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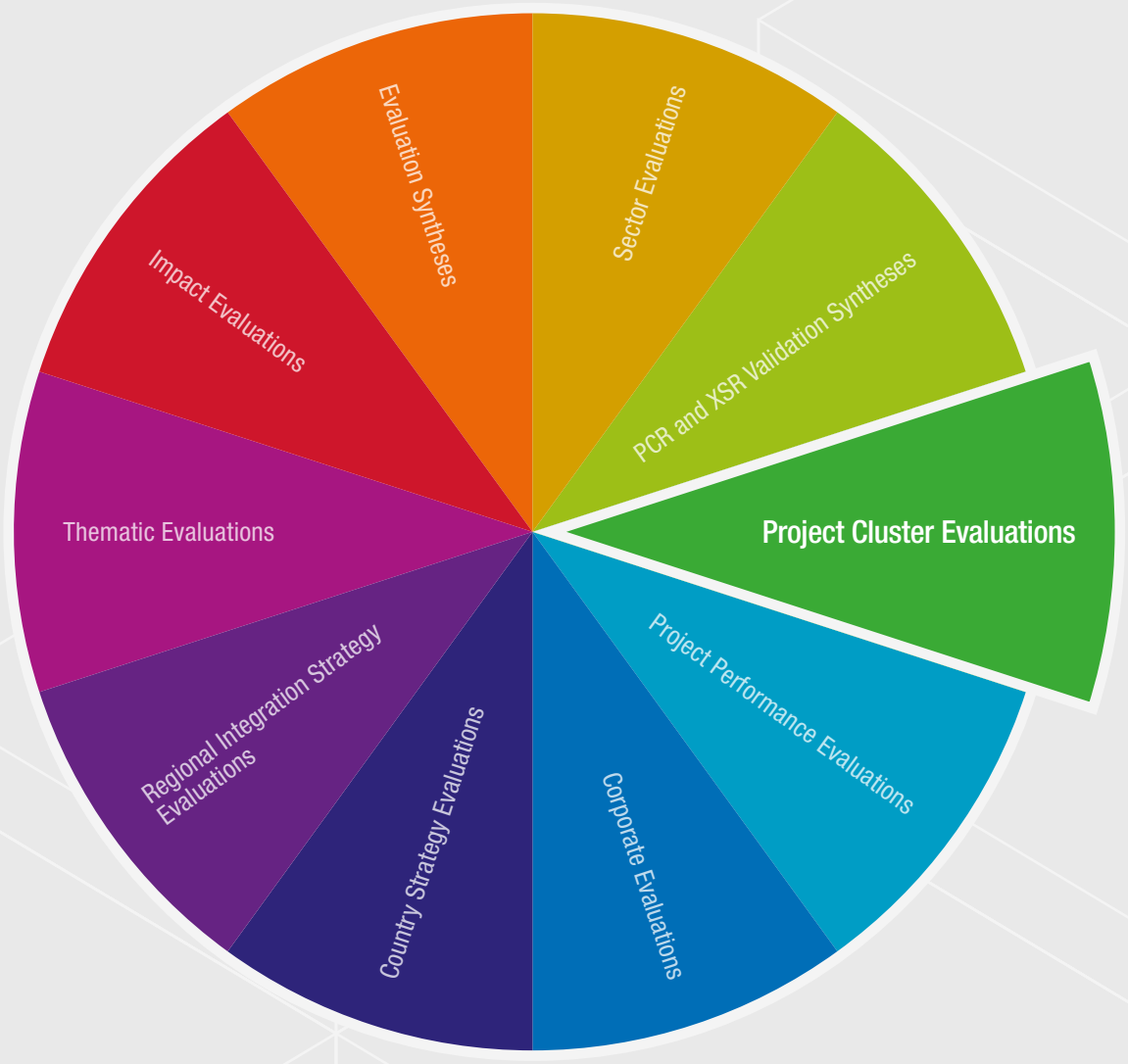
Cluster Evaluation of the AfDB's Governance Institutional Support Projects in Zimbabwe (2012-2024)

Summary Report

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP

April 2026

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AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP

April 2026

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IDEV Project Cluster Evaluation, April 2026

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACBF	African Capacity Building Foundation
ADB	African Development Bank
ADF	African Development Fund
AfDB	African Development Bank Group
AHGC	Gender, Women and Civil Society Department
CBPFEM	Capacity Building for Public Finance and Economic Management
COZW	Zimbabwe Country Office
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DMFAS	Debt Management and Financial Analysis System
ECAD	African Development Institute
ECGF	Governance and Economics Reforms Department
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GAP	Governance Action Plan
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GISP	Governance Institutional Support Project
GoZ	Government of Zimbabwe
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IDEV	Independent Development Evaluation
IFMIS	Integrated Financial Management Information System
IIAG	Ibrahim Index of African Governance
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPR	Implementation Progress Report
ISP	Institutional Support Project
ISPGPFM	Institutional Support Project for Governance and Public Finance Management
ISSER	Institutional Support for State Enterprises Reform
ISSERDP	Institutional Support for State Enterprise Reform and Delivery Project
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoFEDIP	Ministry of Finance, Economic Development & Investment Promotion
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PAR	Project Appraisal Report
PCR	Project Completion Report
PFM	Public Finance Management
PGCL	Office of General Counsel and Legal Services
PMU	Project Management Unit
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
PRA	Project Results Assessment
PRAZ	Procurement Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RDTS	Transition States Coordination Office
RDVP	Regional Development, Integration and Business Delivery Complex
RMC	Regional Member Country
SACAGE	Support to Arrears Clearance and Accountability Enhancement
SEGA	Strategy for Economic Governance in Africa
SEP	State Enterprises and Parastatals
SITA	Strengthening Institutions of Transparency and Accountability
SNDR	Development Impact and Results Department
SNFI	Fiduciary and Inspection
SNSC	Safeguards and Compliance Department
SNSP	Corporate Strategy and Policy Department
SOE	State-Owned Enterprise
TAEP	Tax and Enhancement of Accountability Project
TaRMS	Tax and Revenue Management System
ToC	Theory of Change
TSF	Transition Support Facility
TYS	Ten-Year Strategy of the African Development Bank
UA[1]	Unit of Account
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USD	United States Dollar
ZACC	Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission
ZIMRA	Zimbabwe Revenue Authority

[1]Unit of Account (UA) = 1.37097 United States Dollars (USD) as at October 2025



Emergency Food Production Project implemented by the Africa Fertilizer Financing Mechanism as part of the African Emergency Food Production Facility

Executive Summary

This report evaluates a cluster of Institutional Support Projects (ISPs) funded by the African Development Bank Group (AfDB or 'the Bank'), in the area of governance in Zimbabwe, from 2012 to 2024. In line with the 2024 Work Program of the Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV), this evaluation examines eight projects (four completed, four ongoing)[2] representing a total commitment of USD 57.88 million, funded by the African Development Fund (ADF) and the Transition Support Facility (TSF). The projects aimed to address institutional and governance weaknesses in Zimbabwe stemming from economic decline, fiscal fragility, and weak governance. The evaluation was conducted in response to a request from the Bank's Management to examine the AfDB's governance support to Zimbabwe in the context of the country's ongoing arrears clearance process. It assesses the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact, efficiency, and sustainability of the Bank's interventions.

Background and Context

Governance is one of the AfDB's long-standing priorities in its support to Regional Member Countries. This commitment is expressed, among others, in the following key strategies and action plans of the Bank:

- Medium-Term Strategy (2008-2012)
- Ten-Year Strategy (TYS) (2013-2022)
- Governance Action Plans (GAP I and II)
- Strategy for Economic Governance in Africa (SEGA)

Between 2012 and 2024, Zimbabwe experienced repeated economic shocks including droughts, currency reforms, Cyclone Idai, and COVID-19, resulting in volatile growth, high inflation, rising debt, and structural vulnerabilities. Despite modest gains in 2021-2022, the fiscal space remained constrained, undermining sustainable recovery.

Zimbabwe's governance indicators faced notable challenges over the past decades, though recent trends show modest signs of improvement. The AfDB's support to Zimbabwe in the area of governance focused on transparency, accountability, and public sector effectiveness. Over the evaluation period, the cluster of eight ISPs provided technical assistance and capacity building in public finance management (PFM), procurement, oversight of state-owned enterprises (SOEs), parliamentary and auditor general functions, anti-corruption mechanisms, and arrears clearance.

Zimbabwe's USD 21 billion public debt–including USD 760 million owed to the AfDB–severely limits access to concessional financing. The AfDB-led arrears clearance process, in tandem with the IMF and the World Bank, has been critical to restoring debt sustainability and investor confidence, and enabling long-term macroeconomic stabilization.

Methodology

The evaluation employed a mixed-methods, theory-based, utilization-focused approach, guided by the international evaluation criteria. It assessed the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, higher-level impacts, efficiency, and sustainability of the eight governance ISPs. The emphasis was on cluster evaluation, that is, cross-project, cluster-level performance and learning rather than on individual project performance. The evaluation specifically sought to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent are the objectives and design of governance ISPs in Zimbabwe strategically aligned with the Bank's TYS and the High 5s, responsive to the context and the needs of the recipient country, aligned with other Bank Group policies and strategies, and did they remain responsive over time as circumstances changed?

2. To what extent were the Bank's ISPs in the area of governance coherent with other Bank interventions, strategies and policies as well as those of other development partners and the government?

3. To what extent did the Bank's governance ISPs in Zimbabwe achieve or were they likely to achieve their expected results?

4. To what extent have the projects generated or are they expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects? To what extent did the projects lead to holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms?

5. To what extent has the Bank's assistance been delivered efficiently in terms of timeliness and cost? To what extent was the Bank well organized to deliver the interventions?

6. To what extent were the projects' activities and results sustainable or likely to be sustained?

The evaluation reconstructed the cluster's Theory of Change (ToC) and reviewed project results frameworks, drawing on project documents, IDEV ratings, a governance sector review, and semi-structured interviews with Bank staff, project management units (PMUs), beneficiaries, and development partners. Triangulation was used to identify enabling and constraining factors.

In accordance with IDEV's Evaluation manual, the evaluation provided a rating for each criterion as follows: (4) Highly Satisfactory; (3) Satisfactory; (2) Partly Unsatisfactory; and (1) Unsatisfactory. Evaluators also used a six-point scale to judge the overall cluster performance: Highly Successful (6); Successful (5); Mostly Successful (4); Mostly Unsuccessful (3); Unsuccessful (2); and Highly Unsuccessful (1) (See Annex 4 for more details).

Key limitations included limited documentation, outcome-level data gaps, and attribution challenges in a multi-donor, politically complex environment. These limitations were mitigated through the use of proxy indicators, triangulation of evidence, and a contribution-focused approach that traced plausible results chains.

Findings

Relevance

This criterion assessed the extent to which the project cluster was aligned with beneficiary needs, national priorities, and AfDB strategies, and whether this alignment was sustained over time. It also evaluated the appropriateness of project design in supporting intended reform objectives.

Alignment: The evaluation found that the project cluster was strongly aligned with national development strategies such as the Medium-Term Plan and the National Development Strategy 2021-2025, as well as AfDB frameworks which include the TYS, GAP I and II, and SEGA. The project cluster addressed critical gaps in PFM, oversight, skills retention, and institutional resilience. For instance, the Capacity Building for Public Finance and Economic Management (CBPFEM) project supported public financial management reforms that aligned with the Governance Strategic Directions (GAP I) (2008–2018). Gender considerations were found to be included in the projects' design but unevenly applied during implementation. The Institutional Support Project for Governance and Public Finance Management (ISPGPFM) integrated cross-cutting themes on gender and climate, consistent with the National Development Strategy.

Design quality: The evaluation found that most ISPs in the cluster had sound results chains, risk assessments, and M&E frameworks, while project objectives and designs were informed by diagnostic assessments, national reform agendas, and fragility considerations. However, the evaluation also identified shortcomings in project designs, such as weak indicator selection and limited integration of reform stages. Strong designs such as those for the Governance Institutional Support Project (GISP) and Strengthening Institutions of Transparency and Accountability project (SITA) incorporated clear logic, functional PMUs, and risk mitigation. Others like CBPFEM and the Institutional Support for State Enterprise Reform and Delivery Project (ISSERDP) showed fragmented sequencing and weaker Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) arrangements. Fragility considerations were found to be inconsistently applied, though adaptive mechanisms improved in later ISPs. Expected results were generally deemed realistic, though early projects sometimes overestimated institutional capacity.

Notwithstanding the importance of the shortcomings observed, the evaluation rated the **relevance** of the project cluster as **satisfactory.**

Coherence

This criterion evaluated the extent to which the project cluster was mutually reinforcing and aligned with broader interventions. The assessment considered (i) internal coherence (i.e. synergies across the Bank's interventions); and (ii) external coherence (i.e. alignment, complementarity, and coordination with government policies, institutional reforms, and initiatives of other Development Partners (DPs).

Internal coherence: The evaluation found the ISPs to be thematically complementary and strategically sequenced. Initial projects, such as CBPFEM and GISP, laid the foundation for PFM. Later interventions such as SITA, ISPGPFM, and the Tax and Enhancement of Accountability Project (TAEP) expanded oversight, civil society engagement, and results-based management. Continuity through the Ministry of Finance, Economic Development and Investment Promotion (MoFED) and PMUs supported coordination and learning, despite capacity gaps and partial integration - for example TAEP's tax and oversight components were not fully aligned.

External coherence: The evaluation found that the cluster aligned with government priorities and complemented the efforts of other development partners, minimizing duplication via joint forums and sector platforms. There was a strong strategic coordination between the Support to Arrears Clearance and Accountability Enhancement project (SACAGE) and the arrears clearance process, between ISPGPFM and IMF/World Bank PFM initiatives, and between SITA and parliamentary programs. However, operational-level integration was deemed uneven. The Bank's leadership and technical support were considered essential, though fragmented coordination occasionally constrained impact.

Overall, the project cluster demonstrated a **satisfactory** level of **coherence**.

Effectiveness

This criterion assessed the extent to which the project cluster delivered planned outputs and achieved intended outcomes, with a view to addressing key governance and institutional weaknesses resulting from economic decline, fiscal fragility, and weak governance. It also identified the factors that enabled or constrained performance across the cluster.

Achievement of outputs: The evaluation found that 76% of planned outputs were either completed or on track for the entire cluster. The interventions strengthened accountability, transparency, and stakeholder participation, with initiatives such as CBPFEM, GISP, and SITA achieving most of their intended outputs. Ongoing ISPs such as ISSER, ISPGPFM, and TAEP showed strong delivery trajectories. These include performance reviews of State-Owned Enterprises and Parastatals (SEP),

upgrades to the Debt Management and Financial Analysis System (DMFAS), the rollout of the Tax and Revenue Management System (TaRMS), and gender-inclusive training. Thematic focus was found to vary: CBPFEM emphasized the rule of law, GISP oversight, SITA balanced governance, TAEP accountability, SACAGE anti-corruption, and ISSER accountability and transparency.

Achievement of outcomes: Although 67% of the planned outcomes were found to have been delivered or likely to be delivered, the evaluation revealed uneven, and generally insufficient, progress across governance dimensions. It found improvement in accountability and transparency, evidenced by improved debt reconciliation, integrated budgeting, tax compliance, and audit responsiveness. However, rule of law, participation, and anti-corruption outcomes lagged due to structural factors impeding governance and legal oversight, as well as limited institutional capacity.

Factors that enabled or hindered the achievement of expected project results: The evaluation identified key enabling factors, including strong government ownership, adaptive PMUs, and flexible project management approaches. Conversely, the hindering factors comprised procurement bottlenecks at country level, funding constraints, high staff turnover, capacity gaps, weak early-stage M&E systems, and broader economic and institutional conditions.

On this basis, the evaluation concluded that the project cluster's contribution to addressing the identified weaknesses was partly **unsatisfactory**.

Impact

This criterion assessed the extent to which the project cluster had generated, or was likely to generate, significant higher-level effects, whether positive or negative, intended or unintended, that extended beyond their immediate outputs and outcomes.

The evaluation found that the project cluster contributed moderately to strengthened governance systems, improving accountability, transparency, and oversight through timely audits, better budget disclosure, enhanced expenditure control, procurement oversight, and strengthened public financial management. Capacity building and digitalization in core institutions enhanced timelier reporting and evidence-based decision-making. Across the portfolio, CBPFEM reinforced PFM and macroeconomic stability; GISP and ISSERDP improved governance and inclusive growth; SITA and TAEP enhanced accountability and revenue mobilization; and SACAGE and the Institutional Support for State Enterprises Reform project (ISSER) contributed to debt sustainability, macroeconomic stabilization, and institutionalization of structured dialogue with international creditors. This represented a potentially transformative step in state–creditor relations. At the same time, gains were constrained by structural challenges including droughts, weak SOEs, arrears, inflation, and low investor confidence, while anti-corruption, rule of law, civic space, electoral reforms, and gender inclusion remained limited.

The evaluation also found that the portfolio generated notable unintended effects, both positive and negative. Positive effects included stronger oversight of SOEs (ISSER), improved tax collection (TAEP), enhanced inter-ministerial coordination, improved data quality, and strengthened institutional capacity. SACAGE catalyzed systemic reform dialogue, advanced arrears clearance, and supported land tenure reforms, including farmer compensation and the introduction of 99-year farm title deeds. Negative unintended effects included the high cost of SOE performance reviews, reliance on external procedures that limited local ownership, and persistent constraints on civil society.

Overall, while the project cluster delivered meaningful institutional reforms and some potentially transformative outcomes, the evaluation determined that structural and political economy constraints including fiscal pressures, macroeconomic instability, weak SOEs, and climate shocks, limited depth,

inclusiveness, and sustainability of governance gains. As a result, the reforms remained incremental and fragile, lacking sustained and coordinated engagement. However, the evaluation was limited to a qualitative assessment, as the absence of impact-level data did not allow for a credible rating of this criterion for the project cluster.

Sustainability

This criterion evaluated the likelihood that the benefits of the project cluster would endure, considering financial, institutional, social, and environmental capacities, as well as mechanisms supporting long-term resilience and continuity.

Financial sustainability: The evaluation found that some projects lack dedicated post-project funding, making them vulnerable to fiscal constraints. Exceptions included:

- CBPFEM - revenue from debt and PFM systems,
- ISSERDP - Corporate Governance Unit (CGU) fee-levy under the Public Entities Corporate Governance (PECG) framework
- TAEP - in-house digital systems with maintenance budgets
- SITA - Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) co-funding and civil society organization (CSO) partnerships
- SACAGE - co-financing arrangements.

By contrast, projects such as GISP, ISPGPFM, and ISSER SEP advisory services remained reliant on ad hoc donor or government support. This underscored the need for structured financing mechanisms to ensure continuity amid Zimbabwe's macroeconomic volatility.

Technical soundness: The evaluation noted that the project cluster strengthened local capacity through training and infrastructure, enabling the independent operation of core systems: CBPFEM, GISP, and ISSERDP improved PFM, audit, Integrated Results-based management (IRBM), and SOE governance; ISPGPFM, SACAGE, and SITA advanced civil society engagement, anti-corruption, and parliamentary capacity; TAEP implemented TaRMS and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) training. However, staff turnover, limited ICT skills, incomplete system integration, insufficient maintenance funding, and reliance on external consultants threaten long-term continuity.

Ownership and partnerships: The evaluation indicated that the project cluster fostered participatory design and stakeholder engagement. However, persistent challenges included high staff turnover, uneven institutional uptake, and limited cross-agency integration.

Environmental and social sustainability: The evaluation noted that the project cluster posed minimal environmental risks (Category 3) and focused on capacity building, requiring very little mitigation. Social considerations were integrated through gender-targeted activities and CSO engagement. CBPFEM, GISP, ISSERDP, and ISSER had no environmental liabilities; ISPGPFM proposed conceptual climate measures; SACAGE promoted debt-for-nature initiatives; and SITA and TAEP mitigated social risks via training and memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with CSOs. Overall, the interventions were found to be resilient, with low environmental impact, though greater beneficiary sensitization could have strengthened long-term awareness and compliance.

The evaluation rated the cluster's **sustainability** as **satisfactory.**

Efficiency

This criterion evaluated the extent to which the project cluster delivered results efficiently, in terms of timeliness and operational management.

