Report Number: ICRR0022180

1. Project Data

Project ID P125024	**Project Name** GM:Commercial Agriculture & Value Chain
Country Gambia, The	**Practice Area(Lead)** Agriculture and Food

L/C/TF Number(s)	**Closing Date (Original)**	**Total Project Cost (USD)**
IDA-53990,IDA-H9200	30-Nov-2019	14,537,999.51
Bank Approval Date	**Closing Date (Actual)**	
18-Mar-2014	30-Nov-2019	

	IBRD/IDA (USD)	Grants (USD)
Original Commitment	15,920,000.00	0.00
Revised Commitment	15,920,000.00	0.00
Actual	14,537,999.51	0.00

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2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

The Project Development Objective (PDO) as articulated in the Project Appraisal Document (PAD, paragraph 21) was identical to one stated in the Financing Agreement (FA, page 4) and aimed to:

"improve productivity and access to market of targeted agricultural commodities for smallholders in the Project Area."

The project would primarily support two values chains: rice and horticulture (particularly vegetables). In addition, mango would be supported in close collaboration with the Gambia Growth and Competitiveness Project, which focused on increasing domestic processing and postharvest handling to reduce losses. The project area consisted of Central River Regions (CRR - North and South) and the North Bank and West Coast regions of the country.

The outcome of this project will be assessed based on a split rating because four PDO outcome indicator targets were revised as part of the 2018 restructuring.

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

Yes

Did the Board approve the revised objectives/key associated outcome targets?

No

c. Will a split evaluation be undertaken?

Yes

d. Components

The PDO was supported by the following three components:

1. Support to development of irrigation and key productive infrastructure (appraisal cost: US$13.56 million-IDA Grant US$3.75 million; IDA Credit US$7.20 million, actual cost: US$13.77 million). This component aimed to support critical public and private infrastructure needs to enhance the resilience and competitiveness of the agricultural sector. It sought to rehabilitate and improve tidal irrigation schemes, as well as key productive infrastructure to address key constraints in the agricultural production system in order to improve productivity. It also aimed at improving the efficiency of key value chains through improved access to markets. It included the following two sub-components:

1.1 Irrigation development and farm production improvement. This sub-component sought to improve basic irrigation infrastructure facilities and required management systems to strengthen the country's resilience to climatic shocks for enhanced production of rice and vegetables. It also sought to enhance the producers' access to improved technologies (including climate-smart technologies, bio fortified varieties with iron, carotene, among others.) which would increase productivity and competitiveness.

1.2. Leveraging private sector investments in agri-business and supporting access to key productive assets. This sub-component sought to improve basic post-harvest management infrastructure downstream the value chains to improve quality and enhance competitiveness of domestically produced rice, in particular; and enhance the mechanization of the agricultural works by building the capacity of the various stakeholders in the private sector, particularly producer organizations and youth groups, and the facilitation of start-up businesses supplying these services to the producers in the tidal irrigation schemes to be rehabilitated. The ICR (paragraph 17) noted that "during the first restructuring in November 2017, matching grant window two under sub-component 1.2 was discontinued."

2. Support to value chain management (appraisal cost: US$3.15 million-IDA Grant US$1.76 million, actual cost: US$0.36 million). This component aimed to develop and strengthen the institutional capacity

of farmer-based organizations and professional associations of private sector participants in the value chain; scale-up best practices and support farmers' and private sector participants' sub-projects to address key constraints and exploit the opportunities to improve the productivity, processing, and marketing of selected commodities; and to strengthen marketing and agribusiness development through engagement with private sector stakeholders. The component also sought to support the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) with technical assistance to review and reorganize the cooperative department of the Ministry. In coordination with the Growth and Competitiveness project, this project would also support improvements in quality standards in The Gambia. The activities were organized under three sub-components:

2.1. Strengthening the capacity of the associations of value chain participants. This sub-component sought to strengthen the technical and management capacity of producer groups, professional associations and other stakeholders benefiting from the project to adopt effective organizational approaches to access competitive input and output markets through formal linkages between smallholders and either larger-scale commercial farms or separate services providers.

2.2. Linking producers to markets. This sub-component sought to to support improved value chain development and coordination, through support to SMEs and producer organizations to enhance their productive capacity and competitiveness and to develop market linkages.

2.3. Improving agricultural investment climate and service delivery. This sub-component sought to support policy dialogues with key stakeholders, especially the private sector through public-private round tables, forums or platforms (farmers, processors, entrepreneurs supporting the value chains) to provide a voice on key policy issues and to engender effective partnership with the public sector so as to broaden and deepen the agricultural commercialization agenda.

3. Project administration and institution building (appraisal cost: US$2.56 million-IDA Grant: US$1.82 million, actual cost:3.16 million). This component aimed to ensure proper coordination of project implementing agencies and sound management of project activities, while providing support to the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) for the overall coordination of the Gambia National Agricultural Investment Plan (GNAIP). It included the following two sub-components:

3.1. Project management, monitoring and evaluation. This sub-component sought to support all activities necessary to ensure that the project is implemented in accordance with the project implementation manual.

3.2. Support to Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) for the implementation of the GNAIP. This sub-component sought to support the Ministry of Agriculture to develop strategies and policy frameworks to adequately coordinate and implement the GNAIP.

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

Project Cost. The total cost of the project was expected to be US$19.27 million. The actual cost reported in the ICR (Annex 3) was US$17.29 million or 89.7% of the appraisal amount.

Financing. The project was financed by a combination of IDA Credit worth US$7.20 million and IDA Grant worth US$8.72 million for a total of US$15.92 million equivalent. The actual amounts disbursed according to

the ICR (page 2) were US$6.57 million and US$7.96 million for the IDA Credit and Grant, respectively. The total amount disbursed was US$14.53 million.

Borrower Contribution. The project was expected to receive co-financing of activities by beneficiaries (supported value chain entrepreneurs) amounting to US$2.61 million, and counterpart funding from the Government budget (US$0.74 million) to partially support additional operating cost of MoA's relevant departments, including the Central Projects Coordination Unit (CPCU), in project implementation (PAD, paragraph 59). According to the ICR (paragraph 74) the Government increased its contribution to US$2.01 million compared to a contribution of US$0.74 million at appraisal in order to "finance outstanding activities towards the end of the project." These amounts totaled to US$3.35 million. The ICR (page 2) reported that the total amount was revised downwards to US$2.76 million and the amount disbursed was 100% of the revised total amount. No reason was given for the downward revision and the ICR did not provide a breakdown of the total amount.

Dates. The project was approved on March 14, 2014, and became effective three months later on June 16, 2014, three days before the expected effectiveness date. The Mid-Term Review (MTR) was conducted on February 12, 2018 which was two years later than expected, the PAD (paragraph 77) stated that the MTR was expected to be conducted no later than two years after effectiveness, i.e. during 2016. The project closed on November 30, 2019, which was the expected closing date. The project was restructured twice, both Level 2 restructuring as follows:

1. On November 15, 2017, when the amount disbursed was US$11.64 million, the project was restructured in order to discontinue one activity and reallocate funds between expenditure categories. "In 2017, the matching grant window for mechanized agricultural services was cancelled due to fear of political capture and lack of viable business proposal. Due to the high costs of irrigation equipment provided to vegetable gardens the funds were reallocated from Category 2 and 3 and the Project Preparation Fund to Category 1 of the IDA Grant H9200 (ICR, paragraph 69)."

