



## 1. Project Data

<b>Project ID</b> P149049	<b>Project Name</b> Forest Dependent Communities Support Pr.	
<b>Country</b> Congo, Democratic Republic of	<b>Practice Area(Lead)</b> Environment, Natural Resources & the Blue Economy	
<b>L/C/TF Number(s)</b> TF-A0924,TF-A5550	<b>Closing Date (Original)</b> 31-Jul-2022	<b>Total Project Cost (USD)</b> 6,617,461.84
<b>Bank Approval Date</b> 08-Apr-2016	<b>Closing Date (Actual)</b> 30-Jun-2023	
	<b>IBRD/IDA (USD)</b>	<b>Grants (USD)</b>
Original Commitment	7,800,000.00	7,800,000.00
Revised Commitment	7,800,000.00	6,617,461.84
Actual	6,617,461.84	6,617,461.84

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## 2. Project Objectives and Components

### a. Objectives

The project development objective (PDO) as written in the Strategic Climate Fund Forest Investment Program Grant Agreement (page 6) dated April 26, 2016 was “to strengthen the capacity of targeted Indigenous People and Local Communities (IPLC) in the Member Country's selected territories and at the national level to participate in REDD+ oriented land and forest management activities.” The PDO statement in the Project Appraisal Document (page 13) was almost identical to that in the Grant Agreement, just omitting the words “the Member Country.”



This ICR Review will assess the achievement of the following PDOs:

1. To strengthen the capacity of targeted IPLC in selected territories and at the national level.
2. To increase participation of IPLC in REDD+ oriented land and forest management activities.

In the context of this project, the term 'Indigenous Peoples' (IP) is specifically applied to the Pygmy population, recognizing their unique cultural heritage and ancestral ties to the region. Conversely, the term 'Local Communities' (LC) refers to those groups residing in areas adjacent to the IPs. While these communities share certain cultural aspects with the IPs, they do not qualify as IP due to distinct differences in historical and social attributes. The project supported both groups to promote conflict resolution and enhanced resource governance.

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

No

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

No

**d. Components**

The project had three main components:

1. **Reinforce the Participation of IPLC in Forest and Land Management Processes Related to REDD+** (appraised cost: US\$1.5 million, actual cost: US\$1.59 million). The component focused on building national-level capacities to strengthen IPLC voices on land and forest policies. Activities included supporting advocacy and lobbying for stronger recognition of IPLC rights, enhancing participation in land tenure policy reform, and operationalizing formal recognition of traditional IPLC rights. These efforts aimed to improve IPLC consideration in the forest sector, increase legitimate participation in policy reform, and formally recognize IPLC traditional rights in specific forested areas.
2. **Support Community-based Sustainable Forest and Land Management** (appraised cost: US\$2.6 million, actual cost: US\$3.32 million). The component aimed to empower IPLC through formal recognition of their traditional user rights and financing natural resource management activities. This component promoted sustainable forest and land management through alternative livelihood activities and cultural promotion. It provided micro-grants for IPLC to engage in or improve sustainable livelihoods and explored innovative ways to secure IPLC forest management activities. The expected results included enhanced climate change adaptation, improved rural livelihoods, and the promotion of IPLC cultural and traditional values, along with securing user rights for IPLC.
3. **Increase the Capacity to Implement Development Activities for IPLC and Consolidate Feedback** (appraised cost: US\$1.9 million, actual cost: US\$2.89 million). This component focused on project coordination, implementation, and fiduciary management. It aimed to coordinate feedback channels at local and national levels and creating a national network of IPLC representatives for continuous monitoring and reporting.



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

**Project Cost:** At appraisal, the project cost was estimated at US\$6 million. On April 8, 2021, a second grant from the Central African Forest Initiative was added to the project in the amount of US\$ 1.8 million, bringing the total project cost up to US\$ 7.8 million. Total disbursement at the time of project completion was US\$ 6.6 million. The project team informed IEG (on August 13, 2024) that the remaining funds were transferred back to the Central African Forest Initiative and redistributed to other projects.

**Financing:** The Strategic Climate Fund signed a grant agreement in the amount of US\$6 million on April 26, 2016. The budget was increased by US\$1.8 million to accommodate additional financing from the Central African Forest Initiative.

