statistics related to trade; (c) improve social statistics, particularly household surveys; and (d) strengthen coordination among member countries and with regional and international bodies (PAD, para. 17). This project supported the realization of three of the four axes (excluding improving trade-related statistics).



The project was important for the WAEMU Commission since it was seeking: (i) to extend the scope of social statistics to poverty issues to facilitate better information for the design of future regional policies; and (ii) to conduct regional poverty analysis.

The project was relevant to WAEMU member countries' National Statistical Development Strategies (NSDSs) and/or national development plans which were aligned with the post-2015 development agenda. These strategies and plans included poverty reduction as a priority but member governments lacked the necessary data to inform the implementation of development plans and policies. As an example, the *Plan Senegal Emergent* (2014-2019) had poverty reduction as one of its pillars and intended to achieve this objective by promoting human capital and investing in social protection programs. In Cote d'Ivoire, the *Plan National de Développement* (2016-2020) emphasized human development as one of the goals to becoming an emergent country. Moreover, all the countries adhered to the post-2015 development agenda to end poverty in all its forms, among other goals. To better inform those policies, countries indicated the desire to break the cycle of low comparable poverty and socioeconomic statistics, but doing so on a country-by-country basis had proven to be difficult. The data generated by the project would facilitate the WAEMU countries to monitor progress they were making in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals and other socioeconomic indicators.

The regional project led by a regional body such as the WAEMU Commission, which already had experience in harmonizing price, national accounts and financial statistics had a better chance of success. Improving statistical capacity, data quality, availability and dissemination of data at the country-level was also important in WAEMU. A regional approach to improving socio-economic statistics was considered a viable alternative, especially due to the progress that was achieved regionally in harmonizing national accounts and financial statistics.

## Rating

Substantial

## 4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)

### OBJECTIVE 1

#### Objective

To support the WAEMU Commission in strengthening the capacity of its member countries to conduct living conditions surveys that meet harmonized, regional standards.

#### Rationale

The theory of change (TOC) for this objective held that the WAEMU Commission and member countries were facing four main challenges: (i) irregular household surveys leading to socio-economic data gaps, (ii) inconsistent survey design leading to lack of comparability of poverty data over time and across countries, (iii) absence of important data dimensions that limited relevance of data produced for policy, and (iv) low access





to micro data restricting their use in research which, in turn, could lead to improved survey design, and (v) low institutional capacity and limited human resources.

The vision was to put in place the foundations of a new system of timely, comprehensive, high-quality, and accessible household surveys that met harmonized, regional standards.

The strategy focused on capacity building (for NSOs and schools of statistics) in WAEMU member countries. The TOC identified that activities such as the harmonization of survey and data processing methodologies at all stages; launching living conditions surveys; making data accessible; and modernizing and increasing sustainability of the statistical infrastructure and capacity were all critical inputs that would help to fill data gaps. The project activities also included investments in information technology infrastructure (computers, tablets, software etc.) which are necessary for the collection, production, and dissemination of reliable and timely data, and essential for capacity building.

The activities/inputs would lead to outputs such as building capacity and strengthening the role of the WAEMU Commission through legislation in helping member country national statistics offices (NSOs) adopt and implement harmonized surveys regularly to fill data gaps. These would contribute to the achievement of the PDO by making the surveys freely accessible for the eight countries, expanding the use of surveys for evidence-based policy and decision-making and strengthening the demand (including from governments) for high-quality data.

The PAD did not include a TOC. The ICR constructed a detailed TOC (p. 7). Although the ICR's TOC presents an easy-to-understand list of activities/inputs, it is not fully aligned with the Results Framework. The TOC highlights infrastructure modernization inputs that could not be included *ex post* into the Results Framework. For example, the TOC and the Financing Agreement both refer to 'statistical training curricula in regional institutions offered to statistics students and staff from regional and international statistics institutions and research centers.' Though not included in the Results Framework, IEG determined that this was completed, and the curricula was adopted in all the schools.