2. On October 15, 2018, when the amount disbursed was US$14.36 million, in order to introduce changes to both the Results Framework (RF) and the components.

3. Relevance of Objectives

Rationale

Context at Appraisal. The Gambia is a low-income country with a population of about 1.8 million people (2012), of which half lived in rural areas. Living conditions were generally poor: the country ranked 165 out of 187 in the 2012 UNDP Human Development Index. The agricultural sector account for about 30% of the country's GDP and engaged about 75% of the country's work force. The majority of the farmers were smallholders cultivating less than 4 hectares per family. The agriculture sector generated approximately

40% of foreign exchange earnings and provided two-thirds of total household income. The agriculture sector suffered from low productivity, which was exacerbated by a combination of structural and institutional constraints such as: (i) low levels of rural infrastructure ; (ii) a weak research system and limited capacity and efficiency of extension services; (iii) a lack of adequate delivery mechanisms to ensure the provision of good quality farm inputs; (iv) high post-harvest losses; (v) weak institutional capacity of producer organizations (POs) and of agricultural services; (vi) low levels of private investment; (vii) lack of access to short- and long-term financial capital; and (viii) most crucial of all, adverse agro-climatic conditions. The project aimed to improve food security by increasing production and market access for products important to domestic consumption.

Previous Sector Experience. The Gambian Government sought to transform the agriculture sector from subsistence-based low productivity farming of rain-fed lands to a competitive, commercialized, and market-oriented sector that contributes to inclusive and sustainable poverty reduction and economic growth (ICR paragraph 1). The Government worked with the Bank to design this project which complemented two other Bank funded projects: the Gambia Growth and Competitiveness Project (GCP) and the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program (WAAPP 1C). The Bank had extensive experience in the Gambian agriculture sector through previous projects including: Gambia Community Demand Driven Project (CDDP); Gambia Growth and Competitiveness Project; and the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program (1C). These projects yielded several important lessons that were incorporated into the design of this project (PAD, paragraph 61). The Bank experience also included analytical work such as The Gambia Agricultural Sector Policy Note.

Relevance to Government Strategies. At appraisal, the objective was in line with objectives of the Agricultural and Natural Resources (ANR) Sector Policy Framework (2009-2015) which focused on key areas that would accelerate the modernization of agriculture, improve productivity and competitiveness, and enhance commercialization, particularly of smallholders, by laying a solid foundation for a sustainable and inclusive growth in agricultural sector. The objective was also in line with the Gambia National Agricultural Investment Plan (GNAIP) which aimed to: (i) improved agricultural land and water management; (ii) improvement of other shared resources (common properties); (iii) development of agricultural value chains and market promotion; (iv) national food and nutrition security; (v) sustainable farm development; and (vi) GNAIP coordination, monitoring and evaluation. The objective was also in line with Pillar 1 of the World Bank and the African Development Bank Joint Assistance Strategy (JAS, FY13-FY16) which aimed to “enhance productive capacity and competitiveness in order to strengthen resilience to external shocks.”

At completion, the objective continued to be in line with agricultural development priorities laid out in the Gambia National Development Plan (GNDP) 2018-2021 and the ANR 2017-2026. The GNDP 2018-2021 aimed at ‘delivering a revitalized and transformed economy for the well being of all Gambians’ through eight strategic priorities, among which: modernizing agriculture and fisheries for sustained economic growth, food and nutritional security and poverty reduction. Objectives were also in line with the objectives of the ANR (2017-2026) on achieving a higher level of production and productivity of primary commodities, and achieving wider and more effective participation and representation of subsistence farmers/operators especially women in modern and commercial production, agribusiness and trade.

Relevance to Bank Assistance Strategies. The objectives was in line with Pillar 1 of the World Bank and the African Development Bank Joint Assistance Strategy (JAS, FY13-FY16) which aimed to “enhancing productive capacity and competitiveness in order to strengthen resilience to external shocks.” The objective was also in line with the Bank's Country Engagement Note (CEN, FY18-21). The CEN FY18-21 emphasized the need of The Gambia’s agriculture sector to transition from a subsistence-oriented

production system to a productive, climate-smart, market-oriented sector. Objectives were in line with objective 1 of the CEN: to restore macroeconomic stability and stimulate inclusive growth. The CEN (paragraph 6) called for providing "support to the private sector in key areas, such as energy, tourism, the financial sector, and agriculture." Objectives were also in line with the Systematic Country Diagnostic 2020 pathway C (increase agricultural productivity) and policy area C.1 (invest in irrigation infrastructure).

The statement of objectives was clear, focused and specified the target groups. However, it lacked a connection to higher level objectives, namely, improving food security and alleviating poverty.

Based on the above-mentioned assessment, Relevance of Objectives is rated substantial. Based on the previous sector experience, the PDO was set at the right level of ambition. While objectives were in line with the country and Bank priorities at the appraisal and completion stages, the statement of objectives lacked a connection to higher level objectives.

Rating
Substantial

4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)

OBJECTIVE 1

Objective

PDO: to improve productivity and access to market of targeted agricultural commodities for smallholders in the Project Area.
As stated the PDO has two elements:
1.To improve productivity of targeted agricultural commodities for smallholders in the Project Area; and
2. To improve access to market of targeted agricultural commodities for smallholders in the Project Area.

Rationale

Theory of Change (ToC). To achieve the first element of the PDO (to improve productivity of targeted agricultural commodities for smallholders in the project Area), the project would support the development of irrigation and key productive infrastructures including: rehabilitation, extension and modernization of rice and vegetable irrigation schemes, improving on-farm management, and promoting private sector investment in agribusiness and supporting access to key productive equipment through matching grant system. These activities were expected to improve access to irrigation facilities, increase access to improved technologies, and Increase agro-entrepreneurship. The expected outcomes were increased productivity and production of rice and vegetables and decreased post-harvest losses. To achieve the second element of the PDO (to improve access to market of targeted agricultural commodities for smallholders in the project area), the project would support value chain development through institutional strengthening and value chain coordination, linking producers to markets, and improving agricultural investment climate and service delivery. These activities were expected to improve value chain integration, increase partnerships and improve market

connection. The expected outcome was a market-oriented agriculture with an increase of rice and vegetable volume of market sales.

Longer term impacts of the project included: increased green growth and jobs, improved food security in rice and vegetables, better nutrition and health, better resilience to weather risks, and increased income (particularly for women).

The achievement of the PDO was underpinned by the following assumptions: "(i) Water User Associations take ownership of rehabilitated/extended/modernized irrigation schemes; (ii) farmers adopt improved technologies; (iii) SMEs, producer and youth groups can mobilize the necessary equity to match grants; (iv) women will stay engaged in rice and horticulture value chains while strengthening market access; (v) timing of implementation is followed (ICR, paragraph 7)."

