Evaluation of the AfDB Group’s Ten-Year Strategy (2013–2022)

What did IDEV evaluate?

Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) evaluated the Ten-Year Strategy (TYS) of the African Development Bank Group (AfDB or ‘the Bank’) for the period 2013–2022. The Bank’s TYS was designed to “place the Bank at the center of Africa’s transformation and to improve the quality of Africa’s growth.” It had two overarching objectives, namely, Inclusive Growth, and Transition to Green Growth, to ensure that inclusive growth is sustainable. The evaluation assessed the performance of the TYS over the decade in terms of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, and efficiency. It also drew lessons and recommendations to inform the preparation and implementation of the AfDB’s next long-term strategy for 2023–2032.

What did IDEV find?

Relevance

The relevance of the TYS was assessed on the quality of the design and its ability to be used as a programming framework for the Bank, the quality of the result measurements framework, the adequacy of the strategy to the needs of the Regional Member Countries (RMCs) and its continued relevance. Overall, the evaluation found the TYS to be relevant to the needs of the RMCs. It was well designed and compared well with the strategies of other Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) that were adopted over the same period. The scope of the TYS, its core operational priorities, and the areas of special emphasis were broad enough to address the diverse and changing needs of African countries, but this resulted in the Bank spreading its commitments widely.
In addition, the TYS document did not contain a Theory of Change since this was uncommon for MDB strategies at the time. This led to shortcomings in operationalizing the Inclusive Growth and transition to Green Growth objectives in the TYS design. Nevertheless, the TYS had adapted well to most of Africa’s development challenges over time.

**Coherence**

The evaluation found that the TYS was coherent with external strategies such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union Agenda 2063. Internal strategies formulated soon after the launch of the TYS, in 2013, were closely aligned with it. However, after the **High 5s** (five development priorities) were introduced, the TYS was gradually replaced as a point of reference for other Bank strategies by the High 5s. The evaluation noted that a clear relationship between the TYS and the High 5s was not formally established, and this caused some confusion within the Bank around implementing the TYS. In addition, the Bank had not yet rationalized the structure of operational policies and strategies to support the implementation of the TYS.

**Effectiveness**

The performance and quality of the Bank’s delivery improved over the TYS period: the evaluation noted that the share of operations with clear development outcomes rose from 69% in 2016 to 86% in 2021. Stakeholders in the RMCs attested that the Bank was seen as “an excellent partner delivering visible outputs and outcomes.” However, achieving results at country, sector, and thematic levels was not as stellar as for operations. The TYS could have done better as a programmatic framework for the Bank. The evaluation noted that whereas the Country Strategy Papers (CSPs) and Regional Integration Strategy Papers (RISPs) approved between 2013 and 2015 were aligned to the operational priorities of the TYS, those approved after 2015 were more aligned to the High 5s, indicating a displacement of the TYS priorities in favor of the High 5s as the guiding strategic framework. Furthermore, there was no evidence of a significant shift in the sector composition of Bank operations post-2013 towards the TYS priority areas. The evaluation observed recurrent challenges related to delays in approvals, procurements, and disbursements. There was also the perception among RMCs that the Bank processes still lack flexibility regarding the use of country systems.

**Efficiency**

While the efficiency of the Bank in implementing the TYS was rated satisfactory overall, some key concerns remain.

- The Bank’s decentralization efforts to move closer to clients to enhance delivery have made good progress during the TYS period. Although the level of progress has been less than expected under the Development and Business Delivery Model (DBDM), it has nevertheless been much appreciated by clients. Moreover, the level of achievement of the Bank’s financing plan is largely on target.

- However, the evaluation found some shortcomings in efficiency. First, while the improvement of business processes was a key objective of the DBDM, and progress has been made, the reforms have been more limited in scope and breadth than was originally anticipated. Second, the level of improvement of the Bank’s staff engagement, development, and productivity for better performance has been mixed.

- Finally, while the Bank has used several mechanisms to operationalize, monitor and report on the implementation of the TYS, important shortcomings were identified in relation to each of these mechanisms.

**Lessons**

- Introducing new or additional operational priorities while implementing a long-term strategy without establishing clear relationships among the different elements can lead to confusion, disruption, and misalignment between the two.

