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Adapting Social Protection to FCV and Insecurity

The Case of the Democratic Republic of Congo

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Adapting Social Protection to FCV and Insecurity
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Abstract: The Eastern Recovery Project (STEP) has offered the primary platform for delivering social safety net (SSN) support in response to different shocks and overlapping crises in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). STEP has been operating successfully since its launch in 2014, evolving and adapting from a project designed to support post-conflict stabilization and recovery in Eastern DRC to a comprehensive shock-responsive SSN system aimed at building resilience and protecting human capital against the full spectrum of fragility, conflict, and violence (FCV) nationwide. This paper presents an in-depth analysis of STEP's evolution by identifying and discussing key operational adaptations to (i) project design, (ii) delivery chain, (iii) monitoring, implementation, and partnership, and (iv) World Bank's supervision. Drawing lessons learned from the analysis, the paper suggests operational options to adapt current and future social protection engagements in FCV.

Keywords: Adaptive Social Protection, Fragility, Conflict, and Violence, Insecurity, Crisis, Shocks, Forced Displacement, Community Infrastructure, Social Safety Nets, Cash Transfers, Labor-Intensive Public Works, Stabilization, recovery Resilience, Human Capital, Social Cohesion, STEP, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eastern DRC, World Bank.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AF	Additional Financing
ALE	Agence Local de Développement
AM	Accompanying measures
ASP	Adaptive Social Protection
AST	Agent de Suivi de Terrain
AVC	Agricultural Value Chains
BE	Bureau d'Etudes
CAR	Central African Republic
CAS	Country Assistance Strategy
CBT	Community-Based Targeting
CC	Chef de Chantier
CCP	Provincial Consultative Committee – <i>Comité Consultatif Provincial</i>
CDD	Community-Driven Development
CE	Chef d'Equipe
CERC	Contingency Emergency Response Component
CLD	Local Development Committee – <i>Comité Local de Développement</i>
CNR	National Commission for Refugees – <i>Commission Nationale pour les Réfugié</i>
CRW	Crisis Response Window
DfID	Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo

EDRP	Emergency Demobilization and Reintegration Project
ESF	Environment and Social Framework
EVD	Ebola Virus Disease
FARDC	<i>Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo</i>
FCV	Fragility, Conflict, and Violence
FSRDC	<i>Fond Social de la République Démocratique du Congo</i>
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEMS	Geo-Enabling Initiative for Monitoring and Supervision
GLR	Great Lakes Region
GoDRC	Government of the DRC
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
HCI	Human Capital Index
HDI	Human Development Index
HDP	Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ID	Identification
IDA	International Development Association
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IE	Impact Evaluation
JMAC	Joint Mission Analysis Center
LIPW	Labor Intensive Public Works

M23	March 23 Movement
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MARTA	Monitoring Automated for Real-Time Analysis
MINAS	Ministry of Social Affairs – <i>Ministère des Affaires Sociales</i>
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs
PASU	Emergency Social Action Project – <i>Projet d’Action Sociale d’Urgence</i>
PDO	Project Development Objective
PFE	Point Focal Environnementaliste
PIE	Project Implementation Entity
PMT	Proxy Means Testing
PP	Parent Project
PTI	Project Targeting Index
RSW	Regional Sub-Window for Refugees and Host Communities
SRA	Security Risk Assessment
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
STAREC	National Stabilization and Reconstruction Program
STEP	<i>Project pour la Stabilisation de l’Est de la République Démocratique du Congo pour la Paix</i>
TSS	Transition Support Strategy

TT	Task Team
TTL	Task Team Leader
UCT	Unconditional Cash Transfer
UN	United Nations
UNHAS	UN Humanitarian Air Service
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	UN International Children’s Emergency Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Program
WHR	Window for Host Communities and Refugees

I. Introduction

Around the world, Adaptive Social Protection (ASP) programs are increasingly being used to protect vulnerable households from a variety of risks and shocks, including natural disasters, economic crises, epidemics and pandemics, and fragility, conflict, and violence (FCV). The key objective of ASP is “to build the resilience of poor and vulnerable households by investing in their capacity to prepare for, cope with, and adapt to shocks: protecting their wellbeing and ensuring that they do not fall into poverty or become trapped into poverty as a result of the impacts.”¹

In fragile and conflict-affected situations, the role of ASP, and particularly social safety nets , goes beyond the income support function. FCV settings are often characterized by some combination of poor governance, limited state authority and control, weak or nonexistent institutional capacity, differing levels of violence and insecurity, and political volatility. In these settings, where trust and social cohesion are often fractured and depleted, safety net programs also have an important stability function.² By providing direct, regular, and predictable support to meet short-term needs, safety nets can help address the grievances often underlying and driving conflict and fragility and reduce FCV in the long-term. Safety net programs can therefore act as a bridge between citizens and state institutions by helping restore a form of social contract and offering a pathway to long-term recovery.

The potential development impact of social safety nets in FCV contexts is significant, but so are the challenges posed by FCV to their effective delivery. Engaging in FCV situations implies acknowledging that fluidity and uncertainty are inherent factors to the operational environment, translating into increased risks for both project effectiveness and project

¹ Thomas Bowen et al., *Adaptive Social Protection: Building Resilience to Shocks. International Development in Focus* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2020), 6.

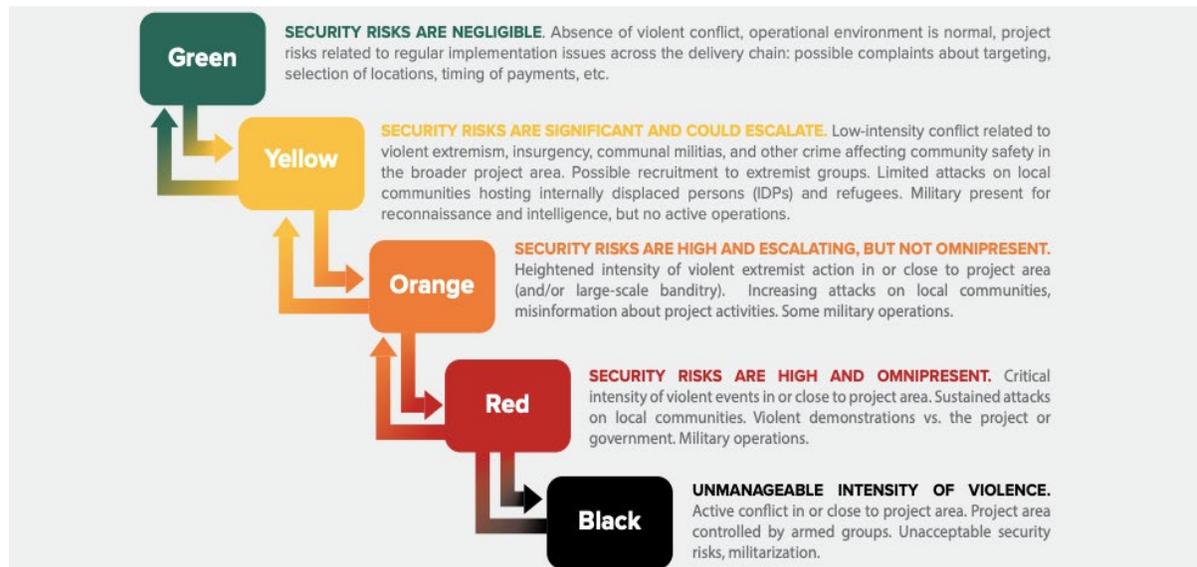
² World Bank, *The State of Social Safety Nets* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2015), 18. Social cohesion is defined as “a sense of shared purpose and trust among members of a given group, trust by group members in government officials, and willingness of group members to engage and cooperate with each other to survive and prosper.” This definition of social cohesion draws from ongoing analytical work jointly carried out by the German Development Institute (Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik, DIE) and the World Bank Social Sustainability and Inclusion Global Practice, with the aim to develop a framework connecting social cohesion to community resilience in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence (FCV).

teams. Difficult or deteriorating conditions on the ground involve higher risks that project objectives will not be achieved. Project implementation may experience delays and prolonged suspension, undermining effectiveness, or cancellation altogether. A chaotic and often rapidly changing work environment also poses higher risks to the safety and security of project staff. Security incidents, in turn, can lead to costly damage to the project’s reputation and acceptance. Some risks can be reduced or mitigated, to some extent, through project design, but this may not be sufficient to eliminate their impact. Other environmental risks, on the other hand, cannot simply be anticipated but can only be dealt with ex post.

To better understand how security risks may characterize the operational landscape at different levels of intensity and scope, Figure 1 provides a framework based on five scenarios. In the framework, security risks range from a “green scenario,” where the level of security threats to operations is minimal, to a “black scenario,” where tensions escalate into violent conflict and generate unacceptable levels of insecurity and unsafety, which cause the suspension or withdrawal of operations. The bidirectional arrows in the graph also make

Figure 1.1: Cascading Levels of Insecurity

explicit the variability and linkages between and across the five scenarios. In a project area,



Source: R. Grun, M. Saidi, and P. Bisca, “Adapting Social Safety Net Operations to Insecurity in the Sahel,” 2020, 5.

security conditions may undergo abrupt and unexpected shifts from one scenario to another, for instance from a low risk, “yellow scenario” to a “red scenario” of significant security risks, and which grant project teams only little adjustment window. Similarly, given their context-specific nature, which varies with specific local actors, grievances, and factors of fragility, conflict and violence may be present in different forms in a same project area or in different areas where operations are deployed. For instance, a target province or region of a country may exhibit negligible or low security risks at the aggregate level, while deep pockets of armed conflict and violence may persist in “black areas” within the province itself.

More so than in stable developing countries, building resilience in FCV settings requires the ability to adapt safety nets rapidly and effectively to changing conditions. Fragility and conflict are not just development challenges in their own right. They also act as risk multipliers by interacting with existing vulnerabilities and other shocks, including food insecurity, natural disasters, epidemics, and forced displacement. While some of these factors – such as poverty and climate-related shocks – can sometimes trigger or exacerbate the risk of conflict, others – such as food insecurity and forced displacement – can be not only the result of conflict but can ignite and drive conflicts, especially in a context of political instability and weak governance.³ The interdependence between these shocks often give rise to complex emergencies which, even if small in scale, can escalate into protracted humanitarian crises, owing to fragility and insufficient coping capacity. Working in FCV settings thus requires front-line project teams to be able to effectively manage higher levels of risks and complexity and prevent them from becoming a barrier to active engagement. It also requires new knowledge and different approaches to assistance delivery that go beyond the linear model of the traditional project cycle. Ultimately, the World Bank’s commitment to remaining engaged during crises and active conflicts and laying the foundations for long-

³ Katharine J. Mach et al., "Climate as a risk factor for armed conflict," *Nature* 571 (2019).

term recovery⁴ requires a deeper understanding of how we can adapt safety net programs to FCV.

This study seeks to contribute to operational knowledge on safety nets adaptations in FCV settings through an in-depth exploration of the World Bank’s Eastern Recovery Project in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The study presents an analysis of the Eastern Recovery Project (*Project pour la stabilisation de l’Est de la République Démocratique du Congo pour la paix, STEP*) and illustrates how the project has evolved and adapted in response to the prevailing operational challenges and strategic objectives at a given time. Adaptations have involved each phase of the project cycle, i.e., from project design to delivery, implementation and monitoring, and supervision. As the study shows, these adaptations have been developed in three phases, prompted by three additional financing (AF) in 2015, 2020, and 2021. The lessons learned from examining STEP’s adaptations offer important insights for both current social protection engagements in FCV and future development efforts. This study can thus provide World Bank’s front-line Task Team Leaders (TTLs), Task Teams (TTs), and practitioners with actionable knowledge and options to adapt social protection projects to fragility and insecurity. In pursuing this objective, the study builds on, and contributes to, an emerging body of work on social protection adaptations to FCV,⁵ while also aiming to promote cross-country learning.

The study consists of four chapters. Chapter 2 sets the stage for the analysis of STEP adaptations by presenting the context of risks and covariate shocks in the DRC. The chapter focuses on the prevailing security, development, and humanitarian challenges that have marked STEP’s operational context since it was first deployed. Chapter 3 provides a brief historical overview of the World Bank’s engagement in the DRC. It then situates the origins of STEP against this backdrop and presents the basic elements of the three additional financing, namely STEP 1, STEP 2, and STEP 3. Chapter 4 explores both the original project

⁴ World Bank Group, *World Bank Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence 2020–2025* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2020).

⁵ Rebekka Grun, Mira Saidi, and Paul M. Bisca, *Adapting Social Safety Net Operations to Insecurity in the Sahel. SASPP Operational and Policy Note Series, Note 2.* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2020).

features and their adaptations and analyzes them in chronological order, i.e., from STEP to STEP 3, and sequentially, according to the phases of the project cycle: (i) project design; (ii) delivery chain; (iii) implementation and monitoring, and partnerships; and (iv) World Bank's supervision. Chapter 5 concludes by deriving lessons for ASP projects in FCV contexts.

II. The challenge of development in the DRC: fragility, conflict, epidemics, and forced displacement

Over the past three decades, the DRC experienced two consecutive wars. The First Congo War (1996-1997) had its roots in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. The war resulted in the overthrow of the 32-year-long regime of Mobutu Sese Seko and brought Laurent Désiré Kabila to power. Unresolved internal conflicts and regional rivalries led to the outbreak of Africa's World War (1998-2003), which involved most of the DRC's neighbors. It became to be known as the deadliest since World War II, claiming the lives of an estimated 5.5 million people in the DRC, in addition to leading to its economic collapse.⁶ Since 2003, the country's efforts to transition out of fragility have been undermined both by continuing instability stemming from conflicts and crises in neighboring countries (e.g., Burundi and CAR) and challenges to state legitimacy arising from within the country itself.

Even more than the rest of the country, Eastern DRC has suffered most heavily in terms of the direct impacts and long-term consequences of protracted war. The Eastern provinces, particularly Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu, and Tanganyika, faced most of the brutality of the wars, which caused widespread devastation of socio-economic infrastructure, the loss of livelihoods, increased poverty and deprivation, massive internal displacement, and a major exodus of refugees from the DRC into neighboring countries. Despite a series of peace agreements and initiatives have sought to restore stability, conflict and violence have remained prominent features in Eastern D.R. of Congo. This is particularly noticeable in Ituri and North Kivu where, as recently as May 2021, an alarming wave of increased violence led the Government of the DRC (GoDRC) to impose martial law in the attempt to restore stability in the two provinces. Despite these measures security conditions in the two provinces have continued to deteriorate in the following months.⁷

⁶ Robert J. Hanlon and Kenneth Christie, *Freedom From Fear, Freedom From Want. An Introduction to Human Security* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 37.

