



1. Project Data

Project ID P130888	Project Name BRICKS (PSG)	
Country Western Africa	Practice Area(Lead) Environment, Natural Resources & the Blue Economy	
L/C/TF Number(s) TF-14804,TF-14805,TF-14806	Closing Date (Original) 30-Jun-2019	Total Project Cost (USD) 4,626,266.84
Bank Approval Date 04-Sep-2013	Closing Date (Actual) 30-Jun-2019	
	IBRD/IDA (USD)	Grants (USD)
Original Commitment	4,629,630.00	4,629,630.00
Revised Commitment	4,629,630.00	4,626,266.84
Actual	4,629,583.72	4,626,266.84

Prepared by Chikako Miwa	Reviewed by Fernando Manibog	ICR Review Coordinator Christopher David Nelson	Group IEGSD (Unit 4)
------------------------------------	--	---	--------------------------------

2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

The combined Project Development Objective and Global Environment Objective of the Building Resilience Through Innovation, Communication and Knowledge Services (BRICKS) project is to improve accessibility of best practices and monitoring information within the Sahel and West Africa Program portfolio on sustainable land use and management (Global Environment Facility Grant Agreement, Schedule 1, page 5).



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

No

c. Will a split evaluation be undertaken?

No

d. Components

Component 1 - Knowledge management (Appraisal cost: US\$2.36 million, Actual cost: US\$2.14 million)

Carrying out a program of activities aimed at ensuring the exchange of operational knowledge inside and outside the Sahel and West Africa Program in support of the Great Green Wall Initiative (SAWAP) Portfolio, encompassing four activities. First, organizing SAWAP portfolio teams and key stakeholders for structured learning, including: (i) establishing a regional decision support web portal; (ii) identifying and disseminating best practices; and (iii) holding regular south-south training for the SAWAP Portfolio teams. Second, providing competitive regional innovation small-grants to beneficiaries to develop relevant information and communication tools that can potentially be used in the SAWAP Portfolio and broader GGWI. Third, establishing, in coordination with IUCN and OSS, an operational services facility for the SAWAP Portfolio on key implementation topics related to environmental public goods by developing and maintaining a list of proven experts on environment public goods, and brokering the delivery of such experts to country projects in the SAWAP Portfolio. Fourth, carrying out a series of regional environmental economic analyses on successful natural resource management approaches, in coordination with IUCN and OSS.

Component 2 – Program monitoring support (Appraisal cost: US\$1.65 million, Actual cost: US\$1.44 million)

Establishing and promoting an impact evaluation platform that improves the sharing of existing relevant impact evaluations, findings, methodologies and expertise, advocates for the use of impact evaluations in project and policy development and implementation, and assembles a cadre of impact evaluation practitioners that could be contracted by Participating Countries with projects in the SAWAP Portfolio.

Component 3 - Project management (Appraisal cost: US\$0.62 million, Actual cost: US\$1.04 million)

Assisting the Recipient in managing the project, including assistance in the establishment of an implementation unit, the preparation of the project's audits and progress reports and the recruitment of staff required for the purpose.

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

Project Cost: At appraisal, the original cost estimate was US\$4,629,630. The actual cost was US\$4,626,244 (ICR, Annex 4, page 51-52).

Financing: At appraisal, the GEF grant was estimated at US\$4,629,630. The GEF grant induced co-financing, which included direct co-financing and parallel financing by TerrAfrica Leveraging Fund (TLF). At appraisal, the total co-financing was estimated at US\$10,000,000. The actual GEF grant and the total co-financing was US\$4,626,244 and US\$13,638,002, respectively (ICR, Annex 4, page 51-52). At completion, the disbursed GEF grant amounted to US\$4.62 million, almost all of the estimated GEF cost at appraisal. It



leveraged co-financing of about US\$13.6 million, as follows: in-kind contributions from implementing agencies (US\$5.1 million), contributions from SAWAP individual projects (US\$0.8 million), direct contribution from TLF (US\$0.7 million), and parallel financing from TLF (US\$7 million) (ICR, Annex 4, page 51). The co-financing increased from US\$10 million at appraisal to US\$13.6 million at project closure, improving the co-financing ratio from 2.2 : 1 to 2.9 : 1, respectively.

