



## 1. Project Data

**Project ID**  
P146827

**Project Name**  
LR-Youth Opportunities Project

**Country**  
Liberia

**Practice Area(Lead)**  
Social Protection & Jobs

**L/C/TF Number(s)**  
IDA-56210, TF-A9505

**Closing Date (Original)**  
31-Dec-2020

**Total Project Cost (USD)**  
13,567,668.97

**Bank Approval Date**  
06-Nov-2015

**Closing Date (Actual)**  
30-Sep-2021

	<b>IBRD/IDA (USD)</b>	<b>Grants (USD)</b>
Original Commitment	10,000,000.00	3,500,000.00
Revised Commitment	13,447,685.83	3,500,000.00
Actual	13,567,668.97	3,500,000.00

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## 2. Project Objectives and Components

### a. Objectives

According to the Project Appraisal Document (PAD) (p. iii) and the Financing Agreement of February 14, 2016 (p.5) the objective of the project was “to improve access to income generation opportunities for targeted youth and strengthen the government's capacity to implement its cash transfer program”.

When the project was restructured in April 2020, the objective was revised to “improve access to income generation opportunities for targeted youth”.



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

Yes

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

Yes

**Date of Board Approval**

17-Apr-2020

**c. Will a split evaluation be undertaken?**

Yes

**d. Components**

The project included four components:

**Component 1: Pre-Employment Social Support and Household Enterprises for Urban Youth (appraisal estimate US\$3.2 million, actual US\$3.1 million):** This component was to finance three sub-components:

Subcomponent 1A: Pre-employment Social Support: This sub-component was to finance activities supporting the development of noncognitive skills and positive attitudes toward work among youth, through intensive pre-employment and psychosocial support, as well as psychosocial support to Ebola (EVD)-affected youth and survivors.

Subcomponent 1B: Household Enterprises: This sub-component was to finance activities to increase labor productivity of youth working in household enterprises and to facilitate the entry of youth into household enterprises.

Subcomponent 1C: Capacity and Systems Building: This sub-component was to finance activities to build capacity and systems for key stakeholders involved in the implementation of the project at both central and local levels.

When the project was restructured in April 2020, the name of component 1 was changed to “Pre-Employment Social Support (PESS) and Small Business Support (SBS)”.

**Component 2: Productive Public Works and Life Skills Support: (appraisal estimate US\$6.53 million, actual US\$7.31 million):** This component was to finance two sub-components:

Subcomponent 2A: Productive Public Works and Life Skills Support: This sub-component was to finance the provision of productive public works opportunities and life skills training for eligible youth.

Subcomponent 2B: Capacity and Systems: This sub-component was to finance the building of capacity and systems under the Libera Agency for Community Empowerment (LACE) for the implementation of household enterprise support, productive public works, and life skills training.



When the project was restructured in April 2020, the name of component 2 was changed to “Community Livelihood & Agriculture Support (CLAS)”.

**Component 3: Capacity Building for Cash Transfer Program (appraisal estimate US\$1.2 million, actual US\$185,000):** This component was to finance capacity building within the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGSCP). The aim was i) set minimum standards of operations in the modalities of identifying, targeting, and delivering cash transfers; ii) update project operational procedures and guidelines; iii) develop coordination mechanisms and ensure synergies in the implementation of this subcomponent; and iv) provide knowledge exchange events at all government levels and international study tours.

When the project was restructured in April 2020, Component 3 was dropped since it was no longer needed to achieve the revised PDO. The remaining funds were reallocated to other components.

**Component 4: Project implementation and coordination (appraisal estimate US\$2.57 million, actual US\$3.0 million):** This component was to finance three subcomponents:

Subcomponent 4A: This subcomponent was to finance project implementation and coordination by the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS).

Subcomponent 4B: This subcomponent was to finance the project implementation and coordination by the Liberian Agency for Community Empowerment (LACE).

Subcomponent 4C: This subcomponent was to finance project implementation and coordination by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGSCP).