⁷ USAID, *Democratic Republic of the Congo – Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #5 Fiscal Year (FY) 2021* (September 10, 2021), <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/democratic-republic-congo-complex-emergency-fact-sheet-5-fiscal-5>.

Other conflict-affected provinces in the East as well as the rest of the country tend to exhibit relatively lower levels of violence and insecurity. This points to a conflict landscape in the DRC that is diverse in nature, a patchwork of multiple layers of conflict that vary across and within the country's provinces. The geographic variation of conflict and insecurity in the DRC can be understood in terms of the analytical framework in Figure 1. The Eastern provinces can be regarded as falling between an "orange" and "red" status, with deep "black" pockets of extreme insecurity that persist within certain provinces, such as Ituri and North Kivu, and which remain inaccessible for development interventions.

Years of enduring conflict have exacerbated preexisting fragility and long-standing grievances, thus providing an enabling environment for non-state actors to remain operational and maintain a safe haven throughout much of the East. State presence and territorial control in these provinces have been traditionally weak and ineffective. This has paved the way for competitive interference of neighboring countries, which have used the opportunity of Eastern D.R. of Congo's fragility to maximize their access to, and exploitation of, its mineral and natural wealth. The primary channel has been provision of logistical and financial support to rebels and armed groups, which have established their support bases in the East.⁸ Regional strategic rivalries have interacted with deep-seated and unresolved grievances at the local level, mostly related to perceived or actual exclusion and discrimination, economic deprivation, lack of opportunities, and limited or unequal access to resources and services. The conflict landscape in Eastern DRC is highly fractured, due to the simultaneous presence of different forms of violence, ranging from interpersonal to criminal, and intra- and intercommunal violence, as well as different actors, such as rebels, armed groups, self-defense groups, and gangs. In this context of generalized insecurity, as many as 120 armed groups are believed to operate in the East,⁹ despite the long presence of the

⁸ Congressional Research Service, "Democratic Republic of Congo: Background and U.S. Relations," (2019). <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R43166>.

⁹ Kivu Security Tracker, *The Landscape of Armed Groups in Eastern Congo. Missed opportunities, Protracted Insecurity and Self-Fulfilling Prophecies* (2021), <https://kivusecurity.nyc3.digitaloceanspaces.com/reports/39/2021%20KST%20report%20EN.pdf>.

United Nations (U.N.) Organization Stabilization Mission in DRC (MONUSCO), the world's largest peacekeeping mission.¹⁰ These groups remain a major source of threats and deadly attacks against civilian populations, including the most recent wave of violence in Ituri.¹¹

Protracted fragility and conflict have left populations vulnerable to cycle of poverty and insecurity. D.R. of Congo remains one of the poorest countries in the world. An estimated 73 percent of the population live below the poverty line of US\$1.90 a day.¹² The country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in 2020 was US\$556.8, which is one of the lowest in the world and across Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).¹³ Widespread poverty is reflected in poor socioeconomic and human development indicators. The DRC ranks 175 out of 189 on the U.N. Human Development Index (HDI), exhibiting one of the lowest scores in SSA (0.48).¹⁴ Its Human Capital Index (HCI) is 0.37, below the SSA average of 0.43. This implies that a child born in the DRC today can expect to be 37 percent as productive in adulthood as she could be if she enjoyed complete education and full health in her early years. Civilians continue to experience the consequences of various acts of violence, particularly abuses, sexual and gender-based violence (GBV). While sexual violence crimes and GBV affect several parts of the country, they remain particularly widespread in the provinces of Ituri, North Kivu, and South Kivu, with girls, boys, women, and men alike being systematically targeted.¹⁵

Lack of trust and social cohesion following decades of violence has exacerbated the impact of overlapping health crises. The DRC has endured 13 Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreaks since it was first observed in 1976. At the time when it was grappling with the worst measles

¹⁰ The largest in terms of its military component. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/monusco>

¹¹ Save the Children, "Surge in violence leaves thousands in DRC in desperate need of assistance," news release, November 25, 2021, 2021, <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/surge-violence-leaves-thousands-drc-desperate-need-assistance>.

¹² Data as of 2018. "The World Bank in DRC. Overview," <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/drc/overview#1>.

¹³ World Bank, "GDP per capita (current US\$) - Congo, Dem. Rep., Sub-Saharan Africa." <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=CD-ZG>.

¹⁴ UNDP, *Human Development Reports. Congo (Democratic Republic of the) (2020)*, <https://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/COD>.

¹⁵ "Democratic Republic of the Congo," Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, 2021, <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/countries/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>.

epidemics ever recorded in its history, between 2018 and 2020 the DRC also faced the world's largest Ebola outbreak, second only to the 2014-2017 EVD in West Africa by number of deaths.¹⁶ The two-year long outbreak, the longest in the country's history, spread mostly in active conflict zones in Ituri and North Kivu, with an estimated population of 3.7 million, and more than 30 active armed groups. Efforts led by humanitarian actors to contain the spread of the virus and provide primary response in Ebola hotspots were stymied by violent community resistance, which culminated in deadly attacks against first aid responders. Violent incidents were mainly driven by anti-foreign sentiments and distrust in local authorities, nurtured by years of conflict and social fragmentation.¹⁷ Although the epidemic was declared over in June 2020, North Kivu and other Northeastern provinces have continued to struggle with Ebola and other infectious diseases. North Kivu faced one additional Ebola outbreak between February and May 2021, followed by the latest, ongoing one, which began in October 2021. Meningitis outbreaks and related deaths have been on the rise in the province of Tshopo since cases were initially reported in September 2021.¹⁸ Also, outbreaks of cholera and bubonic plague in the East overlapped with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in September 2020, which has resulted in increased income loss and food insecurity especially in poorer households.¹⁹ In the Northwestern regions of North and South Ubangi, which have recently experienced a large inflow of refugees from CAR, new spikes of measles cases have been reported since the end of 2020.²⁰

¹⁶ [https://www.who.int/csr/don/26-June-2020-ebola-drc/en/#:~:text=From%201%20August%202018%20to,171\)%20were%20health%20care%20workers.](https://www.who.int/csr/don/26-June-2020-ebola-drc/en/#:~:text=From%201%20August%202018%20to,171)%20were%20health%20care%20workers.)

¹⁷ State and Peacebuilding Fund, *Leveraging the HDP Nexus during the Ebola Epidemic in the Democratic Republic of Congo*, World Bank (2020).

¹⁸ "Meningitis cases and deaths rise in DRC outbreak," Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy, University of Minnesota, 2021, <https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/09/news-scan-sep-21-2021>.

¹⁹ Yele Batan, Alexandra Jarotschkin, and Mervy Ever Viboudoulou Vilpoux, "Reversing the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Democratic Republic of Congo," *World Bank Blogs*, 2021, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/african/reversing-adverse-effects-covid-19-pandemic-democratic-republic-congo>.

²⁰ Medecins Sans Frontieres, "In DRC, measles is spreading and killing again in what seems to be a never-ending fight," news release, April 1, 2021, 2021, <https://www.msf.org/drc-msf-responds-worrying-increase-measles-cases>.

Conflicts, compounded by natural disasters, have resulted in massive population displacement and complex humanitarian emergencies. With an estimated 5.2 million people internally displaced in its national territory,²¹ the DRC is the first country in the African continent and among the world's top three countries, alongside Ukraine and Syria, with the largest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to conflict and violence.²² One million have been internally displaced in the East only in 2021.²³ Recently, internal displacement in the FCV-affected areas of Eastern DRC has also been driven by weather-related and geophysical events. Between 2019 and 2020, flash flooding triggered by heavy rains impacted 80,000 people in South Kivu, thus exacerbating humanitarian needs and the risk of cholera outbreaks among the local population, including 50,000 Burundian refugees.²⁴ In Goma, North Kivu's capital, 200,000 people, including 100,000 children, were impacted by the eruption of Mount Nyiragongo in May 2021.²⁵ The DRC is also home to 516,653 refugees from neighboring countries. While the bulk of refugees is concentrated in the East and Northeast of the country, a wave of violence in CAR in December 2020 caused tens of thousands of refugees to flock into the North and Northwestern provinces of North Ubangi, South Ubangi, and Bas-Uélé. Together, the three provinces host 30 percent of all CAR refugees.²⁶ The combined effects of forced displacement, insecurity, natural disasters, diseases outbreaks and epidemics have reflected in increased food insecurity and the urgent need of humanitarian assistance. As of 2021, the DRC is witnessing the largest food crisis in

²¹ UNHCR, *Democratic Republic of Congo* (2022), <https://reporting.unhcr.org/drc#toc-populations>.

²² According to OCHA, 7.1 million people are currently to be internally displaced in Ukraine, while the number of IDPs in Syria has reached 6.7 million, according to UNHCR: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/ukraine/document/idp-population-estimation-figures-5-april-2022> ; <https://reporting.unhcr.org/syria>; OCHA, *Internal Displacement*, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, <https://www.unocha.org/es/themes/internal-displacement>; UNHCR, *Democratic Republic of Congo*.

²³ UNHCR USA, *Millions need urgent humanitarian assistance in eastern DR Congo* (September 10, 2021 2021), <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/briefing/2021/9/613b19d84/millions-need-urgent-humanitarian-assistance-eastern-dr-congo.html>.

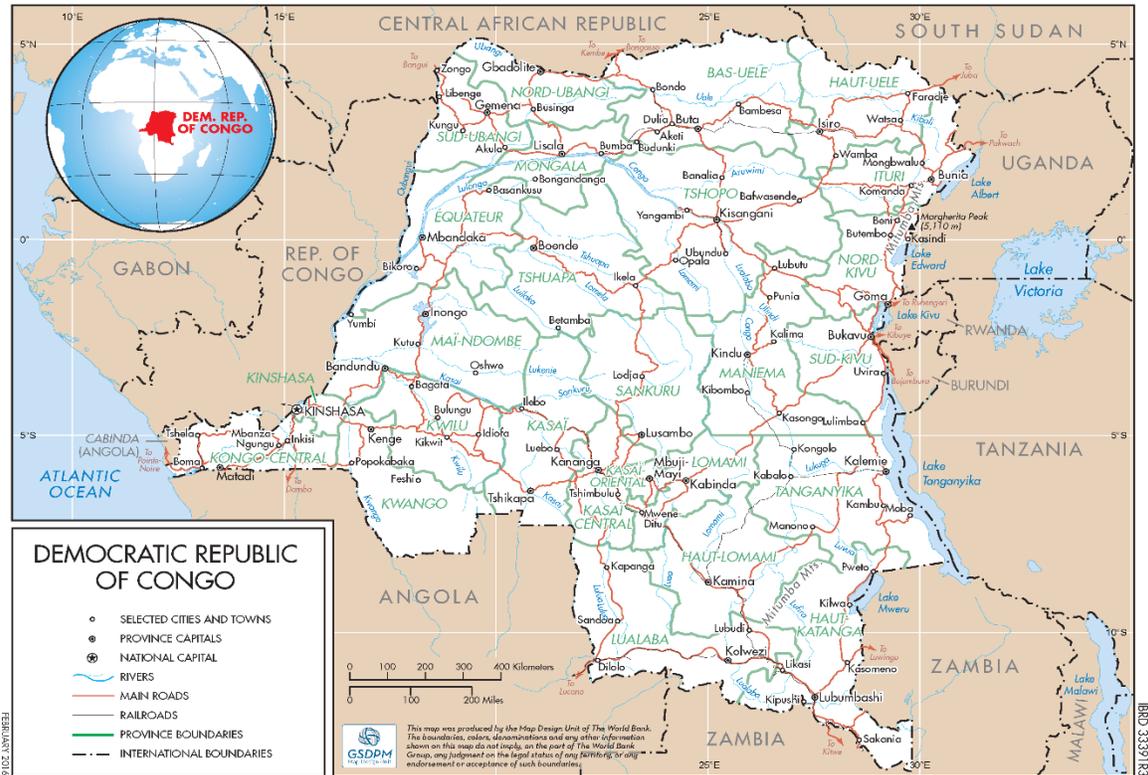
²⁴ UNHCR USA, "Massive floods in DRC's South Kivu impact 80,000 people, kill dozens," news release, April 21, 2020, 2020, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/briefing/2020/4/5e9ea96f4/massive-floods-drcs-south-kivu-impact-80000-people-kill-dozens.html>.

²⁵ United Nations, "Volcanic eruption in DR Congo: UNICEF working to restore water supply amid cholera threat," news release, June 7, 2021, 2021, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/06/1093542>.

²⁶ UNHCR, "Operational Data Portal," (2021). <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/car/location/486>.

the world, with an estimated 26.2 million facing acute food insecurity in the country and 19.6 million in need of humanitarian assistance.²⁷

Figure 2.1: Democratic Republic of Congo



²⁷ OCHA, "About OCHA DRC," news release, <https://www.unocha.org/democratic-republic-congo-drc/about-ocha-drc>.

III. Social Protection in the DRC: From post-conflict stabilization to human development

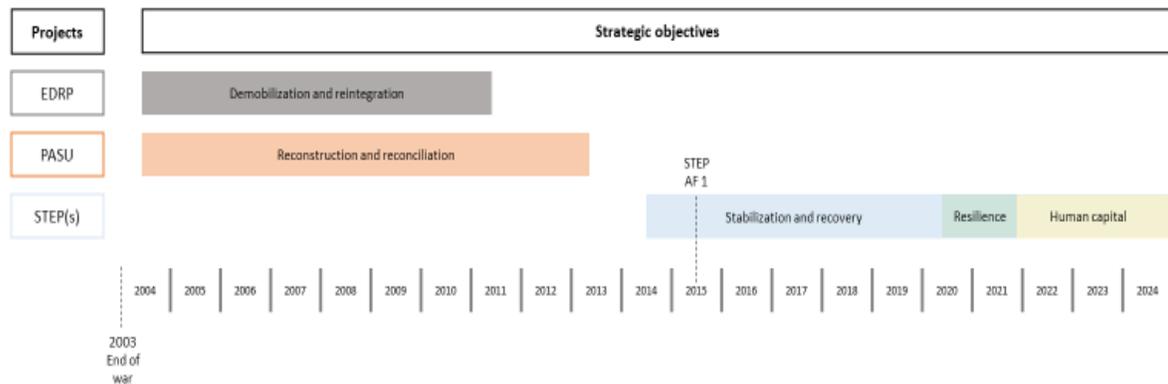
Since the end of Africa's World War in 2003, the World Bank has deployed three major social protection operations in the DRC, corresponding to different phases of engagement (Figure 2). In the early stages of reengagement, immediately following the end of conflict, the focus of the World Bank was on supporting the GoDRC to meet the urgent needs of demilitarization, reinsertion, and reintegration of ex-combatants, and socio-economic reconstruction. Within the framework of the 2001 Transition Support Strategy,²⁸ in 2014 the Bank launched two complementary operations: the DRC Emergency Demobilization and Reintegration Project (EDRP) and the Emergency Social Protection Project (*Project d'Action Sociale d'Urgence*, PASU). EDRP aimed to facilitate the disarmament and demobilization of ex-combatants and their social and economic reintegration into civilian life.²⁹ From 2004 to 2011, EDRP helped demobilize and reintegrate nearly 150,000 Congolese ex-combatants through provision of cash payments in support of a wide range of needs, such as rent, medical care, food, children's education, and basic household items. In parallel, the World Bank carried out reconciliation efforts by deploying PASU. PASU focused on rebuilding social cohesion among combatants-receiving communities by providing direct support to the poor and improving their access to social and economic services. PASU supported a Social Fund mechanism for Community-Driven Development (CDD) activities. These included the rehabilitation and creation of socio-economic infrastructures in poor communities delivered

²⁸ The Transition Support Strategy (TSS) was launched in July 2001 and was followed by the DRC Government's approval of the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IPRDP) in March 2002. The TSS provided a framework for the WBG's involvement in post-conflict reconstruction and recovery in the DRC and supported the country's DDR efforts in line with the IPRSP. The objectives pursued by the TSS included: support to meet basic and urgent needs, rebuilding effective public institutions and policies, revitalizing the economy, and strengthening the Government's implementation capacity.