Timeliness: The evaluation found that only SITA met its original schedule. The other seven projects

were delayed by one to six years, compared to an expected average project duration of five years. These delays were due to procurement bottlenecks at country level such as contractor underperformance, weak coordination, and underestimated technical complexity, as well as external shocks including COVID-19, hyperinflation, and political transitions (See Technical Annex 4). While some extensions, such as CBPFEM's scope expansion, reflected adaptive management, the delays were generally systemic.

Operational efficiency: The evaluation found that the Bank provided strong supervision and coordination through the Country Office in Harare and the Regional Office in Pretoria. Seven of the eight projects achieved satisfactory ratings for implementation progress[3], and seven of the eight were delivered within budget, demonstrating financial discipline. Efficiency was further strengthened through adaptive measures such as using in-house capacity, implementing "training of trainers" programs, and forming CSO partnerships (e.g., SITA).

Additionally, the evaluation noted that the PMU model ensured continuity, cross-project learning, and efficient resource use, while government-led budgeting, with the Bank's oversight, reinforced fiscal discipline. Projects such as ISSER, SITA, and CBPFEM effectively balanced scope and resources, though early interventions faced procurement delays and technical and M&E capacity gaps. Subsequent projects benefited from structured procurement and third-party fund managers, improving delivery.

M&E frameworks: The evaluation found that M&E in the project cluster showed both strengths and weaknesses. Recent projects have strengthened M&E design by using standardized results frameworks, improving the use of gender-disaggregated data, and placing greater emphasis on outcome-level indicators. In contrast, earlier projects were largely output-focused, paying insufficient attention to qualitative and transformative governance outcomes.

Systemic challenges were found to remain across the portfolio, including fragmented data systems, limited Project Implementation Unit capacity, weak data quality assurance, and ineffective feedback loops for adaptive learning. Additionally, political economy considerations were seldom integrated into M&E design. Collectively, these gaps constrained the rigor of outcome and impact measurement and limited the use of M&E evidence to inform governance reforms.

Overall, the evaluation rated the **efficiency** of the project cluster as partly **unsatisfactory**.

Conclusions

The evaluation concluded that over the evaluation period (2012-2024) the project cluster in Zimbabwe achieved partial success in addressing identified institutional and governance weaknesses, delivering incremental yet meaningful reforms but falling short of transformative change. The portfolio addressed core institutional deficits through complementary interventions that strengthened public financial management systems, enhanced oversight mechanisms, and improved accountability frameworks. Technical achievements were substantial: CBPFEM reinforced fiscal discipline through integrated budgeting and debt management systems; TAEP enhanced revenue mobilization capacity; and SACAGE catalyzed structured creditor dialogue. Parliamentary oversight capacity improved through training and infrastructure development, while audit responsiveness mechanisms were strengthened.

However, the impact of the project cluster on deeper governance dimensions such as the rule of law, civic participation, anti-corruption enforcement, and gender inclusion, remained limited. Although the projects created the enabling infrastructure and procedural frameworks, structural constraints

including fiscal fragility, weak institutional capacity, high staff turnover, and broader political economy dynamics prevented these systems from achieving full operational effectiveness. The gap between technical outputs (76% achieved or on track) and transformative governance outcomes reflected persistent implementation challenges rather than design flaws.

Regarding transparency, accountability, and public sector effectiveness, modest improvements were evident. Transparency improved through enhanced financial reporting systems, public expenditure tracking, and parliamentary access to fiscal information. Accountability mechanisms were strengthened through improved audit functions, increased parliamentary oversight capacity, and SOE governance frameworks. Public sector effectiveness improved incrementally through modernized revenue administration, integrated budget processes, and enhanced debt management. However, these gains were fragile. Citizen engagement mechanisms were nascent, anti-corruption frameworks lacked enforcement capacity, and fiscal pressures limited operational sustainability. These improvements were necessary but insufficient for robust governance. Technical infrastructure had been established, but institutional culture, political will, and sustained resourcing remained critical missing elements.

Although Zimbabwe's readiness for arrears clearance had improved materially through the Bank's interventions, it remained incomplete. SACAGE's technical assistance established critical prerequisites, including comprehensive debt reconciliation, structured creditor engagement platforms, and improved fiscal data management systems. These interventions demonstrated a credible commitment to reform and created institutional mechanisms for transparent debt management. Enhanced PFM systems through CBPFEM and improved revenue mobilization via TAEP strengthened the fiscal foundation necessary for sustainable debt service.

Nonetheless, notwithstanding the encouraging steps taken, Zimbabwe had not yet met the conditions for full arrears clearance. Continuing macroeconomic challenges, gradual implementation of agreed reforms, and the country's susceptibility to external shocks continued to influence creditor confidence and the overall pace of progress. While technical governance systems had improved, broader conditionalities—including political governance, human rights commitments, and comprehensive economic reform—remained contested. The project cluster created enabling conditions and demonstrated reform capacity, positioning Zimbabwe more favorably than before the interventions began. However, some governance, fiscal, and political economy challenges persisted. Arrears clearance remained contingent on sustained reform momentum that extended beyond technical system improvements—requiring political commitment, macroeconomic stabilization, and comprehensive governance transformation.

Lessons

The following are the key lessons from this evaluation:

Lesson 1: Gender and inclusivity dimensions require deliberate integration into governance projects, as they do not automatically emerge from institutional reforms without specific design attention.

Lesson 2: Leveraging and strengthening existing institutions—rather than creating parallel units—enhances sustainability, preserves institutional knowledge, and improves implementation efficiency.

Lesson 3: Multi-institutional governance programs require clear mandates and adequate staffing for coordination.

Lesson 4: Long-term institutional sustainability requires a coordinated approach that combines technical capacity, financial continuity, and enabling policy conditions after external financing ends.

Lesson 5: Integrating political economy analysis and flexible partnership strategies is critical for sustaining reforms in fragile environments.

Recommendations

IDEV makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Enhance the design of governance projects to strengthen their effectiveness and achievement of objectives.

Priority actions to consider include:

- Beyond technical assessments, systematically undertaking and embedding political economy analysis at the project design stage to identify power dynamics, vested interests, and reform champions that shape the feasibility of governance reforms, to understand incentive structures and change pathways.
- Designing adaptive implementation strategies with built-in flexibility mechanisms, recognizing that governance reforms in fragile contexts require iterative approaches that are responsive to shifting political dynamics rather than rigid linear frameworks.
- Incorporating targeted social inclusion measures that address identified gaps in gender integration and civic participation, with specific mechanisms for engaging marginalized groups and tracking the distributional impacts of governance reforms.

Recommendation 2: Institutionalize a programmatic approach to governance initiatives both within the Bank's projects and in collaboration with other development partners at country level to further strengthen coherence and outcomes achievement.

Key actions to consider include:

- Developing cluster-level Theories of Change at portfolio inception that articulate how complementary interventions collectively contribute to transformative governance outcomes, with explicit causal pathways linking outputs to intermediate outcomes and long-term impacts.
- Establishing integrated M&E systems at the cluster level with: (i) harmonized indicators tracking both project-specific and cumulative governance outcomes; (ii) centralized data platforms enabling real-time monitoring and cross-project learning; and (iii) regular outcome evaluations assessing progress toward overarching governance transformation objectives.
- Formalizing coordination mechanisms and proactively supporting structured country-level coordination platforms that enable joint programming, shared learning, harmonized monitoring, and cross-institutional collaboration; formalizing mechanisms, including annual programming reviews, to assess cluster coherence and identify synergies, knowledge exchange platforms, and harmonized reporting frameworks. These mechanisms would reduce transaction costs and strengthen strategic oversight.
- Strengthening the M&E capacity development for PIUs and implementing agencies, moving beyond one-off training to embedded technical support that builds institutional capability for outcome-focused measurement, data quality assurance, and evidence-based adaptive management.

Recommendation 3: Design comprehensive sustainability strategies that address the financial, institutional, and political dimensions starting from project inception, to enhance the sustainability of projects' benefits. ■

Management Response

Management welcomes the Cluster Evaluation of the AfDB's Governance Institutional Support Projects (GISPs) in Zimbabwe (2012-2024). The evaluation responds to Bank Management's request to examine the AfDB's governance support to Zimbabwe in the context of the country's ongoing arrears clearance process. The evaluation examined eight projects (4 Completed, 4 ongoing)[4] representing a total commitment of UA 42.22 million funded by the African Development Fund (ADF) and the Transition Support Fund (TSF) windows. The projects aimed at addressing institutional and governance weaknesses in Zimbabwe stemming from economic decline, fiscal fragility, and weak governance. Overall, the evaluation concluded that the cluster of governance ISPs achieved partial success in addressing identified institutional and governance weaknesses, delivering incremental but meaningful reforms while falling short of transformative change in Zimbabwe.

Management agrees with the evaluation's findings and recommendations. It accepts the overall cluster rating and recognizes both the meaningful institutional progress achieved and the structural constraints that limited the depth of governance transformation. The Management Action Record below presents Management's specific responses and committed measures.

Introduction

The Independent Development Evaluation Department (IDEV) completed the cluster evaluation exercise of the Governance Institutional Support Projects (GISPs) in Zimbabwe in December 2025. The GISPs were institutional support projects approved and implemented from 2012 to 2024. The projects were financed under ADF and TSF windows of the Bank Group with a cumulative value of UA 42.22 million. The projects focused on transparency, accountability, and public sector effectiveness and provided technical assistance and capacity building across public finance management (PFM), domestic resource mobilization (DRM), procurement, state-owned enterprise (SOE) oversight, the parliamentary and external audit functions, anti-corruption mechanisms, and arrears clearance.

Management notes the key limitations faced in undertaking the evaluation that included limited documentation, outcome-level data gaps, and attribution challenges in a multi-donor and politically complex environment. IDEV mitigated these through proxy indicators, triangulation of evidence, and a contribution-focused approach that traced plausible results chains.

Overall, Management agrees with the evaluation's findings and recommendations and is pleased with the reported satisfactory level of relevance, coherence, and the sustainability of GISPs development results. The evaluation's lessons and recommendations will inform the design of the next generation of governance ISPs in Zimbabwe.

Relevance

The evaluation assessed the extent to which the cluster of governance ISPs was aligned with beneficiary needs, national priorities, and the Bank strategies, and whether this alignment was sustained over time. It also evaluated the

appropriateness of project design in supporting intended reform objectives. The evaluation concluded that GISPs strongly aligned with national development strategies that included the Medium-Term Plan, National Development Strategy, and AfDB frameworks (Ten Year Strategy-TYS, Governance Action Plan-GAP I/II, Strategy for Economic Governance in Africa - SEGA, Zimbabwe Country Brief). The cluster projects addressed critical gaps in PFM, oversight, skills retention, and institutional resilience. The ISPs also integrated cross-cutting themes on gender and climate at design though unevenly applied during implementation.

Management acknowledges the evaluation's finding that design quality was uneven across the portfolio. While projects such as GISP and SITA incorporated clear theories of change, functional Project Management Units (PMUs), and robust risk mitigation, earlier interventions including CBPFEM and ISSERDP exhibited fragmented sequencing and weaker M&E arrangements. Management will continue to constitute and deploy task teams from relevant departments to ensure that project designs address cross-cutting issues that can impede achievement of results.

Coherence

With regards to coherence, Management is satisfied with the overall finding that the project cluster demonstrated a satisfactory level of coherence. On internal coherence, the evaluation found the ISPs to be thematically complementary and strategically sequenced, with early projects (CBPFEM, GISP) laying the foundations for PFM, and later interventions (SITA, ISPGPFM, TAEP) expanding oversight, civil society engagement, and results-based management. Continuity through the Ministry of Finance, Economic Development and Investment Promotion (MoFEDIP) and PMUs supported coordination and learning. On external coherence, the evaluation found that the cluster was aligned with government priorities and complemented other development partners, minimizing duplication via joint forums and sector platforms. Strategic coordination was found to be strong. The Bank's leadership and technical support were deemed pivotal, though occasionally fragmented coordination constrained impact. Management will enhance coordination frameworks with development partners to minimize redundancy and lower transaction costs. Specifically, the Bank will systematically identify and map the current governance working groups and coordination platforms across targeted countries, detailing the Bank's involvement, whether as a non-participant, active participant, chair, or co-chair—and designating accountable focal points for each platform.

Effectiveness

The evaluation rated the cluster's effectiveness as Partly Unsatisfactory. Management accepts this rating while noting the substantive progress achieved. At the output level, 76% of planned outputs were completed or on track. CBPFEM, GISP, and SITA achieved most intended outputs; ongoing ISPs including SACAGE, ISSER, ISPGPFM, and TAEP showed strong delivery trajectories, including the Debt Management and Financial Analysis System (DMFAS) upgrades, the Tax and Revenue Management System (TaRMS) rollout, Sate-Owned Enterprises (SOE) performance reviews, and gender-inclusive training.

The enabling factors—strong government ownership, adaptive PMUs, and flexible management—are commended. The constraining factors—procurement bottlenecks, high staff turnover, weak M&E, and macroeconomic instability—reflect structural conditions endemic to fragile post-crisis settings.

In response, Management will implement targeted measures which include strengthening upstream diagnostics through deeper analysis of political and institutional drivers of change, building on Country resilience and fragility assessment and complementing these with Country Capacity

Development Needs Assessments to better inform the design of governance ISPs and enhance effectiveness.

Management will also continue working closely with Regional Member Countries (RMCs) to strengthen sustainability by ensuring that supported interventions are self-sustaining and anchored in clear government commitments—through legal, policy, and institutional frameworks—to sustain results beyond project completion.

Impact

The evaluation did not assign a rating to impact, given the absence of impact-level data sufficient for a credible quantitative assessment. Management noted this methodological constraint. The qualitative evidence presented indicates a moderate contribution to strengthened governance systems: improved accountability and transparency, timely audit reporting, better budget disclosure, enhanced expenditure control, and strengthened PFM. Capacity building and digitalisation in core institutions supported more evidence-based decision-making.

The SACAGE, ISPGPFM, and ISSER's contributions to debt sustainability, macroeconomic stabilization, and structured creditor dialogue represent the cluster's most potentially transformative results.

Management nonetheless acknowledges that gains remain fragile. Fiscal pressures, weak SOE performance, macroeconomic instability and low investor confidence constrain the depth and inclusiveness of governance progress.

Sustainability

The evaluation rated the cluster's sustainability as Satisfactory. Management agrees with this rating while noting specific vulnerabilities. Of the eight projects, five—CBPFEM, ISSERDP, SITA, TAEP, and SACAGE—embedded financial sustainability provisions, including co-financing arrangements and cost-recovery mechanisms. Three projects—GISP, ISPGPFM, and ISSER SEP advisory services—lacked dedicated post-project funding and remain exposed to Zimbabwe's fiscal volatility.

Technically, the cluster strengthened local capacity through training and infrastructure development, enabling the independent operation of core systems. However, staff turnover, limited ICT skills, incomplete system integration, and reliance on external consultants threaten long-term continuity. Social sustainability was addressed through gender-targeted activities and engagement with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), with minimal environmental risk across the portfolio. Management is committed to addressing systemic sustainability challenges during project design. The Bank will prepare ISPs staff guidelines to embed best practices that promote genuine country ownership throughout project design and implementation, while also setting out robust provisions to ensure the long-term sustainability of interventions. This will include measures such as co-financing arrangements, and the integration of capacity-building within national institutions to help preserve gains beyond the life of individual projects. Besides use of national institutions, management will ensure that regional institutional are imbedded in project designs with a view to reduce the cost for delivery of capacity building interventions and train more with less.

Efficiency

The evaluation rated the cluster's efficiency as Partly Unsatisfactory. Management agrees with this rating. Only SITA met its original schedule; the remaining seven projects experienced delays of one to six years, driven by procurement bottlenecks, contractor underperformance, hyperinflation, COVID-19, and political transitions.

Management notes that some extensions—notably CBPFEM's scope expansion—reflected appropriate

adaptive management rather than implementation failure.

Operationally, the Bank's supervision performance was strong: seven of eight projects achieved satisfactory implementation progress ratings, and seven of eight were delivered within budget. The PMU model ensured continuity, cross-project learning, and efficient resource deployment. M&E quality improved across the portfolio's lifecycle—recent projects show stronger results frameworks and greater use of gender-disaggregated indicators—but systemic weaknesses persist, including fragmented data systems and limited feedback loops for adaptive management.

Management will continue to support RMCs in building robust M&E capacity within PIUs and implementing agencies. This will be achieved by providing tailored tools and guidelines, targeted technical assistance, and ongoing training on the Bank's Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting, and Learning (MERL) Toolkit for PIUs. The objective is to enhance the quality and effectiveness of M&E planning, assessment, execution, and results-based reporting across projects.

Conclusion

The evaluation provides a good assessment of a decade of governance support to Zimbabwe—a period marked by extraordinary economic and political volatility. The GISPs delivered meaningful institutional reforms in PFM, DRM, oversight, and accountability, contributing to Zimbabwe's improved readiness for arrears clearance. At the same time, the evaluation correctly identifies that reforms remained incremental and fragile, and that transformative governance change requires sustained, coordinated engagement across technical, financial, and political dimensions.

Looking ahead, the lessons and recommendations from this evaluation will directly inform the design of the next generation of governance ISPs in Zimbabwe and across the Bank's transition states portfolio. Management commits to placing greater emphasis on political economic integration, adaptive implementation, financial sustainability from the design stage, and cluster-level results architecture.

Responses to IDEV's recommendations are provided in the following Management Action Record. ■

Management Action Record	
IDEV's Recommendation	**Management Response**
Recommendation 1: Enhance the design of governance projects to strengthen their effectiveness and achievement of objectives.	
The specific priority actions recommended are:	**Agreed** – Enhancing the design of governance projects to strengthen their effectiveness and achievement of objectives is critical in achievement of project development objectives and intended results. This is also key in ensuring smooth and efficient implementation of projects, country ownership and in addressing needs or vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Management will thus continue to constitute and deploy task teams from relevant departments to ensure that project designs address cross-cutting issues that can impede achievement of results.
a. Beyond technical assessments, systematically undertaking and embedding political economy analysis (PEA) at the project design stage to identify power dynamics, vested interests, and reform champions that shape governance reform feasibility, to understand incentive structures and change pathways.	**Actions:** a. The Bank will undertake analysis of political and institutional drivers of change; will build on the Country Resilience and Fragility Assessments, complemented with the Country Capacity Development Need Assessment to inform the design of governance ISPs and enhance effectiveness and achievement of projects objectives. Specifically: ▮ The Bank will prepare an ISP guideline which will provide a standardized framework for PEA to inform the design of governance ISPs, drawing on existing country resilience and fragility assessments. **SNSP (Lead), RDTS, ECAD1, ECGF: Q1 2027** ▮ Training on PEA will be delivered to all Task Managers in the Governance Department and relevant departments such as RDTS and ECCE to better equip them with skills and guidance on how to undertake PEA. **SNSP (Lead), ECAD.1, ECGF, and RDTS: Q1 2027.** This will enable PEA to be integrated in the design of new governance ISPs in fragile or post conflict countries; and all ISPs submitted for concept note review from Q4 2027 onward will include a documented PEA annex identifying power dynamics, reform champions, vested interests, and change pathways. **ECGF (Lead), RDTS: Q4, 2027**
b. Designing adaptive implementation strategies with built-in flexibility mechanisms, recognizing that governance reforms in fragile contexts require iterative approaches responsive to shifting political dynamics rather than rigid linear frameworks.	b. The new ISP guideline will provide good practices in structuring implementation arrangements that are fit for purpose in fragile context. **SNSP (Lead), ECGF, RDTS, and SNFI: Q1, 2027** ▮ Further, mid-term project reviews will be formalized in the financing agreements as a requirement, in addition to six-monthly supervision, to ensure flexibility and responsiveness to the governance dynamics in member countries. **ECGF (Lead), PGCL, and SNFI: Q2 2027**