When the project was restructured in April 2020, subcomponent 4C was dropped since it was no longer needed to achieve the revised PDO. The remaining funds were reallocated to other components.

Due to extremely high inflation at the Mid-Term Review (MTR) in April 2019 (27 percent) the project required Additional Financing (AF) to protect livelihoods of beneficiaries under component 2 and address a funding gap under component 4.

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

**Project Cost:** The project was estimated to cost US\$13.50 million. Actual cost was US\$13.56 million.

**Financing:** The project was financed by an IDA credit in the amount of US\$10.0 million which completely disbursed and a Trust Fund grant in the amount of US\$3.5 million which also completely disbursed.

**Borrower Contribution:** The Borrower was not to make any financial contributions.

**Dates:** The project was restructured five times:

- On March 29, 2019, the project was restructured to receive AF in the amount of US\$3.5 million to cover increases in operations cost and cost overrun due to a modification in design which had not



been anticipated during project appraisal due to a significant increase in inflation (from 8-10 percent in 2014/15 to 24 percent in 2018).

- On April 7, 2020, the project was restructured to: i) revise the PDOs and the Results Framework to exclude the objective and indicators relating to capacity building for cash transfers and read as “to improve access to income generation opportunities for targeted youth”; ii) modify selected PDO indicators, reduce outcome targets for selected indicators and add new indicators to better measure and monitor activities under PPW; iii) extend the project closing date from December 31, 2020, to June 30, 2021 to allow for accommodating the nearly one-year effectiveness delay; iv) change the titles of Components 1 and 2 to reflect properly activities and objectives of these components; and v) reallocate funds between components.
- On July 7, 2020, the project was restructured to change the loan closing date of the Sida financed RETF (TF0A9505), from December 30, 2020, to June 31, 2021, in line with the new project closing date.
- On December 23, 2020, the project was restructured to: i) adjust implementation parameters of project components to align them with COVID-19 realities; ii) adapt the Results Framework to reflect the changes in implementation of the various project components; iii) make reallocations between disbursement categories.
- On June 25, 2021, the project was restructured to change the closing date from June 30, 2021, to September 30, 2021, to allow the Project Management Team (PMT) to have ample time to work with the payment service provider to address the liquidity constraint which has made it difficult to disburse final labor subsidy payments to 1,372 CLAS beneficiaries living in hard to reach rural communities.

### 3. Relevance of Objectives

#### Rationale

According to the PAD (p. 1) before the Ebola outbreak in mid-2014, Liberia had experienced substantial growth since the end of the fourteen-year conflict in 2003. The service and commerce sectors, including construction, retailing, and hospitality, were the leading contributors to the economy, while agriculture remained the single largest source of employment in the country. Iron ore mining and other concessional sectors, such as palm and rubber production, also contributed to GDP growth. Liberia had also attracted reinvestments to its traditional sectors in forestry, rubber, and mining.

However, despite these achievements, high levels of poverty and underemployment, combined with low human capital, persisted and presented significant challenges. Around 48 percent of households were classified as being in extreme poverty and about 85 percent of the active work force had only vulnerable employment, without access to a pension, insurance policies, health benefits, or job security. At the time of appraisal, out of the total labor force, the formal sector employed only 17 percent, while the informal sector, characterized by significant underemployment, low productivity, and low wages, employed 78.5 percent.

The Ebola crisis had, in addition to the toll on human lives and suffering, an economic impact in regard to forgone outputs, higher fiscal deficits, rising prices, lower real household incomes, disruption to education



and training activities, reduction in demand for goods and services as well as trauma/psychosocial impacts of the crisis, and escalation of tensions given increased economic vulnerability.

Furthermore, Liberia experienced many years of conflict until 2003, negatively affecting youth opportunities and behavior. These youth were exposed to a wide range of traumatic experiences, including forced recruitment into armed groups, violence, and victimization, in addition to the daily stresses of poverty and insecurity. In addition to unresolved trauma, other psychosocial impacts included poor work ethics, poor sexual and reproductive health choices, including high rates of teenage pregnancy and related caretaking burdens of female and male youth. These constraints affected the youth's ability to communicate and collaborate effectively in a work environment.