²⁹ The EDRP was part of a wider corporate commitment to Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) in the Great Lakes region. Accordingly, EDRP activities received support from an IDA grant of approximately US\$100 million and from a US\$100 million Trust Fund grant made available through the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP). Established in 2002, the MDRP was the largest DDR program in Bank history. It provided US\$450 million in donor and IDA financing to assist more than 300,000 ex-combatants, including child soldiers and children affected by conflict, in the region. EDRP received an additional financing (AF) of US\$50 million to complete the activities under the parent project.

through target community sub-projects and a pilot of income-generating activities based on labor-intensive public works (LIPWs).³⁰

Figure 3.1: World Bank’s Engagement in the DRC: Phases, Strategic Objectives, and Projects



PASU was in existence for almost a decade, and the encouraging results achieved during this time, combined with the gradual de-escalation of conflict in Eastern DRC, lay the basis for the launch of STEP in 2014. The enabling conditions for the launch of STEP began in 2013 with the defeat of one of the most prominent rebel groups, known as March 23 Movement (M23), by the Congolese Armed Forces (*Forces Armées de la République du Congo, FARDC*) and MONUSCO. In this improved but highly insecure strategic context, STEP could rapidly deploy thanks to the existing structures and capacity that the Social Fund, supported by PASU, had established throughout its nine-year long operational life. In line with the Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) 2013-2016,³¹ STEP marked a new phase in the World Bank’s

³⁰ Income-generating activities specifically focused on the mineral-rich Katanga province to respond to the high unemployment caused from the collapse of the mining sector. Other activities involved provision of scholarships to increase enrollment in universities and a literacy program, including the provision of community libraries and training in library management. Initially approved with a US\$60 million International Development Assistance (IDA) grant, PASU benefitted from one AF in 2010, which brought the total project budget to US\$101.8 million by 2013.

³¹ The CAS set out to support the country’s “transition out of fragility,” with a focus on addressing the developmental deficits that help perpetuate violence and conflict in the Eastern provinces.” CAS’ fourth pillar centered on peacebuilding and stabilization, with the goal of (a) improving community resilience through the

engagement in D.R. of Congo, entailing a shift from post-conflict reconstruction to post-conflict stabilization, with the ultimate goal of supporting the country's transition out of fragility and towards recovery.

STEP has consistently served as the main instrument for social protection responses in the DRC and, given its successful performance, it has undergone three successive iterations since its launch. Approved with an initial budget of US\$79.1 million, STEP Parent Project (PP) was originally planned to be completed by 2018. In view of the satisfactory results achieved over the years and the need for the World Bank to refocus its engagement at different stages due to the changing nature and scope of challenges and needs, STEP's operational lifetime has been extended until February 2024 through three additional financing (AF), respectively in 2015, 2020, and 2021. One commonality shared by all three AFs has been the continuity with the original project development objectives (PDOs), namely, *to improve access to livelihoods and socio-economic infrastructure in vulnerable communities in the eastern provinces of the DRC*. While the PDOs have largely remained the same, albeit with slight variations, the additional funds have varied in terms of the strategic objectives sought, the amount and sources of funds, and the length and structure of its engagement. These elements are briefly described below.

First Additional Financing: STEP 1

The first AF to STEP was approved in 2015 in response to the increased scale and scope of forced displacement, fueled by reignited fighting between FARDC and rebel groups as well as continuing conflict and instability in neighboring countries, most notably Burundi. The fluid security situation resulted in multiple displacements, followed by spontaneous returns and re-displacement of both IDPs and refugees in DRC. The AF leveraged a combination of regional and national allocation from the International

expansion of socioeconomic opportunities and strengthening local conflict management capacities. STEP constituted part of a three-track approach under CAS' objective (b).

Development Association (IDA) funds for additional US\$50 million to the project, while extending its closing date to June 2020. Moreover, given its unchanged strategic objectives to ***promote stabilization efforts*** in the DRC – albeit with an added focus on forcibly displaced people and their hosts – STEP 1 was approved as part of the World Bank’s wider response to the challenge of forced displacement in the Great Lakes region.³² STEP 1 did not result in substantive changes in the PP. It rather entailed a sheer scale up of existing activities to enhance its development impact, with the additional funds earmarked to redouble efforts to assist forced displacement-affected individuals and households.

Second Additional Financing: STEP 2

Of all three AFs, the second AF in 2020 involved the largest changes in the original project in terms of the amount of funds earmarked as well as the nature, scope, and principles of social protection engagement in D.R. of Congo. STEP 2 was launched at a time when the country was grappling with a combination of overlapping crises, driven by the outbreak of the Ebola epidemic, protracted FCV, forced displacement, and COVID-19. The evolved context underscored the simultaneous needs of scaling up the activities financed under the PP while restructuring some of its basic features to promote a ***shift away from a focus on post-conflict stabilization and towards building resilience to shocks***. To bring about such change, STEP 2 benefitted from additional US\$445 million and an extension of its lifetime to 2024. The financing relied on a more complex structure than in the first AF. STEP 2 drew on a rapid response mechanism created under IDA18, including the Crisis Response Window (CRW)³³ and

³² The first AF was approved as a component of the Bank’s Great Lakes Region (GLR) Resilience and Cohesion Displaced Persons and Boarded Community Program rather than a separate project. Launched in 2013, the GLR Program was a US\$1 billion commitment to the Great Lakes region to reduce poverty among populations affected by forced displacement and improve their integration and socio-economic development prospects. The complementarity between STEP’s and GLR Program’s objective as well as STEP’s proven success in the DRC provided a cost-effective basis for approving STEP as part of the Program.

³³ Conditions for eligibility for CRW can be found at: <https://ida.worldbank.org/en/financing/crisis-financing/crisis-response->

the Regional Sub-Window for Refugees and Host Communities (RSW³⁴) for a total of US\$320 million, in addition to a national IDA performance-based allocation (PBA) of US\$125 million.

Third Additional Financing: STEP 3

The third AF was approved in July 2021 and STEP 3 began effectiveness in the first quarter of 2022. . Much like the first AF, the third extra funding has entailed a direct scale up of STEP. It has not modified the expected closing date, which is currently planned for February 2024. However, STEP 3 has expanded and complemented STEP 2's strategic objectives of building resilience by adding an emphasis on ***protecting human capital*** specifically among communities that host a large number of refugees, and which are also impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, struggle to recover from the 2018-2020 Ebola crisis, and/or face urgent need to rebuild physical and human capital after conflict. The third AF of US\$250 million has drawn 45 percent of the total financing from the IDA19 Window for Host Communities and Refugees (WHR), thus making STEP 3 the first IDA19 WHR-financed operation in the DRC.

Over the course of this evolution, STEP has developed a set of adaptations to ensure continuous engagement and greater development impact. Such adaptations have enabled STEP to build a successful delivery model to strengthen resilience in response to multiple shocks and protracted FCV in the DRC. As such, the study of STEP can offer valuable insights into how social protection projects can be adapted and which strategies and approaches have proved successful. The next chapter is dedicated to this task.

[window#:~:text=The%20Crisis%20Response%20Window%20\(CRW,crises%2C%20namely%20disease%20outbreaks%20and](#)

³⁴ Conditions for eligibility for WHR can be found at: <https://ida.worldbank.org/en/replenishments/ida19-replenishment/windows-host-communities-refugees>

IV. Adapting STEP to FCV and insecurity

This chapter identifies the key features of the original STEP project to show how they have evolved and adapted in response to the changing operational context in the DRC. The chapter is divided in four sections, corresponding to the various stages of the project cycle: 4.1. Project Design, 4.2. Delivery Chain, 4.3. Implementation & Monitoring and Partnerships, and 4.4. World Bank's Supervision. Each section is further divided into context-specific subsections as follows:

a. Adaptations to Project Design

- i. Geographic Scope
- ii. Approach
- iii. Activities
- iv. Contingent Financing
- v. Project Operational Costs

b. Adaptations to Delivery Chain

- i.* Identification and Selection of Target Areas
- ii.* Coverage, Benefits, and Payment Systems
- iii.* Safeguards and GRM

c. Adaptations to Implementation & Monitoring and Partnerships

- i.* Implementation and Monitoring Arrangements
- ii.* Partnerships

d. Adaptations to World Bank's Supervision

Under each section, the analysis of adaptations is arranged in chronological order, from STEP to STEP 3. A Summary Table is presented at the beginning of each section to provide a visual map to help readers locate key project features and distinguish elements of continuity from adaptive changes in the evolution from STEP to STEP 3. In the tables, the project features that have been preserved in their original design are marked in black, whereas innovations

or adaptations to those features are highlighted in **blue and bold**. A consolidated table with all adaptations grouped by the four sections is offered in Annex 1.

4.1. Adaptations to Project Design

Table 4.1: Summary of Key Adaptation to Project Design

	STEP (closed)	STEP 1 (closed)	STEP 2 (ongoing)	STEP 3 (ongoing)
GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE	East (North Kivu, South Kivu, Orientale)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> East (North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, Bas-Uélé, Haut-Uélé) Northeast (Tshopo) Southeast (Tanganyika) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> East (North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri) Center (Kasai Central) Northwest (North Ubangi) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> East (North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri) Center (Kasai Central) Northwest (North Ubangi, South Ubangi)
APPROACH	CDD+		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CDD Shock-responsive, targeted safety nets, System-building 	
ACTIVITIES	Component 1			
	Community sub-projects		Community sub-projects with positive list	
	Component 2			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public works (LIPWs) in urban & rural areas Agricultural Value Chains (AVCs) in rural areas Accompanying measures: (i) voluntary saving program, (ii) training on non-cognitive life learning skills, (iii) training in basic business 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LIPWs only in urban areas No longer AVCs; unconditional cash transfers (UCTs) only in rural areas New package of accompanying measures (AM) on human capital & productive inclusion 	
	Component 3			
Conflict-sensitive capacity building		Establishment of building blocks of SP system; partnership agreements across SP sector (CNR, FSRDC, MINAS)		As in STEP 2 + partnership agreements across HD sectors* for refugees' integration
CONTINGENT FINANCING	-		Contingency Emergency Response Component (CERC)	

PROJECT OPERATIONAL COSTS	Initially envisaged above 20% of total budget but decreasing over time. All operational costs, i.e., costs of goods and services and project management costs (PIE) included under Comp. 3	Operational costs capped at 10% of total budget. Creation of Comp 4 for project management costs
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*HD= Human Development sectors, including social protection, health, and education

4.1.1. Geographic Scope

Given its stabilization objectives, STEP departed from traditional social protection approaches to determine the geographic areas of intervention in the DRC. Typically, the poorest and most underserved areas are the entry points for social protection interventions in contexts not characterized by state fragility and violent conflict. In conflict-affected countries, the areas most affected by poverty are likely to be those with the highest security risks (“orange” to “red” scenarios, Figure 1). This scenario reflected the actual operating environment where STEP was first deployed, and which encompassed the Eastern DRC provinces, i.e., North Kivu, South Kivu, and Orientale. Given STEP’s stated objective of promoting stability and social cohesion, the Eastern provinces appeared as a natural entry point. Due to their FCV nature, the provinces combined the greatest developmental needs with elevated levels of insecurity. Continuous conflict in these provinces had caused massive infrastructural deficits, high unemployment, and limited or no access to basic services, as well as pervasive distrust both towards state institutions and members of other groups.³⁵

With the first AF, STEP began to expand into new eastern provinces of the DRC. At this time, the project’s expansion essentially followed forced population movements.³⁶ Coverage was extended to the new provinces of Tanganyika in the southeast and Tshopo in the northeast of the country.³⁷ While relatively more stable than Ituri and the Kivus, the two new provinces had witnessed an increase in the number of IDPs, refugees, and returnees due to conflicts.

³⁵ Minutes from “Emerging Lessons from Social Protection and Labor Projects in Support of IDPs, Refugees, and Returnees. The Eastern Recovery Project in DRC,” SPL Seminar Series, World Bank (2016).

³⁶ Ibidem.

³⁷ In 2015, the province of Orientale was dissolved into four smaller provinces: Ituri, Tshopo, Haut-Uélé, and Bas-Uélé.

By the end of 2018, STEP 1 operated in all the seven provinces located in the belt from the North to Southeast of the DRC, namely Bas-Uélé, Haut-Uélé, Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu, Tanganyika, and Tshopo.

STEP 2's changed focus on tackling a broad range of overlapping shocks pushed project activities beyond the East for the first time. The additional resources made available in 2020 as part of the second AF has enabled STEP to deploy to the provinces of Kasai Central in the south and of North Ubangi in the northwest. At the same time, project activities were gradually phased out from Tanganyika and Tshopo, in an attempt to redistribute increased efforts more efficiently, concentrating on areas most in need, and achieve greater development impact. Overall, STEP 2 has been active in five provinces across the country. These provinces share high vulnerability to shocks and a common need for urgent developmental responses. They have been among the areas most affected by a combination of Ebola and FCV-related challenges, such as acute poverty, infrastructural deficits, forced displacement, and insecurity, in addition to the impact of COVID-19.

STEP 3 has increased the project's presence in the northwestern part of the DRC by expanding into one additional province, i.e., South Ubangi. North and South Ubangi present a relatively safer security environment, because less affected by conflict than the northeastern provinces. Yet, they have recently experienced heightened pressure from new and large refugee inflows from CAR, pushing the number of total CAR refugees in North and South Ubangi to 114,452 and 46,245 people, respectively.³⁸ Mass displacement combined with the impacts of COVID-19 and a new measles outbreak.