Management Action Record	
IDEV's Recommendation	**Management Response**
c. Incorporating targeted social inclusion measures addressing identified gaps in gender integration and civic participation, with specific mechanisms for engaging marginalized groups and tracking distributional impacts of governance reforms.	c. Management will ensure that policy-level commitments on social inclusion and gender equality are operationalized in the design of ISP. Specifically: ▌All governance ISP designs will systematically include stakeholder analysis during project preparation, identifying barriers to civic participation and specific constraints faced by marginalized and underrepresented groups. The diagnostic will inform the design of targeted actions to enhance structured engagement with civil society organizations. **AHGC.1 and AHGC.2 (Lead), ECGF, SNDR, and SNSC: Q4, 2026** Gender analysis will be undertaken for all ISPs to assess the differentiated impacts of fiscal policies, public financial management systems, and economic reforms on women and men. The findings will inform project design, policy dialogue, and the identification of reform actions that address structural gender inequalities such as gender-responsive public financial management and improved access to economic opportunities for women. Expected results will be reflected in ISP results frameworks. **AHGC.1 and AHGC.2 (Lead), ECGF, SNDR, and SNSC: Q4, 2026**
Recommendation 2: Institutionalize a programmatic approach to governance projects both within the Bank's governance projects, in collaboration with other development partners at country level to further strengthen coherence and outcome achievement.	
The action areas to be considered are:	**Agreed** – Management accepts this recommendation as it is consistent with and reinforces the Bank's strategic approach to enhancing development impact and effectiveness.
a. Developing cluster-level theories of change at portfolio inception that articulate how complementary interventions collectively contribute to transformative governance outcomes, with explicit causal pathways linking outputs to intermediate outcomes and long-term impacts.	**Actions:** a. Management will build task managers' capacity to embed cluster-level ToC as standard practice: ▌A structured training program on cluster ToC construction and results matrix design will be developed and delivered to all Bank task managers managing governance portfolios. **SNDR (Lead), ECAD.1, and ECGF: Q1 2027** ▌For country portfolios with two or more concurrent governance ISPs, Bank will prepare a cluster-level ToC at portfolio inception, articulating cumulative causal pathways from outputs to governance transformation outcomes. **SNDR (Lead), ECAD.1, and ECGF: Q4 2027**

Management Action Record	
IDEV's Recommendation	**Management Response**
b. Establishing integrated M&E systems at cluster level with: (i) harmonized indicators tracking both project-specific and cumulative governance outcomes; (ii) centralized data platforms enabling real-time monitoring and cross-project learning; and (iii) regular outcome evaluations assessing progress toward overarching governance transformation objectives.	b. The Bank will support Zimbabwe to develop Cluster- level M&E frameworks to track and monitor progress on implementation of reforms and strengthen the human resource capacity including: (i) harmonized indicators to track progress at cumulative governance output and outcomes level; (ii) outcome evaluations at cluster midpoint and closure; and (iii) ensuring that individual projects from all development partners including the Bank fit within this framework for improved result management. **SNDR (Lead), ECAD.1, ECGF: Q1, 2027**
c. Formalize coordination mechanisms and proactively support structured country-level coordination platforms that enable joint programming, shared learning, harmonized monitoring, and cross- institutional collaboration; formalize mechanisms including annual programming reviews, assess cluster coherence, and identify synergies, knowledge exchange platforms, and harmonized reporting frameworks. These mechanisms would reduce transaction costs and strengthen strategic oversight.	c. Management will strengthen coordination architecture with development partners to reduce duplication and transaction costs: ▮ The Bank will map existing governance working groups and coordination platforms in targeted countries and indicate the Bank's level of engagement (non - participation; active participation; chair; co-chair roles) and responsible focal points. **RDVP – Country Offices (Lead), and ECGF: Q2 2027** ▮ Where coordination platforms are absent or inactive, the Bank will work with RMCs to establish or revitalize them, drawing on the Zimbabwe arrears clearance working group model as a replicable example. **RDVP – Country Offices (Lead), and ECGF: Q2 2027**
d. Strengthen M&E capacity development for PIUs and implementing agencies, moving beyond one-off training to embedded technical support that builds institutional capability for outcome- focused measurement, data quality assurance, and evidence-based adaptive management, including annual programming reviews to assess cluster coherence and identify synergies, knowledge exchange platforms, and harmonized reporting frameworks to reduce transaction costs and strengthen strategic oversight.	d. The Bank will support RMC to develop M&E capacity within PIUs/PMUs and implementing agencies through developing the necessary tools and guidelines, technical assistance, and training on the Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Learning (MERL) Toolkit for PIUs that has been developed by the Bank with the aim to strengthen M&E assessment, planning and execution; and result based reporting. The trainings to be included and be part of fiduciary clinics, and project launch or supervision missions of the Bank with a view to reduce transaction costs. **ECAD (Lead), SNDR, and ECGF: Q1 2027**

Management Action Record	
IDEV's Recommendation	**Management Response**
Recommendation 3: Design comprehensive sustainability strategies addressing financial, institutional, and political dimensions from project inception, to enhance the sustainability of projects' benefits.	
	Agreed – Management will continue to work with RMCs to ensure that projects are sustainable by ensuring that supported activities are self-sustaining and governments make clear commitments (through legal, policy, and institutional provisions) to continue supporting the interventions beyond their life. **Measures:** a. The Bank will ensure that the ISP guideline includes good practices around ensuring country ownership in the design and implementation of projects; as well as mechanisms to ensure sustainability of interventions. **SNSP (Lead), ECGF: Q1 2027** b. Management will enhance collaboration with national and regional capacity building institutions in designing and delivering capacity building interventions to enhance local ownership and sustainability. ISPs and accelerating implementation. Specifically: ▌Bank will map available regional capacity building institutions — including MEFMI, ACBF, ESAMI, ATAF, CABRI, AFROSAI[5]— and establish or reinforce partnership frameworks for their systematic engagement in governance ISP design and implementation to ensure sustainability. Procurement plans to be used as tools for engagement with beneficiary institutions. **ECGF (Lead), and ECAD: Q1 2027** ▌ISP designs will specify, at appraisal, which regional institutions will provide capacity building support, the nature of their engagement (peer learning, South-South cooperation, embedded advisory). **ECGF (Lead), and ECAD: Q2 2027**



Stakeholders of the Emergency Food Production Project implemented by the Africa Fertilizer Financing Mechanism as part of the African Emergency Food Production Facility



Participants at a past African Economic Conference

Introduction

Rationale and Objective

This report presents the findings, lessons, and recommendations of the Cluster Evaluation of the African Development Bank Group's (AfDB or the Bank) Institutional Support Projects (ISPs) in the area of governance in Zimbabwe over the period 2012-2024. The evaluation forms part of the 2024 Work Program of the Bank's Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) function, as approved by the AfDB Board of Directors. It examines a group of similar and/or related interventions approved and financed by the AfDB in the governance sector in Zimbabwe, during this period. The cluster evaluation aims to draw findings from across the projects in the cluster to ascertain common themes and to draw evidence-based lessons to inform the design and implementation of future governance and institutional support interventions in Zimbabwe and other Regional Member Countries (RMCs) operating in similar contexts.

The evaluation responds to AfDB Management's request to assess the Bank's governance institutional support to Zimbabwe, particularly in the context of the ongoing Bank-led arrears clearance process. Its primary objectives are to: (i) generate evidence on the performance of Bank-funded governance ISPs in Zimbabwe over the period 2012 to 2024; and (ii) distill lessons to guide current and future operations, ensuring that the Bank remains relevant and responsive to the country's evolving needs. Specifically, the evaluation aims to:

- Assess the relevance and coherence of the project cluster;
- Evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the project cluster in achieving expected development results and impacts;
- Examine the sustainability of the development results and impacts generated by the project cluster;
- Identify factors that enable or hinder successful implementation and achievement of results; and
- Draw lessons and provide recommendations to improve the design and implementation of future governance operations in Zimbabwe and other RMCs with similar contexts.

Background and Context

Economic context

Zimbabwe's economic context has been characterized by recurrent crises and instability. The hyperinflation episode of the late 2000s wiped out household savings and eroded confidence in the domestic currency. Following dollarization, the economy experienced a period of strong recovery in 2012, driven by growth in agriculture and mining. However, the 2015–2016 El Niño-induced drought severely reduced agricultural productivity, heightening food insecurity and negatively affecting agriculture-dependent manufacturing sectors (FAO, 2016). Although economic activity rebounded in 2017–2018, the recovery was short-lived due to a combination of factors, including the reintroduction of the Zimbabwean dollar, recurrent droughts, cyclone Idai, and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The years 2021–2022 witnessed a modest recovery supported by improved agricultural output, mining performance, and global economic recovery. Nonetheless, growth remains constrained by high and persistent inflation, macroeconomic volatility, and weak governance structures (World Bank, 2024).

The International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s 2025 Article IV Staff Report notes that over the past two decades Zimbabwe has introduced multiple currencies and regimes, experienced periods of high inflation, and relied at times on quasi-fiscal operations and monetary financing. This has undermined confidence and monetary policy credibility. The report assesses the Zimbabwe Gold currency (ZiG), newly introduced in April 2024, noting that initial liquidity expansion led to sharp depreciation and inflation in late 2024, followed by stabilization after decisive monetary tightening. While short-term stability has improved, the IMF stresses that structural dollarization, foreign exchange (FX) distortions, and weak confidence remain key constraints. The IMF concludes that achieving durable stability depends less on further currency changes and more on fiscal discipline, credible monetary policy, and transparent, market-based FX arrangements.

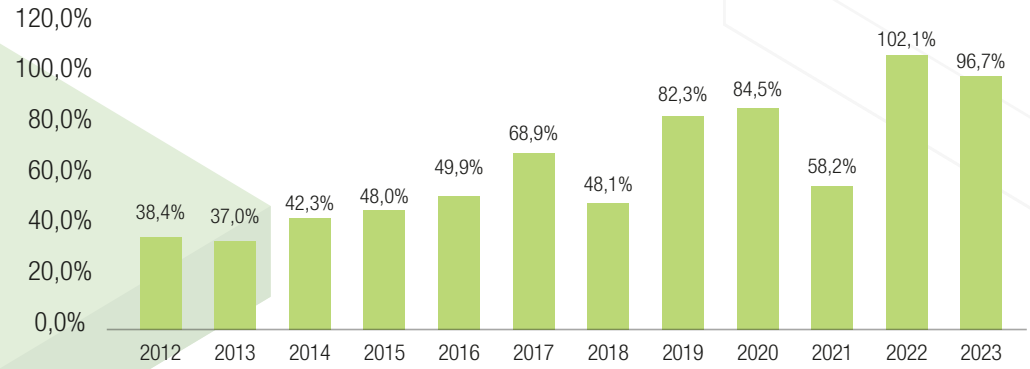
Between 2012 and 2023, Zimbabwe's fiscal and external balances reflected persistent macroeconomic instability and structural weaknesses. During this period, fiscal deficits remained relatively modest, constrained by limited fiscal space under dollarization, which capped government borrowing and spending. However, the country continued to experience large current account deficits, driven by heavy reliance on imported consumer goods and limited export diversification. Since 2021, the government has maintained a tight fiscal stance despite spending pressures arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia–Ukraine conflict. Enhanced revenue mobilization, and fiscal consolidation, have helped contain fiscal pressures and limit the fiscal deficit to below 3% of gross domestic product (GDP) (AfDB, 2024a).

Over the same period, Zimbabwe's public debt as a percentage of GDP has shown an upward trend, driven by increased borrowing to finance public expenditure, the accumulation of arrears and penalty interest from unmet financial obligations. Unresolved external debt and arrears have restricted Zimbabwe's access to international capital markets, forcing greater reliance on domestic borrowing, which has, in turn, intensified debt sustainability risks. Figure 1 presents the evolution of Zimbabwe's debt-to-GDP ratio between 2012 and 2023.

Governance context and AfDB governance support

The World Governance Index for Zimbabwe has shown a clear downward trend since 1996, with marginal improvements in recent years. In the mid-1990s, the country performed relatively well in areas such as control of corruption, government

Figure 1: Zimbabwe's central government debt as a percentage of GDP 2012-2023



Source: IMF

effectiveness, voice and accountability. However, substantial declines occurred in the early 2000s, reflecting deepening governance challenges, including political instability, weakened institutional capacity, and limited transparency. In recent years, there have been marginal improvements across indicators, suggesting tentative progress in governance reforms.

Governance is one of the AfDB's long-standing priorities in its support to its RMCs, as expressed, among others, in its Medium-Term Strategy 2008-2012 and Ten-Year Strategy (TYS) 2013-2022. From 2012 to 2024, the Bank's governance interventions were guided by 3 strategies, namely: (i) the Governance Strategic Direction and Action Plan 2008-2012 (GAP I); (ii) the Governance Strategic Framework and Action Plan 2014-2018 (GAP II); and (iii) the Strategy for Economic Governance in Africa 2021-2025 (SEGA). GAP I aimed to support RMCs in building capable and responsive states by strengthening transparency and accountability in public resource management (AfDB, 2008). Building on GAP I, GAP II aimed to promote transparent, accountable and responsive governance systems (AfDB, 2014). SEGA aimed to strengthen institutions, processes, policies, behaviors, and regulatory settings essential to managing economies effectively (AfDB, 2021).

The Bank's governance interventions under GAP I were focused on three levels: country, sector and regional. At the country level, the focus was on strengthening public resource management systems; while at the sector level, GAP I highlighted the need to improve governance and promote integrity in high-risk sectors, such as infrastructure, including enhancing procurement systems. At the regional level, the Bank supported initiatives that promoted regional standards and codes, fostering governance alignment across borders. GAP II aligned with the Bank's TYS 2013-2022 (AfDB , 2013) and sought to strengthen public sector management, improve sector outcomes, and foster a robust business environment. To address governance issues, the Bank uses several instruments such as ISPs, program-based operations (PBOs), technical assistance, economic and sector work, policy dialogue or advisory services (GAP II). Under the Bank's current strategy, the SEGA is based on three pillars, namely: (i) public sector effectiveness; (ii) governance and structural transformation; and (iii) inclusive governance and accountability.

The AfDB's support to Zimbabwe

As of December 2024, the Bank's portfolio in Zimbabwe consisted of 15 regional and private sector operations with a total value of UA 84.27 million, up from UA 74.64 million in 2012. Implementation status data indicate that 67% of projects had reached completion stage, demonstrating effective project lifecycle management despite Zimbabwe's challenging operating environment.

Funding sources for the portfolio reflected the Bank's innovative approach to engagement in a country with arrears. The African Development Fund (ADF) was the largest contributor, funding 14 projects, followed by the Zimbabwe Multi-donor Trust Fund (ZIMFUND) with 11 projects. The African Development Bank (ADB) window funded six projects, while the Africa Water Facility Fund and the Transition Support Facility each funded two projects.

The sectoral composition of the Bank's portfolio evolved significantly between 2012 and 2024. In 2012, the portfolio comprised seven projects, with multi-sector operations dominating (43%), followed by Water Supply & Sanitation (29%), and Power and Agriculture (14% each). By 2024, the portfolio had expanded to 15 projects with a more balanced distribution across sectors: multi-sector operations (27%), Power (20%), Agriculture and Rural Development, Finance, Social, and Water Supply & Sanitation sectors (13% each). In terms of value (UA), the sectoral composition showed even more pronounced shifts. While multi-sector operations dominated by value in 2012 (43%); the Power sector emerged as the largest component by 2024 (28%), followed by Agriculture and Rural Development (24%), and Finance and Multi-Sector (20% each).

Governance projects in Zimbabwe financed by various Development Partners (DPs) primarily focused on three core areas: Public Finance Management (PFM), institutional capacity building, and transparency and citizen engagement. These programs and projects reflected development partners strategic approach to addressing the country's governance challenges through enhancing fiscal transparency and building institutional resilience. Key challenges that the Bank sought to address included institutional capacity weaknesses, outdated systems, and limited resources that constrained public oversight, accountability, public financial management, and sustainable development; weak capacity of accountability institutions; and deteriorating service delivery.

Over the period 2012-2024, the Bank supported eight ISPs in Zimbabwe, of which four were completed and four were ongoing (see Table 1). The total amount of commitment for these projects was UA 42.22 million, drawn from the Bank's ADF and TSF resource windows. These projects targeted key constraints including weak PFM, poor debt management and revenue administration, and low transparency in procurement, economic and corporate governance. PFM reforms focused on budgeting, debt and revenue management, and tax system modernization. Transparency and accountability reforms aimed to strengthen Parliament, the Office of the Auditor General, and anti-corruption systems, while economic and corporate governance reforms targeted state-owned enterprises. Cross-cutting issues targeted areas such as arrears clearance, gender equality, and inclusive governance.

Zimbabwe's debt and arrears clearance process

Zimbabwe's debt profile has been particularly problematic. As of August 2024, total public debt had reached approximately USD 21 billion, of which USD 12.3 billion was external debt and USD 8.7 billion was domestic debt. These financial constraints, coupled with the country's political dynamics, significantly hampered Zimbabwe's ability to achieve sustainable development and inclusive growth, and hindered its ability to play a greater role in Southern Africa. The country's arrears to the AfDB Group alone amounted to USD 760 million, making Zimbabwe the only RMC in arrears to both the ADB and the African Development Fund (ADF) windows at the onset of this evaluation (AfDB, 2024b). Of this amount, 99% was related to ADB loans and 1% to ADF loans (AfDB, 2024b). As of November 2024, Zimbabwe was intensifying efforts to address its public debt and arrears.

The Zimbabwe debt and arrears clearance process, which the AfDB is spearheading in collaboration with other stakeholders, is a critical pathway to the country's re-engagement with International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and development partners. The process, which began in 2016, aims to address the country's unsustainable debt levels, restore fiscal stability, and facilitate access to concessional financing. The process relies on several critical conditions, particularly the adoption and implementation of the IMF Staff-Monitored Program (SMP) which was expected to commence in January 2025[6], to implement economic reforms aimed at debt resolution (AfDB, 2024c). The SMP is considered by DPs as a critical milestone to demonstrate Zimbabwe's commitment to economic reforms. Other conditions include governance reforms and land reform commitments. During the IMF/World Bank Spring meetings in April 2024, the two institutions expressed their continued support for Zimbabwe's arrears clearance process. The AfDB also held a side-event on the arrears clearance process during its annual meetings in May 2024.

Evaluation Scope

The evaluation covered the eight (8) aforementioned governance ISPs approved and implemented by the Bank during the period 2012-2024 (Table 1; more details in Annex 1). These programs aimed to address

Table 1: Key project data

#	Project name	Approval year	Planned completion date	Status	Approved amount - contract capital (M UA)	Disbursement rate as at Aug 2024
1	The Capacity Building for Public Finance and Economic Management Project (CBPFEMP)	2012	31/12/2021	Closed	16.12	100
2	The Governance and Institutional Support Project (GISP)	2013	29/06/2018	Closed	5.2	100
3	The Institutional Support for State Enterprise Reform and Delivery Project (ISSERDP)	2017	30/05/2023	Closed	3	100
4	The Strengthening Institutions of Transparency and Accountability (SITA) Project	2015	30/06/2019	Closed	2	100
5	The Tax and Enhancement of Accountability Project (TAEP)	2019	31/03/2025	Ongoing	7.6	68.7
6	The Institutional Support Project for Governance and Public Finance Management (ISPGPFM)	2021	31/12/2024	Ongoing	2.5	38.09
7	Support to Arrears Clearance and Accountability Enhancement (SACAGE) Project	2022	31/12/2025	Ongoing	3	58.42
8	The Institutional Support for State Enterprise Reform Project (ISSERP)	2023	31/12/2026	Ongoing	4	4.47

key institutional and governance weaknesses arising from years of economic decline, fiscal fragility and weak governance. These governance lSPs were intentionally sequenced and interlinked, with lessons from earlier programs informing subsequent ones. They were designed to strengthen Zimbabwe's governance structures, enhance transparency, improve public financial accountability, and promote sustainable institutional reforms in alignment with the Bank's strategic priorities. The projects were implemented in the context of an intricate socio-political landscape, marked by persistent fiscal instability, unsustainable levels of external debt (including debt in arrears), limited access to international capital markets, and governance weaknesses—such as corruption risks, limited judicial independence, and weak enforcement. These challenges not only constrained economic recovery but also presented significant barriers to inclusive and sustainable development.

The remainder of the report is structured as follows: The next section describes the evaluation's methodological approach, including its limitations and data collection methods. This is followed by a section presenting the evaluation findings in response to the key questions, using the standard evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, and efficiency. The concluding section sets out the main conclusions, lessons, and recommendations emerging from the evaluation to inform the Bank's future engagement in Zimbabwe and other Regional Member Countries. ■



A pickup truck carries passengers along a rural highway in Zimbabwe.

Methodology

Evaluation Questions

A cluster evaluation examines a group of similar or related interventions that together represent a set of interventions. Similar to a multisite evaluation, a cluster evaluation focuses on interventions that share a common mission, strategy, and target population (Morra Imas & Rist, 2009). The goal is to learn from a group of projects in order to draw overall conclusions. Based on IDEV's Evaluation Manual, this cluster evaluation used qualitative methods to complement quantitative data (mixed methods): Desk reviews, interviews with key stakeholders, and Project Results Assessments (PRAs) of individual projects.

