Report Number : ICRR0020129

1. Project Data

Project ID	Project Name
P112321	CF-EFA/FTI Catalytic Fund Grant (FY09)

Country	Practice Area(Lead)
Central African Republic	Education

L/C/TF Number(s)	Closing Date (Original)	Total Project Cost (USD)
TF-93956	30-Jun-2012	37,800,000.00

Bank Approval Date	Closing Date (Actual)
29-Oct-2008	31-Mar-2015

	IBRD/IDA (USD)	Grants (USD)
Original Commitment	0.00	37,800,000.00
Revised Commitment	0.00	37,800,000.00
Actual	0.00	37,596,702.45

Sector(s)
General education sector(100%)

Theme(s)
Education for all(100%)

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2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

According to the Project Appraisal Document (PAD, p. 7), the development objective stated that the Grant would “contribute to the implementation of Phase I of the Government’s National Strategy (2008-2011), and aims to improve access to better quality primary education." According to the Lending Agreement (page 3), the development objective of the project was "to contribute to the implementation of Phase 1 of the Recipient's National Education Strategy (2008-2011), adopted by the Recipient's Cabinet at its meeting of February 15, 2008 (the "Program"), by improving access to better quality primary education," which is essentially the same wording noted in the appraisal document.

This review will assess achievement of the two objectives: improving access to primary education and improving access to better quality primary education.

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

No

c. Components

Access (appraisal estimate US$ 18.55 million; actual US$ 9.67 million). This component aimed to reduce overcrowded classrooms (from classroom ratio of 116 in 2009/2010 to 111 by the end of the project) by constructing (568) and rehabilitating (417) classrooms, as well as latrines (214), wells (190), and furniture to benefit 49,250 children and 985 teachers. These activities were to be implemented across all regions of the country, but construction was to be done only in zones readily reachable in terms of security and road access. Thus, the project was expected to target areas of the country not under active conflict at the time of appraisal. This component was to be managed through subcontracting with NGOs, which had responsibility for selecting local enterprises and suppliers, supervising civil works, and construction and delivery of furniture.

Improvement of the quality of instruction (appraisal estimate US$ 8.30 million; actual US$ 10.74 million). Under this component, two activities were to be initiated to provide quality inputs: teacher training and textbooks. 365 community teachers who were teaching in primary schools were to be trained so that they would meet minimum qualifications. By the end of the operation, this component was expected to train 1200 teachers. The training was to take place over two years during vacation periods, after which these teachers would become student teachers paid by the government (rather than community) with the first cohort being contracted by the government in the 2010/2011 school year. Initial training was to be provided at a Teacher Training College or Regional Pedagogical Center, and then the teachers were to be deployed to primary schools within the same region as the training institution. 750 teachers were to be trained each year. Four new Regional Pedagogical Centers were to be built, and five new Teacher Training Colleges were to be rehabilitated. At these training institutions, new curricula and materials were to be developed. The regional inspectorate was to receive additional means to manage student teachers and contract teachers in their jurisdictions. The project was to distribute new primary school textbooks (240,000 French and 240,000 mathematics textbooks, and 13,800 teacher manuals) in all schools at no cost to families to reduce the textbook ratio from 10:1 to 2:1. Local transporters were to be contracted to distribute textbooks.

Management and Efficiency (appraisal estimate US$ 9.64 million; actual US$16.96 million). This component was to develop management capacity to address two key system challenges: recruitment, deployment, and payment of 2767 contract teachers; and capacity building in the Permanent Technical Secretariat, which would have responsibility for the operational coordination of all project activities including fiduciary management and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Additional training and equipment such as vehicles were to be provided to central, regional, and local ministerial structures involved with the activities supported by the project, particularly in the Ministry's Directorate for Construction and Equipment and Pedagogical Centers for Teacher Training.

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

Project Cost: Total project costs were US$37.8 million, which is identical to the amount at appraisal. This figure does not include project preparation costs of US$0.52 million, as these funds were utilized prior to project effectiveness. Management and efficiency comprised a significant amount of project resources in comparison to what was planned (176%), which was attributed to the impact of the crisis, according to the project team. The component related to access and school construction spent half the anticipated amount, as fewer schools were constructed/rehabilitated than planned. Final costs for the quality component were also higher than originally planned (129%), as underutilized resources were allocated to purchase and distribution of additional textbooks and teacher training.