**Borrower Contribution:** There were no contributions from the borrower.

**Dates:** The project was approved on April 8, 2016, and became effective in June 2016 as scheduled. It underwent a mid-term review in October 2019. The closing date was extended twice due to governance issues, challenges in developing community-based micro-projects, and delays exacerbated by COVID-19 lockdown measures. The first extension, following the mid-term review, moved the original closing date from July 31, 2021, to July 31, 2022. A second extension of 11 months, approved in June 2022, further adjusted the closing date to June 30, 2023. The project closed 23 months after the original closing date on June 30, 2023.

The project received a grant financing of US\$1.8 from the Central African Forest Initiative which extended the closing date from July 31, 2021, to July 31, 2022. This funding was allocated across all components with US\$ 90,000 in Component 1, an increase of US\$715,000 in Component 2, and US\$995,000 in Component 3.

Following the mid-term review, several targets were increased, including: 1) *the aggregated score on community-based land and forest governance in four pilot sites* raised from 60 to 100; 2) *direct project beneficiaries* increased from 20,000 to 25,000; 3) *IPLC representative organizations receiving capacity-building support* increased from 50 to 60; and 4) *people in forest and adjacent communities benefiting monetarily or non-monetarily from the forest* increased from 15,000 to 19,000.

A project restructuring was completed on June 15, 2022. The restructuring involved extending the closing date by eleven months to June 30, 2023, and reallocating disbursement categories to increase project management costs by \$150,000. The extension was completed to address delays in project implementation, particularly in executing micro-projects and establishing community forest concessions. The restructuring did not entail any changes to the results framework, PDO, and project activities.

## 3. Relevance of Objectives

### Rationale

**Country Context:** With 155 million hectares of rainforest, the DRC has the world's second largest rainforest, and harbors half of all African rainforests. It stores the equivalent of 85 billion tons of carbon dioxide, which roughly equals three years of global energy-related Carbon Dioxide emissions. Despite this,



DRC was among the top ten countries in the world in terms of forest cover loss in absolute terms, losing more than 350,000 hectares of forest annually between 2000 and 2010. This was primarily due to subsistence agriculture and timber harvesting. Indigenous people, numbering around 600,000, played a major role in biodiversity conservation and sustainable forest management. However, they were marginalized, lacked land rights, and had limited access to basic services, which hindered their full participation in development and conservation efforts. IPs' traditional knowledge and sustainable practices were crucial for the DRC's forest management and overall environmental health.

**PDO alignment to Country priorities:** Recognizing the significant threat to its forests, the DRC adopted a National Strategy for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) in 2012, aiming to stabilize forest cover on two-thirds of its land area by 2030. Following this, the government approved the National REDD+ Investment Plan in 2015, providing a framework for implementing the REDD+ strategy. The project was introduced as part of these programs. At the sub-national level, although the 16 territories covered by the project had a high concentration of forest areas and IPLC, project documents did not discuss the selection criteria and why other provinces which also had high forest area and IPLC concentration were excluded from the project.

**Bank experience in the sector:** The World Bank has had prior engagements in forest management sector in DRC. In July 2011, the Climate Investment Fund (hosted by the World Bank) introduced the Forest Investment Program funded a World Bank project focused on providing alternative livelihoods support to communities in the Kinshasa basin. The fund also supported two other similar projects implemented by the African Development Bank covering two other basins. The projects aimed to improve sustainable forest management while improving the livelihood of rural communities.

On engaging indigenous people, the World Bank introduced a Development Strategy for Indigenous Peoples in the DRC in 2009, which was initiated following a 2005 Inspection Panel investigation. The strategy aimed to systematically integrate indigenous people into Bank-funded activities. The Forest Dependent Communities Support project was the first World Bank standalone operation with an explicit focus on indigenous people and their role in land governance and sustainable forest management. Building on previous projects that promoted sustainable livelihoods among communities, this project advanced further by specifically targeting IPLC in land governance to improve their participation in decision-making processes related to forest management and resource use.

**PDO alignment to World Bank Strategies:** The project was aligned with the World Bank Group Country Assistance Strategy for DRC (CAS FY13-16), which emphasized good governance and sustainable development, and addressed climate change as a cross-cutting issue. It also complemented the Bank's Africa Strategy, which prioritized local benefits from natural resource management and forest conservation. The project remains relevant to the current World Bank Group Country Partnership Framework (FY22-26) which aims to scale up efforts to strengthen the resilience of landscapes and communities in all provinces surrounding the country's forest, including the use of DPFs to improve forest governance.