The government of Liberia requested the Bank's support for addressing the youth employment needs and for strengthening the country's safety net system and its ability to respond to shocks as well as increase the resilience of poor households that were adversely affected by the Ebola outbreak.

The project supported Liberia's National Government Strategy-Pro-Poor Agenda for Development and Prosperity (PADP) (2018-2023), the second in the series of five-year National Development Plans under the Liberia Vision 2030 framework. In particular, the project supported Pillar I (Power to the People) and Pillar II (Economy and Job), and Pillar IV (Governance and Transparency).

At appraisal, the objective of the project was in line with Bank's Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) for Liberia (FY2013-17) which aimed at increasing resilience of poor and vulnerable households, focusing on youth underemployment, in particular, as a conflict driver. The objective of the project was also aligned with the Bank's flagship report on "Youth Employment in Sub-Saharan Africa" (2014) and the Bank's Africa Social Protection Strategy (2012-2022) promoting development of equitable, fiscally sustainable, and scalable social protection systems.

The objectives were also consistent with the Bank's most recent Country Partnership Framework (CPF) (FY19-24) under Pillar II (Building Human Capital to Seize New Economic Opportunities) objective 5 (Improved earning opportunities for youth and women). Also, the CPF focuses on improving self-employment outcomes by supporting entrepreneurs' access to capital, markets, and economic opportunities. In addition, the project was in line with the CPF's long-term goals to create demand-driven skills-training platforms to scale up and integrate into new projects.

## **Rating**

High

## **4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)**

### **OBJECTIVE 1**

#### **Objective**

To improve access to income generation opportunities for targeted youth



## **Rationale**

### **Theory of Change:**

The project's theory of change envisioned that project outputs such as providing pre-employment trainings, and psychological support trainings for the youth, on the job and vocational trainings as well as preparing new land for cultivation and providing agricultural inputs and agricultural processing were to result in the above stated objective.

### **Outputs:**

- Recruited 2000 youth ages 15—17 who received pre-employment social support under the project.
- Delivered a program of pre-employment skills training and psychosocial support to at-risk or vulnerable youth;
- Provided orientation workshops to communicate to the youth the objectives and expected outcomes of the program (basic business management skills, financial literacy and life skills needed for successful engagement and operation in household enterprises).
- Facilitated youth groups on the development of their own subproject proposals.
- 520 targeted youth completed pre-employment social support training under the project, not achieving the original target of 2,000 youth.
- 22 percent of targeted urban youth completed apprenticeships or vocational skills training, not achieving the original target of 70 percent.
- 10,000 targeted rural youth completed life skills training under the project, achieving the target of 10,000 youth.
- 5,132 hectares were cultivated with support from the project, achieving the target of 5,000 hectares.
- All of the urban and rural Community Oversight Committees were active, achieving the target of 80 percent.
- The project benefitted 14,108 beneficiaries, not achieving the target of 15,000 beneficiaries. Of these beneficiaries, 51 percent were female, achieving the target of 50 percent being female.
- 10,722 beneficiaries benefitted from safety nets programs, achieving the target of 10,000 beneficiaries.
- 3,386 beneficiaries benefitted from labor market programs, not achieving the original target of 5,000 beneficiaries.

### **Outcomes:**

- 3,289 targeted urban youth were operating small business with support from the project, exceeding the original target of 3,000 youth.
- 92 percent of household enterprises initiated or expanded by targeted urban, that were supported by the project, were operational for more than six months, achieving the original target of 75 percent.
- The average annual earnings of targeted rural youth in Community Livelihood and Agriculture Support was US\$459, achieving the original target of US\$300.
- 1,840,000 person-days in public works were provided by the project, not achieving the target of 2 million person-days.



