Report Number : ICRR0021564

1. Project Data

Project ID	Project Name
P129600	03 -Global Partnership for Educ Program
Country	**Practice Area(Lead)**
Benin	Education

L/C/TF Number(s)	Closing Date (Original)	Total Project Cost (USD)
TF-16842,TF-16846	30-Jun-2016	42,030,538.16
Bank Approval Date	**Closing Date (Actual)**	
21-Mar-2014	30-Apr-2018	

	IBRD/IDA (USD)	Grants (USD)
Original Commitment	42,300,000.00	42,300,000.00
Revised Commitment	42,300,000.00	42,300,000.00
Actual	42,030,538.16	42,030,538.16

Prepared by	Reviewed by	ICR Review Coordinator	Group
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2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

According to the Project Appraisal Document (PAD, p. vii) and the Financing Agreement of March 21, 2014 (p. 5), the objective of the project was “to improve (i) access and equity, and (ii) quality of classroom instruction at the basic education level, with particular emphasis on deprived districts in the Recipient's territory.”

The basic education level is defined as primary level and lower secondary level.

Some key outcome targets were revised at a 2015 restructuring, As neither the original nor revised targets were achieved for any of these indicators, a split rating is not performed.

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?

No

d. Components

The project included three components, most of which were to be administered in 31 of Benin's 77 districts. The districts were selected based on the following criteria: at the primary level, districts with a General Enrollment Rate (GER) lower than 95 percent and/or a completion rate of less than 50 percent. 25 districts representing 22.7 percent of students and 25.3 percent of schools qualified. At the secondary level, districts with a GER for girls lower than 30 percent, accounting for 15.1 percent of students and 20.6 percent of schools. 17 districts overlapped at the primary and lower secondary levels. Two sub-components from Component 1 (pre-service training of lower secondary teachers) and Component 3 (strengthening school inspection and improving pedagogical management through the use of student learning assessments) were implemented in all of Benin's 77 districts.

Component 1: Improving the quality of basic education (appraisal estimate US$8.2 million, actual US$12.9 million): This component was to finance the improvement of teaching practices and the quality of the learning environment in Benin's most deprived districts. The teaching practices of primary school teachers were to be improved through in service-training and pre-service training. Also, this component was to finance school grants for the acquisition of learning materials, not including textbooks, to support primary schools in the targeted districts. Each school was to receive US$ 1,000 to purchase teaching materials only in the school year 2014-2015.

Component 2: Improving access and equity (appraisal estimate US$25.3 million, actual US$23.1 million): This component was to finance the construction and equipment of classrooms in primary and lower secondary schools, as well as activities necessary to improve retention and equity, including school feeding programs and actions aimed at promoting girls' enrollment, in the targeted districts. In order to reduce the shortage of classrooms in the targeted districts, this component was to finance the construction and equipment of classrooms in selected schools based on the needs of each district and student-classroom ratios. The number of classrooms to be built was as follows:

- For primary schools: (i) 255 classrooms or 85 standard modules of three classrooms (which were to include an office and a storage room), 6,375 student desks, and 255 teacher desks; and (ii) 170 blocks of 4 latrines;
- For lower secondary schools: (i) 192 classrooms or 48 standard modules of four classrooms, 4,800 student desks, and 192 teacher desks; and (ii) 96 blocks of 4 latrines.

The project was also to finance, in its last two years, 396 existing school canteens run by communities in the targeted districts by offering at least one meal per day to an average of 128,000 students annually. Furthermore, in order to promote girls' access, the component was to finance primary school package for all girls in grades 1 and 2 in targeted districts, approximately 91,000 students per year, consisting of: (i) school supplies, including notebooks, other didactic materials (excluding textbooks), and a school bag; and (ii) school uniforms.

Component 3: Improving sector management and governance (appraisal estimate US$8.8 million, actual US$5.9 million): This component was to finance the installation of a network data center in the central ministry of primary education, the six regional primary education directorates, and six selected district education offices; the development of specific programs (school statistics, computerized staff management, and consolidated results of school exams); and the building of capacities for the management and use of an Education Management Information System (EMIS). It was also to finance the strengthening of school inspections and improvement of pedagogical management through the use of student learning assessments. Furthermore, this component was to finance carrying out training for key staff, strengthening capacity in data collection and analysis and improving monitoring and evaluation functions.