Also, change of behavior according to the ICR (paragraph 26) was expected to happen through: (i) equipping farmers with the necessary tools to increase their productivity through investments in irrigation schemes combined with capacity training and improved inputs; (ii) leveraging private sector investments in food processing and agricultural equipment through matching grants; (iii) achieving higher market sales through capacity building of value chain participants combined with the development of stronger market linkages would create incentives for farmers and their respective institutions to continue practicing in the established production and management techniques.

The Theory of Change (TOC) included activities that were directly linked to the PDO. The stated assumptions were logical, however, some longer term impacts were ambitious and beyond the scope of the project, such as increased green growth and better resilience to weather risks. A critical assumption overlooked in the ToC was that the implementation of matching grants would be free of elite capture. The RF could have benefitted from a better choice of PDO level indicators, specifically, the indicator on vegetable production and productivity, which was measured in metric tons. This was misleading because different produce skew the overall achievement and is prone to changes during implementation (see section 9 a for more details). Also, the results framework (RF) lacked any indicators to assess the improvement in the availability of irrigation water as a result of project activities.

Outputs

The following information was reported in the ICR (Annex 1) unless referenced otherwise:

1. Outputs related to improving productivity of targeted agricultural commodities for smallholders in the Project Area.

- A total of 34.629 metric ton (MT) of rice (target; 46,000 MT) and 1,645.2 MT of vegetables (target: 20,000 MT) were produced due to the project (both targets not achieved).
- Rice yield reached 3.9MT/ha (original target: 8 MT/ha, revised target: 4 MT/ha, baseline 2 MT/ha) and vegetable yield reached 14 MT/ha (original target: 50 MT/ha, revised target: 30 MT/ha, baseline 0 MT/ha). Original targets for both rice and vegetable yield indicate the total yield of two cropping seasons. Formally revised targets for rice yield indicate the average of two cropping seasons and for vegetable yield the total yield of two cropping seasons.
- 2,500 ha of rice irrigation (target: 2500 ha) schemes rehabilitated, and 105 ha of vegetable gardens rehabilitated or newly constructed against an original target of 100 ha.

- 15 Water User Associations (WUAs) were created and/or strengthened and 3 WUAs networks created (original target: 1, revised target 2, target exceeded) 2 WUAs were fully functional (original target: 20, revised target: 15, baseline: none).
- 11,075 farmer project beneficiaries (original target: 10,000, revised target: 9,000, baseline: none) using improved varieties of rice, of which 80% were women (target exceeded).
- 1,128 farmer project beneficiaries (original target: 10,000, revised target: 6,000, baseline: none) trained in Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)/System of Rice Intensification (SRI), of which 61.3% were women (target not achieved).
- 2 processing facilities were constructed through matching grant scheme for large scale enterprise (target: 3, not achieved).
- 248 Farmer-Based Organization,/Cooperatives/Small and Medium-sized Enterprise/WUAs benefited from capacity building from the project (original target: 500, revised target: 20, baseline: none). No disaggregated data was provided.

2. Outputs related to improving access to market of targeted agricultural commodities for smallholders in the Project Area:

- Market sales of rice and vegetable produce rose from 188.1 MT to 17,832 MT within 5.5 year of project intervention, which represents an increase by 7,873.9% and exceeds the target value of 200% (ICR, paragraph 31).
- Increase of volume of market sales of targeted commodities by selected producer organizations by 13,768.4 MT; increase of volume of market sales by rice producers by 12,365.4 MT due to the project; increase of volume of market sales by vegetable producers by 1,403 MT due to the project.
- Production of targeted commodities marketed by participating producers increased by 26.2% compared to a revised target of 22%, no original target was reported by the ICR.
- 38,624 direct project beneficiaries (target: 40,000, target not achieved) including household members reached, of which 1,128 are male rice producers (target: 2,500, target not achieved), 1,617 are female rice producers (target: 2,500, target not achieved), 2,744 are female vegetable producers (target: 4,000, target not achieved), 467 are young entrepreneurs (target: 500, target not achieved), and 60.8% of all direct project beneficiaries were women compared to a target of 70%, target not achieved.
- 1,014 female members of producer groups, cooperatives, and WUAs benefited from capacity building from the project (target: 2000, not achieved).
- 12 Productive Partnerships were created with project support (original target: 50, revised target: 5, baseline: none, revised target achieved).
- 2,177 entrepreneurs were trained in management skills including business planning, financial management, and marketing ((original target: 500, revised target: 200, baseline: none, target exceeded).
- 0.08% of production was sold to agribusinesses involved in the project (target 20%, not achieved).
- Sales (collected at farm level) by project beneficiaries' amount to US$ 240,063 (target: US$200,000, target exceeded).
- 7 public-private investment policy dialogue were organized with project support (target:4, target exceeded).
- 248 farmer-based organization, cooperatives, SMEs, Water User Associations benefited from capacity building from the project (no target provided).

- 3,167 MT of mango fruits were processed (target 3,500 MT, 90% achievement rate).

Outcome

As noted above the PDO has two elements:

1. To improve productivity of targeted agricultural commodities for smallholders in the project area. The project aimed to achieve the stated objective through:

(i) Improving plot irrigation through rehabilitated, extended and modernized rice and vegetable irrigation schemes. The project supported the rehabilitation and modernization of eight tidal rice irrigation schemes that totaled 2,500 hectares (target: 2500). Rehabilitation activities supported by the project included cleaning and desilting main, secondary and tertiary irrigation canals, and construction of gates and bridges to facilitate access in all seasons. The ICR did not provide information on the length of rehabilitated canals nor the number of gates and bridges constructed. The impact of the project-supported rehabilitation in terms of the availability of irrigation water to rice farmers during the growing season was not discussed in the ICR. The ICR (paragraph 29) reported that the yield for rice for two cropping seasons reached 7.9 MT/ha, representing 98.8% of the target of 8 MT/ha (4 MT/ha per cropping season, two cropping seasons). The yield for vegetables for two cropping seasons reached 14 MT/ha, representing 28% percent of the target of 50 MT/ha (25 MT/ha per cropping season, two cropping seasons). While these figures were encouraging, it is difficult to assess the actual impact of the project in the absence of baseline data and a control group. In a further communication, the project team explained that "data was available for the productivity of the rice irrigation fields and the area of rice fields cropped before project start as well as the area of vegetable gardens cropped before project start. The team therefore calculated baseline values, which serve as a good approximation for control group data and allow to show the attribution of the results to the project intervention by comparing them with data on yield and production collected regularly for each cropping season for the results framework" (Project Team interview, 2020).

To improve access to fields and facilitate transport, the project rehabilitated 21 km of rice fields feeder roads. The project also supported the establishment of 105 hectares of vegetable gardens for 21 women community groups. Each garden (5 hectares) was equipped with a peri-meter fence, a borehole, and a drip irrigation system powered by a solar energy system, including a solar panel, a water tank and pump. According to the ICR (paragraph 36) the drip irrigation system reduced the heavy labor associated with hand-watering the women-farmed vegetable plots.

(ii) Improved water management through establishment and strengthening of Water User Associations. By project completion 15 Water User Associations (WUAs) covering the eight tidal rice irrigation schemes supported under the project were composed and received training. 492 WUAs members (256 men, 236 women) were sensitized and trained on effective scheme management. While the project met its target (15 WUAs) composed and trained, only two WUAs were functioning and three WUAs established their by-laws. The impact of the WUAs on improving management of the irrigation schemes was not documented in the ICR, and only two were functional at completion.