Dates: As requested by Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), the project was restructured in February 2018 to reallocate US\$100,000 from category 2, which was the fund related to regional small-grants, to category 1, which was the fund for general expenses (ICR, para. 22, page 12). The project closed on June 30, 2019, as originally planned.

A split evaluation was deemed unnecessary, as the PDOs, the outcome targets, the PDO Indicators, and the components remained unchanged during implementation.

3. Relevance of Objectives

Rationale

Regional Context. Land deterioration had been a shared concern among the countries in the Sahel region. Land consisted of 70 percent of total natural resource base, providing essential resource for 70 percent of rural employment and 70 percent of energy use through fuel wood and charcoal (TerrAfrica/FAO/WB 2010; ICR, para. 1, page 5). Economies and livelihoods of the Sahel had been heavily dependent on the use of natural resources, without sustainable measures to manage the natural resources. The natural resources degradation led to an increase in human vulnerability among the Sahelian population, of which 83 percent lived in extreme poverty and 15 million people had been facing food insecurity from the 2011 drought.

To address the environmental challenges faced by the Sahel region, the Great Green Wall Initiative (GGWI) was established as an African initiative. The GGWI's objective was to improve sustainability and resilience of the Sahel region and to empower the population living in the region by strengthening natural resources management, mitigating climate change risks, and supporting rural employment.

Sector Context. Improved institutional governance and evidence-based decision making was critical to scale up successes on sustainable land management. The Bank developed the Sahel and West Africa Program (SAWAP), which was a portfolio umbrella with 12 independent country-led investment operations financed by IDA, GEF and trust funds, as the Bank's main support to the GGWI. The SAWAP objective was to expand sustainable land and water management in targeted landscapes and in climate vulnerable areas in West African and Sahelian countries. At the regional level, SAWAP country projects did not have a regional platform to share and receive best practices and monitoring information. At the national level, national institutions were not well equipped to tackle issues of sustainable land management. Shifts in planning and managing adoption of improved land use practices are all highly knowledge-intensive, yet countries are not fully equipped to respond to these interwoven challenges that compromise economic growth and equity. An absence of a regional data platform caused each country to address natural resources management issues in an isolated manner, with limited access to information on the past interventions in similar circumstances. Specifically, main concerns of the national institutions and sectors were their lack of capacity to: (i) monitor natural resources management processes and



assess adoption levels to improve management planning, (ii) generate and disseminate knowledge and data on key environmental dimensions such as climate risk factors, changes in species composition, carbon pools, and the degradation of land and water resources, (iii) plan and budget strategically for scaling up proven technologies and approaches across relevant sectors, and (iv) effectively respond to severe natural resources degradation and natural disasters.

As part of the SAWAP, the Bank developed a regional project on BRICKS (this project), aiming to operationalize the vision of Knowledge Bank by providing a regional data platform to connect the 12 SAWAP country project teams and partners working on the GGWI and by enhancing south-south learning, uses of M&E tools and geo-spatial technologies, and biodiversity and portfolio-wide strategic communication.

Relevance to Bank Strategies. At appraisal, the Bank supported the GGWI and the SWAP through improvements in knowledge sharing and sustainable land management monitoring. This BRICKS project was aligned with the Bank's Africa Development Strategy, titled *Africa's Future, and the World Bank's Support to It (2011)*. This project contributed to implementation of Pillar 2 (vulnerability and resilience) while strengthening capacity of the public sectors among West African and Sahelian countries. This BRICKS project was also in line with the Bank's Climate Change Strategy of the Africa Region as it promoted sustainable land management for climate change adaptation and mitigation. In addition, the project was relevant to the Bank's country assistance strategies for the 12 participating countries to SAWAP, namely: Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sudan, and Togo. The project supported the 12 countries to make targeted investments under SAWAP umbrella to manage natural resources and climate change risks. At project closure, this project was aligned with the World Bank Africa Strategy for 2019–2023 titled *Supporting Africa's Transformation*, as this project contributed to supporting climate change mitigation and adaptation and making more efficient and accountable institutions. The project was also in line with the World Bank Group Climate Change Action Plan 2016-2020, as it supported Priority III: Scale Up Climate Action and Priority IV: Align Internal Processes and Work with Others. The project remained relevant to the Bank's 12 country assistance strategies. The ICR summarized the relevance of project objectives to the country assistance strategies for the 12 countries at appraisal and at completion in Table 3, page 14. To complement Table 3, the Bank's country assistance strategy to Mauritania at project closure (Report No. 125012-MR) also made references to improving land management under CPF Objective 1.2: Increase agriculture and livestock production in the face of climate change. Moreover, the project was relevant to the new global priorities for GEF projects.