The key activities (inputs) were:

- i. Harmonization of household survey tools
  - Design of a harmonized survey methodology through regional events
  - Design of harmonized questionnaires and other survey instruments through regional events
  - Design of a harmonized sampling approach
  - Develop modernized data collection tools [e.g., Computerized Assisted Personal Interviews (CAPI)]
  - Develop a harmonized methodology for poverty measurement
- ii. Implementing the harmonized survey and making data accessible
  - Strengthening NSOs capacities on survey design and implementation through workshops, webinars, etc.
  - Recruitment of technical staff (household survey, CAPI, etc.) in NSOs
  - Implementation of two episodes (also called "rounds") of the survey
  - Data processing of the two rounds of the survey and production of poverty numbers and other socioeconomic indicators
  - Anonymization of micro-data and making them accessible
- iii. Modernization of statistical Infrastructure and sustainability
  - Modernization of the statistical infrastructure (acquisition of laptops, tablets, software, etc.).



- Modernization of the curricula of the “Economics of Poverty” course for the network of Statistics schools.

Outputs:

- Harmonized survey methodology is adopted.
- Harmonized questionnaires, other survey instruments are adopted.
- Harmonized Survey Solutions application is adopted.
- Harmonized methodology for poverty measurement is adopted.
- Recruitment of survey statisticians in NSOs is effective
- Regional capacity-building events on survey implementation are organized.
- Two episodes of the harmonized survey are carried out and data are produced.
- Statistical abstracts were published by the WAEMU Commission.
- Data are documented, anonymized and archived by the WAEMU Commission.
- NSOs are equipped.
- The Economics of Poverty curricula is adopted.

Outcomes:

The outputs listed above were expected to enable the WAEMU Commission to strengthen the capacity of its eight member countries to regularly conduct harmonized living conditions surveys that met the regional standards, and make the collected micro-data publicly available.

Achievement of PDO1:

PDO1: To support the WAEMU Commission in strengthening the capacity of its member countries to conduct living conditions surveys that meet harmonized, regional standards.

Achievement of PDO1 is assessed by two development outcome indicators (DOIs):

- DOI 1: WAEMU member states which completed the collection of harmonized living conditions surveys that made the anonymized micro-data available to the public through the WAEMU website. Baseline: 0 percent of WAEMU countries' micro-data are publicly available. Target: 85 percent of WAEMU countries' micro-data are publicly available. Actual: 100 percent of WAEMU countries' micro-data are publicly available. The project exceeded the target. **Achieved.**
- DOI 2: WAEMU member states which completed a second living conditions survey according to harmonized, regional standards by December 2020. Baseline: 0 countries completed second harmonized survey. Target: 7 countries completed second harmonized survey. Actual: 8 countries completed second harmonized survey. The project exceeded the target. **Achieved.**

There were 5 Intermediate Results Indicators (IRIs) to measure the achievement of PDO1.

- IRI 1: Draft standardized questionnaires, disaggregated by gender, are reviewed by data users. Baseline: 0 standardized surveys. Target: 2 standardized surveys. Actual: 2 standardized questionnaires. The project fully met the target. **Achieved.**





- IRI 2: Standardized living conditions survey instruments manuals developed, and jointly adopted by the NSOs of all eight WAEMU member countries. Baseline: No. Target: Yes. The project met the target. **Achieved.**
- IRI 3: Regional capacity building events. Baseline: 0 events. Target: 8 events. Actual: 25 events. The project exceeded its target. **Achieved.**
- IRI 4: Statistical abstracts with selected official welfare statistics for WAEMU countries and the region are published by the WAEMU Commission. Baseline: No abstracts. Target: Abstract produced. Actual: Abstract produced. The project exceeded the target since two abstracts were produced - one for each round. **Achieved.**
- IRI 5: WAEMU member countries archive their harmonized living conditions survey. Baseline: 0 surveys archived. Target: 8 surveys archived. Actual: 8 surveys archived. **Achieved.**

## Rating

High

## OBJECTIVE 2

### Objective

To strengthen the capacity of the WAEMU member countries to make the collected-micro-data publicly accessible.

### Rationale

The TOC for this objective held that anonymization, documentation and archiving of micro-data would lead to making living conditions survey data accessible and facilitate research. It also indicated that submission of a decision to the WAEMU Council of Ministers committing all member countries to apply certain standards to living conditions would strengthen capacity.

### Inputs:

Under PDO2, there was 1 input that fell under "Modernization of statistical Infrastructure and sustainability:"

- Preparing the decision to committing all member states to apply WAEMU living conditions survey standard[s].