This cluster evaluation was organized around the following key questions, in accordance with the international evaluation criteria (Annex 2):

1. **Relevance:** To what extent are the objectives and design of the AfDB's governance ISPs in Zimbabwe strategically aligned with other Bank Group policies and strategies (i.e. the Bank's TYS and the High 5s); Are they responsive to the context, the needs of the recipient country and national development plans; and did they remain responsive over time as circumstances changed?

2. **Coherence:** To what extent were there synergies and interlinkages between the Bank's governance ISPs and other Bank interventions, strategies and policies, as well as those of other development partners and the government?

3. **Effectiveness:** To what extent did the Bank's governance ISPs in Zimbabwe achieve or are they likely to achieve their expected results?

4. **Impact:** To what extent have the projects generated or are they expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects? To what extent did they lead to holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms?

5. **Efficiency:** To what extent has the Bank's assistance been delivered efficiently in terms of timeliness and cost? To what extent was the Bank well organized to deliver the interventions?

6. **Sustainability:** To what extent will the net benefits of the interventions continue or are they likely to continue?

Evaluation Approach

The cluster evaluation adopted a theory-based and utilization-focused approach to respond to the evaluation questions. The evaluation team reconstructed the Theory of Change (ToC) to improve understanding of the results chain, mechanisms, assumptions, risks and context of the cluster of interventions (see Annex 3). The evaluation was based on a review of the results frameworks of various project clusters. In addition, a project results assessment grid was developed to rate each project according to the evaluation criteria (see Annex 4). The evaluation synthesized findings from various background analyses to provide a cluster-level assessment. These background analyses included:

- **Portfolio review:** Provides a portfolio-level overview of the eight projects under review. The report highlights cross-cutting results, challenges and enabling factors across the ISP cluster.

- **Project results assessments (PRAs):** Each project in the cluster is assessed against the evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The assessment is based on project reviews and information collected during interviews. PRAs provide insight into how each project contributes to the overall governance objectives. The performance of individual projects was assessed based on IDEV's rating scale: Highly Satisfactory (4), Satisfactory (3), Partly Unsatisfactory (2), and Unsatisfactory (1)[7].

- **Cluster assessment:** The cluster of projects is subsequently assessed in aggregate terms so that no single project is identified (Morra Imas & Rist, 2009). A six-point scale was used to judge the overall cluster performance: Highly Successful (6); Successful (5); Mostly Successful (4); Mostly Unsuccessful (3); Unsuccessful (2); and Highly Unsuccessful (1). (see Annex 4).

- **Governance review note:** It provided a broad view and analysis of Zimbabwe's governance context over the last decade. Looking beyond the Bank's interventions, the note examined how governance has evolved over time, and the roles played by government actors and DPs. The note also highlighted progress as well as persistent challenges.

- **Document review:** For the evaluation to yield findings and useful recommendations, the evaluation team collected and synthesized evidence on the interventions. Documents reviewed included relevant Bank strategies and policies, key individual project documents such as Project Appraisal Reports (PARs), Implementation Progress Reports (IPRs), and Project Completion Reports (PCRs), country diagnostic notes, portfolio performance reviews, country briefs, and other relevant documents from the Bank as well as other institutions. For instance, a literature review was undertaken to take stock of documents on governance, PFM, and Institutional reforms in transition states.

- **Semi-structured interviews (individual or group):** The key stakeholders consulted include Bank senior management at Headquarters (HQ), regional and country levels, and the internal operations teams. At the country level, the team consulted with key government officials, project management units, executing agencies, the private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), beneficiaries, and other DPs intervening in the field of governance and institutional support.

Limitations

The main limitations and mitigation measures for this evaluation were as follows:

- **Uneven access to stakeholder-sourced documentation:** Granular analysis, particularly of internal planning processes and contextual decision-making at the individual ISP level, was constrained by uneven access to stakeholder-sourced documentation. This was mitigated through the triangulation of findings from various sources, targeted interviews, and the use of available project documents to verify and supplement interview findings.

- **Data gaps at outcome levels:** Some data gaps – in select PCRs – at the governance outcome level constrained the assessment of the full extent of outcomes achieved, though this occurred only in limited cases. This limitation was mitigated using proxy indicators, triangulating outcome assessment using multiple data sources, and focusing on areas with the strongest data availability. The report also clearly notes data limitations in the findings and qualifies conclusions accordingly.

- **Attribution challenges:** In a context of multiple development partner initiatives, complex reform dynamics and a volatile macroeconomic environment, it is difficult to isolate the specific contributions of AfDB interventions from

the broader sectoral reforms. Therefore, the approach focused on assessing the contributions of the Bank's interventions, tracing logical linkages between interventions and outcomes using theory-based methods and triangulating the findings.

- **Absence of an overarching Bank programmatic Theory of Change**. The evaluation was unable to go beyond a qualitative assessment, owing to the absence of an overarching programmatic Theory of Change for the Bank's governance institutional support. ■



A participant speaks during the 2025 Zimbabwe Country Portfolio Performance Review Workshop

Findings

Relevance

Under this criterion, the evaluation assessed how well the objectives and design of the cluster of governance ISPs in Zimbabwe aligned with the needs and priorities of beneficiaries, as well as with global, national, and partner policies. The evaluation also examined the extent to which this alignment was maintained throughout the implementation period, despite changing circumstances. Specifically, the assessment focused on two areas: (i) The alignment of the project cluster's objectives with Zimbabwe's national development plan, the Bank's strategic priorities, and the needs of beneficiaries; and (ii) The appropriateness of the cluster's design to achieve its intended development objectives.

The evaluation found that the project cluster was generally well aligned with Zimbabwe's evolving needs and national governance priorities. The project cluster was also consistent with the Bank's governance objectives and the strategic priorities outlined in the country brief. Most ISPs targeted critical governance gaps, including institutional capacity weaknesses in public financial management (PFM), oversight functions, and arrears clearance. Although project objectives and designs were informed by diagnostic assessments, national reform agendas, and fragility considerations, the evaluation found shortcomings in project designs such as weak indicator selection and limited integration of reform stages.

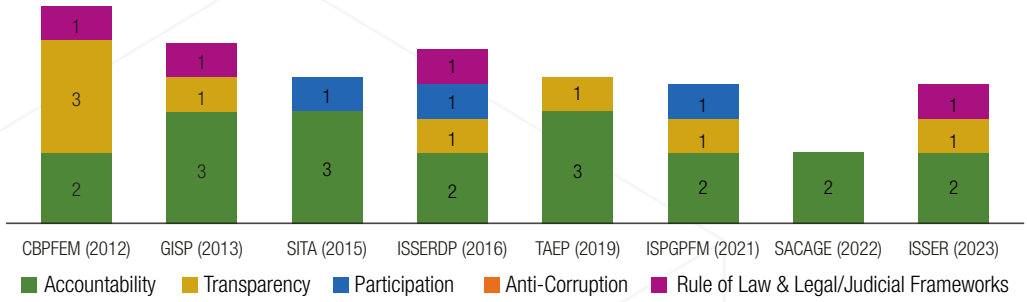
Alignment

This sub-section presents the evaluation's assessment of the extent to which the objectives of the project cluster were aligned with the country's development strategies, the Bank's strategies and beneficiaries' needs. Overall, the evaluation rated the alignment of the projects' objectives as satisfactory. Indeed, the evaluation found that ISPs in the cluster were generally relevant and responsive to Zimbabwe's evolving governance challenges and local populations' needs, including those of women. However, the extent to which they adapted to emerging issues and integrated gender considerations varied and was inconsistent.

The evaluation found that the objectives of all eight ISPs were well aligned with the country's national development frameworks. These include the Medium-Term Plan (2011–2015), the Zimbabwe Agenda for Socio-Economic Transformation (2013–2018), the Transitional Stabilization Program (2018–2020), and the National Development Strategy (2021–2025). This alignment reflects the Bank's responsiveness to Zimbabwe's evolving governance priorities and human capacity needs. The project cluster specifically targeted critical challenges such as the loss of skilled personnel from key government institutions, leading to persistent capacity constraints and expertise gaps affecting public sector performance and policy implementation.

The evaluation also identified that the project cluster was relevant and responsive to the country's institutional needs. It addressed core governance and institutional capacity challenges such as outdated systems and limited resources, which constrained public oversight, accountability, and progress in public financial management and sustainable development. The successive ISPs were designed to mitigate these constraints and strengthen institutional performance. However, some stakeholders noted coverage gaps, with institutions such as Procurement Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (PRAZ) highlighting that the ISPGPFM did not adequately address emerging priorities, including

Figure 2: Overview of governance dimensions by project



Source: IDEV

digitalization and sustainable procurement. Figure 2 shows how the eight projects addressed challenges in key dimensions of governance.

The evaluation found strong alignment between the objectives of the project cluster and the AfDB's strategic priorities and frameworks. The ISPs were consistent with the Bank's 2013–2022 TYS, particularly the "governance and accountability" and "regional economic integration" pillars. Earlier interventions also demonstrated alignment with the Governance Action Plans (GAP I and II). Furthermore, the evaluation established alignment between the objectives of the cluster and the Bank's 2021–2025 SEGA, as well as with its Fragility and Resilience Strategy and Gender Strategy. This reinforced the cluster's strategic relevance within the broader institutional agenda. For instance, the CBPFEM project supported public financial management reforms that were aligned with the Governance Strategic Directions (GAP I) (2008–2018) (AfDB, 2013a). The GISP reinforced institutional capacity building and transparency in public finance, resonating with the Governance Strategic Action Plan (GAP I) and the Fragile States Facility Pillar III (AfDB, 2013b) (AfDB, 2018).

Quality of design

This sub-section presents the assessment of the extent to which the designs of the project cluster were conducive to achieving results. Overall, the quality of the design of the projects was rated satisfactory despite identified shortcomings. The evaluation found that they incorporated predictable factors to ensure effective outputs and outcomes aligned with their objectives to a moderate extent.

The evaluation found that most projects within the cluster (6 out of 8) demonstrated well-structured results chains, robust risk matrices, and clearly articulated monitoring frameworks. However, weaknesses in design coherence, the choice of indicators, and the integration of reform stages limited the overall consistency and effectiveness of project designs. For instance, ISPs such as the GISP and SITA met expectations in terms of logical results chains, risk mitigation mechanisms, and functional Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) structures. In contrast, projects such as the CBPFEM and ISSERDP displayed weaker causal logic, limited integration of reform phases, and fragmented monitoring arrangements. Specifically, ISSERDP did not fully integrate the reform cycle for state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and parastatals. (AfDB, 2023).

The evaluation also revealed that most projects incorporated well-integrated and context-sensitive risk mitigation strategies. For example, the ISPGPFM included a detailed risk matrix addressing fragility, procurement, and capacity constraints, with mitigation measures built around the Bank's field presence, African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) technical support, and fiduciary clinics. However, a few projects, such as the CBPFEM, demonstrated weaknesses in this area.

The PRA highlighted that while procurement delays and capacity gaps were identified during appraisal, the project did not establish realistic or actionable mitigation measures. Consequently, CBPFEM—along with other projects such as ISPGPFM and SACAGE—faced persistent procurement-related challenges that delayed the implementation of key activities. Stakeholder interviews also confirmed recurring concerns about slow procurement processes, which were viewed as a systemic constraint affecting the timely delivery of results across the governance ISP portfolio.

The evaluation found that the quality of the results frameworks across the more recent projects was also generally high, with well-defined indicators, baselines, and targets established during the appraisal process. Most projects set up robust M&E systems through dedicated Project Management Units (PMUs), use of gender-disaggregated data and clear results frameworks, supported by regular reporting. However, weaknesses were noted in some cases such as the CBPFEM, the ISPGPFM, and the SACAGE where fragmented M&E, insufficient attention to qualitative and transformative governance outcomes and incomplete frameworks (lack of stakeholders' feedback or inadequate coverage of outputs) limited performance tracking.

The evaluation found that Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) frameworks in the project cluster demonstrated some strengths but also had enduring shortcomings. Recent projects have strengthened M&E design through the use of standardized results frameworks, improved use of gender-disaggregated data, and greater emphasis on outcome-level indicators. In contrast, earlier projects were largely output-focused, paying insufficient attention to qualitative and transformative governance outcomes. Systemic challenges remained across the cluster. These included fragmented data systems, limited Project Implementation Unit capacity, weak data quality assurance, and ineffective feedback loops for adaptive learning. Additionally, political economy considerations were seldom integrated into M&E design. Collectively, these gaps constrained the rigor of outcome and impact measurement and limited the use of M&E evidence to inform governance reforms.

The evaluation noted that the absence of an overarching programmatic ToC for the Bank's governance institutional support significantly constrained the ability to systematically monitor and report results, generate comparable evidence on what works and what does not, and assess higher-level and longer-term impacts, especially in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Without an overarching programmatic frame, results remained fragmented across projects, limiting cross-project learning, the ability to take timely corrective action, and the use of evaluative evidence to inform the design and strategic coherence of future governance and institutional support operations.

The document review showed that the project cluster broadly demonstrated satisfactory integration of Zimbabwe's transitional context into the general design of projects, though the depth and consistency of this integration varied. Most projects took into consideration the institutional and macroeconomic fragility context of the country. Some projects such as CBPFEM and GISP were designed under the Bank's TSF and underpinned by assessments of drivers of fragility such as institutional erosion and fiscal instability. Subsequent projects, including SACAGE, ISPGPFM, and SITA, also drew on fragility diagnostics and lessons from earlier interventions, embedding elements to address governance challenges in transitional contexts.

However, the evaluation identified the limited use of fragility-specific indicators in the results frameworks across the portfolio, with integration largely dependent on project design. Only SACAGE systematically embedded fragility metrics within its results framework. Other projects tracked related outcomes through broader performance indicators, often with uneven sequencing of fragility components. Nonetheless, the portfolio demonstrates adaptive learning. For example, ISSER incorporated debt distress measures that addressed ISSERDP's gaps, and later ISPs increasingly applied

fragility frameworks more systematically. Overall, a rating of Satisfactory for this sub-criterion reflected notable progress while underscoring the need for more consistent integration of fragility considerations in future operations.

The evaluation found expected results across the project cluster to be generally realistic, though ambition sometimes outpaced implementation capacity. For instance, GISP set overly ambitious targets given Zimbabwe's constrained macroeconomic environment, while SITA and SACAGE adopted more incremental and achievable institutional reforms. Risk assessments also varied in quality—GISP and ISPGPFM provided comprehensive analyses of political, fiduciary, and institutional risks with clear mitigation measures, whereas ISSERDP applied more generic approaches. Over time, evidence of institutional learning emerged, with ISSER incorporating more detailed risk assessments and adapting to evolving political and economic conditions.

The evaluation also revealed that the proposed solutions were generally appropriate and responsive to institutional weaknesses in governance, PFM, debt management, and tax administration, despite the fact that flexibility and adaptive capacity varied across projects. While the project cluster was contextually relevant and aligned with governance priorities, its effectiveness depended on the extent to which solutions were linked to risks and adjusted to evolving challenges. The portfolio demonstrated adaptability to political transitions, elections, and COVID-19 disruptions. This was evidenced by ISSERDP's shift from establishing a new SEP oversight body, to leveraging the Mutapa Investment Fund, TAEP's transition to virtual delivery and a phased rollout of TARMS. Design responsiveness was also reflected in CBPFEM's establishment of a dedicated PMU and SITA's alignment with a stable reform period. Nonetheless, adaptability was uneven, as projects like GISP and CBPFEM showed limited responsiveness and rarely undertook substantive redesigns in response to external shocks.

Document reviews indicated that project designs consistently incorporated lessons from earlier AfDB operations, reflecting an evolving understanding of Zimbabwe's fragile governance context. Earlier governance ISPs such as GISP and CBPFEM built on prior capacity-building initiatives, by emphasizing strong project management structures, dedicated PMUs, and development partner coordination. Subsequent projects demonstrated improved contextual sensitivity, stronger ownership, and more robust risk planning. For instance, ISSER integrated lessons from ISSERDP through simplified disbursement, realistic timelines, and alignment with national strategies, while SACAGE applied insights on adaptive PFM management. However, recurring procurement challenges at country level underscored uneven translation of these lessons into practice, highlighting the need for more proactive risk mitigation in future designs.

Gender integration

Gender has been a cross-cutting priority for the Bank for many years and is intended to be mainstreamed across all its interventions. Therefore, for a deeper understanding (not part of the performance assessment), the evaluation specifically examined gender integration across the project cluster, seeking concrete examples of gender-specific outputs, outcomes, and lessons learned. Overall, the evaluation found that the integration of gender components across the project cluster varied, with some projects addressing gender dimensions more explicitly than others. Additionally, there was limited evidence that women's evolving needs were addressed.

Several projects in the cluster were designed to strengthen women's participation and gender-responsive governance. Gender needs were identified using legal frameworks, consultations, and data analysis. For example, the GISP project aligned with Zimbabwe's national gender policy to ensure women's involvement in management and steering committees. The ISPGPFM held workshops with parliamentary committees to identify gender

gaps and develop a Gender Action Plan. The ISSER integrated gender considerations from the outset, translating constitutional commitments into actions such as gender-sensitive hiring and training. Under the TAEP, gender strategies were developed for Parliament and the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority to advance gender equity within governance and fiscal institutions. These approaches collectively ensured that interventions were grounded in context-specific evidence and targeted the gaps affecting women's empowerment and inclusion.

However, despite the strong commitment to gender inclusion demonstrated across these initiatives at the design stage, the evaluation found limited evidence that women's evolving needs were systematically identified or addressed during implementation. Project documentation tended to focus on participation figures and policy outputs rather than on adaptive measures taken in response to new or emerging gender-related challenges. As one Bank stakeholder noted, the economic governance focus of these operations created inherent challenges for gender mainstreaming. Unlike social or investment projects, their design and implementation structures made it more difficult to integrate gender considerations in a systematic and responsive manner. This finding echoes those of multiple other IDEV evaluations across countries, sectors, and themes.

In conclusion, notwithstanding the importance of design shortcomings, the evaluation rated the project cluster's relevance as satisfactory on balance.

Coherence

The evaluation assessed coherence across two dimensions: (i) internal coherence, which examined the synergies and interlinkages among the projects in the cluster and (ii) external coherence, which assessed consistency, complementarity, harmonization and coordination of the cluster with broader national policies, institutional reforms, and other development partner initiatives in the same context.

The evaluation noted that the projects in the cluster were complementary to one another and to government priorities, and aligned with other development partners' interventions, particularly at the strategic level. Projects were designed to target specific areas, minimizing duplication and aligning with partners' efforts. However, the level of coherence varied across projects, and coordination between partners was weaker during implementation.

Internal coherence

This sub-section examined the synergies and interlinkages among the projects in the cluster. Overall, the project cluster's coherence was rated satisfactory, reflecting strong strategic alignment, thematic complementarity, and continuity in institutional arrangements. Collectively, these factors enabled the cluster to operate as a coherent and mutually reinforcing set of interventions that holistically addressed key dimensions of PFM and governance reform.

The evaluation found strong thematic complementarity across the project cluster, with projects addressing interconnected dimensions of PFM and governance. Foundational initiatives such as CBPFEM strengthened core PFM systems, while subsequent projects like GISP, SITA, and ISPGPFM expanded into sectoral governance, oversight, and civil society engagement. Project sequencing was deliberate and adaptive. For instance, TAEP built on SITA to strengthen parliamentary oversight, and ISSER advanced reforms initiated under ISSERDP by enhancing results-based management. Consistent implementation through the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED) promoted coordination and institutional learning, though it also stretched capacity.

Synergies across the project cluster and with broader Bank operations strengthened

over time. Initial interventions like CBPFEM and GISP were primarily sequential, while subsequent projects such as ISPGPFM, SACAGE, and TAEP demonstrated greater coordination through joint steering committees, harmonized work plans, and complementary reforms in areas such as debt management and illicit financial flows. Demand- and supply-side initiatives were mutually reinforcing. For example, SITA supported parliamentary committees and CSOs, which enhanced oversight of reforms introduced by CBPFEM and GISP. Nonetheless, integration remained uneven; within TAEP, for example, linkages between tax administration and oversight components were only partially achieved, and cross-sectoral coordination beyond governance was limited. Outside the cluster, synergies existed but were less institutionalized. For example, ISSERDP and ISSER's alignment with other Bank operations was limited to gender mainstreaming collaborations under the Youth and Women Empowerment Project (AfDB, 2023).