Financing: The project was financed by a Grant of US$37.8 million provided by the Education for All Fast Track Initiative. According to the Bank's operations portal, US$0.2 million remains undisbursed. In addition to this operation, a complementary emergency program was implemented by UNICEF.

Borrower Contribution: The Borrower made no contributions, nor were any planned.

Dates: There were three project restructurings to change the implementation schedule and extend the closing date. The first was on February 1, 2012 and extended the closing date by one year (from June 30, 2012 to June 30, 2013) to provide the Ministry of Education additional time to complete delayed activities (civil works, teacher cohort to graduate). After the President was overthrown in March 2013, the country was in an active conflict, which disrupted the education sector and project implementation. In August 2013 the coup leader, Michel Djotodia, was sworn in as president; he resigned in January 2014, as there was a rapid deterioration of law and order. Catherine Samba-Panza took over as interim leader. Elections were delayed but finally held, with the new Government expected to take office in March 2016. The Bank suspended all project disbursements in March 2013 due to the security situation (Operational Policy 7.30). By December 2012, 93% of project funds had been disbursed to the Ministry of Finance (i.e. designated account), and implementation continued using these already-disbursed resources, as the project remained open. From March 2013 to December 2013, only minimal progress was made. The second restructuring was initiated on June 12, 2013 to extend the closing date nine months from June 30, 2013 to March 31, 2014. Project disbursement was once again authorized in December 2013. Additional time was needed to complete activities, and therefore the third and final restructuring occurred on March 21, 2014 to extend the operation for another year until March 31, 2015.

3. Relevance of Objectives & Design

a. Relevance of Objectives

Key sector challenges were a low and stagnant primary gross enrollment rate (for the past 15 years at approximately 73%) due to recurrent violent conflict, as well as a high drop-out rate (26%) and a low completion rate (31%). Education quality was low. There was an insufficient number of government teachers to meet educational demand (given the relatively high salaries of civil servant teachers and insufficient budget to cover these salaries), and so non-civil servant teachers or community teachers were hired by communities to address unmet demand and address high student-to-teacher ratios. However, the community school teachers were untrained. Educational inputs such as textbooks and buildings were lacking due to the prolonged conflict. Finally, with demographic growth, the number of primary-age children is expected to triple by 2018, impacting negatively the already high pupil-to-teacher and pupil-to-classroom ratios. All of these factors contributed to low education quality, as students in the country scored lower than the other 10 francophone countries participating in comparative assessment tests (Program for the Analysis of Education System). At the same time, the government financing provided to primary education had declined from 28 percent of public expenditures in 1996 to 14 percent in 2005, while the country increased its support to higher education.

Given the need to increase the number of teachers and classrooms, as well as improve quality and management efficiency, the objectives were substantially relevant. The objectives at appraisal aligned with priorities expressed in the government's National Education Strategy and the Bank's Country Partnership Strategy (FY09-FY12), specifically their promotion of basic education. At closing, the World Bank Engagement Note (FY16-17) and government's Education Transitional Plan 2015-2017 continue to prioritize the re-establishment of the primary education system, consistent with project objectives. Thus, the objectives were substantially relevant throughout the life of the operation. Moreover, the objectives align with the Global Partnership priorities (previous Fast Track Initiative) of increasing children's learning and improving teacher effectiveness through teacher training, recruitment, and retention.

Rating
Substantial

b. Relevance of Design

The planned project activities focused on addressing key sector challenges: increasing the cohort of primary-age children compared with already high teacher and classroom ratios created the need to focus on both teachers and classrooms. Improvements in the training, pay, and retention of teachers were needed to remediate the lack of teachers' qualification while simultaneously dealing with government capacity and budgetary constraints. A critical policy issue faced by this project was how to increase the supply of teachers, given tight resources, as well as ensure teacher quality. The situation stemmed from inadequate sector resources and high civil servant salaries (7 units of GDP) in comparison to the benchmark set by the Fast Track Initiative (3.5 units of GDP). Communities were paying a much lower rate, and were therefore hiring teachers without training or qualification. However, pedagogical training may not result in actual teaching improvements, and therefore project design missed a critical element by not including provisions to weed out poor quality teachers or ensure that teachers possessed adequate competencies before becoming part of the government payroll.