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

Project Cost: The project was estimated to cost US$42.3 million. Actual cost was US$42.03 million. According to the ICR (p. 23), during the second restructuring the budget for each component was revised, resulting in a budget execution rate of 123 percent for component 1, and 93.5 percent and 83.7 percent for components 2 and 3, respectively. According to the ICR (p. 23), the government decided to invest relatively more in the first component after initial weak results in teacher training, and less on the second and third components based on cost savings accruing from a policy that waived taxes on construction.

Financing: The project was to be financed by a US$42.3 million Global Partnership for Education (GPE) grant. The project used a pooled funding mechanism building on the previous Education for All - Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI) arrangement (ICR, p. 34), intended to ensure alignment by working through existing systems.

Borrower Contribution: It was not planned for the Borrower to make any contribution.

Dates: The project was restructured twice:

September 17, 2015: The project was restructured to: (i) make modifications to the Results Framework: The target for the PDO indicator "GER in lower secondary education in targeted districts (total and girls)" was decreased, given a decrease in GER observed during the initial 16-month implementation period. The target for the PDO indicator "Primary Education Completion Rate (PECR) in targeted districts (total and girls)" was increased to take into account progress made on this indicator as of the 2013-14 school year. Some intermediate indicators and targets were also revised; (ii) extend the project's closing date by eleven months from June 30, 2016 to May 31, 2017 to allow for the completion of activities that had been delayed due to a nine-month delay in project effectiveness; (iii) provide and distribute grammar books to teachers under component 1; (iv) reallocate US$1.8 million of grant proceeds from category 2 to category 1 of eligible expenditures; and (v) make changes to the Grant Agreement in terms of disbursement percentages under each trust fund and inclusion of specific guidelines related to the disbursement of the trust funds.

May 21, 2017: The project was restructured to: (i) extend the closing date by eleven months from May 31, 2017 to April 30, 2018 to allow for the completion of some project activities such as the construction of additional schools (which was financed from cost savings resulting from exchange rate gains), establishment of a learning assessment system, implementation of school feeding activities, and establishment of the EMIS; and (ii) reallocate costs across components and categories of expenditure.

3. Relevance of Objectives

Rationale

The project's objectives were highly relevant to country context, government strategy, and Bank strategy. In 2010, per capita income in Benin was US$680, putting it in the lower income group of countries with moderate economic performance. The government was implementing a Growth Strategy for Poverty Reduction to remove constraints on raising economic competitiveness, reach the Millennium Development Goals, and promote good governance. However, Benin ranked 166th out of 186 countries on the United Nations 2012 Human Development Index. Also, the country was experiencing a relatively high rate of population growth (3.2 percent per year between 1992 and 2012) and struggled to meet increasing demand for social services. In 2006/2007, the government had abolished pre-primary and primary school fees and established a school grants mechanism managed by school directors and School Management Committees. Also, in 2006, the government had adopted a ten-year Education Sector Development Plan that focused on improving service delivery to increase access, equity, retention, and learning outcomes in basic education, promoting girls' education, training qualified teachers, and strengthening governance and efficiency through school-based management. However, the education sector continued to face challenges such as a rapid increase in school-age population, an increase in repetition rates, a continuously high dropout rate, shortage of teachers, and overall conditions not adequately supporting teaching and learning.

The project's objectives were aligned with the country's new Education Sector Development Plan (2018-2030) that focuses on promoting equitable access, improving teaching practices, and increasing equitable access of girls to schools. The objectives were highly relevant to the Bank's Country Partnership Strategy (FY 13-17) at appraisal, which identified under its second pillar "improving service delivery and social inclusion" the need to improve the quality of education especially in deprived districts, as well the need to ensure that gender issues were mainstreamed within the framework. The objectives were also in line with the Bank's most recent Country Partnership Framework (FY19-23), which focuses under its second priority "equitable access to opportunities and inclusion of the poor in the growth process" on three areas: (i) developing human capital by improving equitable access to quality education and other basic services; (ii) improving educational outcomes and increasing educational attainment to further reduce poverty, increase labor productivity, and create better jobs; and (iii) addressing gender imbalances and regional disparities in well-being, to improve equality of opportunity and equity overall.