(iii) Improving production techniques through capacity strengthening on Good Agricultural Practices, System of Rice Intensification System. A total of 301 farmers (210 women, 91 men) were trained on the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) farming method, and 111 farmers were trained on the application of soil amendments, both aimed at enhancing yields. In addition, 77 farmers (63 women, 14 men) benefited from training in post-harvest handling and value addition, and 147 farmers (140 women, 7 men) benefited from training on the operation and management of the drip line irrigation systems. The ICR reported that a total of 1,128 smallholder farmers benefited from training out of which 61.3% were women compared to a pre-restructuring target of 10,000 (i.e. an achievement rate of 11%).

(vi) Providing high quality rice seeds through the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program (WAAPP). Through WAAPP, the project provided high-yielding rice seed varieties to 11,075 rice farmers in 2015, of which 8,860 (80%) were women exceeding the pre-restructuring target of 10,000 farmers of which 70% were women. However, it was not clear whether farmers would still receive high quality seeds beyond WAAP support.

(v) Confirming land tenure rights by official land transfers for vegetable gardens. The 21 vegetable gardens associations-formed under the project, each received a land transfer certificate from their village and district heads. By project completion, four vegetable gardens received their official transfer. According to the ICR (paragraph 40) the final official transfer prepared by the area council and needed for credit applications, is currently processed and expected to be finalized for all vegetable gardens by December 2020."

Based on the above-mentioned information, the project succeeded in increasing productivity of rice but fell short on increasing vegetable productivity. The project also achieved its targets for the rehabilitation of irrigation schemes, but fell short on achieving its target on operational WUAs. The reduction in post-harvest losses was not assessed because the indicator was dropped. There were also no indicators to assess improvement in irrigation water availability as a result of the rehabilitation of irrigation schemes. Overall, the improvement in productivity was achieved despite some shortcomings. This takes into consideration the improvement in rice productivity-which is the main staple crop in Gambia and full achievement of the rehabilitation target for irrigation schemes.

2. To improve access to market of targeted agricultural commodities for smallholders in the Project Area. The project sought to achieve two outcomes. The first outcome included the increase in the volume of rice and vegetable produce through meeting the following: (i) strengthening the capacity of value chain actors; (ii) establishing commercial links between farmer associations and agribusinesses; and (iii) supporting policy dialogues. The project's second outcome also sought to contribute to an increase in the volume of mango fruits processed through: (i) supporting the rehabilitation and construction of post-harvest infrastructure; and (ii) value chain coordination. Each of these potential outcome areas will be analyzed below.

By project completion, the volume of market sales of target commodities by selected producer organizations supported by the project reached 13,768.40 metric ton compared to a target of 10,800 metric ton (target exceeded). Also, 12,365 metric ton were sold by rice producers (beneficiaries of the project) compared to a target of 9,200 metric ton, and 1,600 metric ton of vegetables were sold by vegetable producers compared to a target of 1,403 metric ton (both targets exceeded). The volume of mango fruits processed reached 3,167 MT, compared to a target of 3,500 MT (90% achievement rate).

(a) Increasing the volume of rice and vegetables through:

(i) Strengthening the capacity of value chain actors. The project provided training to vegetable and rice producers and the youth to strengthen their position in agricultural value chains. These activities aimed at engaging the youth in the sector and resulted in 90 young entrepreneurs (39 women, 51 men) establishing businesses in the areas of agricultural production and food and beverage processing. The number of entrepreneurs trained in management skills and business planning financial management, marketing, reached 2,177 exceeding the pre-restructuring target of 500. Also, the number of female members of producer groups, cooperatives, and WUAs benefiting from capacity building from the project', reached 1,014, or 50% of the expected target of 2,000 (Target not met). The number of farmer-based organization, cooperatives, SMEs, Water User Associations benefiting from capacity building from the project reached 248 exceeding the pre-restructuring target 20.

(ii) Establishing commercial links between associations and agribusinesses. The project supported the establishing productive partnerships between vegetable/rice producers and agro-processors. By project completion, 12 productive partnerships (target: 5) were built with the agro-processors Radville Farms and Gai Farms, which included the provision of seeds, fertilizer, financing of GlobalGAP certification, training and transport facilitation. These efforts resulted in signing 34 contracts, one with rice farmers and 33 with vegetable farmers. However, rice farmers were not successful in reaching national markets due to three main reasons as reported by the ICR (paragraph 45) : "(i) low quality because of limited access to rice milling facilities; (ii) long distances including river crossings; and (iii) high transaction costs, which limited their overall competitiveness."

(iii) Supporting policy dialogue. The project supported 7 public-private investment policy dialogue, compared to a pre-restructuring target of target of 8. The impact of such dialogues was not clearly discussed in the ICR.

(b) Increasing the volume of mango fruits processed was achieved through:

(i) Rehabilitating and constructing post-harvest infrastructure. To promote private sector investment, the project provided matching grants for processing equipment for agri-food processors of mango and other horticulture products. The project attempted to establish direct linkage between the project-supported mango processors with the mango out-growers supported under the Bank-funded Growth and Competitiveness project (GCP). The project provided matching grants to two mango processors which enabled them to acquire processing equipment for mango drying and juice production. As a result, the two processors contracted 200 mango out-growers, which were previously supported through the preceding GCP project. The number of processing and marketing facilities constructed/rehabilitated through matching grants for large scale enterprises reached two agro-processors compared to a target of three. That said, the ICR (paragraph 42) noted that the project also directly financed the rehabilitation of an already existing rice mill, "for which no matching grants were awarded."

(ii) Supporting value chain coordination. The project linked the mango processors supported through matching grants to 200 mango out-growers supported under GCP. The project financed a cereal processor to install and test packing equipment, which allowed it to successfully export to the US. The volume of mango fruits processed reached 3,167 MT, compared to a target of 3,500 MT. The value of incremental sales (collected at farm level) by project beneficiaries (US$) amounted to US$240,063, falling short of its pre-restructuring target of US$1.2 million. The share of production sold to agribusinesses involved in the project reached 0.08% significantly short of its pre-restructuring target of 60%. This underachievement might be partially due to the lack of an agri-bussiness on the PIU team, which might have resulted in limited follow-up on market linkages and potential partnerships not being established (ICR, paragraph 91).

By project completion, the volume of market sales of target commodities by selected producer organizations supported by the project reached 13,768.40 metric ton compared to a target of 10,800 metric ton (target exceeded). Also, 12,365 metric ton were sold by rice producers (beneficiaries of the project) compared to a target of 9,200 metric ton, and 1,600 metric ton of vegetables were sold by vegetable producers compared to a target of 1,403 metric ton (both targets exceeded). The volume of mango fruits processed reached 3,167 MT, compared to a target of 3,500 MT (90% achievement rate). Based on this information, the project succeeded in improving access to market of targeted agricultural commodities for smallholders in the project area. Outcome targets on volume of market sales were exceeded for both rice and vegetables. The volume of mange processed reached 90% of its target. However, the project achieved minimal progress on meeting its target for incremental sales by project beneficiaries as well as the production sold to agribusinesses involved in the project. Overall, improvement in market access was substantially achieved despite shortcomings. This might be partially due to the lack of an agri-bussiness on the PIU team can result in limited follow-up on market linkages and potential partnerships not being established.