### Outputs:

WAEMU Ministerial Council is the entity which has the authority to make the decision to commit all member states to apply living conditions survey standards when they conduct surveys.

- The decision has been prepared and is waiting submission to the WAEMU Ministerial Council.
- The decision is validated at the country level.

### Outcome:



The outcome of PDO2 was to ensure that the adoption of regional standards of conducting living conditions surveys is sustained into the future by all eight WAEMU member states.

Development Outcome Indicators and Intermediate Results Indicators (IRIs) for PDO2:

PDO 2: To strengthen the capacity of the WAEMU member countries to make the collected-micro-data publicly accessible.

The project's DOI for monitoring implementation of the input for PDO2 was DOI3. However, as DOI3 does not directly address PDO2, IEG used both DOI1 which is directly related to PDO2, and DOI3 to evaluate the efficacy of PDO2.

- DOI 1: WAEMU member states which completed the collection of harmonized living conditions surveys that made the anonymized micro-data available to the public through the WAEMU website. Baseline: 0 percent of WAEMU countries' micro-data are publicly available. Target: 85 percent of WAEMU countries' micro-data are publicly available. Actual: 100 percent of WAEMU countries' micro-data are publicly available. The project exceeded the target. **Achieved.**
- DOI 3: Submission to the WAEMU's Council of Ministers a decision committing all member countries to apply WAEMU living conditions survey standards with respect to methodology, contents and periodicity. Baseline: No decision. Target: Yes, decision is adopted. Actual: No. The decision is planned to be submitted to the June or September 2024. **Not Achieved.**

Achievement of PDO2 is measured using one IRI:

- IRI 6: Living conditions surveys that have been subject to a peer review process. Baseline: 0 surveys subject to peer review process. Target: 6 surveys subject to peer review process. Actual: 2 surveys subject to peer review process. The project did not meet the target. **Not Achieved.** The main reason for the delay and missing of the target was the COVID-19 pandemic that led to travel restrictions and delays in activities such as the review of surveys by peers, and the observance of specific protocols that contributed to delays.

Essential pre-requisites to submitting the decision to the WAEMU Council of Ministers have been completed: (i) The decision has been endorsed by all eight WAEMU member states. (ii) The WAEMU Commission's legal department has reviewed the decision. According to the TTLs, during the Regional Committee of Statistics meeting, the WAEMU Commission has been asked to strengthen the technical and methodological document that supports the decision (by including more methodological and technical details on the survey process), and to have it validated by: (a) the experts in the NSOs, (b) the Departments at the Commission, and (c) the Directors General of the NSOs before its submission to the Council of Ministers. According to the revised estimate by the TTL, the document will be submitted to the WAEMU Council of Ministers in December 2024. The TTLs noted that the decision should "definitely" be endorsed before the implementation of the next WB financed statistics project. All WAEMU member countries are ready to start the preparation of the third round of the survey as agreed in early March 2024 by the WAEMU Director Generals Steering Committee (ICR, p. 30).

## Rating

Substantial

## OVERALL EFFICACY

### Rationale

The project's efficacy is rated Substantial as PDO1 is rated **High** and PDO2 is rated **Substantial**. PDO1 covers most activities, outputs and outcomes of the project and was fully achieved since all eight WAEMU countries successfully completed two harmonized living conditions surveys that meet regional standards and made the anonymized micro-data publicly available. This was a significant achievement and almost unprecedented in Western Africa. PDO2 addressed the public availability of the data, which was achieved, as well as the sustainability of the project and the process by having WAEMU member states commit to carrying out living conditions surveys with appropriate methodology, contents and periodicity. While the achievement of the sustainability aspect was important, the timeline of obtaining the WAEMU Ministerial Council's decision was overly optimistic. All eight WAEMU countries have endorsed the decision and are ready to commence on the third round of the living conditions survey.

### Overall Efficacy Rating

Substantial

## 5. Efficiency

**Cost comparison across countries and across surveys:** if disaggregated data on expenses was collected, it would have been possible to determine the expenditures on preliminary work (e.g., methodologies) and each phase of the country-level survey implementation, processing, and dissemination. Since survey implementation is usually the largest part of the cost, the ICR could have compared the costs across the two surveys for each country, as well as the cost per household interviewed across countries. The project could have also tracked and disaggregated the resources used in each country for various survey-related activities (for example, payment to enumerators, vehicle rentals/purchase, computers, tablets, etc.). This information would enable the Bank to advise countries on how to achieve greater survey efficiency.