Rating
High

4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)

Objective 1

Objective

To improve access, with particular emphasis on deprived districts in the Recipient's territory

Rationale

The project's theory of change linked reducing the shortage of classrooms by constructing new classrooms and providing at least one meal per day with improving access to primary and lower secondary level school.

According to the ICR (p. 11), at the primary level, districts with a GER lower than 95 percent and/or a completion rate less than 50 percent were selected as "deprived" districts, representing 22.7 percent of students and 25.3 percent of schools. At the lower secondary level, districts with a GER for girls lower than 30 percent were selected, which represented approximately 15.1 percent of students and 20.6 percent of schools. According to these selection criteria, 17 districts overlapped at the primary and secondary levels. The ICR (p. 8) stated that since the selection criteria for the most deprived districts were based on access indicators, interventions that aimed at access were implemented only in the most deprived districts. The objectives of equity and access were combined in the objectives statement, as the project's focus on implementing access interventions only in the most deprived districts was seen as equity-enhancing. For purposes of this assessment, however, equity and access are assessed separately, in order to capture fully the results chains for each element.

Outputs

- 318 equipped classrooms at the primary level and 212 equipped classrooms at the lower secondary level in deprived districts were constructed, surpassing the target of 255 classrooms at the primary level and 192 classrooms at the lower secondary level.
- 318,245 primary students received at least one meal per day in the deprived districts, surpassing the original target of 128,000 students and the revised target of 270,000 primary students.

The project also produced outputs to improve capacity development that should have contributed to the achievement of all three objectives.

- 460 officers of ministries in deprived districts were trained in areas such as Excel, leadership and team management, archives and electronic records management, budgeting etc., surpassing the original target of 300 officers and the revised target of 350 officers.
- A data center was established within the Ministry of Basic Education, and software for personnel management and the management of statistical data was installed. Due to procurement issues, a full EMIS could not be implemented in the entire country; only personnel training and implementation of a first phase of EMIS development were implemented. As a result, the target -- EMIS being in place at the central ministry and regional directorates, generating data for preschools and primary education -- was not achieved.

Outcomes

- According of an end-of project beneficiary survey, 95 percent of parents sampled were satisfied or very satisfied with the school canteen intervention.
- The GER in the deprived districts decreased from 107 percent in 2015 to 104.3 percent in 2018, not achieving the target of an increase to 117 percent.
- The PECR in targeted districts increased from 40.4 percent in 2014 to 42.10 percent, not achieving the original target of 50 percent or the revised target of 56.5 percent.
- The GER in lower secondary education in target districts decreased from 45 percent in 2014 to 35.6 percent, not achieving the original target of 52 percent or the revised target of 48.5 percent.

Rating
Modest

Objective 2

Objective

To improve equity, with particular emphasis on deprived districts in the Recipient's territory

Rationale

The project's theory of change linked the provision of school kits to girls with improving equity for girls, and the provision of equipped classrooms with reducing the gap in access between deprived districts and the rest of the country.

Outputs

- 323,455 school kits were provided to girls in grades 1 and 2 in deprived districts, surpassing the target of 265,000 school kits. The school kits consisted of notebooks, didactic materials such as textbooks, school backpacks, and school uniforms.

Outcomes

- According to an end-of project beneficiary survey, 89 percent of parents sampled reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the school kits.
- The Gross Primary Intake Rate (GPIR) of girls in the deprived districts increased from 100.5 percent in 2015 to 104.4 percent in 2018, not achieving the target of 114 percent.
- The GER in lower secondary education of girls increased from 23 percent in 2014 to 29.4 percent in 201, not achieving the original target of 30 percent or the revised target of 37.5 percent.
- The gap in GPIR for boys and girls between the deprived districts and the average national level increased from 27.50 percent in 2014 to 33.40 percent in 2018, not achieving the original target of a reduction to 20 percent or the revised target of a reduction to 26 percent.
- The gap in GPIR for girls between the deprived districts and the average national level increased from 29.5 percent in 2014 to 33 percent in 2018, not achieving the original target of a reduction to 23 percent or the revised target of a reduction to 28 percent.