External coherence

This sub-section examined how consistent the project cluster was with other actors' interventions in the same context. This included complementarity, harmonization, co-ordination with other DPs, and the extent to which the interventions added value while avoiding duplication of effort. Overall, the external coherence was rated Satisfactory for the cluster, demonstrating a clear emphasis on complementarity with other DPs at a strategic level. However, coordination during implementation was found to remain uneven and could benefit from more structured, inclusive, and operationally effective mechanisms.

The evaluation found that the project cluster consistently complemented the work of other development partners by targeting specific reform gaps and avoiding duplication. Partners noted strong collaboration with the Bank, particularly with the IMF on SOE reforms, within PFM development partner sub-committees, and through regular information sharing that promoted transparency and alignment. Document reviews show that projects such as CBPFEM, GISP, and SITA were designed through detailed development partner mapping and consultations. This ensured thematic complementarity with the World Bank, the IMF, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Department for International Development (DFID[8]), and bilateral partners. Each actor focused on distinct aspects of governance, supporting complementarity, and avoiding overlaps. The SITA, for example, demonstrated strong synergy with partners including Sweden, Switzerland, UNDP, Foreign & Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO), and USAID, particularly through the multi-donor Parliament Support Program, which reinforced capacity building across parliamentary committees. Interviews further confirmed that CBPFEM and SACAGE regularly engaged in forums such as the Zimbabwe Analytical Multi-Donor Trust Fund and the Development Cooperation Policy Dialogue Forum, fostering collaboration to align governance reforms and arrears clearance efforts. Overall, stakeholder feedback indicated that AfDB interventions were designed to complement rather than duplicate those of other partners, thereby reinforcing portfolio coherence.

However, stakeholder interviews also highlighted coordination challenges. These included inconsistencies in operational-level integration, limited cross-learning, and occasional divergence in strategic priorities. These issues constrained effectiveness across the cluster of projects. The CBPFEM's dedicated PMU, jointly managed with ACBF, enhanced fiduciary oversight though it limited full alignment with national systems (AfDB, 2019). Similarly, limited cross-fertilization between TAEP's tax administration and parliamentary oversight components reflected broader gaps with government agencies and development partners (AfDB, 2024d). This indicates that coordination was often more informational than focused on joint problem-solving. Interviewees further noted that the large number of actors in the governance space complicates coordination, and the absence of a strong, inclusive country-

level mechanism for governance reforms remains a persistent challenge. These issues underscore the need for a shared strategic framework to guide collaboration. Several partners emphasized the need for a more structured, inclusive, and consistently active coordination mechanism, supported by stronger Bank leadership and visibility within sector platforms.

The evaluation also found that mechanisms such as development partner working groups, joint planning, and multi-stakeholder committees helped mitigate duplication and enhance complementarity. Examples include SITA's collaboration with UNDP, and TAEP's MOUs with CSOs. Risk identification was consistent, though mitigation outcomes varied. For example, CBPFEM safeguarded fiduciary integrity through a dedicated PMU, and GISP experienced delays due to weak contingency planning, while ISPGPFM managed risks more effectively through fiduciary clinics and close supervision. Nonetheless, political instability and macroeconomic volatility (largely beyond project control) constrained resilience and results. Although the Bank has since strengthened its fragility framework and analysis, earlier projects were less equipped to anticipate such risks, limiting cohesive and adaptive implementation.

The evaluation further indicated that the Bank's financial and non-financial contributions were both critical to the success of the project cluster. The Bank's support was essential to achieving the scale, quality, and timeliness of implementation that would not have been possible otherwise. The project cluster relied heavily on the Bank's funding, technical expertise, and convening power. These were complemented by its strong knowledge of transition contexts that enabled effective engagement in Zimbabwe's complex governance environment. Notably, the Bank played a central leadership role in Zimbabwe's arrears clearance process. The Government appointed the AfDB President to lead debt resolution efforts, coordinate partner engagement, and mobilize resources to support governance reforms. Stakeholders consistently emphasized the distinctive value of the Bank's support in addressing Zimbabwe's governance and institutional capacity challenges.

Overall, the project cluster demonstrated a satisfactory level of coherence.

Effectiveness

Under this criterion, the evaluation assessed the extent to which the project cluster achieved, or was likely to achieve, its intended outputs and outcomes, with a view to addressing key governance and institutional weaknesses resulting from economic decline, fiscal fragility, and weak governance. The evaluation also identified the factors that have enabled or hindered results achievement. The analysis of effectiveness is organized around two key dimensions: (i) the achievement of outputs; and (ii) the achievement of outcomes.

The evaluation found that most projects delivered their planned outputs, with 76% achieved or likely to be achieved. Overall, 67% of outcomes were achieved or were likely to be achieved. Some of the outcomes, such as improved accountability and transparency through debt reconciliation, integrated budgeting, and audit responsiveness reforms, were achieved. However, progress on the rule of law, participation, and anti-corruption was limited by structural factors and capacity gaps. The evaluation also found that strong government ownership and adaptive management enabled delivery; while delays, funding constraints, and weak early-stage M&E systems hindered the achievement of outcomes. This resulted in an underperformance in addressing governance and institutional weaknesses.

Achievement of outputs

This sub-section examined the extent to which the project cluster achieved or was likely to achieve its

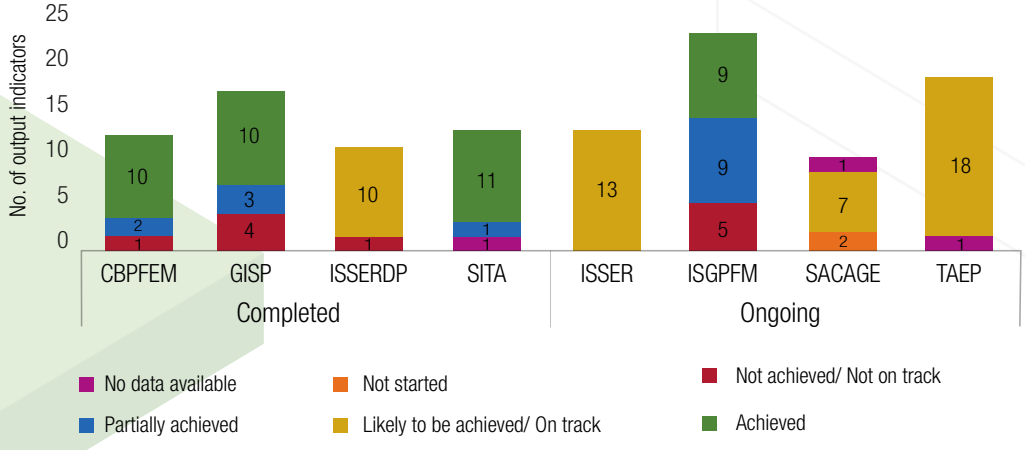
expected outputs in Zimbabwe, by comparing actual achievements to the intended targets as highlighted in the projects' results frameworks. Findings from PRAs, IPRs, PCRs and interviews indicated that the project cluster performed satisfactorily in terms of output achievement (Technical Annex 2). Specifically, 76% of outputs were achieved or are likely to be achieved. The remaining outputs were either not achieved (10%) or were not measured (14%) due to the absence of data.

Overall, projects have delivered or are on track to deliver 70–100% of their planned outputs (Figure 3). Completed projects, including the CBPFEM, GISP, and SITA, met or exceeded most of their outputs. The CBPFEM fully achieved 10 of its 13 outputs, partially achieved two, and has one outstanding. The GISP achieved 10 of its 17 outputs, including internal audit training and mining sector studies (AfDB, 2018). SITA largely met its outputs, with minor shortfalls in gender law reviews and a human resource policy. The ISSERDP reported 91% completion, including governance manuals and IRBMS training, however, the rollout of the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) and the State Enterprises and Parastatals (SEP) turnaround strategies lagged due to capacity constraints and high advisory costs.

Ongoing projects demonstrated a strong delivery trajectory. ISSER was on track to achieve all 13 outputs, with early completion of SEP performance reviews, gender and climate guidelines, and financial reporting training. ISPGPFM had completed over half of its milestones, indicating steady progress, and corrective actions taken to effectively address the upgrade and staffing delays in the Debt Management and Financial Analysis System (DMFAS). TAEP was also deemed to be on track, having achieved advanced Tax and Revenue Management System (TaRMS) implementation (Releases 1–3) and having completed 65.8% of the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) staff training target with 99% of those trained being women. Under Component 2, 120 MPs were trained, a Parliamentary Technical Advisor unit became operational, and a strategic plan, as well as nine audit recommendation reports were produced. Only specialized audits were delayed due to challenges in engaging external consultants.

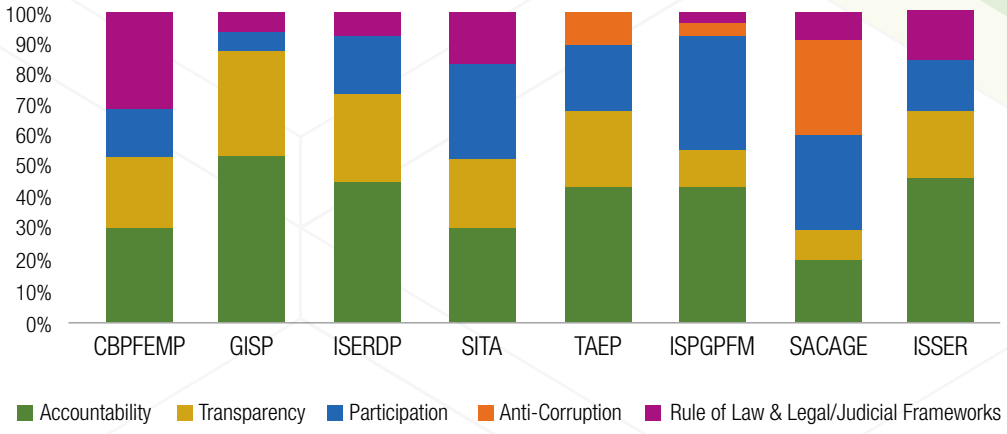
Figure 4 illustrates the thematic focus of each ISP within the cluster. CBPFEM emphasized the rule of law, accountability and transparency measures, while GISP focused primarily on oversight and public reporting. SITA adopted a balanced governance approach, integrating the rule of law, participation, accountability, and transparency. TAEP prioritized accountability and included a dedicated anti-

Figure 3: Performance of output indicators by project



Source: IDEV

Figure 4: Distribution of output indicators by thematic areas across the 8 ISPs



Source: IDEV

corruption component. SACAGE emphasized anti-corruption, supported by engagement activities, and ISSER concluded the portfolio with a focus on accountability and transparency.

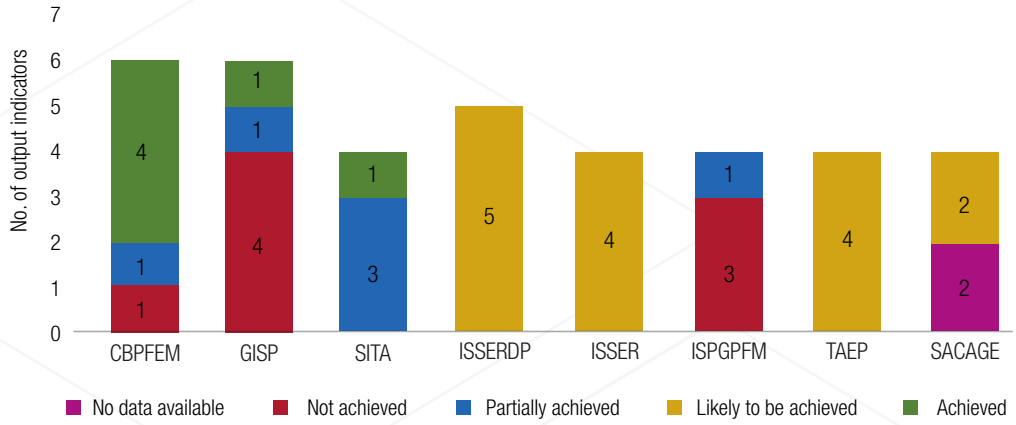
Achievement of outcomes

This subsection presents the assessment of the extent to which the project cluster achieved or was likely to achieve its expected outcomes in Zimbabwe. Overall, the cluster was rated partly unsatisfactory for outcome achievement after comparing actual outcomes with those expected in the projects' results frameworks (see Technical Annex 3). Progress was uneven: outcomes related to accountability and transparency showed good advancement, while those linked to the rule of law, participation, and anti-corruption remained limited. Specifically, 67% of outcomes were fully achieved or were likely to be achieved. By contrast, 33% of outcomes were not achieved. Despite the Bank's support through successive governance ISPs, entrenched governance weaknesses—corruption risks, limited judicial independence, and weak enforcement—continue to impede outcomes.

The evaluation found notable progress in strengthening accountability and transparency in the project cluster but results across other governance dimensions were uneven (see Figure 5). PRAs indicated that the CBPFEM, ISERDP, and TAEP achieved their expected outcomes to a satisfactory level, particularly in debt reconciliation, integrated planning and budgeting, tax compliance, and audit responsiveness. The CBPFEM, for example, reconciled nearly all external debt, integrated Official Developmental Assistance (ODA) transactions into the PFM system, and closed Public-Private Partnership (PPP) transactions. However, compliance with accrual-based International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) and Government Finance Statistics (GFS), along with the supporting roadmaps and guidance manuals, was initially expected by 2023 but was delayed until 2025. Border-post efficiency improved at Beitbridge but lagged at Chirundu while stakeholders noted inconsistencies in data that limited verification of all targets. Other shortcomings identified by the evaluation included fewer PPPs launched than planned and post-project funding gaps that partially eroded improvements in statistical output timelines.

ISPGPFM and SACAGE outcomes had not yet been achieved though they were broadly on track. However, implementation had been constrained by limited scope, staff turnover, and financial constraints. TAEP showed strong early progress in enhancing revenue mobilization and strengthening parliamentary

Figure 5: Performance of outcome indicators by Project



Source: IDEV

oversight. However, staff attrition continued to pose challenges across projects.

With respect to ISERDP, all five outcomes were likely to be achieved by project completion. These included institutionalizing integrated planning and budgeting under IRBM and improving corporate governance compliance among SEPs. Limited data, however, prevented a full assessment of reductions in SEP losses. The ISSER built on these gains, with all four outcome indicators likely to be achieved. These included the government's adoption of centralized SEP management via the Mutapa Investment Fund, indicating strong prospects for enhanced financial oversight. Stakeholders confirmed tangible improvements in governance and operations, such as better financial management in toll agencies, which mitigated the impact of currency devaluation, and improved compliance with corporate governance standards among SOEs.

In contrast, GISP and SITA achieved only one partial outcome each. The GISP made progress on banking-sector liquidity but underperformed in procurement reforms, audit quality, and mining-revenue disclosure. Interview feedback highlighted gains in training delivery, data modernization, and policy research uptake, but also identified constraints such as weak outcome tracking, equipment delays, and staff attrition. SITA expanded audit coverage and strengthened parliamentary capacities, yet outcome indicators on legislative scrutiny of the budget and audit follow-up were not fully met. Stakeholders noted positive institutional shifts, including capacitation of the Parliament Budget Office, and the inclusiveness of policymaking by ensuring gender perspectives are formally integrated into governance.

Beyond the project cluster, the Governance Sector Review prepared for this evaluation also showed modest progress in accountability and transparency between 2012 and 2024. The AfDB's Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) score for transparency, accountability, and corruption improved from 1.5 in 2014 to 2.5 in 2023, while Zimbabwe's ranking on the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) rose from 38th to 31st, reflecting gains from constitutional and procurement reforms. However, citizen perceptions of accountability remained stagnant, revealing a gap between legislative progress and enforcement. Parliamentary budget oversight showed limited improvement, though audit oversight strengthened from "weak" to "adequate" by 2021. Internal financial reporting remained cash-based, with no transition yet to accrual or IPSAS standards.

Transparency indicators showed notable but uneven progress. Zimbabwe's IIAG ranking for Disclosure of Public Records improved from 31st to 15th, while accessibility of public records declined from 15th to 21st. The Open Budget Survey upgraded Zimbabwe from "insufficient" to "sufficient" for budget transparency between 2012 and 2019, a rating which was maintained through 2023 despite inconsistencies in report quality. Key reforms—such as the 2017 Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act, the 2021 Public Finance Management Amendment Bill, and the 2023 Financial Reporting Manual—strengthened the regulatory basis for disclosure and fiscal reporting. These reforms signaled a shift toward more open governance, though implementation gaps persist.

Participation indicators showed modest but constrained gains. The World Bank's Voice and Accountability score increased from 7.5% in 2012 to 19.1% in 2023, while IIAG data reflected improvements in freedom of association and assembly, alongside better public perception of participation. However, progress remains fragile, as restrictive measures—such as the Private Voluntary Organizations (PVO) Amendment Bill—and continued reports of harassment, censorship, and surveillance have curtailed civic space and undermined advances in association rights and electoral openness.

Progress in addressing corruption and strengthening the rules of law has been limited. Corruption control indicators show slight improvement, supported by new legislation, international commitments, and the establishment of the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC) and anti-corruption courts. However, structural impediments to governance, underfunding, and delayed reforms—such as the Whistle-blower Protection Bill—constrained effectiveness. According to the World Bank, the country's rule-of-law percentile rank improved five-fold from 1.9% to 10.4% globally, though Zimbabwe remained in the lowest quintile. Foundational measures, including the 2013 constitution and the 2017 Land Commission Act, enhanced legal safeguards, but subsequent amendments and persistent judicial backlogs eroded this progress.

On this basis, the evaluation found the project cluster's contribution to addressing the identified governance and institutional weaknesses to be partly unsatisfactory.

Enabling and hindering factors

This sub-section examined the key factors that influenced the achievement of results of the project cluster at both output and outcome levels. Findings from PRAs, IPRs, PCRs and interviews indicated that strong government ownership, well-structured PMUs, and adaptive management facilitated output delivery. However, operational bottlenecks, procurement delays, and limited technical capacity constrained some outputs. At the outcome level, political and institutional ownership, adaptive PMUs, durable systems and legislative reforms enabled progress across the cluster. However, procurement and funding bottlenecks, limited institutional capacity, and weak early monitoring (partially addressed in later governance ISPs) moderated overall outcome achievement.

Output-level factors

The evaluation identified several enabling factors which underpinned performance across the portfolio.

- **Strong government ownership,** illustrated by the tripartite oversight structures in ISSER and active MoFED engagement in TAEP provided essential political momentum.
- **Experienced PMUs,** familiar with the Bank's procedures, facilitated smoother procurement and financial management, notably under ISSER and ISPGPFM (based on IPRs and stakeholder interviews).
- **Adaptive management** with ISSERDP's pivot from feasibility studies to direct IFMIS development and CBPFEM's consolidation of PPP legislation allowed for timely reprioritization and sustained

output delivery despite shifting operational contexts.

Conversely, operational bottlenecks constrained timely implementation across ISPs. These include:

- **Procurement and funding bottlenecks at country level**—such as slow preparation of terms of reference and lengthy bid evaluations— were found to be the cause of delayed consultancies, training, and system rollouts, particularly under the CBPFEM and GISP.

- **Capacity gaps within implementing agencies affected delivery.** Limited Information Communication Technology (ICT) expertise in the Corporate Governance Unit (CGU) under ISSERDP and staffing shortfalls in ISPGPFM's PMU delayed the full operationalization of key systems.

- **Broader economic and institutional conditions** were found to have exerted a mixed influence on implementation. Fiscal constraints and staff attrition undermined TAEP's ability to sustain tax-compliance training, while entrenched procurement inefficiencies, ZIMRA and ZACC reflected systemic challenges beyond project control. Nonetheless, targeted corrective actions—including accelerated hardware procurement, stakeholder engagement, and expedited consultant recruitment—enabled projects to mitigate risks and safeguard overall output delivery.

Outcome-level factors

Synthesizing evidence from PRAs, IPRs, PCRs, and stakeholder interviews, two key enablers of outcome-level performance emerged:

- **Strong political and institutional ownership**—from MoFED and Cabinet to SEP oversight boards—provided sustained momentum for complex reforms such as IRBM adoption and updates to the PPP legislation.

- **Systems and legislative reforms established durable foundations for change.** Initiatives such as e-procurement and TaRMS, underpinned by strengthened legal frameworks, anchored improvements in transparency, revenue mobilization, and audit responsiveness.

On the contrary, two recurring barriers constrained outcome achievement:

- **Capacity limitations and high staff turnover,** particularly within ICT units and SEP finance teams, impeded the institutionalization of governance and financial management reforms.