**PDO Level:** The PDO was pitched at the intermediate outcome level and addressed key development challenges. Capacity building and inclusion of IPLC in forest management processes was expected to improve forest management, enhance the sustainability of forest-based value chains, and ultimately conserve DRC's biodiversity. The PDO covered both national and local level outcomes, which proved to be challenging for the project to achieve given the low capacities of counterpart agencies at national and local levels, the multidimensional and complex nature of the interventions required to make progress, and the



difficulties in capturing outcomes during the project implementation cycle. Strengthening the capacity of targeted IPLC at both territorial and national levels assumed a uniform readiness and willingness among diverse communities, which may not have been the case. Increasing IPLC participation in REDD+ oriented land and forest management activities was crucial but faced substantial barriers, including existing power dynamics, land tenure complexities, and conflicts of interest. The success of the PDO hinged on addressing these underlying issues.

Overall, the project was responsive to the country's national priorities and the World Bank country objectives. It also aligned well with global knowledge on the role of IPLC in forest and biodiversity conservation. The project's relevance is rated as "High".

## **Rating**

High

## **4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)**

### **OBJECTIVE 1**

#### **Objective**

To strengthen the capacity of targeted IPLC in selected territories and at the national level.

#### **Rationale**

#### **Theory of Change (ToC)**

Project activities included information dissemination about REDD+, introduction of initiatives to bundle IPLC interests, information sharing about international and national laws, capacity building trainings to IPLC organizations, grants for alternative livelihood activities, facilitation of partnerships between local NGOs and IPLC to deliver micro-projects, preparation of operational documents to formally set up community-managed areas, national-level events to sensitize decision makers about traditional populations, support for IPLC leaders' participation in the land tenure policy reform process, operationalization of formal recognition of traditional rights of IPLC, facilitation of inclusion of IPLC leaders in working groups and meetings related to land tenure policy reform, initiating the official recognition of land use rights and traditional governance in four areas, curating existing documentation on IPLC culture and livelihoods, creating additional knowledge on IPLC, and supporting the potential commercial development of natural resources.

The activities were expected to lead to the following outputs: awareness workshops and knowledge exchange events conducted, operational documents produced, IPLC interest groups and networks established, IPLC organizations trained, alternative livelihood grants provided, IPLC demonstrate the capacity to execute micro-projects, IPLC culture promoted, micro-projects that reduce deforestation implemented, governance framework feasibility studies completed to design management framework around traditional governance systems.



In the medium term, the project aimed to achieve outcomes such as national programs that reflect the specific needs of traditional populations, a land tenure policy reform process that includes the engagement of IPLC, improved capacity of IPLC organizations, strengthened collaboration between IPLC and local NGOs, and increased adoption of alternative livelihood practices. These outcomes were intended to foster greater IPLC involvement in forest management, enhance legal awareness, reduce deforestation, and support the development of resilient and sustainable community-based initiatives. Ultimately, these efforts were expected to contribute to long-term goals including biodiversity conservation, strengthened community self-governance, and increased participation of IPLC in the forest product value chain.

The theory of change was logical and relied on a few assumptions. However, it overlooked barriers like resource constraints and socio-political dynamics that IPLC may face. It also presumed effective collaboration and proper grant utilization without addressing potential challenges like differing priorities.

### **Outputs**

- 50 IPLC representative organizations were provided with capacity-building support aimed at increasing their participation in land use management, meeting the original target of 50 and nearly achieving the revised target of 60.
- 75% of the sub-projects were successfully completed and have achieved their objectives, meeting the target of 75%.
- 250,000 people directly benefited from the project, far exceeding both the original target of 20,000 and revised target of 25,000. This included 30% female beneficiaries.
- 62% of the targeted beneficiaries were satisfied with project interventions, meeting the original target of 62% while falling short of the revised target of 75%.
- 75% of beneficiaries indicated they were satisfied with learnings from the land rights securing activities. This indicator was added in the ICR but was not part of the results framework in the approved PAD and it was not included during the project restructuring.
- 85% of grievances that were registered during project implementation were addressed, meeting the original target of 85% and exceeding the revised target of 80%.