4.1.2. Approach

Consistent with its effort to promote social cohesion in post-conflict Eastern DRC, STEP adopted a Community-Driven Development (CDD) approach. At the time of STEP preparation, several factors suggested the suitability of a CDD approach to the context of

³⁸ <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/car/location/486>

Eastern DRC. These factors can be grouped in four broad categories: (1) principles, (2) experience, (3) economies of scale, and (4) knowledge-based evidence. Each of these is briefly discussed below.

Principles. There was an alignment between the principles of the CDD approach and the overall objectives pursued by STEP. The approach has long been known as a relevant response for post-conflict reconstruction and development in FCV countries due to its focus on promoting community participation, inclusion, and good governance at the local level, enhancing socio-economic recovery, and fostering trust, with the latter being a much-needed asset in poor communities striving to emerge out of conflict and violence. Also, the participatory approach had the added benefit of promoting a cost-effective delivery of basic services according to the priority needs of the beneficiary communities. Not least, CDD provided an entry point for STEP to address the root causes of conflict, some of which were believed to originate at the local level and relate to competing land tenure regimens and claims.

Experience. Given the need to deliver quickly and minimize the risk of failure, STEP refrained from pursuing something new and untested. In fact, it leveraged the experience and comparative advantage that the World Bank had achieved in financing and scaling up large CDD and livelihood support programs in fragile and conflict-affected contexts since the 1990s and, increasingly so, the early 2000s. Particularly, the Bank's experience in the DRC through PASU suggested that the CDD approach proved quite effective in improving community access to basic infrastructures and services. Over nine years, PASU had built or rehabilitated more than 1,000 community infrastructures across the DRC's 11 provinces.

Economies of scale. Infrastructure and service delivery under PASU was primarily undertaken by the Social Fund of DRC (*Fond Social de la RDC*, FSRDC). Created only two years before PASU's deployment, FSRDC had served as its only project implementation entity (PIE). As a result, FSRDC had developed knowledge and sound technical expertise in implementing CDD programs by the time STEP was launched. The choice of CDD-based programs provided

STEP with an opportunity to leverage the structures and capacity built by PASU as well as FSRDC's cumulated experience and logistical set-up. This represented a considerable cost-savings option as compared to other government agencies, which lacked know-how and field experience, or to establishing a new PIE altogether. Moreover, technical audits of FSRDC's outputs under PASU had indicated that, quality being equal, comparable infrastructure built by other actors was more expensive.³⁹

Knowledge-based evidence. Lastly, the adoption of a CDD approach was guided by the evidence gathered by recent studies pointing to the ability of CDD-based programs to deliver better access to basic social services and quality infrastructure in a cost-effective manner and in ways that mustered broad community support in fragile and post-conflict countries.⁴⁰

The exclusive reliance of STEP on CDD, after the approach's initial success, proved increasingly problematic, as new crises hit harder and provided impetus to recognizing existing gaps in ensuring the long-term impacts and sustainability of the interventions. The CDD approach enabled STEP to address the most immediate needs of the beneficiary communities by rebuilding community infrastructure, also in remote areas, based on the exigencies of the post-conflict environment and the difficult transition to peace. However, a sole focus on reconstruction and delivery of basic services limited the effectiveness of the response to the challenge of strengthening resilience to covariate shocks and undermined the potential for meaningful recovery through investments in country systems and policies. The demand for a new approach became particularly pressing as the GoDRC sought to respond to the protracted presence of refugees. Government response has involved not their containment in refugee camps but their integration and that of their host communities into national systems, in particular health, social protection, and education.

³⁹ For example, standard elementary school blocks built by FSRDC were over 20 percent cheaper than the next cheapest.

⁴⁰ Patrick Barron, *CDD in Post-Conflict and Conflict-Affected Areas: Experiences from East Asia*, World Development Report 2011. Background Paper, (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2010); Susan Wong, *What Have Been the Impacts of World Bank Community-Driven Development Programs? CDD Impact Evaluation Review and Operational and Research Implications* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2012).

To increase development effectiveness, STEP 2 has laid the foundations for a more targeted and system-oriented approach, centered on boosting the role of safety nets to respond to current and future shocks and on establishing the foundation of a social protection system.

STEP 2 has partly retained the CDD approach but has strongly supplemented it with a structured safety net approach aimed at helping the most vulnerable households build resilience to various shocks and crises, beyond conflict and the short term. STEP 2 has also made significant efforts to supporting a medium-term policy reform agenda to lay the basis for a social protection system in the DRC. While complementing the safety net approach introduced by STEP 2, STEP 3 has pushed it one step further by promoting a more holistic and integrated approach between the social protection, education, and health sectors to protect the human capital of both refugees and host communities.

4.1.3. Activities

Since its launch, STEP has consisted of three core components: (1) *Support to Community Resilience*; (2) *Livelihood and Employment Generation*; and (3) *Capacity Building*. The components have kept their names virtually unchanged over the course of successive AFs. However, their respective design, scope, and budget have undergone significant modifications. The reasons for combining continuity in the form with change in the substance of the three components can be explained by the need to ensure a smooth transition under time-sensitive circumstances from one phase of the project to another and to retain existing capabilities while pursuing the same PDOs. Each of these components and their adaptations are described in detail in the following sections.

Component 1: Support to community resilience

This component has financed the maintenance, rehabilitation, and/or construction of priority socio-economic infrastructure in select communities. It has arguably been a truer expression of the CDD approach than any other component in STEP. Component 1 has

consisted of multiple, small sub-projects identified by the participating communities themselves through a bottom-up, participatory process, with the aim of minimizing tensions, improving social cohesion, increasing local decision-making and, therefore, ownership. To harness capacity already available, STEP modeled the design of the community sub-projects upon prior experience of PASU. Particularly, the processes for the preparation and identification of sub-projects relied on Local Executing Agencies (*Agences Locales pour l'Emploi*, ALE), which were pre-qualified, competitively hired, and trained by FSRDC. ALEs served as intermediary agencies, which helped link construction firms, also competitively recruited by FSRDC, to communities to help them implement their sub-projects.⁴¹ Construction firms were recruited locally to the fullest extent possible to facilitate logistics. Moreover, STEP used PASU's established practice to develop accurate estimates of the nature and spending patterns of the sub-project proposals earlier in the project cycle, thus ensuring rapid program deployment upon project effectiveness. Sub-projects focused on basic sectors, including education, health, water and sanitation, trade, and transport (small bridges). In addition to community sub-projects, Component 1 has supported local governance by establishing and/or strengthening Local Development Committees (*Comités Locaux de Développement*, CLDs).

STEP adopted a conflict-sensitive approach by embedding mediation and conflict prevention in the design and implementation of CDD to strengthen community relations.

Recognition of the importance of addressing security risks in a post-conflict context while responding to the urgent need of improving basic infrastructures encouraged STEP to integrate conflict prevention and management mechanisms in the design of the component. To this end, FSRDC contracted specialized NGOs with a deep knowledge of the local context

⁴¹ The process started with a community sensitization campaign conducted by FSRDC to share information about the project, followed by a pre-qualification and training of local NGOs and contractors by FSRDC. Communities would then identify an NGO to help them prioritize their needs and develop a sub-project proposal, which would be submitted for funding to FSRDC. FSRDC shortlisted proposals that were eligible for funding according to specific criteria and conducted field visits to confirm their needs. Eligible proposals were submitted to a Provincial Consultative Committee (*Comité Consultatif Provincial*, CCP) for approval. CCPs included representatives from different ministries and civil society. In the end, funds for approved sub-projects were provided to the communities.

and expertise in conflict prevention and management to train key local stakeholders on these themes. Conflict prevention activities were undertaken in select areas, where communities appeared to be in a state of latent conflict and trigger events could lead to a rapid escalation of hostilities and violence. Awareness of conflict dynamics and understanding of the context of the conflict hinged on the principle of “Do No Harm” and the recognition that operations might affect conflict dynamics in inadvertent and unintended ways, exacerbating tensions between communities. As a result, the emphasis was placed on mitigating those risks through context analysis, sensitization, and training on strategies and modalities for a peaceful resolution of conflict. Such arrangements for local capacity building in conflict prevention and management were strengthened through targeted activities in areas recently liberated from rebel control, or where inter-ethnic tensions were significant, and where existing conflicts might impact the delivery of sub-projects. Targeted activities included in-depth conflict analysis and participatory conflict transformation plans.

Component 1 has continued to support community sub-projects based on their positive impact on the stock and quality of the infrastructure built. CDD activities have proved to be an adequate response to the infrastructure deficit in target vulnerable communities. Annual technical audits by an external engineering firm confirmed the quality and quantity of the physical infrastructure built through STEP in a context of fragility.

At the same time, contextual challenges prompted an effort to simplify and streamline the design and procedures. By the time STEP 2 was launched, out of 500 sub-projects planned to be implemented, only 367 has been completed, 174 of which in communities affected by forced displacement, while 52 were ongoing. This shortcoming was partly due to delays related to project management and procurement, mostly driven by disruptions to the procurement chain and limited access to sites as a result of conflict and insecurity. Partly, however, failure to achieve the 500-sub-project target was linked to insufficient readiness for agile and adaptive program delivery, quality standards, cost-effectiveness, and economies of scale. As a result, STEP 2 has introduced two modifications to program design. First, STEP 2 established a centralized management process to improve effectiveness and efficiency.

Accordingly, all functions and activities, including procurement, have shifted from the ALEs, which have been removed, to the control and management by FSRDC. Centralization has resulted in a more cost- and time-effective management by allowing FSRDC to exert greater leverage during the process and to ensure that procurement is carried out as planned. Second, STEP 2 has introduced a positive list of priority sub-projects to increase efficiency and help reap economies of scale. The positive list includes a limited number of priority sectors but for which community demand has been the highest.⁴² These priority sectors include education (primary schools, in particular), health, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH).

The original social cohesion objectives pursued by CDD have been abandoned. After six years of implementation, there was no basis for evaluation to gauge the impact of CDD on social cohesion. Particularly, no impact evaluation was undertaken in the context of STEP. This gap in empirical evidence from the project was accompanied by results from experimental studies that found no direct evidence of the impact of CDD on social cohesion and governance, in addition to other dimensions (i.e., service provision, health, education, economic welfare, and women’s empowerment).⁴³ As a result, while STEP 2 has maintained CDD activities to continue bridging infrastructural gaps, it has delinked them from social cohesion objectives.⁴⁴ Moreover, conflict prevention activities at the local level have been largely discontinued. STEP and STEP 1’s efforts to promote local conflict prevention resulted in the creation (or strengthening, when pre-existing the project) of 194 CLDs. A partnership agreement was established between each CLD and FSRDC, which linked the provision of soft-capacity building to CLDs with delivery of specific benefits and services to their communities.

⁴² A positive list refers to a list of pre-determined classes of community sub-projects, which are selected on the basis of evidence that their activities carry strong and systematic additionality to the project and target beneficiaries. The use of positive lists is a methodological approach that standardizes the determination of project activities based on their proven relevance and effectiveness, with the objective of streamlining their development and delivery.

⁴³ Eric Mvukiyehe and Peter van der Windt, *Assessing the Longer Term Impact of Community-Driven Development Programs: Evidence from a Field Experiment in the Democratic Republic of Congo*, Policy Research Working Paper No. 9140, (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2020). For further discussion see Marcus Holmlund and Vijayendra Rao, "Where and When is Community-Driven Development (CDD) Effective?," *World Bank Blogs*, 2021.

⁴⁴ This has implied a revision of the project results framework, where “improvement in social cohesion among beneficiaries of community sub-projects” has been removed as an intermediate result under STEP 2.

Sensitization and training activities led to the adoption of 369 conflict resolution plans by beneficiary communities. However, as in the case of CDD, no solid evidence was produced to suggest that, in the DRC context, the local capacity building and sensitization activities had had a positive impact on improving social cohesion. Therefore, while continuing to build the capacity of CLDs to provide services to their communities, STEP 2 has progressively abandoned conflict prevention training, including the use of conflict resolution plans.

Component 2: Livelihood and employment generation

This component was designed to primarily provide temporary employment opportunities and income support to target beneficiaries in select urban and rural areas of Eastern DRC.

The original architecture included two sub-components, namely (1) Labor-Intensive Public Works (LIPWs) and (2) Agricultural Value Chains (AVCs), in addition to a number of accompanying measures (AMs). LIPWs and AVCs complemented each other and were implemented jointly only in specific areas, i.e., select strategic corridors connecting rural centers, to provide sustainable livelihood options and create synergies between the two activities for greater impact. The paragraphs below present the major characteristics of the two sub-components and distill the adaptations in their design and implementation from STEP to STEP 3.

Sub-component 2.1: Labor-Intensive Public Works

LIPWs primarily focused on road construction, maintenance, and rehabilitation in both urban centers and rural strategic corridors. This program aimed to contribute to the simultaneous goals of area stabilization and poverty alleviation by addressing the staggering unemployment rates, while rebuilding community assets, in Eastern DRC. Considering the temporary nature of LIPW employment, STEP offered a number of AMs to increase participants' employability at the end of the program. The measures included (i) a voluntary saving program, to help participants set aside part of their wages as a start-up capital for post-

LIPW individual activities; and (ii) a training program, which provided transferrable, life skills, to promote good work and social habits; (iii) training in basic business and technical skills. in areas where the local job market offered employment opportunities.

In view of the logistical challenges to deliver AMs in rural communities, STEP introduced flexible and differentiated arrangements between rural and urban areas. For beneficiaries of urban LIPWs, training sessions were mandatory. The sessions were held once a week and were delivered by NGOs. Participants received a payment equivalent to one LIPW workday for each session attended.⁴⁵ Conversely, the sessions for beneficiaries of rural LIPWs were optional and tied to demand. This arrangement considered the difficulty of organizing training sessions in poorly connected and underserved rural areas as well as their feasibility, given the continuous workload imposed on farmers by the agricultural calendar.

Several reasons contributed to the decision by STEP to implement LIPWs in Eastern D.R. of Congo. The most significant was arguably a shared belief in the strategic value of the program for a post-conflict peacebuilding and development strategy. During preparation, a strong consensus emerged between local authorities and development partners on the importance of road accessibility and rehabilitation as a crucial and urgent factor to be prioritized in support of stabilization and recovery in the East. The operating assumption was that, by providing livelihood opportunities and income support, particularly to youth in rural communities that had traditionally served as the recruiting pool for the many armed groups that had been active in those provinces, the program would help decrease the attractiveness for young men of joining those groups. Given the need to ensure quick delivery of short-term economic returns and public goods, STEP focused on linking cash support to infrastructure development through LIPWs. A second reason was linked to the effectiveness that a number of LIPW programs, previously supported by other donors, had shown in addressing high unemployment rates and the dismal state of infrastructure in the East. Those programs had resulted in short-term employment creation and improved public goods. Finally, STEP's

⁴⁵ See chapter on "Adaptations to Delivery Chain."

selection of LIPWs was guided by the opportunity to benefit from an existing reasonably good supply of local contractors, familiar with labor-intensive techniques, and from FSRDC's expertise in managing LIPW programs.