The project experienced a cost under-run since the final disbursement rate was 91 percent of the total grant. This was due to delays in starting the project resulting from the absence of a President at the WAEMU Commission, signing of subsidiary agreements with the member countries NSOs, long recruitment times of key staff at the Commission and in the countries, "savings" due to activities derailed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and currency exchange gains. It is not clear what activities were not undertaken as a result.

The project's closure was delayed by 22 months due to issues related with project management and the COVID-19 pandemic. (i) The 15-month postponement at the start of the project was due to the absence of a President of the WAEMU Commission who was responsible for making administrative decisions such as the creation of the PIU and hiring of staff; and (ii) delays in the WAEMU Commission's signing of the subsidiary agreements with member countries and fund transfers for data collection activities. The extension allowed NSOs to

implement the second round of the survey. Preparing and conducting a living conditions survey needs a minimum of two years.

There were aspects of procurement and financial management of the project that also led to delays in project implementation. The ICR notes several reasons: (i) slow WAEMU Commission validation procedures and weak NSO FM capacity led to difficulties in the timely transfer of funds to NSOs; (ii) delays at the WAEMU Commission’s end due to the lack of a dedicated procurement specialist assigned to the project; and (iii) weak NSO capacity in FM management.

In sum, except for the peer review process, the project responded to the remaining delays to ensure completion of most project activities through the extension of the closing date. Positive steps were also taken to mitigate delays caused by the weak procurement and financial management practices of the WAEMU Commission and the NSOs. About 9 percent of the project resources were not used due to such unforeseen delays. As the project remained within the original budget envelope, the project’s efficiency is rated **Substantial**.

### Efficiency Rating

Substantial

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

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

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

## 6. Outcome

The project’s objectives of supporting the WAEMU Commission (i.e., to strengthen the capacity of its member countries to conduct living conditions surveys that meet harmonized, regional standards and to make the collected micro-data publicly accessible) remain relevant to the WAEMU member countries development challenges and the WB’s priorities.

The average Statistical Performance Indicator (SPI) increased from 48.1 in 2016 to 61.6 in 2022. The SPI prepared by the WB is a composite score assessing a country’s statistical system based on five pillars (data use, data services, data products, data sources, and data infrastructure). The increase in the score for the WAEMU countries was driven the most by the data infrastructure described as “standards and methodology used in classification” whose average more than doubled in value from a score of 21 to 54 during 2016-2022. Data services (censuses and surveys, admin data, geospatial) and data products (ability of country to produce relevant indicators, especially SDGs) also increased by over 30 percent each.



The project's objective is rated **Substantial** and continues to remain relevant even after project closure since improved national integration in the WAEMU, and the availability and sharing of accessible, timely and quality data is especially important for policy making in a context of economic volatility, fragility, and widespread poverty. Overall, project efficacy is rated **Substantial** since the governments of all 8 WAEMU member states successfully completed two living conditions surveys that were harmonized and met regional standards, and the data was made publicly available to inform policymaking by WAEMU governments and their development partners including the WB. The project's efficiency is rated **Substantial** due to not exceeding the original project cost though with some under-run, reasonable procurement and financial management, and moderate delay. The overall Outcome rating is **Satisfactory**.

**a. Outcome Rating**  
Satisfactory

## 7. Risk to Development Outcome

The ICR highlighted several potential risks to development outcomes which the project successfully addressed during implementation, but they persist in the medium- and longer-term. These include the following:

- The risk of worsening fragility is substantial. Increasing insecurity in the Sahel countries as fragility worsens and leads to displaced populations. During implementation, the Sahelian states identified country-specific solutions to ensuring the representativeness of the surveys, but this may become increasingly difficult if fragility worsens.
- The political and governance risks are substantial. The project mitigated these risks by establishing the methodology and standards prior to survey implementation, data analysis, and publication of results but these methodologies may not be honored by future governments due to political pressure. Additionally, the ICR notes that while the WAEMU Commission was a trustworthy partner to its member governments, and sensitive to their concerns during project implementation, it is strict when it comes to adherence to commonly agreed standards and may not agree if a member government decides to make changes.
- Institutional capacity for implementation and sustainability. The continuation of institutional capacity is dependent upon the availability of adequate funding. The WB is planning to fund a third round of the survey which will continue providing financing for living conditions surveys in the short-term, but future funding uncertainly is a substantial risk that could rapidly erode the institutional capacity to conduct quality surveys.
- Fiduciary risks during implementation were mitigated by ensuring WB financial management support missions, a dedicated accountant, financial oversight of WAEMU member states NSOs, and adequate auditing. This can change rapidly in one or more WAEMU states in the future.
- The main risk to the sustainability of the development outcomes hinges on ensuring that there is a more sustainable mechanism to finance statistical activities. This is a longer-term development challenge in WAEMU.



## 8. Assessment of Bank Performance

### a. Quality-at-Entry

The project design was informed by the demand from the WAEMU Commission and the member country governments for implementing updated and harmonized living conditions surveys regularly though the region had limited resources to fund data collection. The country demand may partially have been a result of their commitment to the African Union - SHaSA I and II initiatives that set out a goal of “An efficient statistical system that generates reliable, harmonized and timely statistical information covering all dimensions of political, economic, social, environmental and cultural development and integration of Africa,” (ICR, para 66). The WAEMU Commission held the mandate of harmonizing statistics across its eight member countries, strengthening modernization through TA, and providing funds to carry out surveys to produce better-quality data. The project was aligned with the regional and national interests in statistics compliance. The institutional setting was based on a detailed analysis of the WAEMU Commission (particularly its mandate on harmonizing statistics) and the WB’s experience in working with NSOs. The project also benefitted from the WB’s vast expertise and experience in designing and implementing living standards surveys across developing countries.

The project was well-designed in terms of achieving tangible outputs (i.e., two living conditions surveys), assuring harmonization of surveys, and improving NSO capacity. By working with the WAEMU Commission, the project ensured that the data would be publicly accessible, reduced the risk of member country government interference in the survey design and implementation, and achieved economies of scale in delivering training, although it underestimated the amount of training needed by NSOs and their financial implications. However, the nature of a regional project made it difficult to address the important issues of NSO institutional reform, human resources management, and targeted training for NSOs, especially the weaker ones. These oversights could affect the sustainability of the progress made during the project.

The project overlooked two important aspects of sustainability. First, it did not identify or explore ways to reduce the cost of data collection. This is particularly important given the known risks to the sustainability of surveys due to financial limitations in low- and lower-middle income countries such as the WAEMU member countries. Second, no measures were put in place to collect data on the cost of the surveys in either each country, or across the eight countries. This was a lost opportunity for the WB team as this information is essential for sustainability, the efficiency of surveys, as well as for the design of new surveys in developing countries. Since the sustainability of data collection requires government funding, it is essential that the costs and benefits of survey data collection are available to governments interested in conducting future surveys.

**Quality-at-Entry Rating**  
Satisfactory

### b. Quality of supervision

The WB conducted regular supervision missions plus a mid-term review. According to the ICR, these missions helped to “remove some of the project’s bottlenecks and promote its favorable outcome, including hastening the recruitment of staff, discussions on FM issues (such as justification of advance to the NSOs),





[and] discussions on handling procurement issues in the absence of a procurement specialist” (ICR, para. 67). The Aide Memoires were helpful records for and of follow-up recommendations. The TA provided through support missions to the individual countries supplemented regional workshops which were the primary vehicle for delivering technical assistance on key topics related to surveys, data processing, poverty measurement, and accessibility. Due to the high variation of capacity among the eight member countries, additional (unplanned) support missions by the WB and the WAEMU Commission were necessary to address the needs for specific countries. As this was a regional project, additional supervision/ support missions were an essential component of the project’s ability to achieve its PDO, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Quality of Supervision Rating**

Satisfactory

### **Overall Bank Performance Rating**

Satisfactory

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

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

The Results Framework provides a useful method for tracking the PDO and outcomes. It was developed before the theory of change since the PAD did not have one. There is incongruence between the RF and the TOC included in the ICR. The RF’s indicators were broadly relevant, measurable, and time-bound. The targets were also clearly defined. However, there were weaknesses in the M&E design: (i) misclassification of indicators, (ii) vague indicators, and (iii) missing indicators.