### **Outcomes**

- 28,880 people in forest and adjacent community with monetary/non-monetary benefits from forest, exceeding both the original target of 15,000 and revised target of 16,000. This included 7,996 women, and 16,337 ethnic minorities and indigenous people. This indicator was defined as the extent to which local people saw improved livelihoods due to the intervention, covering both monetary income and non-monetary benefits like easier access to fuelwood and cultural and spiritual services. The indicator captured a one-time perception of selected beneficiaries and which with already broad parameters. Even though the project did not provide an objective assessment of the extent to which production or income levels improved, the following additional results were noted.

Beyond the results framework, the project achieved the following results related to capacity building of IPLC:

- IPLC utilized and managed 558 hectares of agroecological agroforestry systems, cultivating fruit trees like avocado, safou, mango, orange, and cocoa.
- The project facilitated agricultural production: 336 tons of rice, 6 tons of vegetables, 48 tons of cassava, 167 tons of potatoes, and 7 tons of peanuts.



- 840 beehives were installed to initiate honey production.
- The project rehabilitated 29 kilometers of agricultural tracks through Labor-Intensive Public Works (LIPW).
- Five storage depots and two water sources were constructed.
- Ten units for processing agricultural products were set up.
- Fifteen classrooms underwent rehabilitation.
- 6,852 individuals, including 1,583 women, participated in training on forest conservation, financial management, community forestry, land governance, and environmental and social safeguards.
- Specific training was provided on technical skills like GPS use, map production, and participatory mapping.
- 4,488 individuals, including 3,035 women, were trained in literacy and basic math skills in 76 temporary functional literacy centers.
- Training improved participants' abilities to read, write, manage personal savings, and use digital tools.
- 75% of micro-projects were successfully completed and achieved their objectives, demonstrating the effectiveness of the training and support provided.

Despite the absence of specific results indicators for micro-project outcomes, the ICR highlighted significant achievements in fruit, vegetable, and dried fruit production, along with community efforts in school and road rehabilitation. The report also detailed the number of training beneficiaries and training modules. The project supported the organization of village savings and loan associations (VSLA). The exact nature of the support was not detailed, and not mentioned in the appraisal document.

Overall, the project achieved or exceeded most indicators. Although there were gaps in evidence towards the objective in the results framework, the ICR provided results on the nature of interventions and projects implemented to demonstrate capacity building. The successful implementation and completion of micro-projects under the project and the satisfaction rate of the beneficiaries serve as tangible evidence of the enhanced capacities acquired by the IPLC. Therefore, the outcome is rated Substantial.

## **Rating**

Substantial

## **OBJECTIVE 2**

### **Objective**

To increase participation of IPLC in REDD+ oriented land and forest management activities.

### **Rationale**

The project's theory of change which combines objectives 1 and 2 is presented as a single theory of change under Objective 1 in Section 4.

### **Outputs**

- 50% of Dedicated Grant Mechanism stakeholders perceived the DGM governance and processes as transparent and Inclusive, meeting the 50% target.



- 78% of IPLC who were invited to the National REDD+ Coordination and National Council for Land Reform were satisfied regarding IPLC representativeness in these platforms, exceeding the target of 70%. This indicator relied on inputs from selected IPLC represented who were directly or indirectly endorsed by local organizations from the targeted territories.
- 78% of target territories scored three or more on IPLC representation in local land and forest management, exceeding the target of 70%. This composite indicator measured multiple dimensions: the legitimacy and recognition of the representative by the communities (1 point), their designation and replacement through a participatory process (3 points), and their consultation in land use management discussions (1 point).

## Outcomes

- Aggregated score of 100 achieved on community-based land and forest governance in four pilot sites, exceeding the original target of 60, and the revised target of 90 for four pilot sites. This composite indicator scores pilot sites on their progress in official processes, Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) completion, area delimitation, local support, governance arrangements, relevant studies, and drafting of official documents. The scale of this outcome is unclear as it is unclear what share of the total project territories the four pilot sites reflect. Furthermore, the indicator captures preparatory steps toward operationalizing community-based land and forest governance systems and does not indicate to what extent these were implemented.