Construction was to include school buildings, wells, and latrines. It could be expected that, given the severe shortage of classrooms and teachers, investment in building new classrooms and other infrastructure would increase the gross primary enrollment rate.

Given the lack of existing pre-service training, a longer program of in-service training was needed (it extended over a two-year period). More clarification and planning around the additional means that regional inspectorates would receive to manage student teachers and contract teachers in their jurisdictions could have been provided within project design. As the ICR (p.10) notes, "design would have been stronger had it included interventions to train and support the entire chain of actors supervising and mentoring the trained teachers -- such as school inspectors, pedagogical advisors, school directors -- and aligned training to clear competencies." The sequencing of activities could have been improved if the training program had integrated the curriculum improvements and informed the construction or rehabilitation of the Teacher Training Institutions and Pedagogical Centers.

There was a focus on simple implementation arrangements and few activities, which was reasonable given capacity constraints. However, capacity was not strong among NGOs, who needed more technical assistance to fulfill their responsibilities than project design anticipated.

Rating
Modest

4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)

Objective 1

Objective
Improve access to primary education

Rationale
Several partners (International Monetary Fund, European Commission, Agence Française de Développement, China, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund, and the World Food Program) financed or were expected to finance other interventions or budget support that complemented project interventions to address sector needs. Impact noted below cannot therefore be solely attributed to this operation. However, this operation provided a large share of development partner financing to the sector (70% of support planned or under implementation to education relative to other donors in October 2014). (ICR p. 23)

It should also be understood that the education sector experienced a reversal after the overthrow of the president in December 2012, as there were significant levels of violence against civilians along ethno-religious lines and displacement of a large portion of the population. Approximately 65% of schools were closed by February 2014. These exogenous factors negatively impacted project activities and subsequent attainment of objectives. The ICR notes that there was "unquantified damages to project-financed classrooms and teacher training infrastructure, and loss of materials, vehicles, and equipment both at the Secretariat and government agencies, as well as at the school level" (p. 13). Full data were not available at the end of the project period to determine achievement of targets (see Section 10).

Outputs:

- 926 classrooms were either built or rehabilitated by project closing. This is lower than the planned target (985). The completion report does not state how much of the shortfall involved construction, and how much involved rehabilitation.
- 160 latrines were built, which was lower than the planned target (214).
- 103 wells were built, which was lower than the planned target (190). Fewer wells and latrines were built than expected because water studies were not undertaken earlier to identify water issues with planned sites. This led to unanticipated changes in construction sites (ICR, p. 23).
- The number of new entrants into first grade (non-repeaters) increased from 98,161 in 2007/2008 to 120,010 in 2011/2012, but there are no data available about the number at the end of the project period.
- 16 engineers were contracted to support the Regional Unit for Construction

Outcomes:

- The gross primary enrollment rate increased from 73.7% in 2007/2008 to 88.3% in 2011/2012 (last school census) prior to the political crisis and subsequent instability, but no data were available at project closing. However, limited improvement in gross enrollment rates was evident during project years when school censuses were conducted, and most of the planned classroom construction was finished (86% in 2009/2010 and 88% in 2011/2012) (ICR, p. 22).
- The pupil to classroom ratio improved from 111:1 in 2007/2008 to 84:1 in 2011/2012. Other factors most likely contributed to this result, as this ratio was improving prior to availability of project-financed classrooms (ICR, pp. 23-24).

Due to the lack of data covering the entire project period, achievement of the objective is rated modest.

Rating
Modest

Objective 2

Objective
Improve access to better quality primary education

Rationale
Outputs:

- 2,765 teachers were trained: 2,250 contract teachers and 455 community teachers. This number is higher than the 2,550 planned, despite the fact that training was interrupted during the crisis. Over the course of the project more teachers than expected were paid under the project (3,805 teachers).
- One Teacher Training College was rehabilitated and furnished. 900 teachers were trained at this college over the course of the project, but the status of the institute after the crisis is unknown, as data are unavailable.
- 4 Regional Pedagogical Centers were constructed and furnished, and 4 other Regional Pedagogical Centers were rehabilitated. New curricula for teacher training were created and revised. 1,450 teachers and 365 community teachers were trained at these 8 Regional Pedagogical Centers over the course of the project. The status of these Centers after the crisis is unknown, as data are unavailable.
- 1,339,418 French and mathematics textbooks were delivered (before the crisis) to schools, which exceeds the target (480,000). The project team noted that more books were purchased than planned to accommodate expected increases in student enrollment given demographic trends. The status of these textbooks was unknown at project closure, as data are unavailable.
- 14,092 teacher guides were delivered to schools, which is lower than the target (27,600). The completion report does not provide a reason for the lower than planned quantity. The status of the guides was unknown at project closure, as data are unavailable.
- The number of new entrants (non-repeaters) in Grade 6 was 34,796 children in 2007/2008 and increased to 50,280 children by 2011/2012, which met the target (50,017). However, no data on subsequent years were available at project closing.