Based on the above-mentioned assessment, the efficacy of achieving the stated objectives is rated Substantial despite shortcomings. This rating reflects the success of the project in increasing rice productivity- the main staple crop, and improving market access for rice and vegetables. However, the project achieved minimal progress on meeting its target for incremental sales by project beneficiaries as well as the production sold to agribusinesses involved in the project.

Rating
Substantial

OBJECTIVE 1 REVISION 1
Revised Objective
PDO: to improve productivity and access to market of targeted agricultural commodities for smallholders in the Project Area.
As stated the PDO has two elements:
1.To improve productivity of targeted agricultural commodities for smallholders in the Project Area; and
2. To improve access to market of targeted agricultural commodities for smallholders in the Project Area.

Revised Rationale
The PDO was not revised, but several outcome targets were scaled back. According to the ICR (paragraph 21) "the changes in PDO indicator targets do reflect a reduction in the project's ambition and a split rating is therefore required. The PDO was unchanged and the project scope in terms of number of beneficiaries targeted and area covered under the project remained unaffected. Yet, the changes in PDO targets reflect: (i) more reasonable, clear, and precise objectives; and (ii) unexpected delays in project implementation resulting in late start of agricultural production; and (iii) limited access to necessary on-farm equipment." The restructuring happened at a late stage of project implementation.

Theory of Change (ToC). The ToC remained the same as mentioned above.

Outputs

The same outputs mentioned above apply since the PDO was not revised.

Outcomes

The project activities remained the same. The following table reflects the changes in outcome/intermediate outcome indicator targets after restructuring:

PDO/intermediate outcome indicator	Original Target	For nal
PDO indicator 1b. Increase in production of targeted commodities due to the project – vegetables	20,000 MT	2,00 M
PDO indicator 2a. Increase in yield of targeted crops – rice	8 MT/ha	4 M /ha
PDO indicator 2b. Increase in yield of targeted crops – vegetables	50 MT/ha	30 M T/h
Intermediate Outcome indicator 1.3. Farmers project beneficiaries using improved varieties of rice and vegetables	10,000	9,00
Intermediate Outcome indicator 1.4. Farmers trained in Good Agricultural Practices/System of Rice Intensification techniques	10,000	6,00
Share of production sold to agribusinesses involved in the project (new)	60%	20%

The project increased vegetable production to 1,829 MT which was 91% of the formally revised target of 2,000 MT. Also, rice yields reached 3.9 MT/ha which was about 98% of the formally revised target of 4 MT/ha. However, the increase in vegetable yields reached 14 MT/ha which was about 47% of the formally revised target of 30 MT/ha. Also, the share of production sold to agribusinesses involved in the project reached 0.08% significantly short of its post-restructuring target of 20%.

The same information reported under the outcome of the original objective applies to this objective as well.

Based on the above-mentioned assessment (under the original objective) and the achievements post restructuring, the efficacy of achieving the stated objectives is rated Substantial despite shortcomings. This rating reflects the success of the project in increasing rice productivity-the main staple crop, and improving market access for rice and vegetables. However, the project achieved minimal progress on meeting its target for incremental sales by project beneficiaries as well as the production sold to agribusinesses involved in the project.

Revised Rating
Substantial

OVERALL EFFICACY

Rationale

Overall pre-restructuring efficacy is rated Substantial despite some shortcomings. This rating reflects the success of the project in increasing rice productivity-the main staple crop, and improving market access for rice and vegetables. However, the project achieved minimal progress on meeting its target for incremental sales by project beneficiaries as well as the production sold to agribusinesses involved in the project.

Overall Efficacy Rating

Substantial

OVERALL EFFICACY REVISION 1

Overall Efficacy Revision 1 Rationale

Overall post-restructuring efficacy is rated Substantial despite some shortcomings. This rating reflects the success of the project in increasing rice productivity-the main staple crop, and improving market access for rice and vegetables. However, the project achieved minimal progress on meeting its target for incremental sales by project beneficiaries as well as the production sold to agribusinesses involved in the project.

Overall Efficacy Revision 1 Rating

Substantial

5. Efficiency

Economic and Financial Efficiency

ex ante

- The economic and financial analysis at appraisal estimated that the project would generate an Economic Internal Rate of Return (EIRR) and a Financial Internal Rate of Return (FIRR) of 61% over a ten years time frame which was higher than the discount rate of 12%.
- The estimation of the financial and economic benefit was based on the cash flows (revenue) with a five-year and a ten-year projection as the project's maximum time period for making both social and economic impacts, and to be sustained. The project impact is expected to start materializing on the second year of project implementation given the works and equipment needed.
- A sensitivity analysis was carried out to test the robustness of results of the financial and economic assessment. The FIRR varied between 20% and 55% while the EIRR varied between 21% and 56% in a

ten-year horizons under the following scenarios: a decrease by 50% of rice yield (2 tons/hectare, two times a year) or a decrease by 50% of millet rice price (US$299/ton); a decrease by 50% of vegetables yield (12.5 tons/hectare, two times a year) or 50% of post-harvest losses or 50% decrease of price (US$325/ton for onion and US$390/ton for tomato); an increase by 50% of rice and vegetable production costs, and a-two year lag of the completion of the works of the rehabilitation of the schemes assuming production starts in the year 3 of project implementation instead of the second year. However, a combined decrease by 50% of rice and vegetable yield or prices led to a FIRR of 22% and an EIRR of 23% (PAD, paragraph 98).

ex post

- The EFA at completion estimated the FIRR at 31.4% for 10 years, and 35.7% for 15 years and the EIRR was estimated at 32.9% for 10 years, and 37.1% for 15 years. The associated NPV for 10 years amounts to US$ 3.9 million and for 15 years to US$ 7.2 million. These estimates were lower than the appraisal estimates of 61% for both the FIRR and EIRR due to the underestimation of the costs related to the irrigation equipment established in the vegetable gardens and lower production/productivity outcomes (ICR, paragraph 49).
- The analysis followed the same methodology at appraisal where a single Cost-Benefit Analysis for project investments in vegetable gardens and rice irrigation schemes was conducted. Data from all investment sites was collected by an independent consultant through field visits, progress and annual reports provided by the implementation unit, as well as literature reviews. While the analysis used the same discount rate as applied at appraisal (12%), the time horizon was extended from 10 to 15 years.
- Social Benefits. The drip irrigation system installed in the vegetable gardens facilitated the work and reduced the time needed for water the crop. The women farmers involved in vegetable production could use their time towards other productive work and generate additional income (ICR, paragraph 50).
- Cost efficiency. Comparisons with other projects in The Gambia showed that the project was within the norms of cost efficiency. The cost per hectare for vegetable garden equipment accrued to US$49,609, or US$23,161 without drip irrigation system, and the cost per hectare for rice irrigation scheme rehabilitation amounted to US$2,411. These costs were in line with costs of similar activities implemented under two projects implemented in The Gambia, the Food and Agriculture Sector Development Project (FASDEP) and the National Agricultural Land and Water Management Development Project (Nema). The investment costs per hectare under FASDEP and Nema amounted to US$27,100 and US$30,500 respectively, which compares favorably to investment costs under this project at US$23,161 per hectare. The investment costs for irrigation schemes per hectare under FASDEP and Nema were US$7,500 and US$5,250 respectively, compared to US$2,411 per ha for GCAV. However, costs per hectare under FASDEP and Nema cannot be directly compared to GCAV, as FASDEP invested in constructing new rice irrigation schemes, Nema in the rehabilitation of existing irrigation schemes that needed substantial redesigning, while GCAV invested in the rehabilitation of existing irrigation schemes that needed no substantial redesigning (ICR paragraph 51).
- A sensitivity analysis was conducted using the same adverse scenarios as done at appraisal. The FIRR varies between 6.3% and 35.2% in the ten-year period. The EIRR ranges between 7.5% and 36.6% in the ten-year period.