Rating

Modest

Objective 3

Objective

To improve the quality of classroom instruction at the basic education level, with particular emphasis on deprived districts in the Recipient's territory

Rationale

The project's theory of change linked the training of teachers and providing teaching materials through grants with improving the quality of classroom instruction at the basic education level in deprived districts.

Outputs

- 10,699 primary level teachers received in-service teacher training in the deprived districts, surpassing the original target of 9,000 teachers and the revised target of 10,500 teachers.
- 9,735 teachers received pre-service training at the lower secondary level. Modules were developed by subject experts and delivered to contract teachers. 387 educational advisors, 73 inspectors, and 1,320 management teams of lower secondary schools (directors, censors, and superintendents) were trained (these outputs did not have targets). At project closing, 63.3 percent of the teachers who were trained had graduated and were qualified to teach secondary school.
- 1,744 lower secondary teachers were newly recruited (there was no target).
- In 2017, 26,000 grammar books were purchased, surpassing the target of 21,000 grammar books, and teachers received a study schedule with guidance on use of the books.
- A system for learning assessment at the primary level has been implemented, achieving the target. The assessment has been implemented three times, also achieving the target.

Outcomes

- In 2018, 59 percent of teachers were rated satisfactory by the Institute for Teacher Training and Research and an external agency survey of classroom observations in the deprived districts, surpassing the target of 55 percent.
- In addition, 75.8 percent of public teachers performed at or above accepted standards, based on inspection and classroom visits each year at the primary level using the OSEP (outil de supervision et d'encadrement pédagogique) tool, a pedagogical supervision and guidance instrument designed to collect and analyze teaching and learning data. This achievement surpassed the target of 70 percent.

- In 2014, Benin participated in the Programme for the Analysis of Education Systems (PASEC), a regional assessment (covering ten countries) to assess student abilities in mathematics and reading in French. The results from this assessment showed that Benin's student scores at the beginning of primary school were the second last in language and mathematics, but that by the end of primary school, Benin's students ranked third in language scores and fourth in mathematics scores. Within Benin, performance in urban areas was substantially better than performance in rural areas.

Rating
Substantial

Rationale

Overall efficacy was modest. Although outputs related to access and equity were successfully implemented, these activities did not translate into anticipated outcomes. According to the ICR (p. 22), while the project experienced progress on each of the PDO-level indicators linked to improving access over the first few years of implementation, during the last two years these positive trends did not continue (in the deprived districts or at the national level). The inability of the project to achieve its targets specifically on GER in project districts at the lower secondary level could be explained through a new government policy in 2016 that implemented more rigorous enforcement of secondary school admission standards. Overall, however, the ICR stated that, despite the joint efforts of the ICR team, project team, and government, the factors underlying the decline of PCR and GPIR in targeted districts and at the national level could not be identified.

Overall Efficacy Rating
Modest

Primary reason
Low achievement

5. Efficiency

The PAD did not include a traditional economic analysis. It stated (p. 19) that investments in education, particularly primary education, generally produce very high economic returns. The ICR also did not conduct a traditional economic analysis, stating that sufficient data was not available. Instead, the ICR assessed the operational efficiency of the project.

According to the ICR (p. 23), the project benefited from substantial cost savings due to exchange rate fluctuations that increased project funding by 16 percent. Also, the project benefited from the government's decision to waive taxes on construction activities, resulting in lower unit costs for new classrooms at the primary and lower secondary levels (unit costs were 85 percent of budgeted costs) and latrines (unit costs were between 87 percent and 92 percent of budgeted costs). The ICR (p. 24) stated that unit costs at the primary level were lower than cost comparators, while at the lower secondary level, unit costs were higher; no specific data was provided. The per student cost of school kits was US$8.0, lower than the estimated cost of US$11.63. Furthermore, the per-child unit cost of school feeding was US$28, below the average cost of US$41 in low income countries.

