CONTEXT

TEN YEARS TO TRANSFORM OUR WORLD

In 2020, the world kick-started the Decade of Action to speed up the delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Decade of Action calls for accelerating sustainable solutions to the world’s biggest challenges -ranging from poverty and climate change to inequality and closing the finance gap- at three levels: global action to secure greater leadership, more resources and smarter solutions for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); local action embedding the transitions needed in the policies, budgets, institutions and regulatory frameworks of governments, cities and local authorities; and people action, including by youth, civil society, the media, the private sector, unions, academia and other stakeholders, to generate an unstoppable movement pushing for the required transformation. The United Nations SDGs are in tandem with the African Union’s Agenda 2063 and the African Development Bank Group (AfDB)’s Ten-Year Strategy and High 5 priorities. Several initiatives called SDG Acceleration Actions have been undertaken to fast-track SDG implementation by key stakeholder groups –governments, businesses, civil society organizations and others– individually or in partnership across the world.

COVID PANDEMIC AND THE SHIFT IN GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

In March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a public health emergency. The world as we knew it changed and a new reality rapidly took hold. This shifted global development priorities. The public and private sectors, individuals, and communities mobilized to respond to the impact of the pandemic. There was enormous need for resources to combat the crisis. Countries took unprecedented but unequal measures to contain the virus, each according to its capacity. Most countries focused on immediate response strategies to flatten the disease curve through non-pharmaceutical prevention and containment measures, notably personal hygiene, physical distancing, and reduction of economic activity, to various degrees. Travel restrictions and remote work became the new normal. COVID-19 continued to spread rapidly throughout the year, with far-reaching consequences and implications. In this context, there was a strong need for credible evidence on what works and what does not, why, for whom, and under what circumstances.
THE AFDB IN A NEW REALITY

As the world entered a new reality, so did the AfDB. The pandemic required the Bank to adapt both its way of working and its programs. In one day, the Bank went remote, with all its staff working from home in a digital workplace. All mission travel -crucial for the identification, appraisal, supervision, monitoring and evaluation of operations- was stopped. The AfDB also threw its full weight behind emergency response support to assist its Regional Member Countries (RMCs) at this critical time - designing and establishing a Crisis Response Facility of up to USD 10 billion mainly in the form of budget support, issuing a USD 3 billion social bond, approving a support operation for the WHO, reallocating existing resources and freeing up resources through cancellations, and strengthening coordination and collaboration with other development agencies. At the same time, the pandemic also provided opportunities for the AfDB to accelerate some of its institutional arrangements that enable the organization to operate seamlessly as One Bank1 based on the recommendations of the Evaluation of the Implementation of the Development and Business Delivery Model (DBDM) of the AfDB.

In this new working environment, the IDEV workforce had to be creative and innovative in doing its work, given the many restrictions and challenges. Scoping and design of evaluations, consultation with evaluation reference groups and other stakeholders, data collection and analysis, report writing, knowledge management, communication, dissemination and capacity development all had to be done remotely. This year was not business as usual, and still, IDEV delivered.

“COVID-19 has changed my lifestyle. My work and family life were disrupted, and the balance tilted towards the latter. I now exercise every day to keep fit and I am closer to my wife and kids.”

Debazou Y. Yantio, Principal Evaluation Officer

“The COVID 19 pandemic has completely changed my habits and the way I work. Fortunately, it didn’t take long for me to establish a new routine. I stay motivated thanks to sport and my work team with whom I am constantly in virtual contact.”

Stephanie Yoboue, Evaluation Officer

“COVID-19 radically changed my way of working to a large extent by inhibiting my physical interactions with my colleagues and so I had to rely on emails, phone calls and Skype for work related conversations.”

Andrew Anguko, Chief Quality and Methods Advisor

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1 The overriding objective of the One Bank initiative is to increase the AfDB’s efficiency and development effectiveness by strengthening accountabilities for results and breaking down the institutional silos that hamper performance.