Outcomes:

- The pupil-to-teacher ratio decreased from 90:1 in 2007/2008 to 80:1 in 2011/2012. The ICR (Table 5, p. 25) states that this ratio remained 80:1 at project closing, but this outcome seems uncertain given the impact of the conflict and lack of updated output data.
- The pupil-to-reading textbook ratio changed from 7:1 in 2007/2008 to 1.4:1 in 2011/2012. The pupil-to-mathematics textbook ratio changed from 6.4:1 in 2007/2008 to 1.4:1 in 2011/2012. Again, the ICR states that these ratios remained at pre-conflict levels through project closing, but this result is questionable given the conflict and lack of updated output data.

The objective is rated modest due to lack of data covering the entire project period, uncertain data at closing, and lack of evidence that the teacher training and textbooks translated into improved quality of education.

Rating
Modest

5. Efficiency

The program document omitted cost benefit analysis and sensitivity analysis from its economic analysis. The economic rationale for the project was the social returns to education. The completion report also did not undertake a cost-benefit analysis (given erratic budget records and lack of data on returns to education within the country). Instead, it drew on the in-depth analysis of the education sector contained in the Country Status Report. This analysis highlighted the social benefits of basic education, particularly for girls in relation to reproductive health and female protection. The completion report highlighted the need for more people in the country to access basic education and literacy, as most employment opportunities exist within agriculture and informal sectors.

The project demonstrated some implementation efficiencies. More textbooks were produced than planned and subsequently stored. Comparison of unit costs for textbooks suggests value for money, as the project's unit cost was US$ 1.83 including shipping to schools throughout the county, while unit costs for another development partner were US$ 2.23 with delivery only to Bangui. However, project unit costs were higher than in other post-conflict countries such as Democratic Republic of Congo (US$ 1.32), Sierra Leone (US$ 0.97- 1.66) and Niger (US$ 1.10- 1.40).

Project unit classroom construction costs were US$ 18,045 between 2009 and 2012, while UNICEF's costs between 2012 and 2015 were US$ 20,437. UNICEF's costs may have been negatively impacted by availability of raw materials and increased costs experienced after the crisis. According to the ICR, the project's low-cost model “went too far” (ICR p. 9), leading to reduced durability and quality of construction. For example, the choice of low-cost clay brick as a building material is expected to accelerate wear of the bricks. Higher quality bricks may have been more cost effective, given ease of execution, fewer losses, and no need for a protective coating.

There were other cost inefficiencies during implementation. Some school sites were unsuited for building wells as intended and with the budget allotted. As a result, construction of many of the wells was cancelled after the start of digging. There were unanticipated changes in construction sites, suggesting poor planning and inefficient use of project money. These changes led to building on sites with different school infrastructure needs than initially planned. Three quarters of the planned latrine blocks and about half of the planned wells were actually built.

The management and efficiency component comprised a significant amount of project resources in comparison with what was planned (176%), related to the impact of the crisis. The crisis promoted instability that created looting and damage to untold numbers of schools, and the office building constructed for the Implementing Agency subsequently had to be repaired and re-equipped because of looting. The crisis was one major factor contrbuting to implementation delays. The project lifespan was extended to six years, twice what was planned, to provide additional time to complete activities.