The project benefited from strong coordination among the 16 different donors within the sector. The pooled funding mechanism contributed to alignment of donor interests (ICR, p. 29). However, the project experienced significant implementation delays related to financial management, procurement, and misuse of project funds (see Section 10b), all indicative of implementation inefficiencies. According to the ICR (p. 29), financial management staff were highly risk-averse when processing payments, causing implementation delays related to construction activities, as frequently the payment of one tranche was necessary to move forward to the next phase of implementation. These delays also caused service providers (including mothers providing school feedings) to have to finance activities with their own funds to ensure service continuation. Furthermore, the project experienced administrative and procurement bottlenecks, such as the need to re-launch several procurement procedures to ensure the integrity of procurement processes, delays in drafting terms of reference or finalizing technical aspects of activities, and long waits for government staff participation in bidding evaluations and related processes. In addition, the project was impacted by delays in signing contracts by ministries such as the Ministry of Finance. Cumulatively, these delays resulted in the need to extend the project by 26 months.

Taking everything together, the project’s efficiency rating is 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

The project's objectives were highly relevant to country context, government strategy, and Bank strategy. Efficacy was modest. Although there is evidence of substantial achievement related to improved quality of classroom education based on in-class assessments of teacher performance and relative improvement in demonstrated primary-level learning outcomes, there was (at best) modest progress in outcomes related to equity and access. The ICR reported that the collaborative efforts of the ICR team, project team, and government were unable to determine the factors underlying the disconnect between well-achieved outputs and disappointing outcomes. Efficiency is rated modest due to significant shortcomings in implementation efficiency. These ratings indicate significant shortcomings in the project's overall preparation and implementation, producing an Outcome rating of Moderately Unsatisfactory

a. Outcome Rating

Moderately Unsatisfactory

7. Risk to Development Outcome

According to the ICR (p. 37), the government continues to be committed to the project’s objectives and highlighted the importance of infrastructure, teacher training, school canteens, and school kits for 42 newly-categorized deprived districts in the Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2018-2030. The ICR (p. 38) highlighted that the ESP's objectives are closely linked to this project's PDOs: (i) increasing access and retention of children aged three to 15 in basic education; (ii) providing children aged three to 15 with fair and inclusive basic education; and (iii) providing children aged three to 15 with quality basic education. The ESP contained strong statements about closing the financing gap for the plan's implementation. The government is also planning to continue the national learning assessments and has already made its 2019 contribution to the PASEC. The Bank continues to cooperate with the government through a new US$19.4 million project (Global Partnership for Education, GPE-3) that will build on many of this project's interventions, including pre- and in-service training to basic education teachers, school packages for girls in regions with PECRs below 50 percent, strengthening of the monitoring and evaluation system to fully use the EMIS and extend the EMIS to cover the secondary level, and implementation of a national assessment in 2022. According to the ICR (p. 37), continued support for project-financed activities from development partners such as United Nations Children’s Fund, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, and Plan International is likely, as the GPE-3 project's objectives and design were endorsed by these partners through the Local Education Group.

It is important to note, however, that continuing to implement more of the same (or similar) outputs as this project, without fully acknowledging and understanding the factors underlying this project's disconnect between outputs and intended outcomes, is unlikely to produce desired results.

8. Assessment of Bank Performance

a. Quality-at-Entry

The ICR (p. 27) stated that project design built on activities that were successful during the previous EFA-FTI project, such as strengthening district inspectorates and school management/information systems to increase accountability to achieve results, providing direct support to schools for the acquisition of learning materials, and supporting community-run school canteens. Also, according to the ICR (p. 29), the project was built on strong donor coordination based on the EFA-FTI, and the project coordinated with local development partners to ensure that activities were complementary. Furthermore, the Bank team worked with delegated contract management agencies that had been successful in the past to manage construction activities.

At appraisal, the Bank team identified the main risk factors that could impede project advancement: weak capacity at central and local levels, and political reorganization in relevant ministries. Mitigation activities included providing technical expertise, capacity building for higher-level and technical staff at the central-level ministries and decentralized offices in key areas, and training sessions for school headmasters and heads of parents' association in the targeted school districts in order to improve their skills related to objective-based school contracts. However, mitigation efforts were not adequate, and the project experienced several delays due to financial management and procurement issues.

The project's M&E design was generally sound. However, the ICR (p. 35) stated that aligning the project's data collection timelines with the government's would have been useful for timely updating of the results framework.