- **Weak monitoring systems in earlier ISPs,** characterized by limited baselines and inconsistent results tracking, undermined adaptive management and verification of progress. Addressing these constraints through realistic implementation timelines, strengthened procurement planning. Continuous capacity-building and more rigorous M&E frameworks would be critical to translating output gains into sustained governance outcomes.

Impact

The evaluation assessed the extent to which the project cluster had generated, or was likely to generate, significant higher-level effects—whether positive or negative, intended or unintended—beyond their immediate outputs and outcomes. It also examined the extent to which they led to holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms.

The evaluation found that the project cluster contributed moderately to strengthened governance systems. It improved accountability, transparency, and oversight through timely audits, better budget disclosure, enhanced expenditure control, procurement oversight, and strengthened public financial management. Capacity-building and digitalization in core institutions enhanced timelier reporting and evidence-based decision-making. However,

Table 2: Intended project impact (Based on PARs and ToC)

ISP	Impact
CBPFEM	Increase in economic growth rate due to improved PFM and economic management performance, contributing to macroeconomic stability and poverty reduction
GISP	Contribute to economic recovery and inclusive service delivery through strengthened public sector governance
ISSERDP	Improve public sector performance and contribution to inclusive growth
SITA	Sustain economic recovery through improved public sector governance and gender equality
TAEP	Increase tax revenue and improve public accountability
ISPGPFM	Support the country to attain Middle Income Status by 2030 and progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals
SACAGE	Restore debt sustainability and improve macroeconomic stability
ISSER	Strengthen governance of public entities, reducing fiscal risks and facilitating recovery

Source: IDEV

the evaluation was limited to a qualitative assessment, as the absence of impact-level data did not allow for a credible rating of this criterion.

Intended higher-level effects

At the design stage, the eight ISPs outlined ambitious impact pathways targeting macroeconomic stability, inclusive growth, fiscal sustainability, revenue mobilization, strengthened public-sector governance, and institutional resilience. The portfolio aimed to translate technical reforms in PFM, oversight, and revenue management into broader outcomes, including improved service delivery and restored debt sustainability. PRA analysis showed that while most projects achieved measurable improvements, macroeconomic impact was partial, with an average score of 2.7/4. This reflects the ISPs' contribution to foundational reforms yet highlights limits imposed by structural and contextual constraints. Table 2 summarizes project-level impacts.

The evaluation revealed that investments in capacity building and digitalization contributed to improved institutional performance and macroeconomic results, though progress was limited by structural and governance challenges. Capacity building and digitalization in core institutions enhanced timelier reporting and evidence-based decision making. CBPFEM reinforced PFM and macroeconomic stability across the portfolio, while GISP and ISSERDP improved governance and inclusive growth. SITA and TAEP enhanced accountability and revenue mobilization, and SACAGE and ISSER contributed to debt sustainability, macroeconomic stabilization, and institutionalized structured dialogue with international creditors, representing a potentially transformative step in state–creditor relations. On the other hand, gains were constrained by structural challenges including droughts, weak SOEs, arrears, inflation, and low investor confidence. Anti-corruption, rule-of-law, civic space, electoral reforms, and gender inclusion also remained limited.

Unintended higher-level effects

The evaluation noted that the governance ISPs also generated notable unintended effects, both positive and negative. Positive spillovers included stronger oversight of SOEs (ISSER), enhanced inter-ministerial coordination, improved data quality, and strengthened institutional capacity. Negative unintended effects included the high cost of SOE performance reviews, reliance on external procedures which limit local ownership, and persistent civil society constraints.

Across interventions, a number of positive unintended outcomes that extended beyond the initial project objectives emerged. Under TAEP, digitalization strengthened tax data quality and provided more reliable inputs for broader economic

planning. Skills transfer deepened institutional human capital and helped spur wider governance reforms, as evidenced by more assertive parliamentary oversight and greater awareness of gender disparities in tax administration and representation. The ISERDP similarly generated unanticipated gains, most notably catalyzing political commitment to performance management through the introduction of performance contracts for ministers and senior political leaders. It also led to the organic emergence of tripartite oversight mechanisms that offered critical high-level backing for governance reforms. Development partners also observed incremental improvements in economic inclusion and institutional strengthening such as greater participation of youth and women, progress in land reform, and compensation for farmers. However, slow progress on electoral and civil society reforms, restrictive legislation, and weak outcome metrics continued to constrain the visibility and long-term sustainability of these downstream effects.

Some negative unintended outcomes were also observed. Higher-than-expected costs for conducting SEPs performance reviews were identified as having a moderate negative impact. There was continued reliance on Bank and ACBF procedures which may have undermined country-system ownership, while the GISP's dependence on AfDB and ACBF procurement and M&E frameworks had, in some cases, limited the development of parallel local processes, sustaining pockets of external dependency. Under ISPGPFM, citizen oversight remained weak: the IIAG recorded a "Civil Society Participation" score of only 20.1 out of 100, and the proposed Private Voluntary Organizations (PVO) Bill threatened to criminalize or restrict NGOs, further constraining civil society engagement.

Structural and contextual challenges

The evaluation found that while the project cluster in Zimbabwe had enabled notable institutional reforms in PFM, oversight, and capacity development, its long-term overall impact remained limited by broader systemic macroeconomic, political, and institutional constraints. Persistent macroeconomic instability, limited fiscal space, and weak resilience to shocks, have tempered the translation of technical gains into broader governance improvements. Government ownership has been uneven, often dependent on individual champions rather than institutionalized commitment, while entrenched capacity gaps, high staff turnover, weak incentives, and fragmented mandates have also limited the effectiveness of reforms. Coordination across government entities and development partners has been inconsistent, reducing coherence and opportunities for collective impact.

Document reviews indicated that while Zimbabwe's economy showed modest stabilization, at the time of the evaluation, it remained constrained by fundamental low-growth equilibrium. Dollarization between 2012–2017 stabilized inflation and supported modest growth, but the 2019 reintroduction of the Zimbabwean dollar triggered currency disruption and deep GDP contractions in 2019–2020, with inflation peaking at 237%. Per capita incomes remained below 2018 levels, poverty reached nearly 40% by 2019, and inequality worsened (Gini coefficient rose from 43.2 to 50.3). Dependence on agriculture, climate shocks, and repeated droughts—exacerbated by the 2023–2024 El Niño crisis affecting 2.7 million people—further constrained inclusive growth, highlighting that short-term stabilization had not resolved structural vulnerabilities.

The evaluation also indicated that Zimbabwe's strained fiscal position, high debt burdens, and unresolved SOE inefficiencies continued to limit fiscal space, weaken service delivery, and ultimately undermine the durability of governance reforms. Document review revealed that although tax revenues rebounded to near pre-crisis levels by 2023 following the sharp decline in 2019, public debt surged to 103% of GDP in 2020 and only fell to about 60% by 2024. Zimbabwe's limited access to concessional financing—compounded by external arrears accounting for roughly two-thirds

of its obligations—continued to restrict fiscal space for priority spending. SOEs remained a major source of fiscal risk due to opaque reporting, dependence on non-concessional borrowing, and persistent operational inefficiencies. Weak delivery in the energy, water, and transportation sectors further elevated production costs, discouraged investment, and constrained growth (AFRODAD, 2023). Without deep, structural SOE reforms, fiscal pressures are likely to intensify, undermining the sustainability of governance outcomes.

The evaluation noted that Zimbabwe's development path since 2012 has been defined by brief political openings followed by stalled reforms. As a result, investor confidence remained weak, financing constraints persisted, and growth prospects were subdued. The 2017 leadership transition temporarily aligned political renewal with macroeconomic stabilization, which reduced perceived sovereign risk, attracted new investment commitments, and reopened engagement with bilateral and multilateral creditors—raising hopes for eventual debt regularization (Signé & Munyati, 2018). However, these gains proved short-lived. Governance reforms fell short of market expectations, and U.S. restrictions under the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act remained in place. Consequently, investor confidence stayed subdued, evidenced by a thinning project pipeline, elevated external borrowing costs, and persistent fiscal constraints. These conditions were further dampened by uncertainty surrounding the August 2023 general elections.

The evaluation further found that weak institutional foundations—characterized by capacity gaps, fragmented mandates, and uneven government ownership—have continued to undermine the implementation of coherent and sustained reforms. PRAs and interviews indicated that although some progress had been made in administrative capacity, fiscal discipline, and anti-corruption frameworks, these gains remained fragile and had unevenly translated into broader economic resilience. Persistent capacity constraints in procurement, auditing, and public financial management limited the effectiveness of reforms, and these weaknesses were further exacerbated by high staff turnover, weak incentives, and overlapping institutional responsibilities. As a result, such challenges could not be resolved through isolated interventions. Moreover, government ownership has been inconsistent, often hinging on individual reform champions rather than institutionalized commitment. Finally, limited coordination across government and development partners further weakened reform coherence and reduced opportunities for collective impact.

DPs recognized progress but stressed that lasting impact depended on translating technical gains into measurable improvements in accountability, transparency, and rules-based governance. Interviews with DPs revealed that restoring investor confidence and achieving broad-based growth would require governance reforms that enhanced budget credibility, improved state enterprise management and strengthened contract enforcement. The above findings also underscored the need for reforms that are fiscally sustainable, politically anchored, systematically supported through capacity development, and better integrated across sectors and partners. To enhance its governance contribution, the Bank would need a more systemic approach, emphasizing sustained capacity development and closer collaboration with national stakeholders and development partners to foster integrated and resilient reforms.

Overall, the evaluation concluded that while the ISPs delivered meaningful institutional reforms and some potentially transformative outcomes, structural and political economy constraints limited the depth, inclusiveness, and sustainability of governance gains. As a result, the reforms remained incremental and fragile, lacking sustained and coordinated engagement. However, the evaluation did not manage to collect sufficient tangible evidence to provide a credible rating for this criterion.

Sustainability

The evaluation assessed the extent to which the net benefits of the project cluster were likely to continue over time. It examined the financial, economic, social, environmental, and institutional capacities required to sustain these benefits, as well as the mechanisms in place to support long-term resilience and continuity.

The evaluation found that while the project cluster had strong technical foundations and improved institutional capacity, it also had persistent financial and operational risks. While select projects secured co-financing or maintenance budgets, most remained vulnerable to fiscal constraints and reliant on ad hoc support. Long-term continuity would depend on structured financing and deeper institutionalization. Environmental risks were found to be minimal, and social sustainability was promoted through gender-focused activities and CSO engagement.

Financial and economic sustainability

This sub-section assessed the extent to which funding mechanisms and modalities were in place to sustain benefits after the completion of the cluster projects in Zimbabwe, with a focus on financial sustainability. The evaluation rated the cluster as partly unsatisfactory in this dimension, as evidence from PRAs, IPRs, PCRs, and stakeholder interviews indicated uneven performance and widespread weaknesses in post-project financing arrangements.

The evaluation found that financial sustainability across the project cluster was uneven and remained the cluster's weakest dimension. A small number of projects established more sustainable financing models. For example, CBPFEM generated revenue gains through improvements in debt management, public financial management, and data systems, while ISSERDP enabled the Corporate Governance Unit to levy fees under the PECG Regulations, securing ongoing corporate governance functions. TAEP embedded digital systems within institutional maintenance plans and budget allocations, SITA leveraged the Government of Zimbabwe's co-financing and CSO partnerships, and SACAGE initiated co-financing arrangements, reflecting emerging national ownership.

However, most ISPs lacked formal post-project funding structures. For instance, GISP reverted to standard line-item budgeting without dedicated financing vehicles, ISSER's SEP advisory services remained donor-dependent, and ISPGPFM relied on in-kind contributions without explicit budget guarantees. Stakeholders noted that such ad hoc arrangements were particularly vulnerable to Zimbabwe's macroeconomic volatility and exchange-rate pressures. As a result, approximately half of the ISPs were rated partly unsatisfactory for financial sustainability, underscoring the need for structured, revenue-generating mechanisms to ensure continuity beyond AfDB support.

Technical soundness

The evaluation assessed the extent to which the achievements of the cluster projects were based on sound technology, efficient use of inputs, and productivity gains. This includes operation and maintenance (O&M) capacities, availability of recurrent funding, spare parts, and workshop facilities. Evidence from PRAs, IPRs, PCRs, and stakeholder interviews indicated that technical sustainability was generally satisfactory. Most ISPs had built moderate technical capacity through training and infrastructure support. However, risks to independent continuation and long-term operational effectiveness persisted due to high staff turnover, ICT skills gaps, limited maintenance funding, and incomplete system integration.

The technologies and practices introduced under the governance ISPs were largely context-appropriate and aligned with Zimbabwe's administrative and governance needs. Projects including CBPFEM, GISP, ISSERDP, ISPGPFM, SACAGE, SITA, and TAEP deployed systems, manuals, and frameworks suited to local conditions, reflecting pragmatic design and stakeholder engagement.

Nevertheless, sustainability risks remained, driven by aging equipment, reliance on external consultants, limited ICT capacity, and insufficient follow-up funding. Stakeholder feedback emphasized that continued functionality and productivity gains would depend on regular maintenance, hardware upgrades, capacity reinforcement, and stronger institutionalization.

Technical training and infrastructure investments enabled many local teams to operate systems independently, though capacity gaps, high staff turnover, and equipment maintenance still constituted challenges. CBPFEM, for example, delivered extensive classroom and on-the-job training, study tours, and ICT infrastructure, thereby strengthening MoFED, statistical agencies, and ZIMRA capacities in PFM, M&E, statistics, and border IT systems. GISP and ISSERDP enhanced audit, core-banking, IRBM implementation, and SEPs governance, while ISPGPFM, SACAGE, and SITA supported community co-design, anti-corruption frameworks, and parliamentary capacity. TAEP phased TaRMS implementation, ICT staff training, and source code transfer to facilitate in-house maintenance.

Despite these gains, long-term technical sustainability remained at risk due to thin staffing, incomplete capacity transfer during consultancy phases, weak integration with underdeveloped government systems, and persistent attrition. Interview feedback confirmed that while skills transfer was substantial, productivity gains were vulnerable without dedicated maintenance budgets, refresher training, and structured knowledge-sharing mechanisms. Overall, the sustainability of technical and capacity-building achievements was constrained by systemic and institutional challenges.

Ownership, participation, sustainability of partnerships

This sub-section presents the assessment of the extent to which the cluster projects have effectively involved relevant stakeholders, promoted a sense of ownership among the beneficiaries (both men and women) and put in place effective partnerships with relevant stakeholders such as local authorities, civil society organizations, private sector, and development partners, as required for the continued maintenance of the results. The evaluation concluded that ownership, participation, and partnership sustainability were generally satisfactory. The project cluster fostered inclusive design and structured partnerships, promoting ownership and participation. Yet, persistent challenges such as high staff turnover, uneven institutional uptake, and legal or interagency constraints were likely to limit the long-term sustainability of these gains.

The evaluation found that ownership, participation, and partnership sustainability were generally positive across the project cluster, though results were uneven across projects. For example, CBPFEM demonstrated strong participatory, country-driven design aligned with national plans and a consultatively developed Debt and Development Strategy. Stakeholders were engaged through seminars and workshops, and the project exceeded its female-staff training target, achieving 38% against a 30% quota. However, high staff turnover occasionally disrupted the continuity of the "train-the-trainer" approach, limiting long-term knowledge retention.

GISP secured broad buy-in through consultations with ministries, oversight bodies, training institutes, research units, and development partners, supporting the adoption of audit manuals and core-banking systems. Nevertheless, procurement and mining-sector entities struggled to institutionalize their frameworks, revealing uneven stakeholder commitment. Under ISSERDP and ISSER, government demonstrated strong ownership at the senior levels, as evidenced by the introduction of corporate governance manuals, a functional IFMIS, and the establishment of the Mutapa Investment Fund to manage state-owned enterprises. Community participation, however, remained largely limited to stakeholder consultations rather than grassroots engagement.

ISPGPFM promoted civil society participation through over twenty MOUs and public hearings on budget allocations, climate resilience, and social safety nets, creating spaces for co-designed oversight. Nevertheless, muted progress on IIAG civil society indicators and potential legal constraints suggested that sustained engagement may require stronger political safeguards. SACAGE actively involved local institutions in developing the Anti-Corruption Act, to foster shared responsibility. Additionally, training approximately 30 officers in legal drafting strengthened local ownership.

SITA leveraged partnerships with seven CSOs organized into thematic clusters focused on gender, legal alignment, research, transparency, and leadership, to enhance parliamentary capacity. However, reliance on external consultants constrained the sustainability of local capacity. TAEP showed strong internal ownership at ZIMRA, where staff were actively involved in system specification and GoZ co-funding for cost overruns. Nonetheless, broader interagency integration faced resistance, indicating incomplete cross-governmental ownership.

Environmental and social sustainability

This subsection examined the project cluster's resilience to exogenous factors and environmental effects. The evaluation found that the project cluster achieved satisfactory environmental and social sustainability. Given the low environmental and social risks associated with these interventions, minimal mitigation measures were required, and no negative impacts were anticipated. Social considerations were embedded through gender-targeted activities and the inclusion of civil society organizations. However, there remained an opportunity to further sensitize beneficiaries to the importance of these mitigation measures, to ensure lasting awareness and compliance.

Evidence from PRAs, IPRs, and PCRs indicated that most ISPs were classified as Category 3 at the design stage, reflecting minimal environmental risk due to their focus on capacity building rather than physical works. For instance, CBPFEM and GISP identified no environmental liabilities, and social risks were managed via gender quotas and stakeholder engagement. ISSERDP and ISSER's design did not include physical interventions, so mitigation beyond standard Bank compliance was unnecessary, although ISSER's climate-action reporting guidelines could indirectly reduce future environmental harm. ISPGPFM proposed conceptual measures like green bonds and climate-resilient budgeting. However, these measures had yet to be translated into concrete mitigation. Furthermore, social safeguards depended on validating CSO frameworks rather than formal risk-management plans.

SACAGE relied on an Environmental and Social Compliance Note and promoted debt-for-nature initiatives, but no site-level interventions required additional safeguards. SITA's Category 3 classification meant that routine training and ICT procurement sufficed for mitigation. TAEP incorporated environmental considerations via digital processes and limited social risks through formalized CSO MOUs though it did not adopt explicit measures to mitigate potential negative effects on vulnerable user groups. SSI feedback provided little additional insight, suggesting that mitigation measures were not a primary concern from beneficiaries' perspective.

Overall, the evaluation rated the sustainability of governance ISPs as satisfactory.

Efficiency

This criterion assessed the extent to which the project cluster delivered, or was likely to deliver, results in a timely and cost-effective manner. The assessment focused on three key dimensions: (i) timeliness of implementation and disbursement, (ii) economic efficiency in the use of resources, and (iii) operational efficiency in project management and execution.

The evaluation found that while most projects stayed within budget and benefited from strong Bank supervision and adaptive measures, delivery was slowed by systemic delays—except

for SITA—caused by procurement challenges at country level, technical complexity, and external shocks like COVID-19 and inflation. Subsequent projects improved through better procurement and resource management, but initial interventions faced gaps in capacity and monitoring. Efforts to strengthen M&E systems helped track progress, yet weaknesses in capacity and data quality limited the ability to measure results and inform decisions.

Timeliness

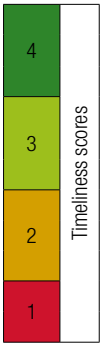
This sub-section examined the extent to which the results were achieved within the intended timeframe. The timeliness of implementation was based on a comparison between the planned and the actual period of implementation from the date of signature. Overall, the evaluation found implementation timeliness to be partly unsatisfactory for the cluster of projects due to significant delivery delays. Only one project was completed within its original timeframe, while the remaining seven experienced extensions ranging from one to six years (compared to an expected average project duration of five years). Common causes of these delays included procurement bottlenecks, contractor underperformance, and external shocks such as economic volatility and the COVID-19 pandemic. These factors, compounded by administrative complexities and fragmented institutional coordination, led to systematic delays across the portfolio.

The evaluation determined that timeliness was a significant implementation challenge across the project cluster. Timeliness ratings across the portfolio ranged from Unsatisfactory (1) to Highly Satisfactory (4), reflecting mixed performance. Ongoing projects such as ISSER, TAEP, and SACAGE were assigned preliminary ratings pending further evidence. However, early disbursement patterns and supervision findings already showed persistent systemic constraints similar to those observed in earlier phases.