Relevance to Government Strategies. At appraisal, the project was relevant to global and regional initiatives on sustainable resource management that the majority of the national governments of the 12 SAWAP countries supported, such as the GGWI, TerrAfrica, and the Sahel Initiative. At project closure, the ICR (para. 25, page 13) noted that the project was relevant to national development strategies and policies.

Institutional Capacity and Realism. There were three regional institutions which had essential roles in implementation of the project. First, the Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) was the project's Implementing Agency. CILSS led regional knowledge management and dissemination (Component 1) under the BRICKS project, working collaboratively with the other two regional institutions and regional and national stakeholders. Second, the Sahel and Sahara Observatory (OSS) was a Borrower for the project. OSS provided support to the SAWAP countries on M&E and geo-spatial tools for resources and results monitoring. Third, the West and Central Africa Office of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) was another Borrower. IUCN supported the SAWAP countries on



biodiversity and strategic communication. At appraisal, the PAD (para. 46, page 13) indicated that there were capacity issues for OSS and CILSS due to a lack of focus on development through sustainable natural resource management. The PAD suggested the participation of OSS and CILSS would strengthen the ownership of the agenda and improve technical capacity to address sustainable growth in the region. At project closure, capacities of the three regional institutions were improved overall, though financial management capacity of CILSS showed shortcomings, as discussed in Section 10.b.

Rating

High

4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)

OBJECTIVE 1

Objective

To improve accessibility of best practices and monitoring information within the Sahel and West Africa Program (SAWAP) portfolio on sustainable land use and management

Rationale

Theory of Change (TOC) for the project: As described in section 3 above, in order to address environmental challenges in the Sahel, especially land deterioration, the GGWI aimed to improve sustainable land management. To support the GGWI, the SAWAP aimed to improve evidence-based policy making. This project, BRICKS, aimed to support the GGWI and the SAWAP to achieve their objectives by providing operational services to country projects to help identify regional and global innovations, promote them through better communication, and put that knowledge into use. BRICKS envisioned to address a bottleneck experienced by the GGWI and the SAWAP, which was a lack of means and capacities for region-wide knowledge management on best practices and monitoring information.

Under the project, provision of the following inputs would lead to key outputs: technical support for a regional online platform, M&E and geo-spatial tools, participatory training on M&E and geo-spatial analysis, expert M&E support through consultants, competitive regional innovation small grants for technical assistance to develop low-cost information and communication tools, and technical support to develop and implement a regional communication strategy. The key outputs were: (1) the establishment of a regional online platform for sharing program data and best practices among the SAWAP participating countries, (2) the development of an integrated regional communication strategy and associated implementation plans, and (3) the development of a harmonized results framework as well as utilization of M&E and geo-spatial tools. These would lead to intermediate outcomes including improved regional knowledge management and dissemination, enhanced strategic communication, and strengthened M&E and geo-spatial analysis capacities. Consequently, these would lead to the final outcomes of improved accessibility to best practices and monitoring information on sustainable land use and management. Moreover, as an increased number of decision makers would be able to access quality data, there would be more evidence-based policies on sustainable land use and management. As the longer term outcome, the evidence-based policies



would support improving resilience of countries against climate change, that would result in increased food and crop security, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and alleviated poverty in the Sahel region.

Critical assumptions on the TOC were: (i) the regional online platform would be well managed and updated under collaborated efforts of CILSS, IUCN, OSS, and GGWI partners, so that the data in the platform would stay relevant to decision makers, (ii) knowledge consolidated and disseminated under the project would reach the right target audience who had decision-making powers, (iii) people who obtained the knowledge as a result of the project would have the capacities and skills to utilize the knowledge to support evidence-based policies, (iv) there would be sufficient funding available to implement plans to materialize strategic communication and harmonized results monitoring, and (v) staff who received training on M&E and geo-spatial tools would retain in the same institutions so that the knowledge would remain in the institutions.