**Rating**  
Substantial

**OBJECTIVE 1 REVISION 1**

**Revised Objective**

To improve access to income generating opportunities for targeted youth

**Revised Rationale**

The project's theory of change did not change for this objective when the PDO was restructured.

**Outputs (in addition to the outputs stated above)**

- 520 targeted youth completed pre-employment social support training under the project, achieving the revised target of 520 youth.
- 22 percent of targeted urban youth completed apprenticeships or vocational skills training, not achieving but close to the revised target of 23 percent.

**Outcomes**

- 3,289 targeted urban youth were operating small business with support from the project, not achieving but close to the revised target of 3,400 youth.
- 3,386 beneficiaries benefitted from labor market programs, not achieving but close to the revised target of 3,400 beneficiaries.
- 96 percent of beneficiaries were satisfied with project interventions, exceeding the target of 70 percent.
- The average annual earnings of targeted rural youth in Community Livelihood and Agriculture Support was US\$459, achieving the target of US\$450.
- An Impact Evaluation (IE) showed that 59 percent of beneficiaries of the Small Business Support (SBS) round 1 reported at least one of the paid activities they participated in was through self-employment, compared to 50 percent for non-beneficiaries in the control group. Also, program beneficiaries experienced a 16 percentage points increase in rates of self-employment, on average, compared to the control group. Program beneficiaries were also 9.3 percentage points more likely to have their main paid employment activity be in self-employment, working in average an additional 4.6 hours per week in self-employment activities compared to individuals in the control group. Beneficiaries were also working an average of 7.6 hours more per week in paid employment than non-beneficiaries.

**Revised Rating**  
Substantial

**OBJECTIVE 2**  
**Objective**





To strengthen the government's capacity to implement its cash transfer program

**Rationale**

**Theory of Change:** The project's theory of change envisioned that project outputs such as improving operational procedures as well as improving standards for targeting and payments in cash transfers were to result in the above stated objective.

**Outputs:**

- Supported the establishment of register and target mechanisms for a future full-fledged system.
- Developed technical papers and terms of references. The ICR did not state for what activities.
- Created the Liberia Household Social Registry (LHSR) and Integrated Management Information System (MIS) architecture.
- Renovation and furnishing of space to host the LHSR at the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection to enable the physical establishment of the registry.

**Outcomes:**

- The average share of beneficiary households receiving bi-monthly cash transfers before or on the 15th of the proceeding months was zero, not achieving the target of 70 percent.

**Rating**

Modest

**OVERALL EFFICACY**

**Rationale**

Achievement of the first objective (with original targets) was Substantial and achievement of the second objective was Modest.

**Overall Efficacy Rating**

Substantial

**OVERALL EFFICACY REVISION 1**

**Overall Efficacy Revision 1 Rationale**





Achievement of the first objective was Substantial after the restructuring. The second objective was dropped during the restructuring.

### **Overall Efficacy Revision 1 Rating**

Substantial

## **5. Efficiency**

### **Economic Efficiency:**

The PAD (p. 24) conducted a traditional Economic analysis. Approximately 90 percent of YOP funds were to finance Components 1 and 2 which constituted the main activities targeted to improving access to income generation opportunities among youth. Other benefits related to establishing the basic social safety net system were to be expected in the long term and were not easily quantifiable.

The PAD's analysis of the Economic Rate of Return (ERR) focused on the benefits to increased earnings over the lifetime of youth that participate in the program, as well as immediate consumption gains realized in the first year of inclusion due to the grants and wages. The analysis considered two scenarios: i) the program was considered to be effective at increasing the initial earnings of the youth by 10 percent and maintaining this increase in earnings but not increasing the rate of earnings growth; and ii) the program was considered to be effective at improving the earnings growth of the youth by 2 percent per year over their lifetime. Under the scenario of a level increase of earnings by 10 percent, the ERR for pre-employment support was 8 percent, 2 percent for household enterprise grants and support, and 3.5 percent for productive public works. Under the scenario of a boost to earnings growth of 2 percent, the ERR increases to 15 percent, 9 percent and 10 percent respectively. This analysis indicated that the project was a worthwhile investment.