Procurement inefficiencies at country level were found to be the most recurrent source of delays, often resulting from fragmented contracting structures, limited market analysis, lengthy re-tendering and approval processes, and the preparation of TORs (see Box 1). Projects such as CBPFEM and GISP experienced repeated re-procurement cycles after initial bids failed to meet specifications or budgets, while ISPGPFM faced the challenge of complex coordination across multiple beneficiary institutions. These delays were further compounded by contractor nonperformance and underestimation of technical complexity, as seen in TAEP's data migration and inter-agency integration challenges. Only one project, SITA, was completed on

Table 3: PRA score for timeliness

Project	Unsatisfactory	Partly unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Highly satisfactory
CBPFEM	1			
GISP		2		
SITA				4
ISSERDP		2		
TAEP*		2		
ISGPFM*			3	
SACAGE*			3	
ISSER*		2		
	Timeliness rating			



Source: IDEV

Notes: Projects marked with an asterisk (*) are still underway, thus scores on timeliness are preliminary.

Box 1: Primary Causes of Delays

Delays stemmed primarily from contextual and procedural constraints.

- **Procurement Bottlenecks (Bank and Country)**

Slow tendering and limited market depth resulted in extended delivery schedules.

- Complex and fragmented procurement structures led to re-bidding and slow contract awards (e.g., CBPFEM, and GISP).
- Weak local supplier capacity and rigid compliance procedures under the Bank's rules delayed execution.

- **Contractor Non-Performance (Third-party and Country)**

Consultant underperformance triggered costly re-procurement.

- ISSERDP faced a two-year delay following the termination of a key consultancy due to inadequate technical capacity.

- **Coordination and Institutional Capacity Gaps (Country)**

Weak inter-agency coordination and limited technical expertise constrained execution.

- Multi-entity projects (ISPGPFM and TAEP) experienced overlaps and slow decision-making.
- Capacity shortages in ICT and procurement units reduced implementation efficiency.

- **Technical Complexity (Country)**

Underestimating system integration and data migration needs prolonged timelines.

- TAEP's TaRMS rollout exceeded the expected timeframes due to unanticipated integration and compliance hurdles.

- **External Shocks and Political Transitions (Contextual)**

Exogenous factors further disrupted delivery.

- COVID-19 restrictions, hyperinflation, and election cycles (2018 and 2023) delayed procurement and necessitated re-engagement with new officials.

- **Adaptive Management and Positive Extensions (Bank and Country)**

Some delays reflected strategic project adaptation.

- CBPFEM's six-year extension enabled cost savings to finance expanded training and systems support, reflecting proactive management rather than inefficiency.

schedule, while seven of eight projects experienced delays ranging from one to six years. In fact, SITA's timely completion was due to its streamlined implementation through a single executing agency and a realistic scope. This underscored the value of strong preparatory work and clear technical specifications.

External factors were also found to have a material impact on timeliness. The COVID-19 pandemic, hyperinflation, and political transitions in 2018 and 2023, all disrupted procurement cycles, delayed training activities, and required renewed engagement with newly appointed officials. However, not all extensions reflected inefficiency: in some cases, such as CBPFEM, the use of savings to expand the scope demonstrated adaptive management and responsiveness to evolving institutional needs. Overall, while systemic delivery challenges constrained timeliness, selected cases illustrated that flexibility and strong design realism could partially offset contextual constraints.

Operational efficiency

This sub-section presents the extent to which human and financial resources were appropriately and fully utilized as planned during implementation. The evaluation rated the project cluster as satisfactory for operational efficiency. It found that the Bank

demonstrated strong organizational capacity in supervising and coordinating the project cluster, supported by a responsive Country Office. Implementation progress was deemed satisfactory, with seven of eight projects receiving a rating of satisfactory or highly satisfactory. The M&E framework functioned efficiently, with standardized reporting and PMU-led monitoring. However, there were still challenges in ensuring robust baseline data, continuity of dedicated M&E staff, and systematic reporting to sustain timely decision-making and accountability across the portfolio.

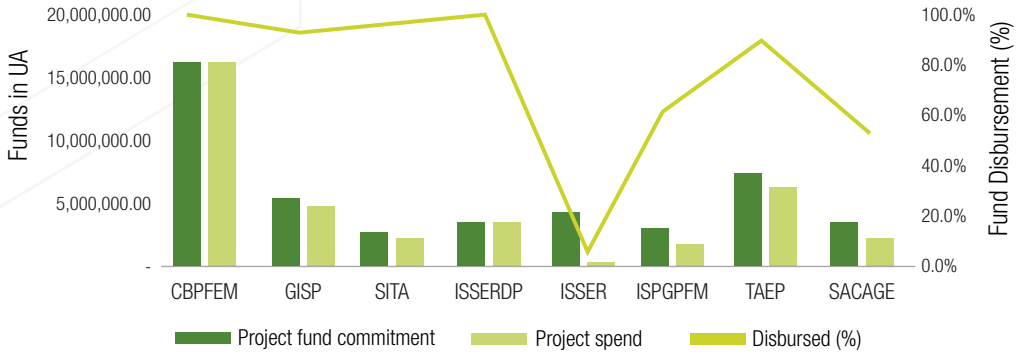
Implementation arrangements

Project documentation indicated that budgeting for the cluster of projects followed a consistent, two-tier process that secured government ownership while maintaining the Bank's oversight. Under this model, the government prepared project budgets for the Bank's review, as seen in ISSER which had a total budget of UA 4.4 million, including UA 0.4 million in-kind as GoZ contribution. Budgets were systematically categorized into services, goods, training, and operating costs, with contingency allocations providing flexibility. This government-led approach promoted relevance, fiscal discipline, and stronger institutional commitment. Across the portfolio, seven of eight ISPs were completed or expected to be completed within their approved budgets, with efficiency ratios between 0.92 and 1.05, demonstrating good financial control. Projects such as SITA and CBPFEM maintained cost discipline through realistic scoping, streamlined procurement, and adaptive reallocations. However, low disbursement rates in newer projects, notably ISSER, largely reflect early-stage implementation hurdles rather than inefficiency.

Despite overall fiscal discipline, the evaluation found that resource constraints often forced prioritization of activities within limited envelopes. Most of the projects relied on government co-financing. For example TAEP received an additional 10 percent for expanded system features, and cost-saving measures, such as SITA's use of in-house facilities and CSO partnerships, improved efficiency (see Box 2).

The evaluation also found that supervision and coordination mechanisms were robust, supported by the presence of the Bank's Country Office (COZW) in Harare and technical oversight from the regional office in Pretoria. Seven of the eight projects received satisfactory or higher supervision ratings, with only CBPFEM receiving partly unsatisfactory ratings due to early M&E gaps rather than systemic weaknesses.

Figure 6: Project commitment versus actual project spending



Source: IDEV, PRAs

Box 2: SITA's Approach to Resource Utilization

The analysis of the SITA project indicated that engaging CSOs and utilizing in-house capacity could achieve substantial cost savings while maintaining delivery quality. Document review indicated that the project's approach to cost management centered on leveraging existing institutional relationships and local expertise rather than relying primarily on external consultancy services. CSOs with established parliamentary experience were engaged to deliver capacity-building activities, which reduced consultant procurement processes by approximately 50% while maintaining implementation quality (AfDB, 2019). The evaluation found that this approach was more cost-effective than engaging private consultancy firms, as these organizations already possessed the necessary institutional knowledge and stakeholder relationships required for effective delivery.

Cost efficiency was further enhanced through the systematic use of in-house facilities instead of external venues and the development of internal training capacity. The project created "training of trainers" programs and developed 11 standardized training modules, reducing long-term dependency on external providers (AfDB, 2019). Local expertise was prioritized over international training, with in-country consultants training larger cohorts domestically rather than sending small groups abroad.

Continuous engagement through quarterly missions and responsive management ensured close follow-up and real-time problem solving. The use of shared PMUs and joint steering committees across projects further enhanced coordination and reduced administrative costs.

The evaluation also noted that strong partnerships and stakeholder engagement underpinned effective project ownership and political commitment. The Bank coordinated closely with the Government of Zimbabwe and development partners through platforms such as the Development Cooperation Policy Dialogue Forum and the Zimbabwe Multi-Donor Trust Fund (ZimFUND). SACAGE exemplified structured partnership management, with roles divided among technical, legal, and political stakeholders to support debt management and governance reforms. Similarly, the ISSER project built directly on lessons from ISSERDP, addressing earlier coordination gaps and improving implementation design. These examples demonstrated the Bank's capacity for institutional learning and adaptive management within a complex and evolving governance environment.

However, constraints in procurement management and technical expertise for implementing agencies remained a major challenge affecting six of the eight projects. Repeated re-tendering and consultant underperformance delayed the implementation of projects such as CBPFEM and GISP. Meanwhile, the technically complex TaRMS under TAEP faced integration delays and required phased implementation. By contrast, SITA and SACAGE avoided major procurement delays through efficient COZW support and the use of experienced fund managers.

Overall, while the Bank's organizational systems and supervision quality were strong, project efficiency was undermined by recurring procurement bottlenecks and limited specialized technical capacity at country level, suggesting the need for enhanced early-stage procurement planning and market readiness assessments in future governance operations.

Implementation progress

The evaluation found overall implementation progress[9] across the project cluster to be satisfactory, with seven of eight projects achieving satisfactory or highly satisfactory ratings[10]. The consistent use of a Project Management Unit (PMU) model, largely housed within MoFEDIP, provided institutional continuity, cross-project learning, and efficient resource utilization. Centralized arrangements enabled compliance with Bank fiduciary requirements, while expanded Project Steering Committees (PSCs), such as in the ISSER

project, broadened stakeholder ownership and strengthened reform initiatives. However, staffing gaps—particularly vacancies in program manager and M&E specialist roles—undermined efficiency, created an excessive workload, and reduced the quality of monitoring and reporting. The CBPFEM project highlighted the ongoing need for targeted institutional capacity building, particularly in procurement processes.

Adaptive management was found to be the response to external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic, political transitions in 2018 and 2023, and economic instability. COVID-19 forced a shift to virtual training and consultation, delaying capacity-building activities in projects like ISSERDP. Political transitions affected parliamentary components in projects such as TAEP and ISPGPFM, requiring re-orientation and engagement of newly elected officials before project activities could resume. Economic shocks, including hyperinflation and currency instability, further affected procurement costs and staffing in beneficiary institutions. Despite these challenges, the portfolio maintained overall progress, ensuring that core development objectives were largely preserved across the governance ISPs through adaptations and institutional learning.

Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)

The evaluation determined that M&E frameworks were prioritized and integrated into the cluster projects during the project appraisal process. Initial projects established M&E systems with standardized reporting and incremental improvements. Subsequent projects strengthened these frameworks by introducing baselines, targets, gender-disaggregated data, and adaptive management measures to address initial gaps, thus enabling progress despite shocks and capacity constraints. However, weaknesses in system design and data quality assurance limited the rigor of outcome and impact measurement. These shortcomings constrained analytical depth and compromised evidence for decision-making. Consequently, the evaluation noted that M&E systems across the project cluster functioned adequately, with an average rating of satisfactory.

Based on the above review of timeliness and operational efficiency, the evaluation rated the overall efficiency of the project cluster as partly unsatisfactory. ■



Stakeholders of the Emergency Food Production Project implemented by the Africa Fertilizer Financing Mechanism as part of the African Emergency Food Production Facility

Conclusions, Lessons And Recommendations

Conclusions

The evaluation concluded that over the evaluation period (2012-2024) the cluster of governance ISPs achieved only partial success in addressing identified institutional and governance weaknesses: it delivered incremental yet meaningful reforms but fell short of driving transformative change. The cluster addressed core institutional deficits through complementary interventions that strengthened public financial management systems, enhanced oversight mechanisms, and improved accountability frameworks. Technical achievements were substantial: CBPFEM reinforced fiscal discipline through integrated budgeting and debt management systems; TAEP enhanced revenue mobilization capacity; and SACAGE catalyzed structured creditor dialogue. Parliamentary oversight capacity improved through training and infrastructure development, while audit responsiveness mechanisms were strengthened.

However, the cluster's impact on deeper governance dimensions—the rule of law, civic participation, anti-corruption enforcement, and gender inclusion—remained limited. While projects created enabling infrastructure and procedural frameworks, structural constraints including fiscal fragility, weak institutional capacity, high staff turnover, and broader political economy dynamics prevented these systems from achieving full operational effectiveness. The gap between technical outputs (76% achieved or on track) and transformative governance outcomes reflects persistent implementation challenges rather than design flaws.

Regarding transparency, accountability, and public sector effectiveness, modest improvements are evident. Transparency was strengthened through improved financial reporting systems, public expenditure tracking, and parliamentary access to fiscal information. Accountability mechanisms were strengthened via improved audit functions, parliamentary oversight capacity, and SOE governance frameworks. Public sector effectiveness improved incrementally through modernized revenue administration, integrated budget processes, and enhanced debt management. Yet these gains remain fragile: citizen engagement mechanisms are nascent, anti-corruption frameworks lack enforcement capacity, and fiscal pressures limit operational sustainability. The improvements represent necessary but insufficient conditions for robust governance—technical infrastructure has been established, but institutional culture, political will, and sustained resourcing remain critical missing elements.

Through the Bank's interventions, Zimbabwe's readiness for arrears clearance has improved materially, but not completely. SACAGE's technical assistance established critical prerequisites including comprehensive debt reconciliation, structured creditor engagement platforms, and improved fiscal data management systems. The interventions demonstrated a credible commitment to reform and create institutional mechanisms for transparent debt management. Enhanced PFM systems through CBPFEM and improved revenue mobilization via TAEP strengthened the fiscal foundation necessary for sustainable debt service.

Nonetheless, notwithstanding the encouraging steps taken, Zimbabwe has not yet met the conditions for full arrears clearance. Continuing macroeconomic challenges, gradual implementation of agreed reforms, and the country's susceptibility to external shocks remain factors that influence creditor confidence and the overall pace of progress. While technical governance systems have improved, broader

conditionalities—including political governance, human rights commitments, and comprehensive economic reform—remain contested. The project cluster contributed to enabling conditions and demonstrated reform capacity, positioning Zimbabwe more favorably than before the interventions began. However, some governance, fiscal, and political economy challenges persist. Arrears clearance remains contingent on sustained reform momentum beyond technical system improvements—requiring political commitment, macroeconomic stabilization, and comprehensive governance transformation that extends well beyond the scope of these projects.

Lessons

The following are the key lessons from this evaluation:

Lesson 1: Gender and inclusivity dimensions require deliberate integration into governance projects, as they do not automatically emerge from institutional reforms without specific design attention.

The evaluation found that governance improvements do not automatically lead to inclusive benefits. They require the deliberate integration of mechanisms rather than assuming that technical institutional reforms would address social inclusion organically. The project cluster demonstrated that technical reforms focused on systems and procedures often failed to address gender disparities or inclusivity gaps without explicit design components. Projects achieved better inclusive outcomes when they incorporated specific gender analyses, targeted capacity building for women's participation, and monitoring indicators that tracked inclusive governance improvements alongside technical performance measures.

Lesson 2: Leveraging and strengthening existing institutions—rather than creating parallel units—enhances sustainability, preserves institutional knowledge, and improves implementation efficiency.

The evaluation found that leveraging existing institutions, such as the PMU at MoFED, enhances sustainability and preserves capacity. The centralized PMU enabled cumulative learning, efficient resource use, and consistent oversight across multiple projects. Sector-specific arrangements, such as those in SITA and TAEP, fostered ownership and technical capacity within implementing agencies though they required continued Bank oversight. Aligning implementation structures with project scope and institutional context improves efficiency, reduces start-up delays, and strengthens long-term institutional memory.

Lesson 3: Multi-institutional governance programs require clear mandates and adequate staffing for coordination.

The evaluation found that stakeholder availability affected coordination and implementation efficiency. Delayed PSC meetings, due to limited availability of senior officials, created bottlenecks in decision-making and procurement evaluation processes. While informal coordination helped prevent duplication in Zimbabwe, it fell short of fully leveraging synergies. By contrast, the project cluster demonstrated benefits when coordination mechanisms included regular joint planning sessions, harmonized reporting requirements, and shared learning platforms that enabled cross-institutional collaboration along the PFM value chain. These findings highlight the need for coordination planning and scheduling protocols to account for stakeholder availability.

Lesson 4: Long-term institutional sustainability requires a coordinated approach that combines technical capacity, financial continuity, and enabling policy conditions after external financing ends.

The evaluation revealed that capacity-building efforts contributed to lasting change when paired with financial sustainability and ongoing political backing. Across multiple ISPs, capacity-building efforts were delivered at scale, including "train-the-trainer" models, ICT training, and institutional embedding of new systems. In several cases—such as with ISSERDP's IRBM master trainers and TAEP's ICT modules—these approaches helped establish local expertise and reduce dependency on external

consultants. However, sustaining these technical and institutional gains proved difficult without structured career pathways, refresher training, and budgeted retention strategies. Projects that combined technical training with phased handover arrangements and/or political backing demonstrated better continuity than those relying solely on external financing.

Lesson 5: Integrating political economy analysis and flexible partnership strategies is critical for sustaining reforms in fragile environments.

Zimbabwe's ongoing international diplomatic isolation created distinctive challenges requiring non-traditional partnership approaches with regional bodies and alternative development actors. The evaluation found that while most development partners withdrew support during this period, the Bank maintained engagement through multiple available financing windows—including the Fragile States Facility, Transition Support Facility, and ADF resources. This reinforced the Bank's position as a trusted partner willing to continue reform support. The project cluster also benefited from adaptive partnership models that complemented technical support with political facilitation. This approach is best exemplified when design is informed by political economy analysis and constraint scenarios are identified as evidenced in SACAGE – where a high-level diplomatic facilitator was used for debt resolution, whilst the Bank supported technical and financial elements.

Recommendations

IDEV makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Enhance the design of governance projects to strengthen their effectiveness and achievement of objectives.

Priority actions to consider include:

- Beyond technical assessments, systematically undertaking and embedding political economy analysis at the project design stage to identify power dynamics, vested interests, and reform champions that shape the feasibility of governance reforms, to understand incentive structures and change pathways.
- Designing adaptive implementation strategies with built-in flexibility mechanisms, which recognize that governance reforms in fragile contexts require iterative approaches that are responsive to shifting political dynamics rather than rigid linear frameworks.
- Incorporating targeted social inclusion measures that address identified gaps in gender integration and civic participation, with specific mechanisms for engaging marginalized groups and tracking the distributional impacts of governance reforms.

Recommendation 2: Institutionalize a programmatic approach to governance initiatives both within the Bank's projects and in collaboration with other development partners at country level to further strengthen coherence and outcomes achievement.

Key actions to consider include:

- Developing cluster-level Theories of Change at portfolio inception that articulate how complementary interventions collectively contribute to transformative governance outcomes, with explicit causal pathways linking outputs to intermediate outcomes and long-term impacts.
- Establishing integrated M&E systems at the cluster level with: (i) harmonized indicators tracking both project-specific and cumulative governance outcomes; (ii) centralized data platforms enabling real-time monitoring and cross-project learning; and (iii) regular outcome evaluations assessing progress toward overarching governance transformation objectives.
- Formalizing coordination mechanisms and proactively supporting structured country-level coordination platforms that enable joint

programming, shared learning, harmonized monitoring, and cross-institutional collaboration; formalizing mechanisms, including annual programming reviews, to assess cluster coherence and identify synergies, knowledge exchange platforms, and harmonized reporting frameworks. These mechanisms would reduce transaction costs and strengthen strategic oversight.

- Strengthening M&E capacity development for PIUs and implementing agencies, moving beyond one-off training to embedded technical support that builds institutional capability for outcome-focused measurement, data quality assurance, and evidence-based adaptive management.