Beyond the results framework, the project achieved the following results:

- A law to protect and promote Indigenous Peoples' rights was enacted in 2022.
- A national territorial planning policy was validated by the Council of Ministers in May 2021.
- Recognition of Indigenous Peoples' land rights in the National Land Policy was validated in January 2022.
- A sustainable agriculture policy targeting Indigenous Peoples for agricultural participation, employment, land access, and capacity building was validated in November 2022.
- Provincial Decree-Laws to promote and protect Indigenous Peoples' rights were adopted in Sankuru, Maï-Ndombe, and Tshopo.
- Position notes on land, spatial planning, agriculture, and wood energy were developed by IPLC.
- A legally binding Local Community Forest Concession covering 252,202 hectares was established in two territories, and frameworks were prepared in three additional territories. The project's contribution is unclear as it was not included in the original project design with specific baseline and target values. Nonetheless, this is the highest level of outcome reported in the ICR.

The project made good use of composite indicators to capture multiple dimensions of IPLC participation in the four pilot sites and in the two convening platforms (the National REDD+ Coordination and National Council for Land Reform). However, there were a variety of activities to support IPLC, the results framework included few robust indicators to measure results. For instance, the 78% satisfaction rate among IPLC did not clarify the level, frequency, or effectiveness of their participation and representation. Despite lack of indicators to capture institutional development milestones, the ICR reported some results on legal and policy reform on land administration and recognition of IPLC role including formal recognition of community land rights in two out of 16 target territories. Without clear initial benchmarks, it is difficult to determine how much of the





observed changes outside the results framework can be directly linked to the project interventions versus other external factors.

Overall, the project achieved key targets including stakeholder satisfaction with transparency and high scores in community-based governance at pilot sites. The ICR also demonstrated key milestone achieved on institutional development and legal recognition of IPLC ownership and role in forest management. This outcome is rated Substantial.

**Rating**

Substantial

**OVERALL EFFICACY**

**Rationale**

The project demonstrated substantial progress toward its objectives of building IPLC capacity at national and local levels and improving IPLC participation in land and forest management activities. The overall efficacy is rated Substantial.

**Overall Efficacy Rating**

Substantial

**5. Efficiency**

**Economic and Financial Efficiency**

The project carried out a cost-benefit analysis using a "with" and "without" project scenario to estimate incremental benefits at appraisal and completion stages, with a focus on component 2. This was appropriate given the challenges of a quantitative analysis of economic rate of return and net present value in the absence of adequate data. The project's assumption around "without" project scenario was not entirely plausible, as IPLC could improve their income over time due to increasing external support, improved access to information, and rising market demand for sustainable products, and ongoing legal reforms in the DRC. Nonetheless, the assessment indicated expected increases in household income levels and in non-timber production (i.e. rice, cassava, maize, vegetables, potatoes, and peanuts). Beyond this, the project contributed to carbon sequestration through agroecological forestry system and by planting around 400,000 productive tree species across 400 hectares.

The completion-stage assessment complemented the appraisal-stage analysis and presented a more comprehensive assessment with different scenarios using discount rates of 4%, 12%, and 20% and levels of income increases and market conditions. The assessment referred to WBG's estimation of non-timber wealth in



DRC at US\$589 per capita, which is relatively lower than other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and indicates a more challenging environment to promote the production of non-timber crops.

**Administrative Efficiency**

With a budget increase of US\$ 1.8 million, the project increased a few targets for project beneficiaries (from 20,000 to 25,000), IPLC organizations that received capacity building support (from 50 to 60), and number of people with benefits from forests (from 15,000 to 19,000).

There were delays in micro-project implementation due to governance issues and weak implementation capacity, which led to cost overruns, necessitating a second extension and an additional US\$150,000 in management fees. With this cost increase and two years of extension, the project completed its activities and met all its original targets and most of the revised targets. The extension was partly due to scaling up of activities and partly due to implementation delays. The overall actual project cost (US\$ 6.6 million) was higher than the initial appraised cost though less than the revised allocation (US\$7.8 million).

Overall, the project 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 was informed by a sound analysis of the role of IPLC in forest and land management and the sustainability of resources in DRC. It was highly relevant to the country's context. It achieved Substantial progress toward its two objectives with some minor shortcomings. The project managed to achieve its targets with substantial efficiency, although with two additional years of implementation, due to a scaling up of activities and some implementation delays. The overall outcome rating is Satisfactory.