#### Classification of indicators:

PDO1 states “To strengthen the capacity of the WAEMU member countries to conduct living conditions surveys that meet harmonized, regional standards”. There are two indicators (DOI 1 and IRI 4) that may have been classified under PDO2.

Specifically,

- DOI 1 under PDO1 states “WAEMU member countries which completed the collection of harmonized living conditions surveys that made the anonymized micro-data available to the public through the WAEMU website” (underline added). However, it is PDO2 that states “To strengthen the capacity of WAEMU countries to make the collected-micro-data publicly accessible.” Thus, reference to public accessibility in DOI 1 is misplaced.
- IRI 4 under PDO1 states that “A statistical abstract with selected official welfare statistics for WAEMU countries and the region are published by the WAEMU”. Publication implies accessibility of data and, thus, should also have been placed under PDO2.

#### Lack of clarity of indicators:



- IRI 2 states “standardized living conditions survey instruments and manuals are adopted by the NSOs ....”. It would have been better to be specific about what survey instruments were being referred to. If there are several, then only the key ones could have been specified. For example, IRI 3 states “regional capacity-building events are organized”. Adding more information such as capacity building on “survey methodology” or “poverty measurement” or “financial management” would have provided more information to be able to measure achievement of the indicator.
- DOI 3 (which falls under PDO2) states “Submission to the WAEMU Council of Ministers a decision committing all member countries to apply WAEMU living conditions survey standards with respect to methodology, contents and periodicity”. How this applies to PD02 which is more about public accessibility is unclear.
- IRI 6 states “Living conditions surveys that have been subject to quality review by peers and by independent external parties”. It is unclear how it relates to public accessibility. This is an indicator of quality and/or relevance of data rather than accessibility.

#### Missing indicators:

The M&E design overlooks two important areas. Though the PAD's Results Framework did not cover them, the ICR could have benefited from providing a short summary.

- Training curricula. The FA (pp. 5-6) refers to “strengthening... (ii) statistical training curricula in regional institutions, all through the provision of training to statistics students and staff from regional and international statistics institutions and research centers”. This is also listed in the TOC.
- Modernization of statistical infrastructure. The TOC lists as one of the project’s 13 activities/inputs “Modernization of the statistical infrastructure (acquisition of laptops, tablets, software, etc.)” (ICR, p. 7). The ICR (para. 3) mentions briefly that “the project supported the beneficiaries on several areas including ... (d) statistical infrastructure modernization, including software and equipment of the eight NSOs and statistical center of the WAEMU Commission.”

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

The Results Framework (pages 29-34) incorporated baseline and target values for all the outcome and intermediate indicators. The ICR reported achieved values and dates. Almost all targets were met except IRI 6 (“Living conditions surveys that have been subject to quality review by peers and by independent external parties”). The ICR states that the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted implementation of this step. However, the project substituted peer review with regional workshops that “allowed countries the opportunity to work together on different aspects of the survey and these exchanges of experiences provided elements of bilateral reviews” (ICR, p. 34). This appeared to be an acceptable substitution since other NSOs are indeed “peers.”

### **c. M&E Utilization**

The PIU did not have a designated M&E specialist on board. However, it produced progress reports which provided a summary of recent developments in the areas of procurement and financial management. According to the ICR, the reports from the PIU discussed implementation challenges,



status updates, recommendations, and progress on actions agreed previously in ISRs and Aide Memoires.

### **M&E Quality Rating**

Modest

## **10. Other Issues**

### **a. Safeguards**

The project did not trigger any environmental or social safeguards.

### **b. Fiduciary Compliance**

The project performed satisfactorily in terms of financial management, though it was characterized by significant delays in hiring and reporting. Significant support had to be given to the WAEMU Commission and to member countries' NSOs, several who had not worked on investment projects with the WB before. This support was delivered through technical assistance, regional workshops, and during implementation missions. The project was managed in accordance with the WAEMU Commission rules. The PIU had a full-time accountant who was supervised by a WAEMU Commission financial management specialist. The ICR did not indicate whether this arrangement was adequate or whether it would have been better to have a dedicated financial management specialist.