- An explicit Theory of Change explaining the causal chain underpinning the various elements of a long-term strategy is a highly useful tool that helps to avoid logical gaps and confusion. The full alignment of a Results Measurement Framework with the long-term
strategy strengthens results measurement.

1. Matching the classification of projects to the operational priorities of the long-term strategy is essential for assessing and steering the alignment and performance of the portfolio.

2. Rationalizing the suite of policies and strategies that implement the long-term strategy can enhance clarity and efficiency.

What did IDEV recommend?

1. Ensure a robust design for the new long-term strategy.
   a. Balanced approach: Take an approach that is broad enough to allow the Bank to respond to the heterogeneous needs of African countries over the next ten years and provides a basis for continued selectivity.
   b. Sound design: To ensure that the intervention logic of the new strategy is underpinned by a robust analysis of the internal and external contexts, the new strategy should include: (i) a Theory of Change, (ii) an analysis of the Bank’s comparative advantage in relation to other development actors in Africa, and (iii) references to papers analyzing key developments and challenges and opportunities for development in Africa anticipated over the next ten years.
   c. Review mechanism: Foresee the possibility of reviewing the Strategy (ad hoc and/or periodically) in response to changes in context, vision, and new Senior Management, or as necessary, to ensure its continued relevance and coherence over the period. One option could be to complement the 10-year duration of the strategy with planned periodic reviews.

2. Improve the effectiveness of the new long-term strategy by ensuring that the Bank aligns its operations with the priorities laid out in the strategy.
   The new long-term strategy should have a cascading effect on new Bank approvals, such that all new Bank operations are geared towards the Strategy. In practice, this will require an operations classification system aligned to the new strategy, allowing the Bank to link new projects to its operational priorities, including in the Bank’s Systems Applications and Products (SAP).

3. Strengthen monitoring, evaluation, and reporting by improving institutional mechanisms and coordination.
   a. Alignment between the long-term strategy and the Results Measurement Framework (RMF): Ensure full alignment between the long-term strategy and the RMF, both in time and in substance. The selection of strategic priorities should be made alongside the selection of indicators and targets, in a unified manner.
   b. Clarity of roles: Include a clear mechanism detailing the responsibilities and timelines for monitoring, evaluating, and reporting on the implementation of the strategy, and the coordination of contributions from across the Bank, to ensure efficient and effective implementation of the strategy.

What was the methodological approach?

The evaluation methodology relied on a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure triangulation and the validity of the findings. The methods and tools included an in-depth document review, portfolio analysis, synthesis of evaluative knowledge, consultations in the form of interviews with key informants, a survey of Bank staff and external stakeholders, and benchmarking of the Strategy with other multilateral and regional development organizations.

What did Management respond?

Management welcomes IDEV’s evaluation of the Bank Group Ten-Year-Strategy for the period 2013–2022. The evaluations’ analysis, lessons, and recommendations come at an opportune time when work is underway in the Bank to elaborate a successor strategy. The findings will inform the new Ten-Year Strategy (TYS 2.0) for the period 2023–2032.
Evaluation of the AfDB Group’s Ten-Year Strategy (2013–2022)

About IDEV

Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) at 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 experience and plan and deliver development activities to the highest possible standards.

Evaluation Task Management:
Oswald Agbadome, Principal Evaluation Officer, IDEV 2
Mohammed Jalaludeen Issahq, Principal Evaluation Officer, IDEV 1
Bilal Bagayoko, Evaluation Officer, IDEV 2
Roland Akabzaa, Research Assistant, IDEV 2

Publication coordinated by:
Jacqueline Nyagahima, Principal Knowledge Management Officer, IDEV 3
Najade Lindsay, Knowledge Management Officer, IDEV 3
Kate Stoney, Senior Communications Officer, IDEV 3

Date of publication: January 2023
Full report available at idev.afdb.org

Independent Development Evaluation
African Development Bank

African Development Bank Group
Avenue Joseph Anoma 01 BP 1387, Abidjan 01 Côte d’Ivoire
Phone: +225 27 20 26 28 41
Email: idevhelpdesk@afdb.org