Quality-at-Entry Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

b. Quality of supervision

According to the ICR (p. 36), the Bank team had an adequate skill mix for project implementation. The project benefited from the task team leader being in-country, which ensured continuity in the project's supervision. The ICR stated that implementation bottlenecks were reported in a timely manner, and that supervision missions were conducted regularly. Furthermore, the Bank team ensured strong cooperation with other development partners and harmonization of activities in the country's education sector. The Bank team restructured the project twice to modify the results framework to reflect changes in implementation circumstances and allow for better monitoring of project outcomes. According to the ICR (p. 30), two cases of fraudulent activity in regards to school feeding were addressed adequately (see Section 10b).

However, the project experienced several implementation delays. Implementation started nine months late due to a lengthy project preparation period that involved delay in completing the recruitment of Program Monitoring Unit staff (which was a pre-condition for the project). Results monitoring encountered several challenges, including indicators being based on EMIS data that took months to update, and unreliable survey data underpinning the indicator on the percentage of schools in deprived districts communicating student results and budgets to the community. According to the Bank team (April 25, 2019), the project would have benefited from closer supervision, include supervision of school feeding during the first two years of the project, which experienced some financial leakage. However, the misuse of funds was significantly reduced after the Bank began to require third-party verification and regular audits on activities carried out at the school level. Despite some early challenges, significant efforts were put forth by the Bank team to ensure that funds were used for their intended purposes.

Quality of Supervision Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

Overall Bank Performance Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization

a. M&E Design

The project's objectives were clearly specified, and the PDO and intermediate outcome indicators encompassed all outcomes of the PDO statement. The selected indicators were adequate in capturing the full results chain. All indicators were specific, measurable, and relevant.

The project invested in an EMIS to build a sustainable information system. According to the ICR (p. 31), the project's M&E design would have benefited from being more aligned with the government's timelines for reporting education data, as EMIS data was only available several months after the beginning of each academic year, meaning that it was not available for timely planning purposes for any given school year.

b. M&E Implementation

According to the ICR (p. 32), the project's M&E system used existing ministry data collection instruments and systems at all implementation levels. Data collection was complex and included the reporting of several entities such as schools and school districts, non-governmental service providers, follow-up committees at the commune and regional levels, central-level ministry directorates, and the project's Program and Monitoring Unit. In addition, the project collected data from annual work plans in various project implementation units, periodic implementation reports from executing agencies/service providers, and performance reports from the ministries. The ICR (p. 32) stated that the structure of the M&E process, data collection, analysis, and reporting was clearly defined, but it required high levels of collaboration between different departments.

Project M&E experienced challenges, such as the closing of the statistical division within regional education offices when the government changed. Also, the project lacked sufficient resources for data cleaning and verification during the last year of project implementation, resulting in delays in data processing and reporting of key indicators. The ICR (p. 32) stated that these shortcomings affected data trends, including EMIS data showing substantial declines in enrollment compared to previous years. Even though the project supported the EMIS, there were implementation delays, and project indicators could not be updated with 2017/2018 EMIS data when the project closed in April 2018. According to the ICR (p. 33), another shortcoming of the project's M&E was that the indicator tracking the percentage of schools communicating students' results and budgets to the community could not be fully measured throughout project implementation, as the survey that was to provide data for this indicator was not reliable.

The project's M&E was rated Moderately Unsatisfactory during the last year and a half of implementation.

c. M&E Utilization

According to the ICR (p. 33), the project used M&E data to inform decision making. For example, the project conducted internal and external classroom observations and used the results together with the outcomes of education system performance (PASEC 2014) to tailor teacher training content and refine the training's targeting (what teachers would receive training, in what topic, and for how long, during in-service training). Also, M&E activities identified low teacher content as an obstacle to achieving the project's quality outcomes, resulting in the project adding the activity of distributing two grammar books to all primary teachers in the targeted districts at restructuring in September 2015.

M&E Quality Rating

Modest

10. Other Issues

a. Safeguards

The project was classified as category B and triggered the Bank's safeguard policies OP/BP 4.01 (Environmental Assessment) and OP/BP 4.12 (Involuntary Resettlement). The ICR (p. 35) stated that safeguards assessments were conducted in June 2016 and compliance with the Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF) was found to be insufficient. According to the Bank team (April 25, 2019), the shortcomings related to a lack of dissemination of the RPF and insufficient site evaluation to establish convincingly the non-existence of situations of non-compliance. These shortcomings were addressed by disseminating the RFP and collecting necessary documentation in each of the construction sites to ensure their compliance.