Administrative and Institutional Efficiency

While the project closed on time, it experienced implementation delays that resulted in late start of agricultural production (ICR, paragraph 21). These delays were due to two reasons beyond the control of the implementation unit. First, local bidding for the irrigation equipment of the vegetable gardens received no satisfactory bids at the national level and an international bidding process was initiated. Second, during contract execution, delivery of equipment from abroad was delayed mainly due to the political turmoil in 2016/17. Finally, while this is outside the control of the project, the depreciation of the SDR against the US Dollar and the US Dollar against the Gambian Dalasi (GMD) resulted in an exchange rate loss of US$1.93 million (ICR, paragraph 79).

Overall, efficiency is rated Substantial. The ex post EIRR was lower than the ex ante, but still higher than the discount rate. The cost efficiency analysis showed that the project investments were within the acceptable levels in the country. There were administrative weaknesses that resulted in implementation delays, but these were beyond the control of the implementation unit.

Efficiency Rating

Substantial

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

	Rate Available?	Point value (%)	*Coverage/Scope (%)
Appraisal	✓	61.00	0 ☑ Not Applicable
ICR Estimate	✓	32.90	0 ☑ Not Applicable

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

6. Outcome

Pre-Restructuring

Relevance of Objectives was rated Substantial. Overall pre-restructuring efficacy is rated Substantial despite some shortcomings. This rating reflects the success of the project in increasing rice productivity-the main staple crop, and improving market access for rice and vegetables. However, the project achieved minimal progress on meeting its target for incremental sales by project beneficiaries as well as the production sold to agribusinesses involved in the project. Efficiency was rated substantial as ex post EIRR was higher than the discount rate.

Based on a Substantial rating for all three criteria (Relevance of Objectives, Efficacy and Efficiency), Outcome is rated Satisfactory.

Post Restructuring

Relevance of Objectives was rated Substantial. Overall post-restructuring efficacy is rated Substantial despite some shortcomings. This rating reflects the success of the project in increasing rice productivity-the main staple crop, and improving market access for rice and vegetables. However, the project achieved minimal progress on meeting its target for incremental sales by project beneficiaries as well as the production sold to agribusinesses involved in the project. Efficiency was rated substantial as ex post EIRR was higher than the discount rate.

Based on a Substantial rating for all three criteria (Relevance of Objectives, Efficacy and Efficiency), Outcome is rated Satisfactory.

Split Rating

Rating Dimension	Original Objective	Objective after revision
Relevance of Objective	Substantial	Substantial
Efficacy	Substantial	Substantial
Efficiency	Substantial	Substantial
Outcome Rating/Rating Value	Satisfactory (5)	Satisfactory (5)
Amount Dispersed (US$ million)	$14.36 million	$0.18million
Disbursement (%)	98,8%	1.2%
Weight Value	4.94	0.06
Total Weights	5	
Overall Outcome Rating	Satisfactory	

The overall outcome rating is rated as satisfactory.

a. Outcome Rating
Satisfactory

7. Risk to Development Outcome

The ICR discussed the following three issues that could impact the development outcome:

- Limited Water Supply. There is a risk of low rice productivity as all WUAs are not functioning effectively resulting in limited water availability. Water User Associations need further strengthening through sensitization and training, establishment of by-laws, community building efforts and building market linkages to provide incentives. While the Ministry of Agriculture expressed its readiness to provide necessary support, substantial efforts are needed to mitigate this risk (ICR, paragraph 101).
- Low Capacity. There is a risk that women farmers will be unable to properly maintain the vegetable garden drip irrigation system and apply good agricultural practices or experience unfavorable access

to markets due to limited experience. Women farmers would benefit from operation and maintenance training and continuous support to build their capacity. The ICR (paragraph 102) noted that the Ministry of Agriculture was discussing a maintenance contract on the irrigation equipment with the contractor to be signed by all gardens by the end of May 2020. The sustainability of the vegetable gardens is at risk if the maintenance of the drip networks is not addressed.

- Potential Limited Market Demand. There is a risk that farmers might discontinue the maintenance or practice of the provided technologies due to limited demand. Connecting farmers to markets and contract enforcement are key to engaging farmers. If farmers face marketing bottlenecks, supply side efforts might be reduced. This could potentially lead to poor maintenance of the rehabilitated infrastructure or not using it to its full potential, as already visible in the rice irrigation schemes (ICR, paragraph 103). The mitigation of this risk lies in strengthening farmers access to markets. The Ministry of Agriculture is aware of this limitation and plans to support both rice and vegetable producers in this area. Yet, these efforts still need to be planned.

8. Assessment of Bank Performance

a. Quality-at-Entry

The project aimed to build on and complement the on-going Bank-funded operations, notably the Gambia Growth and Competitiveness Project (GCP) and the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program (WAAPP 1C). It would contribute to the Government's strategy on market-oriented agriculture growth and support the agriculture sector to become more competitive and private sector-led, and strengthen value chain coordination to generate higher incomes, particularly for women. Design benefited from the coordination between the Bank team and other development partners during project preparation, particularly with the teams of the National Agricultural Land and Water Management Development Project and the Food and Agriculture Sector Development Project projects (ICR, paragraph 64). Design also benefited from previous lessons and experience in the country and in Africa. Notable lessons reflected in the project design include: provision of long term support for farmer-based organizations to ensure sustainability; and recovery of operating and maintenance costs through water charges and beneficiaries' ownership is key to sustainability of irrigation schemes.

Design featured an integrated approach that links higher productivity of target crops to improved access to markets, and supports farmers to utilize the project-provided modern technology and knowledge to maximize incomes. Design also relied on a demand-driven approach in the selection of project sites and supported the rehabilitation of rice irrigation schemes in parallel with institutional strengthening. However, the design suffered from three notable weaknesses as correctly pointed out by the ICR (paragraph 97), first, the cost of the drip irrigation technology for the vegetable gardens was underestimated at appraisal; second, the assumption that matching grants for the establishment of productive agricultural equipment would promote investment by producer and youth groups did not materialize and the related activities were cancelled; and third, design featured a Results Framework that reflected ambitious targets and lacked baseline data, and with the absence of control groups attribution of the project was difficult.