Given these shortcomings, efficiency is 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 ☐Not Applicable
ICR Estimate		0	0 ☐Not Applicable

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

6. Outcome

Relevance of objectives is rated substantial, while design is rated modest. Achievement of both objectives (access and quality) is rated modest. Efficiency is rated modest. The project's outcome is therefore rated Moderately Unsatisfactory, consistent with significant shortcomings in both design and implementation. While there were notable improvements in access prior to the crisis (gross primary enrollment rate increased from 73.7% in 2007/2008 to 88.3% in 2011/2012), there were no data covering the entire project period. More textbooks and teachers were trained than originally planed, but there were uncertain data at closing and lack of evidence to show that the training and textbooks actually translated into improved quality of education.

a. Outcome Rating
Moderately Unsatisfactory

7. Rationale for Risk to Development Outcome Rating

During the project period, the crisis resulted in large declines in economic development and GDP, and the regular payment of civil service wages and pensions was suspended between 2013 and early 2014. Regular payments were resumed in 2014 due to large-scale donor re-engagement. There is a continued risk that the government will not be able to maintain stable macro-economic conditions, which would have an impact on its ability to maintain teacher salaries. The financial analysis in the appraisal document noted important fiscal gaps within the government’s education sector budget. Development partners will need to maintain engagement, or there could be further erosion in the education sector. If the political transitions are not recognized by the international development community, there could be a pull-out of donor funding, with detrimental effects on the education sector including declining investments in buildings, textbooks, training, and payment of teachers’ salaries. The security situation could also lead to the departure of qualified teachers and civil servants, which would further lower education quality and institutional capacities. Capacity issues within the government and Ministry of Education persist.

There are several factors that help mitigate the risk to the development outcome. The Bank has maintained engagement in the country and education sector. Diagnostics for the Country Engagement Note are being prepared by the Bank. The European Union, which will rehabilitate schools and provide institutional support to the Ministry of Education, has recently engaged with the country. The government has continued to finance the salaries of teachers trained under the project. An updated national education strategy (Education Transitional Plan 2015-2017) was prepared by the government with support from development partners. This strategy was the basis for preparation of a follow-up operation funded by the Global Partnership for Education, which is supervised and managed by UNICEF. This grant focuses on reversing some of the effects of the crisis on the education sector and supports many of the same activities supported by this operation (school construction, textbooks, training of community teachers). The follow-up grant has taken on board two lessons learned from this operation (studies to determine capacity of non-commercial bank operators to ensure salary payments in difficult-to-access areas not covered by commercial banks, and training additional actors in the pedagogical chain). Given continued insecurity, the follow-up operation maintains contingencies in case there is a need for emergency education activities for displaced children. All of these factors help mitigate the risk to the development outcome.

However, significant risks are posed by the continued political and security situation, as large reversals occurred within the education sector in relation to infrastructure, supplies, and access. There likely will be continued issues in relation to school maintenance and operation, as there were (and continue to be) no designated resources for this purpose. Considering all of these factors, the risk to the development outcome is rated high.

a. Risk to Development Outcome Rating

High

8. Assessment of Bank Performance

a. Quality-at-Entry

The Bank worked closely with other development partners to develop a 12-year National Education Strategy, which was adopted by the government and became the basis for aligning partner strategies and external financing.
Analysis conducted during preparation related to sector challenges -- lack of trained teachers, over-crowded classrooms, and underfinancing of the sector -- and included a technical assessment of the government's planning and monitoring capacity. However, assessment of some key technical aspects was not conducted. For example, water studies were not done to identify the presence of water, its depth, and quality. As a result, wells were constructed where there was risk of water pollution, resulting in cancellation of wells (65% of planned wells). Technical assessment of the low-cost architectural design was also not done. There was no assessment of firms' capacity to take on a supervisory role, which would have detected that there were few qualified entities in areas distant from the capital. The training program, its content, and planned competencies were not developed.
Several assumptions (assistance from the EU-supported "development poles program" and the Catholic Church to process payments to teachers, or 20 percent of teachers reachable via mobile phone companies or other private sector actors) were made in relation to the payment of teachers (PAD, p. 8). These assumptions were not realized, and therefore teachers continued to be paid through the formal banking system, resulting in persistent difficulties in paying salaries and stipends in remote and insecure areas.
There were also shortcomings in the results framework (see Section 10).

Quality-at-Entry Rating

Moderately Unsatisfactory

b. Quality of supervision

Prior to the conflict, the Bank team maintained ongoing supervisory missions. It provided support related to fiduciary aspects to staff in the Implementing Agency and tried to minimize process bottlenecks. It also provided local and international technical assistance to improve planning, reporting, and operating capacity. Before the conflict, supervision missions were augmented with regular communication to review implementation progress and review sector data. The completion report indicates that this “led to tailored recommendations to adapt to the needs of the sector" (p. 36). The Bank team supported the monitoring and evaluation efforts of the Implementing Agency and helped develop a plan for textbook distribution that provided some monitoring to ensure delivery to schools. Quality assurance audits were conducted and findings highlighted with the Implementing Agency so that improvements could be made.

