
What did IDEV Evaluate?

The evaluation examines the Regional Integration Strategy Paper (RISP) for Eastern Africa for the 2011–2015 period. It assesses all of the Bank’s 24 operations approved during the evaluation period under the RISP and amounting to UA 1.41 billion UA. The development sectors covered under the Eastern Africa RISP include transport, energy, finance, ICT, agriculture and multisector. All these sectors were structured around two key pillars: promotion of regional infrastructure development; and institutional capacity building and knowledge sharing. The evaluation aims to inform the preparation of the Bank’s new Eastern Africa regional integration strategy. As such, the objective of the evaluation is twofold: 1) to assess the extent to which development results have been achieved in the context of the RISP; and 2) to suggest lessons and potential improvements that will feed into and help guide the preparation of the next Regional Integration Strategy.

AfDB RISP Portfolio in Numbers (2011–2015)

- 24 Operations approved
- 1.41 billion UA Approximate amount of overall portfolio
- 38% Share of portfolio in Transport sector
- 33% Share of portfolio in Energy sector
What did IDEV Find?

The Bank’s contribution to regional integration in Eastern Africa

The Eastern Africa RISP is aligned with the Bank strategic objectives under the Ten-Year Strategy (TYS) and the projects funded under the strategy are of priority to participating Regional Member Countries (RMCs). However, about 30 percent of the projects in the portfolio were found to be multi-country or single country operations that do not directly advance the goal of regional integration, while all of them were supportive of the RISP’s other objectives and those of the Bank. Given these facts, the evaluation team found the RISP’s relevance to be moderately satisfactory.

Good progress is evident, but the results in achieving the planned outputs and outcomes of the RISP’s two pillars are mixed. The Regional Infrastructure Pillar of the RISP was found to have greater demonstrated effectiveness (moderately satisfactory) than the Capacity Building Pillar (moderately unsatisfactory). Greater attention to policy reform and “soft” infrastructure, particularly at the design stage, would have further advanced the ambitious regional integration outcomes identified in the RISP. Overall, effectiveness is rated moderately satisfactory.

Sustainability is weak with variations across sectors. Projects in the financial and transport sectors fared better on sustainability compared to the agriculture sector and institution building operations, where it is weakest. Overall, sustainability is rated as moderately unsatisfactory.

The Bank’s management of regional and multi-country operations

The reviewed portfolio points to serious delays with problems in the procurement process of the capacity building operations. These stemmed from the weak capacity of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) or RMCs. Analyses of costs or rates of return were absent in the majority of the Implementation Progress and Results Reports and supervision reports, making it difficult to conclude whether the operations are/were on track or would be efficient once implemented. Overall, efficiency is rated as moderately unsatisfactory.

The Bank’s dialogue with RMCs and RECs did deal with regional integration issues in almost all cases. The areas of dialogue covered the regional integration dimensions of transport corridor projects, capacity building for road safety, and technical assistance on trade facilitation for the East African Community. However, it was noted that policy dialogue with the private sector, particularly in transport corridor projects, was missing in the RISP strategy.
There is evidence of donor coordination in the 24 operations reviewed, with the Bank assuming a leadership role in many cases, and RECs in the rest. However, performance was somewhat weaker in terms of working formally within the Paris Declaration framework and fostering greater coordination between RECs and RMCs and between RECs and the Bank. This is partly due to lack of clarity as to who is ultimately in charge.

The Bank’s system for managing for development results is not being implemented robustly enough to help guide implementation or serve as a basis for supervision. Planned outcomes (and their associated indicators) are well beyond what the project could affect; relevant baselines and target indicators for completion are frequently missing. Too often, project outputs and outcomes do not address the broader regional integration issues and therefore opportunities for synergies are missed. For the operations reviewed, the Bank has been supportive through its supervision but with resource levels that fall short of the requirements for complex, multi-country regional operations.

**What did IDEV Recommend for the New Eastern Africa Regional Integration Strategy?**

1. Consider to underpin the next RISP with a clear vision that focuses on regional integration and that is supported by a theory of change and a results-based framework: to this end, the theory of change would be instrumental, among others, to identify the logical linkages on how the Bank’s operations lead to regional development; and guide the formulation of a balanced portfolio of Bank operations that addresses priority regional integration objectives, and the TYS priorities of inclusive and green growth. The theory of change should be entrenched in strong analytical knowledge work.

2. Strengthen the institutional capacity of RECs by underscoring their importance as the key building blocks for continental integration: this could be done through the review of the role assigned to RECs, the resourcing of RECs through technical assistance, and systemic attention to capacity development during project design.

3. Support RECs and/or RMCs to develop solid mechanisms to handle commercial, financial and technical sustainability risks associated with asset management of regional public goods: prioritizing the asset protection and maintenance of regional public goods in AfDB’s regional operations project cycle, involving RECs and RMCs in the planning and implementation of projects, as well as the support of project implementation and planning by non-lending activities such as policy dialogue and capacity building.

4. Design and implement results-based M&E systems so they provide valuable management tools for assessing and managing for results: in this respect, the Bank should consider solid results frameworks which would focus the contribution made by Bank operations and the resourcing of M&E systems to marshal the skills and relevant data collection required to yield useful accountability and learning information.

5. Improve procurement process by supporting RECs and/or RMCs: this should be done through the implementation of recommendations 2 and 3.

**What was the Methodological Approach?**

The evaluation employs multiple lines of enquiry including: document review, literature review, portfolio review, key informant interviews, and project results assessments (which involved site visits of completed projects). The findings are based on triangulation across the five lines of evidence as well as an evaluation of the quality at entry of the RISP carried out in 2014. In carrying out this evaluation, both practical and conceptual challenges were faced. Indeed, nearly the entire portfolio under review was “ongoing” at the time of the evaluation, so a number of the evaluation questions around “achievement” of objectives and outcomes could not be fully addressed. These were instead assessed in terms of the likelihood of achieving outcomes and subsequent sustainability, as well as alignment with the priorities and goals of the RISP, based on the progress reported, including delays, identified risks, and any contextual changes. Moreover, the evaluation team found several gaps that hampered the team’s ability to assess the likelihood of progress, especially documentation and information gaps.
The Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) of the African Development Bank carries out independent evaluations of Bank operations, policies and strategies, working across projects, sectors, themes, regions, and countries. By conducting independent evaluations and proactively sharing best practice, IDEV ensures that the Bank and its stakeholders learn from past experience and plan and deliver development activities to the highest possible standards.

What did Management Respond?

Management welcomes IDEV’s evaluation of the RISP for Eastern Africa, covering the period 2011 to 2015 (extended by 1 year to 2016). The evaluation provides a timely assessment of the Bank’s contribution to regional integration in Eastern Africa in terms of the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of its interventions in the region. Management generally agrees with the findings of the evaluation and welcomes the recommendations of the IDEV Evaluation, which will be taken into account in the preparation of the Bank’s new RISP 2017-21 for Eastern Africa and the Bank’s RISP guidelines currently under preparation.