The PIU regularly produced progress reports. The following challenges occurred in this area: (i) a non-eligible expense by an NSO that was successfully reversed, (ii) delay in hiring an external auditor due to WAEMU Commission's reluctance given the existence of the Court of Audit, (iii) delays in internal audit reports due to the COVID-19 pandemic-related delays, and (iv) delays in the justification of funds transferred to the NSOs requiring "many FM supervision missions" (ICR, para. 64).

### **c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)**

First, the project helped to inform public policy in the member countries during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was possible due to (i) the availability of funds under the project that could be allocated (along with other sources of funding) to high frequency surveys to collect household-level data rapidly; (ii) the existence of a sampling frame (from the first round of the living conditions survey) served to increase the robustness of the data; and (iii) the trust from the NSOs who turned to the Bank for design and implementation support.

Second, nine other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa adopted the methodological approach of the harmonized survey and poverty measurement methodology used in the WAEMU countries. These countries are Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Guinea, Republic of Congo, and São Tomé and Príncipe. According to the ICR, several of these



countries not only used the technical tools such as questionnaires, manuals, CAPI application, and STATA programs for poverty measurement, but they also enhanced their capacity by participating in the WAEMU regional workshops on technical topics. The harmonization of surveys and poverty methodologies increases the comparability of survey indicators (including poverty measurement) across countries and time. This is an important public good.

**d. Other**  
N/A

**11. Ratings**

Ratings	ICR	IEG	Reason for Disagreements/Comment
Outcome	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	
Bank Performance	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	
Quality of M&E	Substantial	Modest	Some indicators were missing; others were incorrectly specified, and could have been improved.
Quality of ICR	---	Substantial	

**12. Lessons**

The ICR offers important lessons with which IEG concurs. They are:

1. The regional design resulted in positive impacts that could not have been achieved through eight individual projects. Some of the main benefits were: (i) the regional capacity-building workshops were an effective way to introduce new concepts and approaches to household surveys and socio-economic indicators. (ii) the harmonization of living conditions surveys was more easily achieved in a group context in WAEMU. (iii) The existence of regional institutions (WAEMU Commission) with credibility among its member countries facilitated the adoption of politically sensitive steps such as public access to data. (iv) Cooperation with a regional institution (WAEMU Commission) did not mean that all aspects of a project needed to go through that institution—the World Bank could retain certain responsibilities (e.g., design and methodology of the surveys). (v) A regional project had a strong demonstration effect that led to other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa adopting harmonized living conditions surveys including the initiation of more regional projects in Africa.
2. Regional projects in member countries that have diverse implementation capacity need disproportionately larger TA budgets to succeed. The regional design required a significantly larger technical assistance budget to succeed. First, the supervision budget was insufficient to cover the cost of supervising the activities and providing necessary implementation support to one regional institution and eight countries with diverse levels of client (NSO)



capacity. Second, given the low-capacity environment in several of the WAEMU countries, the support implementation missions, and regional workshops did not provide enough technical assistance for these countries to consistently achieve the desired level of quality in outputs. Consequently, budgets from other WB Analytical and Advisory tasks had to be diverted to this project.

### 13. Assessment Recommended?

No

### 14. Comments on Quality of ICR

The ICR provided a good overview of the project's objectives and achievements. The document conveyed the benefits and challenges of a regional project, including the lack of adequacy of supervision funds. The discussions on the WAEMU Commission provided a good sense of the advantages as well as some of the disadvantages of its being the direct recipient of the grant. The ICR also provided a persuasive explanation for the project extension date. The section on unintended outcomes and impact was especially illuminating and welcome.

The ICR could have been improved if it provided greater clarity on (i) what was not achieved as a result of 9 percent of grant funds that were not disbursed; (ii) when the first and second surveys were actually implemented in each country; (iii) what improvements were or were not achieved at the NSO level; (iv) whether and where the project design could have been improved or could have performed better; (v) greater emphasis in project design on integrating survey data into government processes and systems; and (vi) how the second survey (carried out three years after the first one) affected/benefited government policy and programs as distinct from the first survey.

Finally, the ICR could have done a better job of ensuring that the indicators used to measure the efficacy of the two PDOs were accurately identified and supported by a coherent discussion. As presented, there are missing indicators and a mismatch between the PDOs and indicators without any explanation. The use of the term "episodes" of surveys was confusing given that the traditional terminology is either "round" or "wave" depending upon what is being referred to.

#### a. Quality of ICR Rating

Substantial