The ICR (p. 35) stated that the project's safeguard compliance was rated Moderately Satisfactory overall.

b. Fiduciary Compliance

Financial Management

According to the ICR (p. 27), the project's financial management was designed to follow the government's existing public financial management systems for budgeting, accounting, disbursement, and flow of funds. The ICR (p. 34) stated that the project conducted seven audits, of which all had unqualified opinions. Reporting standards and protocols were appropriate, and interim unaudited financial reports were submitted on time and complied with the Bank's procedures. A final audit will be conducted once the pooled financing facility closes in 2019.

According to the ICR (p. 29) the project experienced implementation delays due to disbursement and payment arrangements and a high work load of the government's financial management staff. The ICR mission found that delays were also due to the financial management staff's hesitancy in making payments directly from the designated account at the Central Bank and using a procedure with fewer administrative controls.

The project experienced two fraudulent activities. In 2014/2015, it was found that the Head of the Inspectorate and the District Tax Officer in Malanville, one of the project's districts, conducted fraudulent activities regarding the project's school feeding interventions. This resulted in the government having to reimburse the Bank in the amount of US$51,800. The ICR (p. 35) stated that this issue was addressed quickly by letting the involved authorities go, reimbursing the Bank in the amount of US$51,800, and conducting an audit on a representative sample of schools in the target districts to oversee the use of funds transferred to all activities. Also, the fiduciary risk rating was increased to High. The issue was reported by the task team to the Bank's Integrity Vice Presidency (INT), which found that it was dealt with appropriately. Another fraudulent activity was identified in 2016/2017 with US$87,080 being misused for school canteens. The government reimbursed the Bank. The issue was reported to INT, which found that it was handled appropriately.

According to the ICR (p. 34) the project's financial management was rated Moderately Satisfactory during most of project implementation.

Procurement

The ICR (p. 35) stated that the project followed the Bank's procurement procedures, and no major issues were found during project supervision. However, even though the project used two Delegated Contract Managers who were experienced in administering classroom construction, the project faced delays in several activities such as school feeding, school kits, construction, processing of contracts, etc., resulting in implementation bottlenecks. Also, the ICR stated that the project experienced an issue of conflict of interest with procurement procedures for the EMIS; this issue was addressed quickly. The project experienced a high turnover of its procurement specialist, who changed three times during implementation. At the beginning of the project, procurement was rated Satisfactory, and the procurement rating was Moderately Satisfactory for the remainder of the project period.

c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)

None reported.

d. Other

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11. Ratings

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

12. Lessons

The ICR (p. 38-39) provided lessons learned, summarized here by IEG:

- **Equipping a project implementation unit with adequate staff can ensure stability and continuity of project implementation during political changes.** In this project, the government's administration changed in 2016, resulting in the restructuring of the education ministries and re-organization of lead directorates responsible for project implementation. Even though it took some time for the new staff in the education ministries to get up to speed, the presence of the project implementation unit was critical for ensuring knowledge transfer and keeping implementation delays to a minimum.
- **Having complementary data sources available in case of delays in national data collection is critical when a project's M&E relies on national data for measuring progress towards the PDO.** In this project, three out of seven PDO indicators were dependent on data collection from the EMIS. However, EMIS data collection was often delayed by several months, complicating assessment of these indicators when the project closed.

- **Establishing feedback mechanisms to allow for continuous and regular assessment of project activities is critical for making adaptations when necessary.** In this project, the assessment of teacher competencies and subject specialization allowed for modifications in teacher training by grouping teachers according to their capacity and subject specification.

13. Assessment Recommended?

Yes

Please explain

To understand better the disconnect between outputs (which were largely achieved) and outcomes (which were not achieved for the access and equity indicators).

14. Comments on Quality of ICR

The ICR provided a solid overview of project preparation and implementation. It was candid and outcome-driven. Its lessons were insightful and drawn from project experience. However, the ICR did not conduct a traditional economic analysis, was lengthy, and did not state how the lack of safeguard compliance was addressed. Overall, the ICR's quality is rated Substantial.

a. Quality of ICR Rating

Substantial