The Bank maintained policy dialogue over the course of the operation. This policy dialogue led to the government eventually taking responsibility for the majority of student-teacher stipends and teacher salaries covered under the project. The Bank team worked with other partners on development of the Education Transitional Plan 2015-2017, which was adopted during the crisis. The grant money provided through this operation was used to address government shortfalls in funding, and over the course of the operation had a catalytic role in attracting other donors.

When the security situation erupted, the Bank was not able to conduct implementation support missions but instead maintained remote communication with the Implementing Agency. During the crisis, the Bank lacked information on the situation on the ground and its impact on the sector and project activities. Given that project archives were stolen during the crisis, the Bank tried to resolve these issues by developing financial management action plans. Extensions to the closing date allowed time to complete implementation.

However, there were shortcomings in performance. An earlier audit of the civil works would have allowed for early identification of issues and incorporation within subsequent construction phases. Shortcomings with the project's results framework were not initiated within project restructuring. Similarly, targets were not adjusted despite the impact of the crisis and extensions. Closer safeguard monitoring may have been warranted and beneficial. The resettlement issue (see section 11a below) was not followed up by the Bank team.

Quality of Supervision Rating
Moderately Unsatisfactory

Overall Bank Performance Rating
Moderately Unsatisfactory

9. Assessment of Borrower Performance

a. Government Performance

The government was committed to the basic education sector and to the operation. Project preparation involved key central government officials, but participation was not extended to other levels that could have created greater buy-in and earlier identification of potential issues.

The government complied with agreed-upon implementation arrangements and legal covenants, with the exception of financial audits due to capacity issues. The government contributed monetary resources for student-teacher stipends and salaries. It developed the Project Completion Report. Since the closing of the project, elections have been held, and the new government is expected to take office in March 2016. During the crisis, the government maintained its commitment to the operation, as well as continued policy dialogue with the Bank. There were, however, shortcomings in performance, including challenges with the appointment of qualified staff related to procurement and fiduciary matters. After the crisis, the government was not able to maintain stability, but it continued to support the Implementing Agency. The government could have provided a more candid assessment of its technical capacity and put in place additional measures to monitor the performance of the Implementing Agency and service providers. Closer involvement of the project steering committee may also have been beneficial.

Government Performance Rating
Moderately Satisfactory

b. Implementing Agency Performance

The Implementing Agency was the Ministry of Education, supported by a Project Technical Unit staffed by a combination of Ministry and international consultants. Additional qualified staff were added after a procurement specialist (who had been on loan from the government's national procurement department) left the team. The Ministry of Education developed a national teacher training strategy and revised the teacher training curriculum, both of which were subsequently adopted by the government. During the first period of the project (from effectiveness to the beginning of the political and security crisis), the majority of implementation occurred.

The Ministry was not familiar with Bank fiduciary guidelines and had limited experience with the third-party approach utilized in the project. Incorrect procurement procedures were initiated and had to be restarted, which delayed construction for a year. There were also delays in the recruitment of firms to supervise the civil works activities. While the Implementing Agency monitored the firms, this monitoring was not adequately linked to data about progress and payment. For example, technical shortcomings in construction were not flagged during the provisional process, which resulted in negative impact on construction quality (leaks, low lighting, etc.). Some construction projects did not abide by contractual timelines but were not sanctioned for these delays, despite contractual provisions to do so. There was need for better monitoring and reporting on environmental safeguards and involuntary resettlement.

However, the delays in the civil works were also caused by factors out of the control of the Implementing Agency. For example, supplies from local markets were unpredictable, as raw materials were prioritized for exports. Also, the crisis caused border closures, which resulted in shortages of materials.

During the conflict, staff from the Implementing Agency conducted periodic site visits and tried to find solutions to maintain teacher training activities. Despite the fact that the Implementing Agency lost staff, data, and equipment during the crisis, which negatively impacted its ability to monitor, it continued to implement all project activities. Sector-wide indicators were not monitored during the entire period of the project, as school censuses were not undertaken during the crisis. However, intermediate indicators were tracked by the Implementing Agency.