**a. Outcome Rating**

Satisfactory



## 7. Risk to Development Outcome

**Government Ownership Risk:** The project was entirely funded by international trust funds and implemented by non-governmental agencies, as were other related projects discussed in the PAD (page 4). Meaningful participation of IPs in REDD+ oriented land and forest management activities depends upon a cohesive and stable partnership between government and civil society to ensure the broadest coverage of needs and community mobilization. The government of DRC has started piloting large-scale agro parks to expand and modernize production of agricultural commodities and was responsive to the project's initiatives to introduce IPLC representatives to national land governance platforms and committees. However, continued support and more targeted investment in this area would compete with other priorities that might have higher returns in the short run.

**Resource Conflict Risks:** The PAD discusses a history of local conflict over land in the DRC, particularly affecting indigenous communities (page 95). Land tenure rights are complex, involving various historical concepts, including customary land tenure managed by "Chefs de Terre," which often push IPs deeper into forests. Notably, the government has undertaken land rights reforms, and the project has supported these efforts. Nonetheless, there remains a risk of elite capture, and conflicts arising due to overlapping claims. The project's grievance mechanism is expected to continue operating under the Network of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities for Sustainable Forest Ecosystem Management. However, as noted in paragraph 39 of the ICR, the system needs to be strengthened.

**Financial Risk:** Funding for the project came entirely from external sources with no borrower contribution, indicating potential financing challenges for continued engagement. As discussed in paragraph 86 of the ICR, the project faced weak financial management systems, as evidenced by undocumented expenses and irregularities in payments for micro-project contracts. Continued support through the non-government sector would require further strengthening financial management practices and oversight.

**Environmental Risk:** The DRC faces significant environmental risks that threaten agriculture and forest-based livelihood activities. Climate change exacerbates these challenges, with extreme weather events disrupting agricultural cycles and diminishing crop yields (PAD, page 31). These factors can jeopardize the alternative livelihood activities promoted through the project and require a sustainable transition to non-timber livelihoods, requiring continued technical and financial support to the IPLC.

## 8. Assessment of Bank Performance

### a. Quality-at-Entry

This was the first WBG project to focus on the IPLC' role in forest and land governance. The team leveraged the WBG's forest sector experience and coordinated closely with regional initiatives like the National Parks Network Rehabilitation Project, the Forest Investment Program, and the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility. The PAD included relevant lessons including the need for strong due diligence of civil society organizations given their lack of legitimacy in DRC. During the preparation phase, the project engaged a broad range of stakeholders using a participatory approach.



The implementation arrangements were complex, involving a non-profit organization (NGO) as the implementing agency that subcontracted several other NGOs across territories. The use of subgrantees allowed for closer community engagement and a decentralized approach but lacked upfront capacity assessment and a clear definition of roles. This led to delays in implementing subprojects due to capacity constraints (ICR, para 60). The ICR notes that simpler implementation arrangements given the low capacity for coordination would have been beneficial.

The M&E design used composite indicators to capture IPLC' participation in governance and included citizen engagement indicators to track beneficiary satisfaction and grievances, aligning with corporate requirements at the time. Third-party monitoring was limited to one indicator: *DGM stakeholders' increased role in REDD+ processes*. There were some shortcomings in the M&E design (refer section 9a). Environmental and social assessments for initial sites were prepared on time, and the project was correctly rated for environmental and social risks, as it did not involve critical habitats or significant resettlement.

Overall, the project's quality at entry is rated Moderately Satisfactory due to inadequate capacity assessments of partner NGOs and shortcomings in M&E design.

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

Moderately Satisfactory

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

The World Bank's performance during the project's implementation demonstrated adaptability and commitment to overcoming challenges but also revealed areas for improvement. The Bank provided support, particularly in addressing delays and introducing innovative solutions. For example, the micro-project structure was revised in response to higher-than-expected costs to increase the size of the grants and reduce the total number of microprojects. The Bank offered trainings in procurement, financial management, and environmental risk management. Consistent supervision, supported by low TTL turnover and strong in-country presence, enabled effective communication and timely issue resolution.

The project team followed up on environmental and social safeguards issues as reflected in aide memoires. The team used project ratings, the mid-term review, and restructurings to address some of the implementation issues for example by extending the project duration by two years, increasing the cost allocation to management fees, and reducing the performance ratings for financial management.

However, shortcomings in procurement and financial management were evident, including issues with contract finalization and documentation in the STEP system. While the Bank's proactive measures, such as developing action plans and facilitating resource allocation during crises, helped maintain project momentum, the persistent challenges in compliance and monitoring suggest that more rigorous supervision and clearer guidance could have mitigated some of the risks and delays encountered.