Reports on LIPW implementation showed positive results but also offered a basis for STEP 2 to limit the geographic coverage of the program to urban areas. Challenges related to preparatory work in a low-capacity setting delayed the start of program implementation to 2016. Yet, over the following four years, STEP 1 benefitted almost 16,000 individuals, with over 1.3 million days of waged labor for vulnerable people created. Approximately 800 km of feeder roads had been rehabilitated, including about 500 road structures (e.g., gutters and bridges). However, the remoteness of the rural areas combined with lack of facilities and logistical challenges of geographic location to raise costs and make LIPWs increasingly hard to implement. Moreover, different challenges facing urban and rural populations created different needs and therefore required different responses. Particularly, the opportunity for rural communities to participate in the program was limited, due to their inability to turn away from agricultural activities. In urban areas, instead, unemployment proved unyielding and affected particularly the youth. As a result, STEP 2 continued to implement LIPWs but only in urban areas, to provide temporary jobs while improving access to social infrastructures.

Moreover, STEP 2 has greatly simplified the design and standardized the component parts of the LIPW program by introducing a “unique LIPW contract.” Under the unique LIPW contract, each urban center selected for LIPW implementation lists a number of construction sites (*chantiers*). Each *chantier* is organized according to the same principles. Specifically, each site includes 250 beneficiaries, 10 team managers (*Chef d'équipe*, CE), one focal point for environmental control (*Point Focal Environnementaliste*, PFE), one field monitoring officer (*Agent de Suivi de Terrain*, AST) and one site manager (*Chef de Chantier*, CC), in addition to one surveillance officer and one storekeeper. Personal protective equipment and tools have also been standardized according to the type of work performed. The CEs, PFEs, ASTs, and CCs, known as *encadreurs*, are consultants recruited and trained by FSRDC and support the

process of identification of LIPW activities as well as the recruitment of beneficiaries. The standardization and harmonization of LIPW work sites have greatly facilitated procurement coordination and organization by allowing to determine in advance the nature and quantity of equipment and tools to be purchased, how many workers need to be recruited, the amount of total compensation but also establishes a clear process for the recruitment timeline, terms of reference (ToR), and steps.

Sub-component 2.2: From Agricultural Value Chains to Cash Transfers

The Agricultural Value Chains (AVCs) sub-component was designed to increase the income and food security of rural households. Decades of violence in Eastern DRC had caused a sharp decline of agricultural production. Many farmers had been displaced by recurring conflicts, while those who had maintained access to land engaged in subsistence agriculture, due to lack of access to markets, inputs, and technical assistance. Against this backdrop, this sub-component provided the inputs and technical assistance needed to support all the processes involved in the agricultural chain. To connect farmers to markets, AVCs were implemented along the same strategic corridors targeted for the rural roads to be rehabilitated by the rural LIPWs. The targeted provinces had a significant agricultural potential, combined with high density of population at risk.

As a major adaptation to the core components of the original project, STEP 2 discontinued and replaced the AVCs with an unconditional cash transfer (UCT) program. The decision to terminate AVCs was made not because of the program's failure. In fact, nearly 45,000 rural households had been assisted with in-kind transfers, including seeds and tools, and technical assistance, by 2020. Rather, the provision of UCTs to rural communities has stemmed from the need to address the persistent challenges of chronic poverty and food insecurity. By ensuring predictable and direct income support over the medium- to long-term, cash transfers have been introduced to complement one-off or short-term humanitarian assistance, thus helping the poorest and most vulnerable households mitigate the impact of shocks. In addition to the LIPWs, the integration of a cash transfers program into STEP's

toolbox has been a key element in its adaptive change towards a comprehensive social safety net. This evolution has also enabled STEP to pave the way for better alignment with the cash-based interventions carried out by most agencies and donors in the DRC, including Merci Corps, the World Food Programme (WFP), and the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

A second key element driving STEP’s transition to a structured safety net program has been the design of a comprehensive package of AMs. STEP 2 has introduced a package of AMs to maximize the impact of social transfers, i.e., LIPWs and UCTs. The accompanying measures have focused on promoting productive inclusion and human capital and have been targeted to beneficiaries of both programs. At the same time, the package provides different benefits to LIPW beneficiaries than to UCT beneficiaries. LIPW beneficiaries in urban areas benefitted from a US\$100 investment grant, as the equivalent of the voluntary saving program under STEP.⁴⁶ The grant has coupled with training in income-generating activities, financial management, and entrepreneurship. The accompanying measures for UCT beneficiaries, currently under development, will be similar to the human capital and productive investment activities under the LIPWs, while aiming to increase the beneficiaries’ agricultural productivity.

Component 3: Capacity building

This component focused on building the capacity of local and national authorities, FSRDC, and implementing partners, and integrated conflict sensitivity into the training of the stakeholders involved in STEP’s implementation. STEP delivered capacity building through trainings on both technical themes, particularly LIPWs and AVCs, and cross-cutting themes, including conflict and gender sensitivity. STEP 1 scaled up activities by providing enhanced training on conflict management to local authorities, in particular those working in the so-called “triangle of death” in Northern Katanga. It also strengthened the capacity of the

⁴⁶ The inclusion of the investment grant has been encouraged by early results from the Impact Evaluation (IE) study on STEP’s LIPWs in urban areas. The study has indicated that beneficiaries were able to smooth consumption, while their resilience to future shocks was strengthened. The strongest effect was associated with the package including most benefits, i.e., cash, training, and savings. These findings have been therefore reflected in the design of STEP 2.

government entities in charge of assisting the forcibly displaced, specifically the National Refugee Commission (*Commission Nationale pour les Réfugiés*, CNR). In addition, STEP 1 took active measures to manage local conflicts, especially the simmering one between Bantu and Pigmy people in Tanganyika. The measures included supporting the mediation efforts of local authorities, helping communities produce conflict resolution plans, and producing a radio program, “My Neighbor is My Brother,” aired by local radios.

However, capacity-building efforts lacked a long-term and systemic orientation, thus resulting in missed opportunities for institutional enhancement. STEP financed over 50,000 days of training of local authorities, civil society organizations, community leaders, and small enterprises, involved in the implementation of the project to increase their management, local development planning, and fiduciary capacities. Nevertheless, these efforts were not focused on promoting systemic change or developing a coordinated institutional structure for social protection. Lack of attention to system-building thus constrained the long-term sustainability of interventions and limited STEP’s ability to improve social outcomes for the most vulnerable beyond the short-term.

STEP 2 has placed new emphasis on institutional development and reforms and has made the promotion of country systems and policies an action point under this component. STEP 2 has laid the foundation of a national social protection system in the DRC, by beginning to establish its main building blocks through a two-pronged approach. The first has involved the establishment of novel partnership agreements at the national level, specifically one between FSRDC and the Ministry of Social Affairs (*Ministère des Affaires Sociales*, MINAS) and one between MINAS and CNR. The purpose of these partnerships has been to set up an inclusive national safety net, offering equal access to refugees. Accordingly, CNR has been in charge of managing refugee inclusion and preparedness, while MINAS has held responsibility for policy and systems, and FSRDC for operations and delivery. The second has focused on building core system components, particularly a unified social registry that can be used to reach the poor and vulnerable in any emergency. So far, the registry has only collected data on STEP beneficiaries and their households with inputs provided by MINAS through a standard

eligibility questionnaire. However, over the medium-term, MINAS is expected to collect data on the beneficiaries of other programs, thus restructuring the registry from an integrated beneficiary to a social registry.

4.1.4. Contingent Financing

STEP 2 has introduced a Contingency Emergency Response Component (CERC) as a new project component to increase financial flexibility in crisis situations. Lessons learned from STEP 1's response to the Ebola epidemic highlighted the need for the project to have improved access to liquidity immediately following a shock. STEP 2 established a CERC to allow the GoDRC to quickly reallocate and mobilize project resources to activities not previously included in the operation to respond to shocks that are not already addressed by the project, e.g., a pandemic outbreak like COVID-19, a new displacement crisis, or climate-related shocks. The new flexibility was used to respond to the COVID crisis in the capital city, Kinshasa, with a large-scale, emergency cash transfer program. The program is still ongoing and has benefitted so far about 250,000 beneficiaries. CERC was introduced as a zero-fund component under STEP 2. As a result, funds to the emergency cash transfer program were reallocated from one of its core components. STEP 3 has replenished the funds used, while its CERC has been provisioned with a US\$50 million to support an anticipated scale-up of COVID response in Kinshasa, upon the Government's request.

4.1.5. Project Operational Costs

The elevated security risks and the challenges associated with the launch of a new engagement in a FCV setting were reflected in STEP's high operational costs. Experience with PASU had shed light on the high costs of doing business in the DRC. This was due to a number of factors, including high salaries to attract and retain highly qualified individuals in the country, poorly developed transport networks, rough terrain across a vast land mass, and the ensuing higher need for air travel. PASU had also showed a need to allow for some

flexibility in sub-project budget levels for remote locations. FCV challenges in the DRC thus required investments in project operational costs that were envisaged to exceed the World Bank's standard ceiling of 20 percent of the total project costs. These arrangements accounted for the need to adjust budget by province to reflect variations in security, road quality, and other factors, thus avoiding scaling down the activities in remote, underserved areas where the needs were greatest. Expectations for higher operational costs were also driven by the need for the PIE to be better equipped to effectively support operations over a large territory, for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) to be sufficiently funded, and for project staff and partners to be trained in a common methodology for gathering, recording, and documenting indicator data to ensure that the project would be on track in achieving the expected results effectively and transparently.

Continuous and increasing engagement, combined with new project management methods, including performance-oriented mechanisms, enable greater cost efficiency and to gradually align STEP 2 with similar FCV operations. The expanded scale of the project through additional financings allowed STEP 2 to achieve economies of scale, such as lower cost per unit of raw materials, planning, and program implementation. STEP 2 benefitted from economies of scope generated by clustering the three project components (i.e., CDD, LIPWs, and UCTs) in the same high-impact areas to obtain maximum complementarity and synergy and by simplifying and standardizing the activities. An equally important aspect leading to cost efficiency was the restructuring of Component 3. In addition to capacity building, Component 3 under STEP was designed to also support all operating costs of the project, including the direct costs of goods and services as well as the project management costs incurred by FSRDC. This arrangement made it difficult to discern and report, in addition to inflating, the operating costs.⁴⁷ Thus, STEP 2 separated out and placed the management costs under a new component, i.e., Project Management, to specifically finance all operating expenses incurred from the management of the project, with a dedicated line reporting on the salaries paid to the implementing unit. The new project management arrangement was

⁴⁷ Interviews with STEP team.

accompanied by the introduction of a novel performance-based compensation mechanism, which has enabled an improvement in FSRDC’s productivity and efficiency by providing incentives to the agency to remain engaged on the ground and perform better towards the attainment of key project indicators.⁴⁸ These changes have allowed STEP 2 to cap the project operational at 10 percent of the total costs.

4.2. Adaptations to Delivery Chain

Table 4.2: Summary of Key Adaptations to Delivery Chain

	STEP (closed)	STEP 1 (closed)	STEP 2 (ongoing)	STEP 3 (ongoing)
IDENTIFICATION & SELECTION OF PROJECT AREAS	Identification			
	Involvement of MONUSCO, FSRDC, colocation of other donor-funded projects		Use of zoning strategy through Project Target Index (PTI)	
	Selection and deployment			
	Selection of exact project areas only during implementation; deployment informed by FSRDC’s scoping missions and risk assessments; scattered interventions across project areas, far from FSRDC’s offices		Selection based on security conditions, but modular, flexible, and opportunistic deployment; concentrated interventions, closer to FSRDC’s offices	
TARGETING & SELECTION OF BENEFICIARIES	Targeting and selection mechanisms			
	Self-registration + public lottery for urban LIPWs			
	Targeting approach			
	Status-based Quotas for women and forcibly displaced groups (refugees & IDPs)		Needs-based No quotas. Proactive measures to facilitate registration of women; collaboration with UNHCR to ensure inclusion of refugees in the program	
COVERAGE, BENEFITS, & PAYMENT SYSTEM	Urban LIPWs			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefit: US\$3 Periodicity: day Duration of contract: 60 days (3 months), renewable only once Frequency of payment: bi-monthly Total cost per beneficiary: US\$216 (US\$180 benefit + US\$36 training program) Delivery mechanism: cash-in-hand 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefit: US\$3 Periodicity: day Duration of contract: 100 days (5 months), no renewal Frequency of payment: every 20 days (1 month) Total cost per beneficiary: US\$400 (US\$300 benefit + US\$100 investment grant) Delivery mechanism: cash-in-hand 	

⁴⁸ Additional details on the performance-based model are provided in section 4.3.1.

	Rural UCTs	
	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefit: US\$75 • Periodicity: trimester • Coverage duration: 1 year • Total cost per beneficiary: US\$300 • Delivery mechanism: cash-in-hand*
SAFEGUARDS & GRM	NA	CRM with enhanced safeguards

* Except in Kinshasa (mobile phone), but in the context of the COVID-19 CT response.⁴⁹

4.2.1. Identification and Selection of Project Areas

STEP elaborated a proactive risk management strategy for the identification of project areas, beginning with mapping “high-risk” and “low-risk” areas within each of the three provinces where it first deployed, i.e., North Kivu, South Kivu, and Orientale. These target areas, or zones, included urban centers and strategic corridors for LIPWs and AVCs, as well as areas for the community sub-projects. The zones shared similar profiles as well as challenges in terms of stabilization and development. In these areas, the processes of peacebuilding and reconstruction were confronted with several sources of communal conflict, which involved different actors, including forcibly displaced groups, returnees, host communities, farmers, and livestock farmers, as well as political and local authorities. At the same time, the zones presented different levels of security risks. While low-risk zones were relatively stable, security conditions in high-risk zones were precarious due to their only recent stabilization, proneness to destabilization, or contiguity with active conflict-zones. Moreover, these were zones where young people were most vulnerable to be recruited by armed groups.

⁴⁹ For a detailed overview of how digital payments were performed in urban areas in a context of the COVID-19 emergency, see Paul Bance, Laura Bermeo, and François Kabemba, "Cash and the city: Digital COVID-19 social response in Kinshasa," *The Brookings Institution*, September 8, 2021, 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2021/09/08/cash-and-the-city-digital-covid-19-social-response-in-kinshasa/>.