Six main risks were identified at appraisal with an overall rating of substantial. Relevant mitigation measures were included in the PAD. The ICR (paragraph 96) reported that fiduciary and procurement

risk mitigation measures were implemented and improved performance in these two areas. M&E suffered from design shortcomings that made assessing the project outcomes challenging (see section 9 for more details).

Based on the above-mentioned assessment, Quality at Entry is rated Moderately Satisfactory. This rating reflects design weaknesses and M&E shortcomings.

Quality-at-Entry Rating
Moderately Satisfactory

b. Quality of supervision

The project was implemented under a difficult political environment related to the presidential elections in 2016/17, and experienced extreme weather events that resulted in flooding in 2016, 2017, and 2018 (ICR, paragraphs 80 and 81).

During the first three years of implementation, the project benefited from the Bank's support on procurement and financial management. The team also worked with the Government to address the financing gap and provided appropriate advice and remedial actions. The mid-term review (MTR) was conducted in 2018, two years later than expected. According to the ICR (paragraph 98) the MTR "recommended a set of actions to be taken to ensure a successful completion of the project." Despite initial implementation delays of works such as the rehabilitation of the rice irrigation schemes and the installation of the irrigation equipment in the vegetable gardens, all works were completed by May 2018, approximately 1.5 years before project closing (ICR, paragraph 69). The Bank team also worked to strengthen the capacity of the implementation unit in the areas of procurement, financial management, and M&E (ICR, paragraph 73). However, the implementation unit experienced high staff turnover of project coordinators.

Bank supervision suffered from two notable weaknesses. First, supervision of safeguards was poor and only improved in 2018 as the Bank team changed. Poor supervision of safeguards was exacerbated by the lack of an environmental and social safeguards specialists on the implementation unit team. Second, the TTL of the project acted as a country representative during the 2016/17 political turmoil. According to the ICR (paragraph 99) this limited the time the TTL could dedicate to the project team. The situation became more difficult when the country office was evacuated, and Bank supervision relied totally on desk reviews and video conference calls. This situation resulted in a delayed MTR and consequently delayed the second restructuring of the Results Framework. While the political turmoil was outside of the control of the Bank, the project could have benefited from earlier action to restructure the Results Framework.

Quality of Supervision is rated Moderately Unsatisfactory. This rating reflects various shortcomings, including poor supervision of environmental and social safeguards and delayed action to restructure the Results Framework.

Bank Performance is rated Moderately Unsatisfactory which reflects some weaknesses for Quality at Entry and significant supervision shortcomings.

Quality of Supervision Rating
Moderately Unsatisfactory

Overall Bank Performance Rating
Moderately Unsatisfactory

9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization

a. M&E Design
While the PAD did not include an explicit Theory of Change, it included a detailed Results Chain that reflected the connections between project activities, outputs/intermediate outcomes, outcomes and impacts (PAD, page 36). The PDO was to be assessed through five key outcome indicators:

1. The increase in production (Tons) of targeted commodities (rice target: 46,000 ton, Vegetables: 20,000) ;

2. Increase in yield of targeted crops (Rice: 8 ton/ha, Vegetables: 25 ton/ha);

3. Increase in the volume of market sales of target commodities by selected producer organizations supported by the project (target: 200%);

4. The percent reduction in post-harvest losses from farmers having access to the post-harvest infrastructure under the project (target: a reduction from 30% at baseline to 10% at completion); and

5. Direct project beneficiaries (target: 40,000).

The first two indicators were directly linked to the PDO and measurable, but the PAD did not plan on conducting a baseline. The third indicator aimed to capture the achievement of the second element of the PDO (improve market access). It was directly linked to the PDO and measurable, but also lacked a baseline. The fourth indicator would also assess improved market access and reflect the project efforts to improve the connection between the producer and consumer of agriculture commodities. The fifth PDO indicator tracks the number of direct project beneficiaries, including household members.

The RF included seventeen intermediate outcome indicators to assess the activities under the project components. Most were relevant and measurable, but lacked baseline data.

M&E design suffered from notable shortcomings (ICR, paragraph 83). First, the indicator on vegetable production and productivity was measured in metric tons. This was misleading because different produce skew the overall achievement and is prone to changes during implementation. Second, the indicator on increase of volume of market sales was not clearly defined as it did not specify whether it referred to volume (MT) or value in US$. Third, the RF lacked any indicators to assess improvement in the availability of irrigation water.

b. M&E Implementation

The project implementation unit had the overall responsibility of the project M&E activities. According to the ICR (paragraph 85) the project's M&E activities provided systematic management information on implementation activities, procurement and disbursement, and provided the basis for regular project reports of "good quality." M&E activities benefited from the capacity training provided by the Bank. However, there were inaccurate derivation of certain target values and misinterpretation of certain indicators in the Results Framework. The ICR (paragraph 85) attributed these shortcomings to "frequent changes in the M&E function and high workloads." However, the M&E software envisioned at appraisal never became operational due to technical issues. Alternatively, the implementation unit relied on Excel sheets to record the collected data.

Restructuring and revision of the RF. During the second restructuring in October 2018, the targets for both the first and second PDO indicators were revised down, the third PDO indicator was broken down into specific indicators, to allow for a more precise estimation of project results, the fourth PDO indicator was dropped. In addition, 4 intermediate indicators were dropped; 5 were replaced by new indicators; 7 amended; and 1 new indicator was introduced during the second restructuring. Changes in the PDO indicators targets were logical given the unexpected delays in project implementation resulting in late start of agricultural production; and limited access to necessary on-farm equipment (ICR, paragraph 21). However, dropping the indicator on post-harvest losses is questionable because some project activities were expected to reduce post-harvest loses.

M&E implementation was challenging and initially suffered from limited capacity, and the intended software was not used as envisioned.

c. M&E Utilization

According to the ICR (paragraph 86) M&E reported on implementation progress and informed project management and supported decision-making. This was demonstrated by the decision to cancel the matching grant scheme and undertake relevant changes in the Results Framework. The M&E findings also guided the project through two restructurings, and allowed the project to address financing gaps and accommodate implementation delays during the first four years of project implementation.

Overall, M&E had notable design shortcomings including lack of baselines and controls, implementation was challenging with concerns on the quality of data due to inaccurate derivation of certain outcome values, yet the available data was utilized to guide project management to the extent possible.

Based on the above-mentioned assessment, M&E Quality is rated Modest.

M&E Quality Rating
Modest

10. Other Issues

a. Safeguards
The project was rated category B as it was not expected to induce significant adverse environmental and social impacts. Four safeguards policies were triggered: Environmental Assessment (OP/BP 4.01); Pest Management (OP 4.09); Involuntary Resettlement (OP/BP 4.12), and Projects on International Waterway (OP/BP 7.50). Some of the planned activities such as rehabilitation of tidal irrigation schemes, construction of processing facilities, and productive sub-projects could result in localized, remediable environmental impacts. Relevant framework instruments (Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF), a Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF) and a Pest Management Plan (PMP)) were prepared, consulted upon, approved and disclosed in-country January 28, 2014 and at the Bank Infoshop January 27, 2014. A riparian notification exception was provided by the Regional Vice President (RVP) on February 11, 2014 for OP/BP 7.50, as the project interventions were determined to fall within notification exception provided for under paragraph 7(a) of OP7.50.