The ICR did not repeat the economic analysis that was conducted at appraisal by using information available at the time of closing.

### **Operational Efficiency:**

The original implementation period was extended by nine months from December 31, 2020, to September 30, 2022, to allow for the completion of activities, which had been delayed due to a delay in the project becoming effective and the Covid-19 pandemic. During the MTR, the Bank team identified cost underruns (component 3) and overruns (component 4) across different components that were reallocated during the restructuring.

According to the ICR (p. 24) the project experienced high implementation costs due to its wide coverage of all 15 counties resulting in high costs of service provision and monitoring of activities. Furthermore, the original project budget had underestimated staffing costs for the five-year implementation period. During the MTR, the complex project design and national coverage were identified as major cost drivers. The ICR (p. 28) stated that the project restructuring happened one year later than planned due to the PMT taking longer than expected account for the finances under component 3 since disbursement was paused under that component,



key consultants had to be let go and goods and services had to be reduced to allow for an increase in the support to beneficiaries.

Taking everything together, the project's overall 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 <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

Original PDO: Relevance of the objective was High. Efficacy under the original objective was Substantial as well as Efficiency resulting in an outcome rating of Moderately Satisfactory.

Revised PDO: Relevance of the objective was High. Efficacy under the revised objective was Substantial. Efficiency was Modest, resulting in an outcome rating of Moderately Satisfactory.

As a result, the project's overall outcome rating is Moderately Satisfactory.

### a. Outcome Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

## 7. Risk to Development Outcome

The risks to development outcome are limited due to these two factors:

**Government commitment:** The project team signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Ministries of Agriculture and Internal Affairs and the Liberia Anti-corruption Commission for the integration of the project activities in their program or activities indicating government commitment. Also, the Bank continues to stay engaged in the area through two projects, the Recovery of Economic Activity for Liberian Informal Sector Employment (REALISE) (financing amount US\$10.0 million) which aims to increase access



to income earning opportunities for the vulnerable in the informal sector in response to the COVID-19 crisis in Liberia and the Liberia Social Safety Nets Project (LSSNP) (financing amount US\$ 18.9) which aims to establish the key building blocks of a basic national safety net delivery system and provide income support to households who are both extremely poor and food insecure.

**Stakeholder ownership:** Under the Community Livelihood and Agriculture Support (CLAS) component, beneficiary youth groups established Village Saving Loan Associations (VSLA) to improve the group's stability and continue farming activities, as well as access to secured loans. These VSLAs are now providing beneficiary youth groups with access to secure loans for household needs and as credit unions for participating communities

## 8. Assessment of Bank Performance

### a. Quality-at-Entry

According to the PAD (p.16) the project was built on lessons learned from implementing youth employment programs in Liberia. These lessons included: i) Community Driven Development (CDD) can be an effective tool for empowering communities, enhancing social service delivery and contributing to building local institutions; ii) stakeholder and donor coordination is essential in all development activities in a post-conflict context, especially during the transition from relief to development phase where priorities need to be clearly identified and sequenced; iii) Paying attention to fiduciary and project management skills in a weak post-conflict set-up is a critical factor; iv) Use of clear and transparent criteria for the selection of beneficiaries is key as it provides coverage against possible political interventions; v) Introducing pre-employment support and life skills alongside technical skills is key to project implementation; and vi) integrating a robust control and accountability framework in the design and implementation process to ensure transparency and accountability and prevent corruption is important.

According to the PAD (p. 23) the Bank team identified relevant risks, the following were rated as Substantial: i) inadequate capacity and accountability mechanism and lack of clarity around functional assignments and responsibilities; ii) limited financial management and procurement capacity; iii) basic monitoring and management systems, and widely varied capacity at the national and county levels; iv) limited qualified service providers and innovative training providers in Liberia; v) land acquisition for project negatively impacting local communities; and vi) spread of Ebola to staff and project beneficiaries.