Inputs:

Technical support and capacity strengthening through consultants and training/workshops for:

- Developing a regional web portal for managing and sharing data on sustainable land use and management
- Equipping M&E and geo-spatial tools to monitor natural resources and program results
- Developing a regional communication strategy, its implementation plans, and a community of practice to share program data and best practices

Outputs:

Key outputs of the project were as follows:

- SAWAP web portal (www.sawap.net) and geoportal (<http://bricks.oss-intra.org:8080/geobricks/srv/eng/main.home>) were established to serve as a regional platform to share and receive best practices and monitoring information.
- 330 learning products and 20 best practices were developed and disseminated. 9 success stories were developed. 4 regional conferences were organized. 5 study tours were organized.
- 3 studies on regional environmental and economic analysis were published, focusing on biodiversity, drylands, and environmental impact.
- 4 competitive regional innovation small grants were partially funded. As mentioned in Section 2.e., restructuring in February 2018 reduced the budget for the small grants because of shortcomings in CILSS's financial management of project funds. As a result, only 4 out of 10 small grants that were originally planned were approved.
- A regional communication strategy was developed, and 5 annual communication plans were elaborated and implemented.
- A community of practice among communication practitioners of the SAWAP projects was established, including networks participated by 25 journalists and communicators.



- A harmonized results framework for the SAWAP was developed to aggregate results data from the 12 country-led projects under the SAWAP. Based on the program-level M&E, 8 M&E reports on state of SAWAP countries were published.
- 8 regional workshops on M&E and 11 national training on M&E and GIS were conducted, leading to capacity development of data utilization.

Outcomes:

The achievements of PDO outcome indicators were as follows:

- 95 percent of the national team members in the SAWAP projects reported Satisfaction with the effectiveness of services provided by the BRICKS project, exceeding the target of 80 percent (119 percent of the original target).
- The project resulted in the establishment and maintenance of 12 regional program-level monitoring systems capable of aggregating environmental change information from participating country projects, exceeding the target of 11 systems (109 percent of the original target)
- There were 1,152 direct beneficiaries of the project, not meeting the target of 1,200 direct beneficiaries (96 percent of the original target). Of the direct beneficiaries, female beneficiaries were 24 percent, not meeting the target of 40 percent (60 percent of the original target).

In sum, the accessibility of best practices and monitoring information was improved; nevertheless, the relevance and sustainability of some of these benefits were uncertain. Details are discussed below.

Accessibility of Best Practices: The project supported countries to identify and disseminate best practices through communities of practice, existing academic and public/private sector research, and projects financed by the World Bank and partners in the broader GGWI region, and globally. The south-south learning events, training, and periodic study tours enabled the 12 SAWAP project teams to exchange experiences on topics of mutual concern and learn from others. Regional environmental economic analyses on successful natural resource management approaches were conducted. These analyses complemented country-level analyses carried out by the SAWAP portfolio. At project closure, the fact that almost all (95 percent) of the national team members in the SAWAP were satisfied with the effectiveness of knowledge and program support services provided by the project showed a good result, though the methodology of satisfaction survey had some shortcomings as discussed in Section 9. However, regarding the SAWAP web portal, the ratio of satisfied team members decreased to 50 percent after the project closure and during the ICR preparation (ICR, para. 31, page 16). This decrease in satisfaction was due to the cancellation of updates due to insufficient funding and loss of trained staff, as well as low added value of success stories that often duplicated already available information.

Accessibility of Monitoring Information: Physical IT systems and capacities of people who manage and update the information were strengthened. The online platform linked the 12 SAWAP projects' information systems, and existing national and regional knowledge platforms. Under the project, various geospatial outputs have been collected or derived by OSS. Capacities of people who access and utilize the information were strengthened by development of manuals and technical notes and provision of workshops and training. The harmonized results framework was developed and utilized for regional-level M&E, which contributed to publicizing the SAWAP annual reports. However, the Geospatial Operational Support Team (GOST) of the



WBG noted limitations in utilizing the geospatial outputs. For example, the full sets of geospatial outputs were available only through the GIS system installed in a local computer set up in the respective country office (ICR, Annex 7, page 56). It meant that decision makers were not able to access the spatial data interactively from the web platform. The GOST geoportal also did not have user friendly functions in terms of data search, visualization, and exploration.