Environmental and Social Safeguards Compliance. The ICR did not provide an explicit statement on compliance, but stated that "environmental and social safeguard compliance were rated Satisfactory until the MTR in February 2018, when environmental safeguards were rated Unsatisfactory and social safeguards Moderately Unsatisfactory. Overall safeguards were rated Unsatisfactory from June 2018 to June 2019, and Moderately Unsatisfactory from June 2019 to project closing (ICR, paragraph 89)." Supervision of environmental and social safeguards by the Bank was poor through most of the project and up until early 2018 when the Bank team was changed and weaknesses were addressed. Safeguard compliance also was negatively impacted by the failure to recruit safeguard specialists (including a pest management specialist and a social specialist) as envisioned at appraisal. While an environmental and social audit report was prepared, the lack of follow-through coupled with a lack of social and environmental specialists in the implementation unit hindered achieving a satisfactory compliance with safeguard requirements (ICR, paragraph 89). A Bank supervision mission in 2018 reported a possible non-compliance of OP4.12 (Involuntary Resettlement). The Bank asked the implementation unit to conduct a social audit of all vegetable gardens and rice fields regarding this issue. According to the ICR (paragraph 91) the social audit found that vegetable farmers were displaced and incurred income losses, however, the affected farmers were not provided financial compensation or temporary replacement of land to continue production. This issue was not resolved even though the project closed. The ICR (paragraph 92) reported that a functioning Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) was not put in place by the project despite that the implementation unit received training to put a GRM in place. It appears that limited funding combined with the lack of appropriate social and environmental safeguard specialists were the main causes for not putting a GRM in place (ICR, paragraph 92).

b. Fiduciary Compliance
Financial Management (FM). According to the ICR (paragraph 94) the quality of financial reports was acceptable, but submission was frequently delayed. While audit reports of the financial

statements were submitted regularly, interim unaudited financial reports were submitted with delays. The audited financial statements of 2014 and 2015 as well as the statements from 2016, 2017 and 2018 all received an unqualified (clean) opinion. The audit reports were acceptable to the Bank, but not all recommendations made by the auditors were addressed on time. The ICR (paragraph 94) reported that "the project was not in agreement with the legal covenant as the Gambian Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS)."

While financial management risks were mitigated through recruitment and capacity building, FM suffered from poor budget management, weaknesses in cash forecasting and a weak internal control environment. These weaknesses contributed to a financial gap as some expenses were not fully covered in the financial management system. Also, over payment and unidentified debits were found, and the project exhausted its resources two years before project closing. The ICR (paragraph 93) noted that the Government agreed to fully cover this financial gap.

Procurement. Procurement activities were slow due to lack of capacity at the implementation unit, which contributed to slow disbursement of funds. Procurement activities and disbursement of funds improved after the Bank provided relevant training and procurement officers were hired by the implementation unit. According to the ICR (paragraph 95) "no cases of mis-procurement were found and no complaints from contractors or other stakeholders were received."

c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)

None

d. Other

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11. Ratings

Ratings	ICR	IEG	Reason for Disagreements/Comment
Outcome	Moderately Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Rating did not change. The ICR rated Relevance of Objectives High, Efficacy and Efficiency were both Substantial pre and post restructuring which should result in an overall outcome rating of Satisfactory as reported by the ICR Review.
Bank Performance	Moderately Unsatisfactory	Moderately Unsatisfactory	
Quality of M&E	Modest	Modest	
Quality of ICR	---	Substantial	

12. Lessons

The ICR included eight lessons. The following three lessons are emphasized with some adaptation of language:

- **Outcome targets need to be carefully considered at the appraisal stage to ensure that the project could achieve its outcome.** Overly optimistic targets, missing baseline and control groups and late restructuring can make attribution trying and critically affect project outcome. The Bank must ensure that targets are based on reasonable assumptions, with clear road maps for setting baseline values and, when appropriate, establishing well developed control groups. Also, early restructurings could help rectify any weaknesses in the Results Framework and allow enough time for the achievement of results.
- **In fragile countries, ensuring safeguard and environmental compliance requires active support from the Bank specialists.** The project experience demonstrated that the lack of guidance by the Bank team on environmental and social safeguards as well as the lack of environmental and social specialists in the Project Implementation Unit (PIU), critically affected safeguards compliance for four years. Bank teams need to provide regular and extensive guidance on environmental and social compliance from project inception. Environmental and social safeguard experts need be appointed by the PIU for the duration of project implementation. Experts could be drawn from other PIUs who already built the necessary capacity and would allow for cost sharing.
- **The capacity of beneficiaries needs to carefully assessed at appraisal in order to design adequate activities that can be successfully implemented.** Limited knowledge about the management and technical capacity of Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs), producer and youth groups or their inadequate consideration in project design can jeopardize their successful engagement in the project. The Bank team should therefore properly assess the capacity of MSMEs, producer and youth groups at appraisal to inform project design on value chain activities. For example, the Bank must ensure that matching grant schemes are adjusted to the lender's capability with respect to the beneficiaries' contribution. Also, effective operation of WUAs needs governing by-laws in place, and farmers need to be sensitized and trained to ensure proper ownership of irrigation infrastructures.

13. Assessment Recommended?

No

14. Comments on Quality of ICR

Quality of Evidence. The ICR acknowledged that M&E design had shortcomings and implementation was challenging. The ICR (paragraph 85) also acknowledged that there were inaccurate derivation of certain target values and misinterpretation of certain indicators in the Results Framework.

Quality of Analysis. The ICR provided clear linking between evidence and findings to the extent possible - given the M&E weaknesses. However, the lack of baseline data and control groups raises concern on the attribution of the project results.

Lessons were generally based on evidence and analysis, and reflected the project experience.

Results Orientation. The ICR included a good discussion on outcomes despite concerns on the accuracy of the M&E data.

Internal Consistency. Various parts of the ICR were internally consistent and logically linked and integrated.

Consistency with guidelines. The ICR used the available data-to the extent possible, to justify the assigned ratings. Discussion of outcomes was thorough, but could have benefited from more details on the reasons that hindered achieving the outcome targets pre-restructuring.

Conciseness. The ICR was well written and provided thorough coverage of the implementation experience and candidly reported on shortcomings. There was enough clarity in the report's messaging.

The ICR could have provided more information on the reason(s) for an overall outcome rating of Moderately Satisfactory beyond being in agreement with the outcome rating in the final ISR. According to the ICR Manual (page 43) a High rating on Relevance of Objectives, Substantial rating on overall Efficacy, and a Substantial rating on Efficiency should have been a rated Satisfactory instead of Moderately Satisfactory as reported by the ICR. This was an important and unfortunate oversight in the ICR.

The ICR could have provided explicit statements on compliance with Bank's safeguard policies. Also, outputs in Annex 1 lacked targets.

Overall, the Quality of the ICR is rated Substantial despite some minor shortcomings.

a. Quality of ICR Rating
Substantial