With this knowledge of high-risk and low-risk areas, STEP developed a preliminary list of target locations with support from MONUSCO and according to colocation of similar programs. In identifying these locations, STEP relied on close collaboration with government actors and MONUSCO military engineers, given their extensive knowledge of the territory through continuous deployment as well as support to various reconstruction and stabilization projects. MONUSCO helped STEP triage high-risk and low-risk areas and direct efforts to those with the most urgent needs. In addition to collaboration with MONUSCO, STEP sought complementarity with other programs to determine the preliminary project areas. Priority was given to zones where other agencies or donors, such as the Department for International Development (DfID) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), were already financing large-scale CDD programs, in the attempt to leverage economies of scale, cluster interventions, and increase the effectiveness of interventions.

However, STEP kept the criteria for the selection of final target areas relatively flexible. The preliminary zones identified with the help of MONUSCO and other actors formed not a fixed list of project sites, but rather a menu of possible areas of interventions. The criteria for selecting the exact locations for final deployment were kept flexible and were developed in parallel with the assessment and monitoring of security conditions (Box 1). This flexibility enabled STEP to minimize the risk of cost-ineffective restructuring or cancellation of activities.

Box 1: Mitigating Security and Operational Risks through Project Design

After developing a preliminary list of project sites, STEP required FSRDC to undertake scoping missions to assess security and operational risks and ensure that conditions on the ground were suitable for final deployment. The scoping missions focused on identifying the main actors in the conflict, the kind of relationships among and the power dynamics between them, and the key grievances and root causes of conflict. As part of the conflict mapping activity, FSRDC undertook a two-day consultation with key community members and leaders, typically including the mayor's office or local administration in urban areas; district level entities such as the Agricultural and Rural Development Committees (Comités Agricoles et Rurales de Gestion, CARG) in rural areas; ALEs; CLDs; and other NGOs or

churches. The first phase of the consultation usually involved field visits to the designated areas and meetings with local authorities. At this stage, FSRDC engaged in sensitization of beneficiary communities and illustration of the goal of its visit and scope of the proposed activities. In a second stage, FSRDC triangulated information collected through local meetings with data received from NGO partners and MONUSCO to make a final assessment of the risk. Results of the risk assessment thus informed the areas for STEP deployment.

During the Ebola crisis, STEP 1 adopted an enhanced security management strategy by piloting a Security Risk Assessment (SRA).⁵⁰ The Task Team supported the GoDRC to carry out the first SRA in the context of the public work component of the WB Ebola Response Program in Eastern DRC. The assessment focused on identifying the key stakeholders, potential threats that could result in risks to human safety and the Bank's reputation, and recommendations on a series of mitigation measures applicable to project design, the Bank's supervision, and implementation by FSRDC. The assessment was guided by a number of questions, including:

- What are the main security incidents, actors, and risks for operating in Ebola-affected areas?
- What is the level of acceptance of the FSRDC?
- How can FSRDC visit subproject sites and report accurate data on progress toward PDOs?
- What supervision arrangements and partnerships can guarantee physical access for Bank Team?

Answers to these questions allowed to gauge the extent to which residual security risks were acceptable to the World Bank, and which actions could be taken to minimize them in the design and implementation phases. The SRA informed the preparation of STEP 2. However, it has not been integrated as a permanent feature of the project design, as STEP falls under the old ESF safeguards.

The DRC's large territorial size, coupled with weak infrastructure and limited connectivity, made it challenging for STEP to manage logistics and ensure cost-effective supervision, and prompted STEP 2 to redesign the targeting strategy based on a Project Targeting Index (PTI).

⁵⁰ SRAs are a requirement under the new World Bank's Environment and Social Framework (ESF) that government must fulfil to identify security, operational, and reputational risks in areas of project intervention and provide guidance on mitigation measures. Updated at least annually, SRA helps Bank staff to think strategically and systematically about the security threats, vulnerabilities, and specific risks associated with operating in a highly insecure environment.

STEP achieved good results, but contextual risks and operational challenges contributed to the geographic dispersion of its activities within the target areas. Project sites were far from FSRDC's local offices, and the many activities planned were implemented in isolation. This, combined with the large number of actors involved, affected coordination, and stretched FSRDC's capacity. The scattered nature of interventions hindered opportunities to capitalize on complementarities between STEP's activities, thus limiting the potential for stronger developmental impact. Created in response to these challenges, the PTI has been used and expanded as a zoning strategy to target project areas at the sub-provincial level in all the provinces currently covered by STEP 2 (Box 2). It will also be applied in South Ubangi following STEP 3's effectiveness.

Box 2: The Project Targeting Index (PTI)

The PTI allows to identify priority areas for community sub-projects, within each province according to a vulnerability score. The score is calculated based on a set of indicators, including poverty level, refugees and other forced displacement-affected groups, access to infrastructure, incidence of Ebola, prevalence of violence or conflict-related destruction of infrastructure. Security, access, and co-location of other World Bank-or donor-funded projects constitute weights in the PTI. The Index has helped target areas for project implementation and allocate resources to priority areas more efficiently.

4.2.2. Targeting and Selection of Beneficiaries

Most of the initial methods developed and used by STEP to identify, select, and enroll potential beneficiaries for the urban public works have been retained throughout subsequent additional funding. Urban LIPWs have combined two main mechanisms: (i) self-registration and (ii) public lottery.⁵¹

⁵¹ For rural public works, STEP and STEP 1 employed a different methodology. Rural LIPWs used a community-based targeting (CBT), involving a participatory process. Community leaders were responsible for ensuring the inclusion of all households willing to participate in the program and for providing priority access to the most vulnerable. To this end, ALEs were in charge of hiring social workers or community facilitators to help

- (i) **Self-registration** has relied on the individual decision by potential candidates to participate in the program. Since inception, the level of the stipend, or social benefit, offered daily by the scheme was set at a level that could attract the desired target group, i.e., the unemployed poor. Demand for LIPWs from this group has also been sustained by the type of work performed and skills required. Urban public works have focused on tasks such as road maintenance and construction, which can be performed to a large extent by unskilled labor. Participation into the urban public works is open to any member, men and women, in any given district (*quartier*), or community, who is at least 18 years old and wishes to take up regular work. The only requirement for eligibility has been the willingness to work at the offered stipend.
- (ii) **Public lottery** has been chosen and used as the fairest and most effective way to select beneficiaries. Due to oversubscription, STEP has introduced public lotteries for rationing potential beneficiaries. Interested participants express their voluntary candidature by registering their personal information, including names, sex, and age, in a “Registration” questionnaire. The total number of people registered per *quartier* is capped at 1,000 individuals. At the time of registration, each candidate is informed about the day in which the lottery will be held and receives a registration token (*jeton*) to participate in it. Thus, in each district, at most 1,000 tokens are distributed. Out of 1,000 candidates, the lottery randomly selects 300 individuals, namely 250 beneficiaries and 50 waitlisted.⁵² The 250 beneficiaries are then included in a preliminary beneficiary list. A lottery questionnaire is administered to all

communities identify selection criteria consensually, select participants, and mediate potential differences. As mentioned in the previous chapter, STEP 2 has terminated rural public works.

⁵² The lottery for urban public works unfolds as follows: one by one, each candidate listed draws a lottery token from the urn that contains tickets numbered 1 to 1,000. The number pulled out by each candidate is read publicly. Based on the number drawn, the candidates are classified in one of the three categories (i): the call of a number 1 to 250 indicates that the candidate is a beneficiary; (ii) that of a number between 251 to 300 allows the candidate to be placed on the waiting list; and (iii) that of a number above 300 means that the candidate is not selected.

winners (beneficiaries and waitlisted) to collect additional information, which is used for a cursory verification of eligibility and to produce the final list.

This targeting methodology for urban LIPWs has proved to be a strong delivery mechanism over time, especially in a fluid and challenging environment like the DRC. Initially, the choice of self-registration and public lottery was informed by insights drawn from recent experiences in the DRC and other post-conflict contexts (e.g., Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire). Evidence pointed to the need for beneficiary selection to be perceived as fair and transparent by the local population, and public lotteries held that advantage. Subsequent research on the DRC confirmed these findings. An evidence-based assessment conducted prior to STEP 2's launch revealed that beneficiaries had a better perception and understanding of the lottery system as compared to other tested selection strategies. Moreover, STEP's overall experience has shown that public lotteries are a more cost- and time-effective mechanism to select the right beneficiaries than other mechanism, such as the proxy-means testing (PMT).⁵³ The PMT requires intensive use of personnel on the ground, implying greater safety risks in the event of deteriorating security conditions. Moreover, a PMT methodology is yet to be developed in the DRC.

The development of a targeting strategy and methodology for the identification and selection of beneficiaries of UCTs is currently under way. A first pilot of the targeting methodology was conducted by FSRDC in November 2021. The pilot applied geographic targeting in one rural district (*groupement*) in Nord Bangui with high refugee and IDP density. It provided blanket coverage to everyone living in the district aged 18 and above rather than target at the household level. Although no formal assessment of individual need was

⁵³ A post-lottery survey confirmed that the LIPW beneficiaries selected through the public lottery were poor and very vulnerable to shocks. Moreover, 72 percent were unemployed, and, among those who had a job, all were employed in the informal sector and reported an average income of about US\$20 a month. For additional details on the post-lottery survey, and broader discussion on the use of public lotteries to target social safety net programs, see Paul Bance and Pascale Schnitzer, "Can the luck of the draw help social safety nets?," *Social Protection & Jobs - Policy & Technical Note*, no. 24 (2021). <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/35385>.

required, the program validated beneficiaries' data with the local authorities prior to triggering the disbursement. This targeting method has proved effective to minimize the errors of inclusion and exclusion, given the relatively homogeneous and high poverty profile of the target population (over 70 percent of the rural population is estimated to live below the poverty line). It has also proven efficient, since it has reduced the cost and time needed for targeting, and suitable to the DRC context, where the complicated and fragile community dynamics make household-level targeting problematic and potentially contentious. Given the scale of the population, however, geographic blanket targeting may not be replicable across rural areas, as it can end up being far too costly. As a result, alternative targeting options are currently being discussed, potentially including a combination of geographical targeting for area selection and CBT at the household level.

At the same time, STEP 2 has introduced important changes in the approach for targeting and inclusion of specific vulnerable categories. STEP used gender quotas to ensure that at least 50 percent of LIPW and AVC beneficiaries were women. Quotas for IDPs and refugees, set at 30 percent of the total number of beneficiaries in each project area, also complemented the public works program offered by STEP. STEP 2 has removed quotas both for women and forcibly displaced groups. The project has enjoyed strong and voluntary participation, with women making up at least or, in some areas, more than 50 percent of the total registered candidates for LIPWs. As such, gender quotas became obsolete. In their stead, STEP 2 has introduced several measures in situations where encouragement of women's registration may be needed. These measures have included opening a dedicated registration line for women⁵⁴ and/or the provision of basic mobile childcare centers (*mobile crèches*) at each construction site. In these centers, children are typically entrusted to the care of women who are unable to perform manual labor, such as the elderly or women with disabilities. Childcare providers are considered as program beneficiaries and, as such, entitled to the same stipend as LIPW beneficiaries. Moreover, STEP 2 has designed LIPW tasks in a flexible

⁵⁴ Typically, in each construction site, two queues are formed for self-registration, one for men and one for women. To ensure that women have equal opportunities for participation in the LIPW program and incentivize their registration, program staff may open a third line for them.

manner so that can be tailored and adapted to the individual abilities and capacities of individual beneficiaries, especially the elderly and people with disabilities. Less demanding activities that can be performed by vulnerable categories have been introduced to allow as many people as possible to benefit from the program and ensure that nobody who desires to participate is excluded.

The removal of quotas for forcibly displaced populations has been part of a shift from a status-based to a need-based approach to targeting refugees, IDPs, and host communities. This shift has been guided by three main considerations. The first one has been the recognition of the importance of cultural ties, kinship, and social bonds over legal status in defining Congolese identity, which makes the legal distinction between refugees and host communities practically irrelevant on the ground. Second, refugees, IDPs, and their hosts are all equally underserved and poor in the DRC. Thus, targeting based on status and the use of quotas could generate significant exclusion errors. The third and last consideration has stemmed from the need to preserve social cohesion in a context where most refugees live outside of camps and avoid the risks of stigmatization and marginalization. While removing quotas, STEP 2 has sought and found close collaboration with UNHCR to ensure that refugees are not disadvantaged in their access to benefits.

4.2.3. Coverage, Benefits, and Payment Systems

Urban and rural public works under STEP offered temporary employment at a US\$3 benefit per day for a period of three months. During the three-month period covered by the employment contract, each worker could work a total of 60 days, not exceeding five days a week (Monday to Friday). One day a week of training activities (mandatory for the beneficiaries of urban LIPWs) complemented public works. The training day was paid at the same daily rate as for public works (US\$3). This arrangement guaranteed that each worker could work up to six paid days weekly. The employment contract was renewable only once for three additional months, including 60 workdays.

The schedules and methods for delivering the social benefits were different between urban and rural areas. In urban areas, payments were disbursed twice a month. Transfers were initially planned to be made via bank transfers to accounts opened under the beneficiary's name in any financial institution recognized by the Congolese state. However, the program ultimately delivered the benefits cash-in-hand due to lack of adequate financial infrastructure and the small proportion of beneficiaries holding a bank account. In rural areas payments were disbursed manually from the onset and directly on the work site by FSRDC or the construction company and under the supervision of the ALE and/or the *Bureau d'Etudes* (BE) in charge of the control of works. Payments were made once a week to mitigate the risks associated with carrying cash.

STEP 2 has brought to scale the urban public works program for the purpose of achieving greater impact on resilience and recovery. Results from the Social Assessment on STEP in early 2020 underscored the need for the project to strengthen the capacity of existing beneficiaries to cope with shocks, in addition to expanding safety net coverage to a larger number of vulnerable people. As a result, STEP 2 has reached nearly 85,000 new beneficiaries and deepened support to existing ones.⁵⁵ The public works scheme has extended the length of the contract to five months (from original three) and has provided 100 days of employment at a minimum wage of US\$3. Public works beneficiaries have thus received support for a longer period of time and at an increased level. Particularly, the stipend of total US\$300 has been complemented with an investment grant of US\$100 following a mandatory training as part of the accompanying measures. The stipend is paid every 20 days, largely corresponding to one month of full-time work. In parallel to public works, the UCT program provides direct support to 200,000 beneficiaries in rural areas for one year. Each beneficiary receives four trimestral transfers of US\$75, for a total of US\$300 per beneficiary. The first cash transfer payment of US\$75 has been released in November 2021 and has benefitted one community among those living in the rural areas identified by the PTI.

⁵⁵ Under STEP 2, LIPW activities have targeted a total of 100,000 beneficiaries.