Critical assumptions (i), (ii), (iii), and (v) on the TOC were not fully met during the project implementation, which detracted from the achievement of the project objective.

On balance, BRICKS successfully decreased the information gap between the country and regional levels regarding best practices and monitoring information by developing the physical systems and capacities of people who use them. However, relevance and sustainability of some of these benefits were in question as discussed above. Achievement of the objective was substantial.

Rating

Substantial

OVERALL EFFICACY

Rationale

The achievement of the project's objective was substantial. While the relevance and sustainability of some of the benefits were in doubt at project closing, the project succeeded overall in improving the accessibility of best practices and monitoring information for the targeted beneficiaries, both at the country and regional levels.

Overall Efficacy Rating

Substantial

5. Efficiency

Cost-Effectiveness Analysis: To assess the efficiency of the project, the ICR (Annex 4, page 50-54) analyzed its cost-effectiveness by comparing the project cost with the Bank's similar regional projects with components on knowledge management, training, and monitoring support. The BRICKS project costed US\$4.6 million for 12 participating countries, or US\$0.4 million per country on average. This compared well with the Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Program for Aral Sea Basin (P151363), which had a knowledge management component of US\$12.5 million to develop open information platform for two countries, thus costing US\$6.3 million per country. This suggested that the use of GEF funds were cost-effective. Moreover, when the analysis was extended to include the project's co-financing (US\$13.6 million), the overall cost related to the project was estimated at US\$18.3 million. It gave an average cost of US\$1.5 million per country – which was still lower than



the costs of US\$6.3 million per country of the Aral Sea Basin program. This suggested that the overall project was cost-effective.

Incremental Cost Analysis: At appraisal, the PAD (Annex 7, page 67-84) provided the GEF Incremental Cost Analysis for the BRICKS project. It assumed a baseline scenario with a cost of US\$10 million, which was expected as a co-financing from implementing agencies, and GEF support of US\$4.63 million. The analysis suggested that a lack of GEF support would lead to limited exchanges of knowledge and information, fewer chances of benchmarking, a weaker community of practice, and weaker technical capacities in the SAWAP portfolio and among the regional and national implementing agencies. GEF support was expected to improve the technical capacity to monitor and report on global environmental benefits; leverage economies of scale; ensure a much stronger cohesion among national and regional institutions, as well as the community of practice across the region.

Economic Analysis / Financial Analysis: Internal rate of returns for economic and financial analysis were not available. The benefits of the project activities were not measurable quantitatively because of the qualitative nature of the project activities such as knowledge management, communication, and program monitoring support (ICR, Annex 4, page 50). The PAD (para. 65, page 18) provided only a qualitative description of the project's benefits, which were "expected reduced costs for the 12 country teams to implement and involve in key knowledge intensive activities." There was no specific number provided in the PAD regarding the amount of expected reduced costs for the 12 country teams as a result of the project.

Aspects of Design and Implementation that Influenced Efficiency: Implementation of the project activities on regional small grants by CILSS were delayed due to financial management issues described in Section 10.b. The funds for activities on regional small grants were scaled down in the restructuring in February 2018; nevertheless, an outstanding amount of US\$24,040 was not paid to the beneficiaries as of the project closing date. The beneficiaries did not meet the eligibility criteria for the payments of small grants as they had not completed activities on time and missed the deadline to submit the required documentations and the request for the next tranche. The beneficiaries' capacity to fulfill their obligations, might have been impaired by CILSS' cash constraints towards the end of the project. CILSS mentioned that it informed the beneficiaries that it would not be able to pay the remaining balance of the small grants because of CILSS's cash constraints.

The project was cost-effective compared to a similar regional project with a knowledge management component. However, there were operational delays on regional small grants activities due to CILSS's misconducts in financial management which resulted in the outstanding amount at project closing. On this basis, the efficiency was rated modest.