With support, the Implementing Agency provided acceptable financial management and procurement documentation. The performance of the Implementing Agency improved over the course of the operation, despite the turmoil inflicted by the conflict.

Implementing Agency Performance Rating
Moderately Satisfactory

Overall Borrower Performance Rating
Moderately Satisfactory

10. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization

a. M&E Design

There was a logical link between objectives, project activities, and measures; however, as noted in the completion report (p. 21), the measures in the results framework could have been more robust. The results framework specified a number of sector-wide outcome indicators to track progress and attainment of the objectives, but these indicators were not solely attributable to the efforts of the operation, creating attribution challenges. The indicators were based on country systems and annual school censuses.
There were 17 output indicators used to measure implementation progress related to components and all project activities, including number of classrooms constructed, number of latrines and wells built, number of teachers trained, and textbooks distributed. Data collection instruments and methods were not fully specified in project documentation. While the indicators to measure changes in education quality were outputs (teacher to student ratio, number of teachers trained, number of non-repeaters, and textbook to student ratio), it may not have been feasible to expect measures to demonstrate deeper improvements in quality such as assessment of pedagogical practices, use of textbooks, or assessment of student learning/performance, given the capacity of the Implementing Agency and relatively short planned project lifespan.

b. M&E Implementation

Monitoring and evaluation was not adequately linked to performance of contract firms. For example, one firm did not supervise at the individual site level. Another firm provided only partial data. There were challenges with the tracking and reporting of outcome indicators given the political and security crisis. All intermediate level indicators were documented. The annual progress of sector-wide indicators was tracked until the crisis, leaving a gap in available data between 2012 and closing in 2015. Project documentation does not provide the actual number of students benefiting from the new and rehabilitated classrooms. As a result, inferences cannot be made about the project's impact on changes in gross enrollment and number of new entrants.

c. M&E Utilization

The period after December 2012 is characterized by severe lack of data on the status of the education system and at the project level. Thus, there was limited to no utilization of data after this time period.

M&E Quality Rating
Modest

11. Other Issues

a. Safeguards

The project was classified category B for Environment Assessment (OP4.01) and also triggered the Indigenous Peoples (OP 4.10) and Involuntary Resettlement (OP4.12) safeguards due to construction activities. The social impact was expected to be minor, as most civil works were on existing school sites. Safeguard protection was a condition of the Grant, which allowed for the completion of the requirements upon effectiveness rather than during preparation. Three safeguard instruments (Environmental and Social Management Framework, Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework, and Framework for Involuntary Resettlement and Compensation) were developed and disclosed by the Ministry to mitigate potential impacts from the project-financed civil works activities. Monitoring of these documents was done by the Ministry of Education and integrated into the procurement process and documents. The Ministry provided training to construction firms on the safeguard policies. The Bank's implementation reports noted satisfactory progress on these aspects with no particular issues until December 2014, when a lack of accurate reporting on the school civil works program was noted through the end of the operation. Interviews by the Bank's completion report mission with the Ministry and with construction firms reported full compliance with safeguard instruments. However, one case of involuntary resettlement was identified in the 2012 audit, but no follow-up was undertaken by the Bank. Some follow-up was done by the Implementing Agency; however, it was not possible to confirm full resolution. The completion report (p. 36) also notes the potential risk of polluted water to students and teachers because of the absence of proper water studies.

b. Fiduciary Compliance

The Implementing Agency was responsible for financial management (administrative aspects as well as payment and accounting), while disbursements were subcontracted to a local accounting firm. These arrangements were adequate, as were arrangements for the flow of funds. Financial management was a consistent challenge, as its quality was variable across the life of the operation. The main cause of shortcomings was the unfamiliarity of project staff with the financial management software required by the World Bank, which contributed to qualified and adverse opinions in the 2009 and 2010 audits. Performance improved later in the project period.