The Bank mitigated these risks by strengthening local fiduciary and management skills, supporting the continued development of an IT-based Management Information System (MIS), undertaking Economic and Sector Work (ESW) to determine the capacity of skills development service providers as well as putting health safety protocols in place to prevent the spread of the Ebola virus. These mitigation efforts were adequate.

The project's Results Framework and M&E preparatory arrangements were adequate overall (see section 9a for more details).

The project was relatively complex and included three implementing agencies with limited capacity, the Ministry of Youth & Sports (MYS), the Liberia Agency for Community Empowerment (LACE), and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSPP). Also, the PAD was not sufficiently clear in



stating that the second part of the objective (to strengthen the government's capacity to implement its youth cash transfer program) was designed as a temporary transition arrangement until the Bank's new Libera Social Safety Net Project was implemented. Furthermore, effectiveness was delayed by 10 months due to the Ebola pandemic.

### **Quality-at-Entry Rating**

Moderately Satisfactory

### **b. Quality of supervision**

According to the Bank team (September, 29, 2022) the Bank conducted 15 supervision missions on a regular basis and filed 11 Implementation Status Reports (ISRs) throughout implementation.

The Bank restructured the project five times and obtained AF to bridge the financing gap resulting from high inflation. According to the ICR (p. 28) the main financing was supposed to happen at the time of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) but ended up taking place a year later since the PMT took longer than expected to finalize information that was needed for the restructuring. Also, a new government had come in place a year earlier and it took time to reach consensus for staff lay-offs.

The project did not encounter any financial management or procurement related implementation issues (see section 10b for more details).

Also, the Bank team provided adequate Aide Memoires, and Implementation Progress Reports that allowed Bank management to stay informed.

### **Quality of Supervision Rating**

Satisfactory

### **Overall Bank Performance Rating**

Moderately Satisfactory

## **9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization**

### **a. M&E Design**

The project's original and revised objectives were clearly stated. The project's theory of change and how project activities and outputs were to result in intended intermediate outcomes was sound and adequately reflected in the Results Framework. The selected indicators were sufficiently specific, measurable, relevant and all had targets. Also, the indicators were adequate for capturing the contribution of the project activities towards achieving the objective. However, PDO indicator 1 (targeted youth operating small business with support from the project) and Intermediate Outcome Indicator 1 (Youth receiving start-up grants) seemed to have measured the same outcome.



The design of the project-related M&E linked to an Impact Evaluation (IE). According to the PAD (p. 21) the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS) was responsible for establishing an M&E system for this project in particular, as well as the entire youth sector in general. The IE included a baseline survey (year 1) and two follow-up surveys (years 3 and 5).

## **b. M&E Implementation**

The Project Management Team (PMT) included an M&E officer who was responsible for conducting ad-hoc monitoring visits to county teams to identify shortcomings and provide support for improvement on a regular basis. In addition, M&E officers of each implementing agency were responsible for monitoring project activities that were implemented by county offices. The ICR (p. 29) stated that independent parties were contracted to conduct targeted studies such as specific evaluations and midterm and internal project completion evaluations as well as surveys when needed.

The project's Results Framework was restructured twice to reflect the change in the PDO and changes in project components. Nine months before project closure the targets for two intermediate outcome indicators ("targeted urban youth completing pre-employment social support training under the project" and "share of targeted urban youth completing apprenticeships on vocational skills training") were reduced. According to the Bank team (September 29, 2022) the actual need for indicator revisions was identified during the MTR but was formalized only one year later due to political challenges.

According to the Bank team (September 29, 2022) indicators were regularly measured and reported and were found to be reliable and of good quality.

## **c. M&E Utilization**

According to the ICR (p. 30) the project's M&E provided information on implementation progress and bottlenecks, which allowed for informed decision making.

### **M&E Quality Rating**

Substantial

## **10. Other Issues**

### **a. Safeguards**

The project was classified as category B and triggered the Bank's safeguard policy OP/BP 4.12 (Involuntary Resettlement). The project prepared a Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF). Also, according to the ICR (p. 30) the project conducted community consultation for voluntary land donation to avoid relocation.