Efficiency Rating

Modest

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

Rate Available?	Point value (%)	*Coverage/Scope (%)
-----------------	-----------------	---------------------



Appraisal	✓	0	0 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
ICR Estimate	✓	0	0 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable

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

6. Outcome

The relevance of objectives was high. The efficacy was substantial. The efficiency was modest. Overall, the outcome was moderately satisfactory.

a. Outcome Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

7. Risk to Development Outcome

The ICR (para. 108, page 32) indicated the following risks to development outcome at project closure:

- Risk 1: It was confirmed that the sawap.net portal and the regional monitoring evaluation system may not be maintained beyond 2020 due to lack of funding. The person who was trained to update the net portal left the position and external funding outside the project to maintain the net portal was not secured, as discussed in Section 4.
- Risk 2: The scaling down and incompleteness of project activities on regional small grants for innovative low-cost technologies due to CILSS's inappropriate financial management would negatively affect the project's outcomes.

8. Assessment of Bank Performance

a. Quality-at-Entry

Strategic relevance and approach, as well as technical, financial, and environmental aspects were thoroughly considered. Fiduciary aspects of working with an implementing agency with no prior experience in managing project funds of the Bank could have been more carefully assessed at appraisal, in order to employ appropriate risk mitigation measures where needed.

The Bank's preparation team had expertise in natural resources management, social development, and financial management, as well as received support from the Bank's experts on M&E and geospatial tools. However, the Bank's experts stopped being involved after the first two years, based on assumptions that the implementing agencies and other specialized institutions would provide the technical expertise within a regional context. The project could have further strengthened efficacy of the outcome, especially



related to accessibility of geospatial data, if it had continuously received technical inputs from the Bank's experts on geospatial tools from the design stage and throughout the implementation up until project completion.

The project activities were designed and budgeted for 4 years despite a project duration of 6 years. It caused the actual cost of the project activities to exceed the approved amount.

On balance, the project's strategic relevance and approach were well planned at appraisal, while fiduciary arrangements, inputs from the Bank's experts, and budgetary planning could have been more rigorous to improve efficacy. On this basis, the quality at entry was rated moderately satisfactory.

Quality-at-Entry Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

b. Quality of supervision

During the project's implementation, the lack of project funding became evident. In addition to the under-budgeting at the design stage mentioned above, early implementation delays (disbursement was 19 percent in June 2015) required recruitments of extra staff to accelerate implementation, which created additional costs that was not originally planned.

The Bank's task team for lending and implementation had a good mixture of expertise and manpower, as shown in the ICR, Annex 2, page 47. The project teams conducted two implementation support missions a year until 2015, after which only one physical support mission was conducted a year, followed by virtual missions about six months after. Considering that projects under US\$ 5 million would have one implementation support mission per year, the project team provided sufficient implementation support through missions, given the limited amount of supervision budget.

The project could have benefitted from more active involvements from the TTLs and the tasks teams of 12 national SAWAP projects, in order to ensure the project kept aligned with political, economic, and social situations of each country, as well as the status of the national SAWAP projects.

The task team provided solid implementation support through physical and virtual missions, while early implementation delays led to additional costs. However, the Bank could have provided more comprehensive support to the project by encouraging involvements of the TTLs of the 12 national SAWAP projects. On balance, the quality of supervision was rated modest.

Quality of entry was modest. Quality of supervision was modest. Overall bank performance was moderately satisfactory.

Quality of Supervision Rating

Moderately Satisfactory



Overall Bank Performance Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization

a. M&E Design

The M&E framework of the project was relevant to the project's interventions in general although there were some weaknesses in its design. There was no specific discussion regarding how the outcomes in terms of improved accessibility to best practices or monitoring information would be measured beyond the beneficiaries' satisfaction and the number of outputs or participating people. For example, regarding the PDO outcome indicator on satisfaction level of national team members with the project, the level of satisfaction of national SAWAP team members did not mean that the disseminated knowledge was well utilized, which was the main intention of knowledge dissemination. It would have been more beneficial to set an indicator such as a number of policies or strategies that were informed by the knowledge disseminated by the project, if such data was collectable considering each country's situation. In addition, the non-anonymous survey methodology that was designed for collecting data on satisfaction level might have discouraged respondents to provide negative feedback. Furthermore, the intermediate level target on the number of SAWAP project team members participating in regional knowledge events was over-ambitious considering the approved budget.

b. M&E Implementation

The M&E implementation was focused on collecting information on tangible outputs and completed activities, as designed by the M&E framework. During data collection, there were some double-counting of data due to misunderstanding on methodologies in the first two years of the project. The revision of the M&E framework that was conducted in the middle of the project duration was not thoroughly completed to align revised indicators and methodologies with new targets. Moreover, the satisfaction surveys showed results that were exceedingly skewed to a favorable side. This was because two out of five satisfactions surveys were conducted on the certain themes that had the highest level of satisfaction, thus not showing an overall satisfaction level for the whole project.

c. M&E Utilization

The 12 regional program-level monitoring systems that were established under the project would continue to enable each country to aggregate environmental change information from participating country projects, provided they would have technical and financial capacities to maintain the system and operate the GIS software. There were four SAWAP countries which mentioned that after the end of BRICKS, they would continue to share knowledge on best practices among themselves and continue to request support from the three BRICKS institutions (ICR, para. 28, page 15).