The Implementing Agency and construction firms were unfamiliar with Bank financial management and procurement procedures. This lack of familiarity led to delays in selection and contracting of civil works firms. Difficulties related to producing adequate procurement documents and establishing a viable procurement filing system. Issues were resolved with close and extensive support by the Bank team. Capacity issues within construction firms contributed to payment delays. The crisis further added to the financial management difficulties as archives were stolen, which impacted the availability of regular financial report production. The Bank tried to resolve these issues by developing financial management action plans, but all issues were not resolved, and some issues were outstanding at the time the completion report was written, including US$1,600 to be justified or refunded to the Bank.

c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)

The large-scale construction financed by the project deployed firms to most regions of the country. Those firms that were successful in implementing project activities were often able to obtain additional contracts and grow, while others saw their businesses wither due to inability to complete contracts.

d. Other

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12. Ratings

Ratings	ICR	IEG	Reason for Disagreements/Comment
Outcome	Moderately Unsatisfactory	Moderately Unsatisfactory	---
Risk to Development Outcome	High	High	---
Bank Performance	Moderately Unsatisfactory	Moderately Unsatisfactory	---
Borrower Performance	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	---
Quality of ICR		High	---

Note

When insufficient information is provided by the Bank for IEG to arrive at a clear rating, IEG will downgrade the relevant ratings as warranted beginning July 1, 2006.

The "Reason for Disagreement/Comments" column could cross-reference other sections of the ICR Review, as appropriate.

13. Lessons

IEG has synthesized the lessons contained in the ICR (pp. 39-40) to the following:

- Complementing government capacity with external service providers and delegated project management and implementation arrangements can be effective in fragile contexts when there is adequate understanding of capacity constraints of all parties. Balancing state capacity building with external service providers can work, but this strategy should be based on a thorough analysis of capacity, which was not undertaken at entry. Such an analysis may have pointed to issues that would arise during implementation that could have been mitigated. These arrangements between government and external service providers can improve operational capacity of all parties when accompanied by strong supervision from the government and development partners.
- A robust monitoring and evaluation system is essential to track implementation and measure achievement of objectives and allow attribution to project investments. In this case, sector-wide indicators were established, as the common practice within Fast Track Initiative projects is to align with country M&E systems to facilitate data collection, ownership, and sustainability. While this selection of indicators was done to align with country M&E systems, there still is a need to select indicators related to project-financed activities to measure the specific impact of the project. To build country capacity, clear protocols need to be established for indicator monitoring to ensure that data collection and analysis capacity exists or is created.
- In low-capacity and/or fragile contexts, design simplicity and close supervision are essential. Close supervision of civil works activities by the Bank and Implementing Agency is needed in these contexts, particularly when construction occurs in more remote areas. Given low capacity, more support is needed to establish the technical aspects of civil works, such as architectural design and water studies. These studies were not done at preparation of this project, and the technical audit was conducted late in implementation. As a result, there were cost inefficiencies and problems with building quality throughout the project's lifetime. Developing prototypes for certain construction elements as a reference for firms may have helped to improve the quality of both design and execution.
- There is high value in the World Bank remaining engaged with client countries during periods of crisis, including in cases where policies require the suspension of project disbursements. For this project, the Bank maintained dialogue with the government and coordination with other development partners on supporting the education sector during the crisis. This facilitated the Bank’s re-engagement when the political and security situation allowed. Maintaining dialogue and financing operations on a case-by-case basis can also help mitigate the negative effects of crisis at the country level, by providing technical advice or financing for critical activities to maintain stability in an education sector.

14. Assessment Recommended?

Yes

Please explain

Conducting a field-based assessment and applying a service delivery perspective with the data collection tool that IEG is developing could lend additional analysis and insights to the sector-wide operation, particularly given the lack of end-of-project data on most outcome indicators.

15. Comments on Quality of ICR

Considering the content in the main report and annexes, the ICR's quality is rated as high. The ICR is clear, well written, and thorough, and it follows OPCS guidelines. While the completion report has some repetition in content, it is analytical and insightful. Instead of a simple implementation narrative, the ICR analyzes the factors that facilitated or hindered success. This report can facilitate operational learning among Bank staff, particularly those working in fragile and conflict settings. It presents relevant information and sound analysis to support its assessments of Bank performance, relevance of design, efficacy, and monitoring and evaluation. It appropriately highlights the unwavering support of the government and Implementing Agency throughout the operation. It goes beyond discussion of the formal indicators and is candid about what is not known as a result of lack of data and the disruption caused by the conflict. It explains the crisis situation so that readers can understand the impact the turmoil had on the operation and sector. The lessons are well derived from project experience and useful for the region and beyond.

a. Quality of ICR Rating
High