The project also developed a Grievance Redress System (GRS). The ICR (p. 31) stated that during field visits the Bank team noticed that the toll free number for lodging grievances and complaints was only



reachable through one telecom provider and not accessible in some communities. The Bank team asked the project management team to address this issue. Due to this shortcoming, the project's safeguard performance was downgraded to Moderately Satisfactory. The ICR did not state if this issue was resolved by the time the project closed.

The project also triggered the Bank's safeguard policy OP/BP 4.01 (Environmental Assessment) and prepared an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF). The Bank team evaluated the project's compliance with the Bank's safeguard policies during the MTR and found that existing safeguard procedures and practices were broadly consistent with the Bank's safeguard policies and instruments. The overall safeguards rating recorded in the operations portal was Satisfactory.

## **b. Fiduciary Compliance**

### **Financial Management:**

The Project Financial Management Unit at the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP) was responsible for the project's Financial Management (FM).

According to the ICR (p. 31) the independent General Auditing Commission (GAC) conducted audits on Terms of References, which were accepted by the Bank and the government. Also, the GAC performed an annual audit at the end of each government fiscal year. At the MTR, the Bank raised concerns regarding slow disbursement and provided recommendations, which the project team addressed.

According to the Bank team (September 29, 2022) all audit reports were satisfactory to the Bank and there were no qualified opinions expressed in the project's audit reports at any time during implementation.

The ICR (p. 32) stated that due to delays in submitting the Audit Recommendation Action Plans, the project's FM rating at project closer was Moderately Satisfactory.

### **Procurement:**

According to the ICR (p. 32) the project's procurement performance was mostly in the Satisfactory range except between June 2019 and January 2020 when it was rated Moderately Unsatisfactory due to slow implementation of planned procurement activities. This obstacle was addressed by the Bank providing more support resulting in the project's procurement performance being rated Moderately Satisfactory again in January 2020. The ICR stated that the project was able to build capacity for using the Bank's Systematic Tracking of Exchanges in Procurement (STEP) system and was able to solve all STEP related issues.

When the project closed, procurement was rated Satisfactory and all agreed procurement activities had been completed.

## **c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)**



According to the ICR (p. 26) the project's introduction of mobile payments and phones to beneficiaries exposed them to digital financial services and increased their chance of connecting digitally. Also, beneficiaries stated that mobile money payments made them feel empowered since they could choose to cash out the money whenever was convenient to them and owning a mobile phone allowed them to connect with people outside their community. Lessons from the project's successful transition to mobile payments paved the way for full transition of the LSSNP's Social Cash Transfer Program to mobile money payments for all beneficiaries.

#### d. Other

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### 11. Ratings

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

### 12. Lessons

The ICR (p. 34-35) included several lessons learned, which were adapted by IEG:

- **Engaging with local communities ensures continuous project support and community ownership.** This project used various communication tools, including text messaging, and radio talk shows to involve local communities resulting in community members understanding their roles and providing free land for youth groups to cultivate.
- **Using direct payments of grants to beneficiaries through mobile money for procurement of farm inputs allows for greater local ownership.** In this project, the PMT transferred the full beneficiary amount to targeted youth groups who carried out purchases of farm inputs with the support of community facilitators. This procurement method also created a market for local community members and supported the provision of materials of adequate quality to project communities.

### 13. Assessment Recommended?

No





## **14. Comments on Quality of ICR**

The ICR provided an adequate overview of project preparation and implementation and was sufficiently outcome driven. The ICR did not conduct a traditional economic analysis, lacked conciseness and did not state which of the planned outputs were delivered. Also, the lessons learned largely provided information on implementation aspects. The ICR did not apply the split rating correctly, as the ICR is expected to assess achievements across the entire project duration. The quality of the ICR is rated Substantial but only marginally so.

### **a. Quality of ICR Rating**

Substantial