The Bank's performance during supervision is rated Moderately Satisfactory.



### **Quality of Supervision Rating**

Moderately Satisfactory

### **Overall Bank Performance Rating**

Moderately Satisfactory

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

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

The PDO was set at an appropriate level, targeting key development challenges. Capacity building and IPLC' inclusion in forest management aimed to improve sustainability and biodiversity conservation in DRC. The objectives were appropriately ambitious covering both national and local outcomes.

Some of the indicators had shortcomings. While composite indicators captured dimensions of IPLC' participation in pilot sites, the 78% satisfaction rate did not clarify the effectiveness of their participation. Additionally, there are attribution issues with some of the reported results in the absence of clear benchmarking. For example, several legal and policy reforms were made related to land administration and IPLC' roles, but attributing these outcomes directly to the project was challenging without initial baselines and targets. The ICR also noted instances where the reporting of results remained at the process level, overlooking induced changes and short-term impacts. For example, while the number of beehives was recorded, the reporting failed to capture meaningful metrics such as the quantity of honey harvested and its subsequent commercialization or household consumption.

On M&E institutional arrangements, data was mostly collected through implementing agencies, with third-party verification used for only one indicator. The M&E capacities of partner NGOs were not assessed at the time of preparation.

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

The project faced challenges in implementing effective M&E measures due to logistical challenges and limited capacity at the local level. Beneficiaries had limited involvement in defining target indicators and assessing their achievements, which contributed to some of the challenges in M&E implementation. While local communities were engaged to some extent through the establishment of Local Monitoring Committees (LMCs), which played a role in monitoring project activities although in some areas, they faced conflicting roles with pre-existing structures. The sustainability of M&E functions and processes after project closure appears uncertain, primarily due to the challenges in capacity and the reliance on external support during the project. The lack of robust institutional frameworks and ongoing capacity issues suggest that without continued external assistance, the sustainability of these M&E processes may be at risk.

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



The project prepared and disclosed implementation progress reports regularly. Consultations were carried out at project preparation stage. Additional consultations were not carried out at the time of restructuring or during implementation to garner beneficiary inputs.

The mid-term review informed a few changes in the M&E design as some indicator targets were increased as discussed in section 2 of this report. The project made adaptations in response to emerging challenges identified through its M&E systems. For example, it adjusted procurement processes and addressed safeguard compliance issues. However, the extent of systematic learning and adjustment based on M&E findings is not fully detailed. The organizations implementing micro-projects did not have a clear communication and results tracking system. Therefore, timely information flow to inform decision making was lacking.

Overall, the project's M&E quality is rated Modest due to shortcomings in design and implementation. Even though the project M&E is rated as Modest, the ICR provided sufficient additional evidence beyond the results framework to substantiate the satisfactory achievement of outcomes.

## M&E Quality Rating

Modest

## 10. Other Issues

### a. Safeguards

The project was rated as Category B and triggered six operational safeguards policies, namely: OP 4.01 Environmental Assessment; OP 4.04 Natural Habitats; OP 4.10 Indigenous Peoples; OP 4.11 Physical Cultural Resources; OP 4.12 Involuntary Resettlement; and OP 4.36 Forests.

**OP 4.01 Environmental Assessment.** The project completed an environmental social assessment and given the lack of clarity on the nature and scope of sub-projects, it prepared an environmental and social management framework to guide decision-making at the sub-projects level.

**OP 4.10 Indigenous Peoples.** This policy was applied because the project primarily targeted indigenous people, but due to limited expected impact, no specific instruments (i.e. indigenous people's policy framework or management plan) were prepared. IPs were engaged and informed through consultations.

**OP 4.04 Natural Habitats and OP4.36 Forests.** The two policies were triggered because the project's activities on land and forest management legal framework could have potentially affected natural habitats and forests. The project documents (PAD and ICR) do not discuss any specific issues related to these policies.

**Involuntary Resettlement (OP/BP 4.12).** This policy was triggered because, although the project did not intend to cause resettlement, there was potential for land use changes that could indirectly impact land access and use rights. The PAD noted that project activities related to securing land use rights of IPLC could lead to restricted access for some IPLC to certain natural resources in the intervention zones, negatively impacting the livelihoods of the affected individuals. However, it is unclear what the scope of this was and how many individuals or households were impacted by restricted access to natural resources.



**Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM).** A GRM was established. Complaints about land issues, micro-project identification and allocation, as well as micro-project management, were duly received and addressed through an established grievance redress mechanism. The implementation of the complaints management mechanism, once established, was functional. The ICR does not capture the number of grievances, the nature, and how they were addressed.

**OP 4.11 Physical Cultural Resources.** No specific update was discussed on this policy in the ICR.

**b. Fiduciary Compliance**

**Financial Management.** At the time of appraisal, the legal covenants required an operational team of qualified experts, updating of accounting software for project-specific reports, and hiring independent auditors with World Bank-approved qualifications. The ICR does not report whether any of these were achieved but the TTL confirmed to IEG (on August 10, 2024) that these actions have been completed. The project's audits identified significant weaknesses, including undocumented expenses, non-compliance with payment terms for 19 out of 22 micro-projects, and inadequate evidence to support reported expenditures. Substantial advances held by operators further delayed progress. These issues, coupled with pending amendments to the external audit contract indicate lack of transparency.

**Procurement:** The PAD indicated (page 27) that the Bank's procurement rules applied to the project. A review of the Project Procurement Monitoring (PPM) revealed that of the 86 contracts registered in the STEP system, only 20 were finalized, while the remaining 66 were either still in process or not initiated. Many of these contracts had been executed but were not updated in STEP, which created discrepancies in procurement records.

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

None

**d. Other**

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**11. Ratings**

Ratings	ICR	IEG	Reason for Disagreements/Comment
Outcome	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	
Bank Performance	Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderate shortcomings in Quality at entry and supervision
Quality of M&E	Modest	Modest	



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Quality of ICR                      ---                      Substantial

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## 12. Lessons

In addition to the lessons highlighted in the ICR, this review has drawn three lessons based on the information in the ICR:

**Adequate fiduciary capacity of implementing agencies is critical for continuation of community development and capacity development efforts.** The project's experience highlights that a lack of financial management and procurement capacity can significantly undermine transparency and stakeholder confidence. As a pioneering effort in DRC engaging IPLC in land and forest management governance, the project addressed a key development challenge. However, it underestimated the challenges associated with fiduciary and financial management capacity, which could impede the sustainability of such initiatives in the future.

**Digital monitoring platforms and third-party monitoring can overcome both capacity and accessibility challenges for project teams.** The ICR mentioned that community groups indicated the need for digital tracking tools to facilitate their monitoring efforts. The use of third-party monitoring, particularly for conducting social audits, could have provided an additional layer of oversight and accountability. This approach might be especially beneficial in contexts where local capacity is still developing and where independent verification of project outcomes is necessary.

**Extended preparation time and project preparation grants can support smoother implementation with partners that are newly engaged.** Engaging new partners with low capacity requires longer preparation times to establish effective communication and implementation protocols. The project would have benefited from project preparation grants, which could have facilitated the necessary groundwork, including capacity building and the establishment of clear operational frameworks among partners. This preparation could have mitigated the capacity challenges encountered during implementation and ensured a smoother execution of the project.

## 13. Assessment Recommended?

No

## 14. Comments on Quality of ICR

The ICR provides a comprehensive overview of the project's implementation and outcomes, with a generally clear narrative and logical flow. The reconstructed theory of change on page 8 provides a comprehensive picture of the activities and expected results.

However, there are a few inconsistencies. The ICR mentions that the project achieved an "Aggregate score of 86 on community-based land and forest governance in four pilot sites", while the results framework notes a score of 100. The same indicator defines four pilot sites while the ICR paragraph 14 mentions six pilot sites. Annex 3 does not reflect the additional financing, and the revised component costs differ from those reported in





the financial data sheet. On procurement, the ICR discusses discrepancies in the recorded status of procurement packages but does not confirm if all 86 registered contracts had been fully executed at the time of completion. Also, following the Environmental Social Policy for investment operations, the ICR should confirm if the project used mitigation measures for each of the environmental and social policies that were considered relevant at the time of appraisal.

The project task team leader provided IEG with useful information to complement the ICR on August 19, 2024. The information clarified the status of financial management audits, cancellation of unused project funds, and provided relevant documentation.

Overall, the ICR provides valuable insights into the project's implementation challenges and successes and effectively covers the key aspects of the project.

**a. Quality of ICR Rating**  
Substantial