The M&E framework was generally relevant to the project interventions, but it overlooked how the outcomes would be measured beyond the beneficiaries' satisfaction and the number of outputs



and participating people. The shortcomings in methodology designs affected accuracy of data collection. On this basis, M&E quality was rated modest.

M&E Quality Rating

Modest

10. Other Issues

a. Safeguards

At appraisal, the project was classified as a Category C, which did not trigger any safeguard policies (PAD, para. 77, page 20). At project closure, the project activities were confirmed to have no physical footprint and maintained low environmental risk rating during implementation (ICR, para. 91, page 29).

b. Fiduciary Compliance

Procurement: Procurement activities were managed by implementing agencies. At appraisal, the initial assessment of the risks related to procurement was moderate. During implementation, the overall procurement rating decreased from satisfactory to moderately satisfactory, due to delays in procurement, failures to update procurement plans, and inappropriate use of Systematic Tracking of Exchanges in Procurement (STEP) to make procurement outside the procurement system. (para. 104, page 32).

Financial Management: CILSS's lack of experience with the Bank's procedure and weak project planning hindered timely completion of project activities. The CILSS's financial management faced following challenges: (1) cash constraints, (2) incorrect categorization of project expenses, and (3) outstanding payments of sub-grants to the beneficiaries. First, the cash constraints were caused by high general expenses. The actual cost of component 3 (project management) for the CILSS was US\$682,066, which was larger than the expected cost of component 3 for the whole project, US\$624,130 (ICR, para. 17, page 11-12). Second, there were mistakes in posting expenses under incorrect categories. For instance, general expenses (category 1) of US\$25,019 were posted under sub-grants expenses (category 2). Third, the payments of sub-grants to the beneficiaries were delayed due to incomplete activities and document submissions. There was a restructuring of sub-grants in 2018 to reallocate US\$ 100,000 from category 2 to category 1, which reduced cash reallocated in category 2 to US\$100,000. At project closure, of the US\$100,000 under category 2 after the restructuring, US\$ 57,407 was committed, US\$ 33,368 was paid to beneficiaries, and US\$24,040 was remained as an outstanding balance in category 2. The payments made to the beneficiaries lacked full justification, which resulted in the external auditor's qualified opinions in the 2017 and 2018 audit reports.

c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)



IEG concurred with the ICR team that there were no unintended outcomes and impacts (ICR, para. 69, page 25).

d. Other

11. Ratings

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

12. Lessons

Sustainability of development outcomes would be strengthened if implementing agencies and beneficiaries could adapt innovative knowledge management tools in their core structures. When designing projects that include creation of web-based tools, exit strategies for sustainability of the digital platforms should be thoroughly considered in terms of financial and human resources. Towards that, one may stay away from creating the tools linked essentially to a time-bound, World Bank funded program. It would be recommended to ensure that projects were designed to support implementing agencies to secure their own budgets and technical staff to maintain and update the web-based tools after project closure.

Funding gaps could affect the achievement of development outcomes, especially for regional projects that are costly and time consuming. BRICKS was able to implement only about 30 percent of the support requested, partially because of the lack of financing, whether from the BRICKS' limited budget or from the SAWAP projects. Dedicated budgets from national projects or national annual work plans should include regional activities.

13. Assessment Recommended?

No

14. Comments on Quality of ICR



The ICR provides a detailed overview of the project. The narrative is candid, and the available evidence and quality of self-assessment support the ratings. The analysis is causally aligned with the messages outlined in the ICR. There are references to the project's theory of change that helps the reader to understand how the ratings have been reached. The ICR's lessons are clear and based on evidence presented in the ICR.

a. Quality of ICR Rating
Substantial