However, logistical challenges have continued to hamper opportunities for scaling up existing delivery systems. Under STEP 2, cash-in-hand has remained the prevailing delivery mechanism to disburse both LIPW stipends and unconditional cash transfers, with the only major difference being that payments have been increasingly delivered by payment agencies and less by FSRDC Payment agencies have mostly consisted of local banks and, to a much lesser degree, NGOs, which have signed up to a legal agreement with FSRDC. The agreement commits the bank to carry the security risks involved in delivering cash. As such, the bank is responsible for mobilizing the police to escorts its agents to and at the payment point. The costs associated with field security arrangements, alongside standard operating and transaction costs, are reflected in the fee applied by the bank (around 8 percent). The difficulty of transferring the benefits through alternative delivery mechanisms, such as mobile money or bank transfers, has continued to be linked to the absence of reliable and inclusive physical infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, and the limited coverage of identity documents (ID) required to open a bank account. Despite challenges, STEP 2 has envisioned additional investments to prioritize the scale up of payment methods by financing a pilot of digital payments, where conditions on the ground allow, by the closure of the project.

4.2.4. Safeguards and GRM

Investments have been made under STEP 2 to strengthen the capacity of existing mechanisms to redress grievances by establishing specific conflict-resolution arrangements on the top of traditional safeguards. STEP 1 established a Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) in 2017. The Mechanism became accessible to project-affected people by 2018. Since then, it has grown into a comprehensive system and has been fully functional and active in all the provinces covered by the project. The GRM is widely known among local beneficiaries and has allowed to collect a large amount of data during its operation. It has relied on three main channels, including a toll-free number with a dedicated person answering the phone and registering complaints), a suggestion box where people can place their written complaints, and the GRM office. The GRM is composed of a Social Safeguards Specialist, an

Environmental Safeguards Specialist, and a GBV Specialist. The GBV Specialist is usually an expert from FSRDC. Moreover, a GRM Officer has been part of each GRM team at the provincial level to specifically oversee the intake of grievances and manage the toll-free hotline. Each GRM Officer is supported by a local GRM committee. The GRM team is put in place before the start of any activity in each project area. Information about options to complain is provided to all potential beneficiaries and communities through different open channels of communication, including pamphlets and suggestion/complaint boxes installed on all project sites and a GRM hot line. Boxes are checked and mitigation steps taken on a monthly basis.

4.3. Adaptations to Implementation, Monitoring, and Partnerships

Table 4.3: Summary of Key Adaptations to Implementation, Monitoring, and Partnerships

	STEP (closed)	STEP 1 (closed)	STEP 2 (ongoing)	STEP 3 (ongoing)
IMPLEMENTATION & MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS	Project Implementing Unit			
	FSRDC		FSRDC with creation of a full-time dedicated team within FSRDC to exclusively focus on STEP	
	Enabling factors			
	Community acceptance, driven by good reputation, technical expertise, and types of assistance provided			
	Sponsorship			
	Ministry of Finance			
PARTNERSHIPS	MONUSCO, UNHAS for logistical support and to manage security risks		Extended network of partners (MONUSCO, UNHAS, WFP, UNHCR, OCHA, etc.) + HDP Nexus to build SP system	

4.3.1. Implementation and Monitoring Arrangements

The arrangements for implementing project activities have remained essentially unaltered since STEP. All activities, from community sub-projects to public works, and, more recently,

cash transfers, have been implemented by FSRDC. FSRDC was established in 2002 under the Office of the President, with the purpose of improving the living conditions of poor communities by providing them with the human and financial resources necessary for implementing self-selected sub-projects. FSRDC has its headquarters in Kinshasa and has opened field offices in the various provinces of the country where STEP has deployed to implement and monitor the project activities. While FSRDC has served as the sole PIE since the launch of STEP, for STEP 2 the agency established a project team, custom-built for managing STEP, which includes project dedicated staff from both within and outside the headquarters department. The creation of a project team, whose resources and responsibilities are separated from those needed for FSRDC's regular, non-STEP-related operations, is part of STEP 2's broader efforts to improve FSRDC's organizational structure and fiduciary capacity, while avoiding co-mingling STEP funds with funds for other projects. In addition to facilitating project implementation, this adaptation has resulted in improved transparency.

FSRDC has developed a unique set of organizational, technical, and relational skills that have been key to project implementation and monitoring. FSRDC has worked for almost two decades on CDD-based programs and public works activities financed by the World Bank, beginning with PASU through STEP. This experience has allowed the public agency to build technical expertise on both community infrastructure sub-projects and cash-for-work interventions, while the past two years have been spent in developing capacity and competences for managing cash transfers. The FSRDC has continued to deliver tangible community and individual benefits, particularly short-term jobs and socioeconomic opportunities, and to maintain a reputation for good governance and high technical quality. These achievements have been key to FSRDC's ability to earn community acceptance at the local level. Thus, positive perceptions of FSRDC among receiving communities have served as key mechanisms for successful implementation and monitoring, enabling FSRDC to leverage its resources and expertise to ensure project results, even in highly insecure areas. This was particularly noticeable in the context of the Ebola outbreak, where international response

efforts were initially met with violent community resistance. Among impacted communities, the arrival of trusted FSRDC into Ebola hotspots was seen as bringing in jobs and livelihood opportunities, which communities felt as higher priority needs than the medical response. FSRDC's approach focused on responding to community needs and its favorable relations with the local population was key to gain access to Ebola hotspots and deliver the Ebola Response Program.⁵⁶ FSRDC also led the way for health and humanitarian efforts to follow, enabling first aid responders to provide urgent care.⁵⁷ Given its acceptance, FSRDC has been able to conduct most field visits autonomously and avoid relying on (locally less trusted) military escorts or, unlike international NGOs, being subject to harassment.

STEP 2 has also focused on building the capacity of FSRDC and support its long-term sustainability through an innovative incentive-based mechanism. FSRDC has performed its role and responsibilities under a subsidiary agreement with the Ministry of Finance (MoF). STEP 2 has modified the agreement by introducing a performance-based management fee which FSRDC is entitled to receiving for project implementation. The fee accounts for 10 percent of the project management costs, thus equaling 1 percent of total project costs (US\$4.45 million). The management fee is unaudited, with the underlying idea being that FSRDC can make good use of the performance-based compensation by purchasing fixed assets and equipment, building infrastructure, and/or leveraging training opportunities to enhance its own capacity as an autonomous agency. The fee is paid in tranches and disbursement is conditional upon the achievement of pre-agreed key project indicators, typically including the number of infrastructures built, communities reached, or the number of cash transfers delivered. The tranches cannot be triggered, even partially, unless the indicators are fully met. Unexpected and disruptive events, such as a conflict outbreak, that arise outside the FSRDC's control and hinder its efforts to reach the pre-agreed targets are the only exception to this condition. Particularly, a force majeure clause makes specific

⁵⁶ Paul M. Bisca and Paul Bance, "Can public works help fight Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo?," *The Brookings Institution*, July 31, 2019, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2019/07/31/can-public-works-help-fight-ebola-in-the-democratic-republic-of-congo/>.

⁵⁷ Interview with project team.

adjustments to the subsidiary agreement to accommodate for such occurrence. Then, the amount and disbursement of the performance fee are negotiated accordingly. Although it has not been directly prompted by the challenges of fragility and insecurity, this adaptation has laid the basis for an effective delivery model in a FCV setting, which supports incentives to project implementation, in terms of improved performance and efficiency, in such low-capacity context, while providing resources that FSRDC can invest to promote its own autonomy and sustainability after the closure of STEP.

4.3.2. Partnerships

STEP maintained informal links and selective collaboration on logistical, strategic, and security issues with key humanitarian and stabilization partners in the DRC. As part of the international response to promote stabilization in Eastern DRC, STEP actively sought strategic alignment with MONUSCO, UN agencies, and other stabilization actors, in particular the Government's Stabilization and Reconstruction Plan for War-Affected Zones in the East (*Programme de Stabilisation et Reconstruction des Zones Sortant des Conflits Armés*, STAREC), on planning and coordination, while leveraging their presence to facilitate implementation and supervision of the project activities. Interactions included close consultations and joined missions with MONUSCO and STAREC to identify project areas and assess their stabilization needs. Moreover, MONUSCO and the UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) played a key role in providing STEP project staff and FSRDC with the logistical support needed to reach project areas, even those remote and temporarily inaccessible. STEP 2 has continued to benefit from such support, mainly consisting in air lifts and escorts, as a direct user, thus requiring no sponsorship from another organization to access UN logistic services. UNHCR too has provided logistical support on an ad-hoc basis, such as cars for joint missions. Other areas of collaboration have included intelligence and data sharing with MONUSCO's Joint Mission Analysis Center (JMAC). Collaboration has been facilitated by building strong and fairly informal networking relations between project staff and JMAC personnel. Personal connections and trusted relationships have allowed the Bank's TT to gain access to important

information (e.g., updates on security threat assessments and key political developments) sooner, identifying emerging risks faster, and having more critical data readily available to inform prompt project-related decision-making than often cumbersome corporate processes would generally allow. The TT has been able to cross-reference JMAC's information with open-source data, e.g., media reports, news, and academic studies, to inform field missions and delivery mechanisms. This arrangement has benefitted from the continuous and capillary presence of MONUSCO across the national territory at least until the outbreak of the Ebola epidemic (2018-2020). From 2018 onwards, however, cuts to MONUSCO troops and operating bases in some of the provinces (e.g., North Kivu) has limited the availability of intelligence support from JMAC only to the project areas where MONUSCO is still present.⁵⁸

STEP 2 has shifted from selective engagement to a Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) approach to enhance both the flexibility and operational effectiveness of the project in responding to crises. The Ebola crisis underscored the need for a stronger commitment of the project to building effective partnerships in crisis settings that could enable greater operational flexibility and responsiveness to immediate needs. To this end, STEP 2 has sought to integrate its development response within the “triple” nexus of Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) action and offer a platform to operationalize the nexus across the key areas of partnerships, strategy, and programming.⁵⁹ In addition to maintaining and expanding collaboration and alignment on security and logistics with MONUSCO and humanitarian agencies, including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UNHCR, and WFP, STEP 2 has explored synergies between HDP programming on durable solutions to protracted displacement and integration of refugees into national systems. This has entailed greater efforts to engage humanitarian and other partners in aligning approaches, existing initiatives, and best practices to build the core components of a

⁵⁸ For instance, MONUSCO is currently not deployed in the provinces North Ubungui and South Ubungui, where STEP 2 and 3 operate.

⁵⁹ Sophie Christelle Grumelard and Paul M. Bisca, "Can humanitarians, peacekeepers, and development agencies work together to fight epidemics?," *World Bank Blogs*, April 24, 2020, 2020, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/dev4peace/can-humanitarians-peacekeepers-and-development-agencies-work-together-fight-epidemics>.

coherent and scalable shock-responsive social protection system, thus avoiding duplication and fragmentation of efforts and initiatives. While HDP work is still at a very nascent stage in the DRC, the social registry has been identified as one priority area to potentially operationalize the nexus.

4.4. Adaptations to World Bank’s Supervision

Table 4.4: Summary of Key Adaptations to World Bank’s Supervision

	STEP (closed)	STEP 1 (closed)	STEP 2 (ongoing)	STEP 3 (ongoing)
WORLD BANK SUPERVISION	Arrangements			
	Field visits		Field visits + GEMS/MARTA	
	Responsibility for data collection			
	FSRDC			

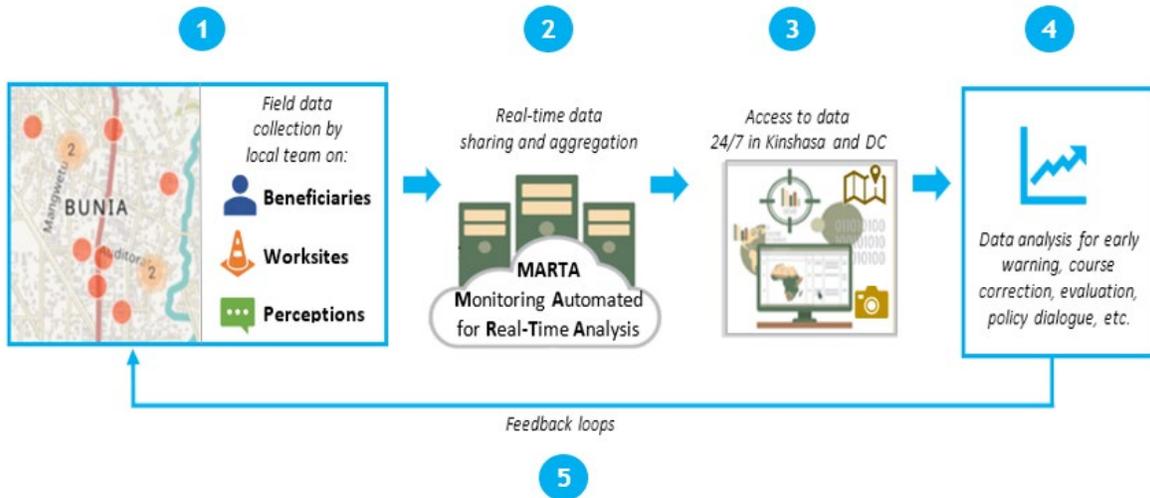
STEP 2 has leveraged the latest Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to upgrade the arrangements for World Bank’s supervision by deploying a remote supervision system, i.e., the Monitoring Automated for Real-Time Analysis (MARTA) (Figure 3). Supervision by the STEP Task Team largely relied on frequent local and international field missions to project areas. Field visits were undertaken in collaboration and with the logistical support of external partners, namely MONUSCO and UNHAS, where and when needed. The Ebola crisis, however, demanded a speedy scale up of emergency operation, while shedding light on the limited capacity for field supervision due to security logistics. As a response, STEP 2 has incorporated adaptive measures for project supervision by supporting FSRDC to develop and deploy the remote supervision system MARTA. MARTA is a customized system that builds on the Geo-Enabling Initiative for Monitoring and Supervision (GEMS) approach to monitor project implementation, particularly in low-capacity, high-risk, and remote

environments. As a data collection tool, MARTA creates a portfolio of high-frequency surveys on work sites, beneficiaries, and community perceptions. It is a fast-to-deploy, cost-effective, client-friendly, and privacy-safe system, which allows the World Bank Task Team and FSRDC to monitor key indicators, compliance, and overall progress of field activities, while reducing security risks and increasing the accuracy of data collected. MARTA simply requires a smart tablet and can work offline. Inputs are collected by a dedicated team on the field and logged into MARTA, which aggregates and analyzes them in real time. Data is available to the FSRDC Headquarters in Kinshasa and the TT in Washington, D.C. within 24 hours. The TT can monitor the progress of CDD and LIPW implementation (for instance, whether and how much infrastructure has been rebuilt and how many days have been employed) and ensure that the safeguards are being implemented (for instance, whether beneficiaries are wearing personal protective equipment at the construction sites).

Although MARTA is primarily a M&E tool, it can support project implementation by serving as a proxy for key delivery mechanisms. MARTA is able to collect and store a wealth of data on beneficiaries. This can enable TTs to build a large beneficiary database, which can be used as a proxy social registry to support emergency interventions or contribute to the development of a social registry (as in the case in the DRC). From September 2019 to September 2020, a pilot of MARTA carried out by FSRDC allowed to collect more than 111,400 surveys, corresponding to more than 14 million data points. The information collected on beneficiaries from MARTA fed into the current beneficiary registry with data on 70,600 poor and vulnerable individuals and enabled to draw the vulnerability profile of beneficiaries and validate the program's targeting mechanism. Moreover, through community surveys, MARTA has enabled the TT to evaluate the effectiveness of the LIPW as perceived by former beneficiaries by collecting their inputs on how they compare their welfare upon exit from the program with their welfare prior to entry. Finally, MARTA can help detect increases in insecurity levels and course-correct in almost real-time. In this sense, MARTA has the

potential to also serve as an early warning system to anticipate operational challenges, including security issues, in a high-risk and rapidly changing setting⁶⁰

Figure 4.1: Improving M&E and Remote Supervision, MARTA



⁶⁰ Laura Bermeo, Paul Bance, and Issa Kiemtoré, "Addressing the challenge of remote project monitoring in crisis and conflict situations – a mobile data approach," *World Bank Blogs*, 2021, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/dev4peace/addressing-challenge-remote-project-monitoring-crisis-and-conflict-situations-mobile-data>.

V. What lessons can be learned from STEP?

This study has undertaken an empirical analysis of the Eastern Recovery Project (STEP) in the DRC to provide an illustration of how social protection projects can be adapted to FCV along the project cycle. A major insight gained from the study is that the series of adjustments and adaptations that STEP has developed in response to the evolving context in the DRC have marked its transition from a project focused on stabilization and recovery in Eastern DRC to a comprehensive shock-responsive social protection system, anchored in the provision of social safety nets and community infrastructure, and focused on building resilience and protecting human capital against the full spectrum of FCV challenges across the national territory. Much can be learned from this transition, and valuable insights can be gained to inform current and future ASP efforts in FCV situations. Key lessons are described in the following paragraphs.

Project Design

1. *Identifying opportunities for alignment and continuity with accumulated experience and learning can be an effective strategy to facilitate initial engagement in a FCV setting.* Fragile and conflict-affected contexts often confront development actors with complex challenges, whose nature and scope call for new approaches to assistance delivery. While developing new approaches is critical, not all information may be known or not all conditions may be in place for this to happen at the time when the project is being designed. In fact, actively seeking out and following through on untested approaches already at the initial stages of engagement can make the process much more arduous and prone to higher risks of failure. In recognition of these risks, STEP built on what existed, by leveraging PASU's operational experience as an entry point to navigate uncertainty and unpredictability and avoiding building operational infrastructure from scratch. This approach focused on continuity also provided the benefit of ensuring quick service delivery to meet urgent needs as well as a platform to develop adaptations in response to evolving challenges.

2. While CDD programs can be effective in delivering short-term outputs in conflict-affected situations, their impact on improving social cohesion and local governance is less clear and presumably context-dependent. STEP adopted CDD with the dual objective of building and/or rehabilitating community infrastructure and of improving social cohesion among beneficiary communities. As such, the CDD program incorporated conflict prevention and resolution activities (CDD+). STEP's CDD program has played an important role in addressing fragility in the short term by improving access of beneficiary communities to basic education, health, and WASH infrastructures. In contrast, its impact on social cohesion and local governance is uncertain, due to the absence of impact evaluations. The lack of conclusive empirical evidence both from the project and existing literature has informed STEP 2's decision to leverage CDD to achieve social cohesion and, consequently, to discontinue conflict prevention and mitigation measures. While it has not been possible to determine the impact of CDD on social cohesion under STEP in DRC, evidence from other FCV countries, i.e., Yemen, has found a positive effect.⁶¹ These inconsistent findings suggest that the impact of CDD programs on enhancing social cohesion and local governance may be highly dependent on program design and on the specific context involved.⁶²

3. Simplification of project activities can help mitigate risks of failure and delays in delivery under conditions of increased volatility and insecurity. In conflict-affected contexts, development actors may be compelled to decrease their engagement or pull out when security risks escalate. To ensure continued engagement, STEP 2 has simplified and streamlined the design of project activities. Simplification has involved (i) the introduction of a positive list of priority sub-projects for community infrastructure under Component 1; (ii) the restructuring of the public works program to be delivered only in urban centers and replacement of AVCs with UCTs in rural areas, and (iii) the creation of a unique public

⁶¹ Afrah Alawi Al-Ahmadi and Samantha de Silva, "Delivering Social Protection in the Midst of Conflict and Crisis: The Yemen Emergency Crisis Response Project " *World Bank Group Discussion Paper N. 1801* (2018).

⁶² On the importance of the local context and the "prerequisites" for successful CDD's impact on social cohesion, see Holmlund and Rao Where and When is Community-Driven Development (CDD) Effective?

works contract, which has standardized and harmonized the organization of LIPW work sites, thus greatly facilitating the procurement process (now entirely managed by FSRDC) and delivery of the program. The use of a simplified delivery framework has also improved readiness for shock-response, cost-effectiveness, and economies of scales.

- 4. *Linking social protection programs to dedicated contingency finance mechanisms is critical to cope with the financial consequences of unpredictable events.*** In the effort to strengthen the responsiveness and readiness of the project to unexpected crises, STEP 2 has incorporated a CERC component. While CERC does not typically feature among traditional social protection financing arrangements, it constitutes a good operational practice, especially in FCV contexts. CERC allows to pre-position financial resources, which can be accessed and used to support the people most in need in times of emergency or crisis. As a US\$0 component, CERC can also receive reallocated or unspent funds from other projects. The contingency budget from CERC has enabled STEP 1 to provide rapid support to nearly 250,000 beneficiaries through emergency cash transfers in response to COVID-19.
- 5. *Thorough assessments of local conflict dynamics and security risks should be undertaken systematically to avoid exacerbating existing tensions and to inform each operational step in delivery of assistance.*** Development interventions without a conflict prevention lens may inadvertently interact with conflict dynamics by igniting or strengthening conflict drivers at the community level and/or by being negatively affected by them. As a commitment to “Do No Harm” and maximize potential benefits, STEP mandated FSRDC to carry out scoping missions in the target areas for project implementation in order to gain a clear understanding of the local context and identify potential operational risks before deploying activities. The scoping missions have relied on a close engagement with local stakeholders, including community members, leaders, and authorities, as well as NGOs and local institutions. The results from the assessments have helped determine the final locations of STEP activities and informed project management. More recently, FSRDC’s conflict mapping has been supplemented by the

piloting of an SRA. This relatively new instrument allows project teams to think more strategically about security threats and reputational risks that may arise from the operational environment.

Delivery Chain

- 6. *Maintaining flexible criteria for selecting project areas is key to mitigate the risks of cost-ineffective restructuring or cancellation of the activities.*** STEP retained some flexibility in the criteria for selecting the final locations for project activities. After developing a preliminary list of potential target areas with the help of MONUSCO and other stakeholders, STEP linked the final selection to security criteria and assessments performed by FSRDC. This strategy allowed to minimize risks of suspension or termination of the activities, but it also confronted STEP with a tradeoff between dispersal of activities to cover as many areas as possible based on the security conditions and concentration in priority areas to achieve economies of scale and enhanced impact. To address this trade-off, STEP 2 developed a zoning strategy based on the PTI, which has allowed effective identification of priority areas for project implementation and a more efficient allocation of resources. In the priority areas, community sub-projects, public works, and cash transfers are concentrated and carried out in tandem, thus allowing to capitalize on complementarities between project activities and achieve greater development impact.
- 7. *The combination of self-registration and public lottery can be an effective and cost-efficient targeting strategy in contexts of social tensions and fragmentation, by fostering perceptions of fairness and buy-in from communities.*** STEP has continued to rely on the voluntary decision by potential candidates to participate in the public works program, on the basis of a daily benefit set low enough to only attract the poorest and low-skilled men and women. This self-registration method has proved successful in attracting the desired beneficiaries. Despite the low level of benefit, the program has tended to be oversubscribed. As a result, participation has been awarded by public lottery. The lottery for STEP's LIPWs is generally conducted in public spaces and is open to everyone aged 18 and above who would like to participate. People have favored this

targeting method because of its transparency and familiarity to most. They understand that winning or losing the lottery is a matter of luck, and this has allowed public works to be implemented in a manner viewed as fair and equitable.

Implementation, Monitoring, and Partnerships

8. There exists a great potential for reducing the costs of operating in fragile and conflict-affected settings by promoting economies of scale as well as performance-based incentives. Engaging in FCV situations entails higher costs, often due to poor infrastructure and supply chains, skill shortages, logistical challenges, and security risks. However, the experience of STEP shows that active and continuous engagement as well as scale up efforts and effective project management can help achieve efficiency and economies of scale. One innovation that STEP 2 developed, and which has been key in lowering costs has been the introduction of the performance-based management fee for FSRDC. This mechanism has allowed STEP 2 and 3 to cap the project management costs at 10 percent of the total project costs and to enhance FSRDC's performance and accountability. The performance-based mechanism can be an effective way also to strengthen institutional capacity and sustainability in situations of weak governance and institutional fragility.

World Bank's Supervision

9. The use of new technologies and tools can help ensure more effective monitoring and supervision in low-capacity and high-risk environments, while decreasing costs. STEP 2 has leveraged low-cost, high-impact geo-spatial solutions to enhance monitoring and supervision of project implementation. It has relied on a new GEMS-based tool, called "MARTA," which allows to capture granular and reliable data on performance indicators, ensure remote supervision also in areas that are inaccessible to the World Bank, and monitor the safeguards and progress of the activities. MARTA has improved the accuracy, reliability, and overall performance of monitoring and supervision in a highly insecure environment.

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Annex 1: Summary of Adaptations from STEP to STEP 3

	STEP (closed)	STEP 1 (closed)	STEP 2 (ongoing)	STEP 3 (ongoing)
GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE	East (North Kivu, South Kivu, Orientale)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> East (North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, Bas-Uélé, Haut-Uélé) Northeast (Tshopo) Southeast (Tanganyika) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> East (North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri) Center (Kasai Central) Northwest (North Ubangi) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> East (North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri) Center (Kasai Central) Northwest (North Ubangi, South Ubangi)
APPROACH	CDD+		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CDD Shock-responsive, targeted safety nets, System-building 	
ACTIVITIES	Component 1			
	Community sub-projects		Community sub-projects with positive list	
	Component 2			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public works (LIPWs) in urban & rural areas Agricultural Value Chains (AVCs) in rural areas Accompanying measures: (i) voluntary saving program, (ii) training on non-cognitive life learning skills, (iii) training in basic business 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LIPWs only in urban areas No longer AVCs; unconditional cash transfers (UCTs) only in rural areas New package of accompanying measures (AM) on human capital & productive inclusion 	
	Component 3			
Conflict-sensitive capacity building		Establishment of building blocks of SP system; partnership agreements across SP sector (CNR, FSRDC, MINAS)		As in STEP 2 + partnership agreements across HD sectors* for refugees' integration
CONTINGENT FINANCING	-		Contingency Emergency Response Component (CERC)	
PROJECT OPERATIONAL COSTS	Initially envisaged above 20% of total budget but decreasing over time. All operational costs, i.e., costs of goods and services and project management costs (PIE) included under Comp. 3		Operational costs capped at 10% of total budget. Creation of Comp 4 for project management costs	
I D E N	Identification			

	Involvement of MONUSCO, FSRDC, colocation of other donor-funded projects	Use of zoning strategy through Project Target Index (PTI)
	Selection and deployment	
	Selection of exact project areas only during implementation; deployment informed by FSRDC's scoping missions and risk assessments; scattered interventions across project areas, far from FSRDC's offices	Selection based on security conditions, but modular, flexible, and opportunistic deployment; concentrated interventions, closer to FSRDC's offices
TARGETING & SELECTION OF BENEFICIARIES	Targeting and selection mechanisms	
	Self-registration + public lottery for urban LIPWs	
	Targeting approach	
	Status-based Quotas for women and forcibly displaced groups (refugees & IDPs)	Needs-based No quotas. Proactive measures to facilitate registration of women; collaboration with UNHCR to ensure inclusion of refugees in the program
COVERAGE, BENEFITS, & PAYMENT SYSTEM	Urban LIPWs	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefit: US\$3 Periodicity: day Duration of contract: 60 days (3 months), renewable only once Frequency of payment: bi-monthly Total cost per beneficiary: US\$216 (US\$180 benefit + US\$36 training program) Delivery mechanism: cash-in-hand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefit: US\$3 Periodicity: day Duration of contract: 100 days (5 months), no renewal Frequency of payment: every 20 days (1 month) Total cost per beneficiary: US\$400 (US\$300 benefit + US\$100 investment grant) Delivery mechanism: cash-in-hand
	Rural UCTs	
	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefit: US\$75 Periodicity: trimester Coverage duration: 1 year Total cost per beneficiary: US\$300 Delivery mechanism: cash-in-hand*
SAFEGUARDS & GRM	NA	GRM with enhanced safeguards
IMPLEMENTATION & MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS	Project Implementing Unit	
	FSRDC	FSRDC with creation of a full-time dedicated team within FSRDC to exclusively focus on STEP
	Enabling factors	
	Community acceptance, driven by good reputation, technical expertise, and types of assistance provided	
	Sponsorship	
	Ministry of Finance	

PARTNERSHIPS	MONUSCO, UNHAS for logistical support and to manage security risks	Extended network of partners (MONUSCO, UNHAS, WFP, UNHCR, OCHA, etc.) + HDP Nexus to build SP system
WORLD BANK SUPERVISION	Arrangements	
	Field visits	Field visits + GEMS/MARTA
	Responsibility for data collection	
	FSRDC	

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ABSTRACT

The Eastern Recovery Project (STEP) has offered the primary platform for delivering social safety net (SSN) support in response to different shocks and overlapping crises in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). STEP has been operating successfully since its launch in 2014, evolving and adapting from a project designed to support post-conflict stabilization and recovery in Eastern DRC to a comprehensive shock-responsive SSN system aimed at building resilience and protecting human capital against the full spectrum of fragility, conflict, and violence (FCV) nationwide. This paper presents an in-depth analysis of STEP's evolution by identifying and discussing key operational adaptations to (i) project design, (ii) delivery chain, (iii) monitoring, implementation, and partnership, and (iv) World Bank's supervision. Drawing lessons learned from the analysis, the paper suggests operational options to adapt current and future social protection engagements in FCV.

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