Recommendation 3: Design comprehensive sustainability strategies that address financial, institutional, and political dimensions starting from project inception, to enhance the sustainability of projects' benefits. ■



A presentation during the 2025 Zimbabwe Country Portfolio Performance Review Workshop



Irrigation system implemented by the Emergency Food Production Project as part of the African Emergency Food Production Facility

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Annex 1: Project Objectives and Key Components

N°	Project Name	Date of Approval	Objectives	Project Components & Key Activities	Beneficiary Institutions
1	Capacity Building for Public Finance and Economic Management (CBPFEM)	Dec 2012	Strengthen economic and public sector management systems and public finance management.	PFM systems strengthening; procurement and HR reforms; analytical work.	Ministry of Finance; Accountant General; ZIMSTAT
2	Governance and Institutional Strengthening Project (GISP)	12 Dec 2013	Improve transparency and effectiveness in public finance and economic management.	Procurement reform; mining governance; RBZ ICT systems; M&E support.	MoF; SPB; RBZ; Ministry of Mines
3	Strengthening Institutions of Transparency and Accountability (SITA)	10 Jul 2015	Improve transparency, accountability, and gender equality.	Parliamentary oversight; Auditor General capacity; CSO engagement.	Parliament; Auditor General; CSOs
4	Institutional Support for Governance and Public Finance Management (ISG-PFM)	22 Nov 2021	Enhance macro-stability through effective governance and debt management.	Debt management; procurement reform; parliamentary oversight.	MoF; Parliament; PRAZ
5	Institutional Support for Governance and Public Finance Management II	22 Nov 2021	Improve governance, fiscal planning, and accountability.	Debt strategy; SOE borrowing controls; procurement compliance.	MoF; Parliament; PRAZ
6	Tax and Accountability Enhancement Project (TAEP)	2019	Improve tax compliance and accountability.	TaRMS implementation; audit capacity; parliamentary oversight.	ZIMRA; Parliament; Auditor General
7	Support for Arrears Clearance and Governance Enhancement (SACAGE)	15 Sep 2022	Support arrears clearance, debt management, and governance reforms.	Debt strategy; oversight institutions; arrears clearance roadmap.	MoF; PDMO; Parliament; Auditor General
8	Institutional Support for State Enterprises Reform (ISSER)	31 Oct 2023	Improve SOE governance and reduce fiscal risks.	SOE oversight; governance frameworks; performance monitoring.	MoF; Office of the President; SOEs

Annex 2: Evaluation Matrix

Criteria	Evaluation Questions	Sub-Questions
Relevance	To what extent are the objectives and design of governance Institutional Support Projects in Zimbabwe strategically aligned with the Bank's TYS; responsive to the context and the needs of the recipient country; Bank Group AfDB governance strategies; and did they remain responsive over time as circumstances changed? To what extent are the governance GISP projects fit for purpose?	**Relevance of Project Objectives:**
		▪ To what extent have the projects been responsive to the evolving needs of Zimbabwe and the local populations (including women)?
		▪ To what extent could the projects have been implemented without the AfDB input (financial and nonfinancial) with the same scope, quality and/or timeframe?
		Relevance of Project Design:
		▪ Considering predictable factors, did the project design ensure effective outputs and outcomes that were in line with the stated objectives, discounting unpredictable external stimuli?
		▪ In cases where applicable, to what extent did the project design integrate the unique characteristics and challenges of Zimbabwe?
		▪ Regarding the intervention's design, assess the clarity and focus of the objectives. Evaluate the (i) realism of intended outcomes given the country's current circumstances; (ii) the quality of risk assessment; (iii) appropriateness of solutions; (iv) the relevance of modifications; and (v) consideration of prevailing circumstances.
		▪ How did the project design adapt over time in response to changing and unpredictable external stimuli?
		▪ Did the project design reference past lessons learned and incorporate them into decision-making processes?
Coherence	To what extent are the Bank governance ISPs complementary and compatible with respect to other interventions supported by the AfDB, the government or other development partners?	**Internal Coherence:**
		▪ To what extent do other AfDB interventions support or undermine the governance ISP project cluster and vice versa?
		▪ To what extent were synergies between the AfDB's interventions in the governance ISP projects and other AfDB interventions optimized (integrated solutions)?
		▪ How did project management staff consider the opportunities and risks posed by AfDB or other development partner projects initiated during project delivery?
		External Coherence:
		▪ To what extent are the Bank's governance Institutional support interventions complementary, harmonized and coordinated with other development partners' support to RMCs, adding value while avoiding duplication of effort?
Effectiveness	To what extent did the Bank's governance ISPs in Zimbabwe achieve or are they likely to achieve their expected results?	**Outputs Achievement:**
		▪ To what extent were governance ISP projects' outputs achieved or are they likely to achieve their expected outputs?
		▪ What factors have enabled or hindered the implementation of the projects and the delivery of outputs?

Criteria	Evaluation Questions	Sub-Questions
		Outcomes Achievement:
		▪ To what extent were outcomes of governance ISP projects achieved or are they likely to be achieved?
		▪ What factors have enabled or hindered the implementation of the projects and the delivery of outcomes?
Impact	To what extent have the Bank's governance ISPs in Zimbabwe generated or are expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects? To what extent did they lead to holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms?	▪ To what extent have the ISP projects collectively contributed* to improving governance and financial management in Zimbabwe?
		▪ What key lessons can be drawn about what works and does not work, where and under what circumstances?
		▪ What challenges still remain that need to be addressed if the Bank is to achieve its governance objectives?
Efficiency	To what extent have the Bank's governance ISPs in Zimbabwe been delivered efficiently in terms of timeliness and cost?	**Timeliness:**
		▪ Were delays present during the delivery of the projects?
		▪ Were the projects completed within the planned timelines?
		Resource Use Efficiency:
		▪ Were the projects delivered within the allocated budget?
		▪ Were there any cost overruns, and if so, what were the reasons?
		▪ To what extent was the Bank well-organized to deliver the governance ISPs?
		Implementation Progress (IP):
		▪ How does the evidence demonstrate that the project was implemented as planned?
		Cost-Benefit Analysis:
		▪ To what extent were the costs of the intervention funded by the AfDB commensurate with their planned benefits?
		▪ How does the efficiency of these projects compare to similar projects in other countries or regions?
		Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):
		▪ How effective were the monitoring and reporting systems in tracking project progress and efficiency?
Sustainability	To what extent were the projects' activities and results sustainable or likely to be sustained?	**Financial Sustainability and Economic Sustainability:**
		▪ Are the institutional changes and capacities built likely to be maintained after the project ends?
		▪ Have the projects established mechanisms for securing ongoing funding or financial resources?
		Technical Soundness:
		▪ Have the projects built sufficient technical capacity among local stakeholders to continue the activities independently?
		▪ Are the technologies and practices introduced by the projects appropriate and maintainable in the local context?
		Ownership and Participation and Sustainability of Partnerships:
		▪ Have the projects fostered community ownership and participation in the activities?

Criteria	Evaluation Questions	Sub-Questions
		Environmental and Social Sustainability:
		▪ Have the projects incorporated environmentally and socially sustainable practices? ▪ Are there measures in place to mitigate any negative environmental and social impacts of the projects?
		Institutional Sustainability and Strengthening of Capacity
		▪ To what extent did the projects contribute to building institution and capacity? ▪ How did the project contribute to the improvement of governance practices, competencies, procedures, incentives, and structures put in place as a result of the project?

Annex 3: Project Cluster Reconstructed Theory of Change (ToC)

Annex 4: Rating Scales

Ratings for Project Results Assessments (PRAs) – Four-point Rating Scale

Specific Questions	Judgement Scores
Relevance	
Relevance of Objectives	
To what extent are the objectives and design of governance Institutional Support Projects in Zimbabwe strategically aligned with the Bank's High 5s; responsive to the context and the needs of the recipient country; aligned with other Bank Group policies and strategies; and did they remain responsive over time as circumstances changed? To what extent are the governance ISPs fit for purpose?	1 = During the implementation period, the project purpose was not aligned with either: i) the Bank's TYS ii) the Bank country strategy iii) Bank governance strategy
	2 = During the implementation period, the project purpose was only somewhat aligned with one of: i) the Bank's TYS ii) the Bank's country strategy iii) Bank governance strategy
	3 = During the implementation period, the project purpose was largely aligned with one of: i) the Bank's TYS ii) the Bank's country strategy iii) Bank governance strategy
	4 = During the implementation period, the project purpose was fully aligned with all of the following: i) the Bank's TYS ii) the Bank's country strategy, and iii) Bank governance strategy
To what extent has the project been responsive to the evolving needs of RMCs, RECs and the local populations (including women)?	1 = During the implementation period, the project was barely aligned with any of the following i) country's development strategies, ii) local needs
	2 = During the implementation period, the project had some alignment with one of the following i) country's development strategies, ii) local needs
	3 = During the implementation period, the project was largely aligned with one of the following i) country's development strategies, ii) local needs
	4 = During the implementation period, the project was fully aligned with one of the following i) country's development strategies, ii) local needs
To what extent could the project have been implemented without the AfDB input (financial and nonfinancial) with the same scope, quality and/or timeframe?	1 = The project would have continued as it did without AfDB (potentially funded by another organization)
	2 = The project would have continued at the same scale and speed, but not been aligned to key AfDB objectives
	3 = The project would have continued but at smaller scale or slower
	4 = No Governance Institutional Support project would have been delivered without AfDB involvement
Relevance of Project Design	
Considering predictable factors, did the project design ensure effective outputs and outcomes that were in line with the stated objectives, discounting unpredictable external stimuli?	1 = Project design activities were limited and only had one of the following: i) strong rationale (showing causal chains) ii) risk mitigation strategy iii) effective monitoring system
	2 = Some project design activities were conducted and had two of the following in some order: i) strong rationale (showing causal chains) ii) risk mitigation strategy iii) effective monitoring system
	3 = The project design activities were considered and had two of the following in good order: i) strong rationale (showing causal chains) ii) risk mitigation strategy iii) effective monitoring system
	4 = The project design activities were fully thought through and had all of the following: i) strong rationale (showing causal chains) ii) risk mitigation strategy iii) effective monitoring system
In cases where applicable, to what extent did the project design integrate the unique characteristics and challenges of fragile states?	1= The intervention design encompasses/considers just one or none of the above factors.
	2= the project only include 2 or 1 of the following elements: i) the project was designed applying a fragility lens; ii) the project contribute to reduce fragility; iii) the project include components/activities that address fragility iv) the project has specific indicators for fragility issues

Specific Questions	Judgement Scores
	3= the project only include 3 of the following elements: i) the project was designed applying a fragility lens; ii) the project contribute to reduce fragility; iii) the project include components/activities that address fragility iv) the project has specific indicators for fragility issues
	4= i) the project was designed applying a fragility lens; ii) the project contribute to reduce fragility; iii) the project include components/activities that address fragility iv) the project has specific indicators for fragility issues
Regarding the intervention's design, assess the clarity and focus of the objectives. Evaluate the (i) realism of intended outcomes given the country's current circumstances; (ii) the quality of risk assessment; (iii) appropriateness of solutions; (iv) the relevance of modifications; and (v) consideration of prevailing circumstances.	1= The intervention design encompasses/considers just one or none of the above factors.
	2= The intervention design encompasses/considers few of the above factors.
	3= The intervention design encompasses/considers most of the above factors.
	4= The intervention design encompasses/considers all of the above factors (i) to (vi).
How did the project design adapt over time in response to changing and unpredictable external stimuli?	1 = The project design did not respond to unpredictable external stimuli
	2 = The project design altered slowly to somewhat respond to unpredictable external stimuli
	3 = The project design altered quickly to somewhat respond to unpredictable external stimuli
	4 = The project design altered quickly to fully respond to unpredictable external stimuli
Did the project design reference past lessons learned and incorporate them into decision-making processes?	1 = Initial project designs did not consider any previous projects or lessons learnt
	2 = Initial project designs somewhat considered previous projects or lessons learnt
	3 = Initial project designs somewhat considered and implemented some previous projects or lessons learnt
	4 = Initial project designs fully considered previous projects and lessons learnt
Coherence	
Internal Coherence	
To what extent do other AfDB interventions support or undermine the governance ISP project cluster and vice versa?	1 = There is no evidence of any consideration for mutual benefits between other AfDB interventions and GISP projects
	2 = There are limited indications that some consideration was given to mutual benefits between other AfDB interventions and GISP projects
	3 = Some effort was made to enable and deliver mutual benefits between other AfDB interventions and GISP projects
	4 = There is clear evidence that significant consideration was given to ensuring mutual benefits between other AfDB interventions and GISP projects, which resulted in some mutual benefits
To what extent were synergies between the AfDB's interventions in the governance ISPs and other AfDB interventions optimised (integrated solutions)?	1 = There is no evidence of AfDB interventions complementing, harmonizing, or coordinating with other AfDB programs and activities
	2 = Limited evidence exists of AfDB interventions complementing, harmonizing, or coordinating with other AfDB programs and activities
	3 = Some efforts were made by AfDB interventions to complement, harmonise, and coordinate with other AfDB programs and activities, adding value, but it was not fully realised
	4 = AfDB interventions are clearly demonstrated to complement, harmonise, and coordinate with other activities by the Bank, adding significant value to the overall development efforts.

Specific Questions	Judgement Scores
How did project management staff consider the opportunities and risks posed by AfDB or other development partner projects initiated during project delivery?	1= The Risk/Mitigation Measures in the Project Logical Framework section of the PAR were not considered during project implementation leading to complications in output delivery.
	2= Risk/Mitigation Measures were considered but not implemented effectively enough to avoid complications in output delivery.
	3=Risk/Mitigation Measures were considered and proactively implemented, avoiding complications in output delivery.
	4=Risk/Mitigation Measures were actively applied throughout the project, leading to smooth output delivery.
External Coherence	
To what extent are the Bank's governance Institutional support interventions complementary, harmonized and coordinated with other development partners' support to RMCs, adding value while avoiding duplication of effort?	1 = There is no evidence of AfDB interventions complementing, harmonizing, or coordinating with other development partners
	2 = Limited evidence exists of AfDB interventions complementing, harmonizing, or coordinating with other development partners
	3 = Some efforts were made by AfDB interventions to complement, harmonise, and coordinate with other development partners, adding value, but it was not fully realised
	4 = AfDB interventions are clearly demonstrated to complement, harmonise, and coordinate with other development partners, adding significant value to the overall development efforts.
Effectiveness	
Output Achievement	
To what extent were governance ISP projects' achieved or are they likely to achieve their expected outputs? What factors have enabled or hindered the implementation of the projects and the delivery of outputs?	1= Less than 40% of the project outputs (as specified in the PAR and evaluated in the PCR and through analysis of other relevant documents and stakeholder interviews) have been delivered (or are on track to be delivered).
	2= Between 40% and 70% of the project outputs were delivered (or are on track to be delivered)
	3= Between 70% and 100% of the project outputs were delivered (or are on track to be delivered)
	4= Above 100% of the project outputs were delivered as planned
Outcomes Achievement	
To what extent were governance ISP projects' achieved or are they likely to achieve their expected outcomes? What factors have enabled or hindered the implementation of the projects and the delivery of outcomes?	1= there is no evidence that the project will ever achieve the intended outcomes (as specified in the PAR and evaluated in the PCR and through analysis of other relevant documents and stakeholder interviews)
	2= weak questionable evidence of improved outcome indicators
	3= Limited but convincing evidence of improved outcome indicators
	4= the project has achieved or exceeded all outcome targets as specified in the PAR and PCR
Efficiency	
Were delays present during the delivery of the project? Were the projects completed within the planned timelines?	1= The ratio of planned implementation time (as per PAR) and actual project implementation time is expected to be <0.50.
	2= The ratio of planned implementation time (as per PAR) and actual implementation time is expected to be <0.75 and ≥0.50.
	3= The ratio of planned implementation time (as per PAR) and actual implementation time is expected to be <1 and ≥0.75.
	4= The ratio of planned implementation time (as per PAR) and actual implementation time is expected to be ≥1.
Were the projects delivered within the allocated budget? Were there any cost overruns, and if so, what were the reasons?	1= The ratio of the median percentage implementation of the project outputs and commitment rate (per the PCR) is <0.50. The project delivered significantly less outputs within the available budget.
	2= The ratio of the median percentage implementation of the project outputs and commitment rate is <0.75 and ≥0.50. The project delivered less outputs within the available budget.

Specific Questions	Judgement Scores
	3= The ratio of the median percentage implementation of the project outputs and commitment rate is <1 and ≥0.75. The project largely delivered the outputs expected within the available budget.
	4= The ratio of the median percentage implementation of the project outputs and commitment rate is ≥1. The project delivered all or more outputs than expected within the available budget
How does the evidence demonstrate that the project was implemented as planned?	1= The average rating of applicable IP criteria ratings (as per the PCR) is comprised between 1.0 and 1.49. Most dimensions of implementation processes have not been satisfactory, which has jeopardized the achievement of project results.
	2= The average rating of applicable IP criteria ratings is comprised between 1.5 and 2.49. Several dimensions of implementation processes have not been satisfactory, which has jeopardized the achievement of some project results.
	3= The average rating of applicable IP criteria ratings is comprised between 2.5 and 3.49. The implementation processes have for the most part been satisfactory and has for the most part lead to the anticipated
	4= The average rating of applicable IP criteria ratings is comprised between 3.5 and 4. The implementation processes have for the most part been highly satisfactory and has to lead to the anticipated results.
To what extent were the costs of the intervention funded by the AfDB commensurate to their planned benefits? How does the efficiency of these projects compare to similar projects in other countries or regions	1= The ratio of the ERR at completion and the anticipated ERR at appraisal is <0.50
	2= The ratio of the ERR at completion and the anticipated ERR at appraisal is <0.75 and ≥0.50.
	3= The ratio of the ERR at completion and the anticipated ERR at appraisal is <1 and ≥0.75
	4= The ratio of the ERR at completion and the anticipated ERR at appraisal is ≥1.
How effective were the monitoring and reporting systems in tracking project progress and efficiency?	1 = M&E system required extensive navigating, leading to major flaws in tracking project results delivery
	2 = M&E system required substantial navigating leading to substantial flaws in tracking project results delivery
	3 = M&E system required minimal navigating leading to minor flaws in tracking project results delivery
	4 = M&E system were efficient and well-designed, accelerating project tracking project results delivery
Sustainability	
Institutional Sustainability	
Are the institutional changes and capacities built likely to be maintained after the project ends?	1= The project has not put in place any mechanisms for institutional changes and capacities built, and the flow of benefits associated with the project are not expected to continue after completion
	2= The project marginally contributed to building or strengthening institutional changes and capacities built and capacities remains weak to ensure the continued flow of benefits associated with the project after completion
	3= The project significantly contributed to building or strengthening institutional changes and capacities built are sufficient to ensure the continued flow of benefits associated with the project after completion
	4= The project was critical in building or strengthening institutional changes and capacities built and capacities are sufficient to ensure the continued flow of benefits associated with the project after completion
Financial sustainability	
Have the projects established mechanisms for securing ongoing funding or financial resources?	1= The project has not put in place any mechanisms for financial sustainability, and the flow of benefits associated with the project are not expected to continue after completion

Specific Questions	Judgement Scores
	2= The project marginally contributed to mechanisms for securing ongoing funding or financial resources. Country systems and capacities remains weak to ensure the continued flow of benefits associated with the project after completion
	3= The project significantly contributed to established mechanisms for securing ongoing funding or financial resources are sufficient to ensure the continued flow of benefits associated with the project after completion
	4= The project was critical in established mechanisms for securing ongoing funding or financial resources are sufficient to ensure the continued flow of benefits associated with the project after completion
Technical Soundness	
Have the projects built sufficient technical capacity among local stakeholders to continue the activities independently? Are the technologies and practices introduced by the projects appropriate and maintainable in the local context?	1= there is a high likelihood that factors related to the technical capacity among local stakeholders of the intervention may severely impact the achievement of the results
	2 = there is a substantial likelihood that factors related to the technical capacity among local stakeholders of the intervention may adversely impact the achievement of the results
	3= there is a relatively low likelihood that factors related to the technical capacity among local stakeholders of the intervention may adversely impact the achievement of the results
	4= there is a very low likelihood that factors related to the technical capacity among local stakeholders of the intervention may adversely impact the achievement of the results
Community Ownership and Participation	
Have the projects fostered community ownership and participation in the activities?	1= there is a high likelihood that factors related to the community ownership and participation among local stakeholders of the intervention may severely impact the achievement of the results
	2 = there is a substantial likelihood that factors related to community ownership and participation among local stakeholders of the intervention may adversely impact the achievement of the results
	3= there is a relatively low likelihood that factors related to community ownership and participation among local stakeholders of the intervention may adversely impact the achievement of the results
	4= there is a very low likelihood that factors related to community ownership and participation among local stakeholders of the intervention may adversely impact the achievement of the results
Environmental Sustainability	
Have the projects incorporated environmentally sustainable practices? Are there measures in place to mitigate any negative environmental impacts of the projects?	1= there is no evidence that the project incorporated environmentally sustainable practices to deliver similar projects in the future
	2= weak questionable evidence on incorporated environmentally sustainable practices to deliver similar projects in the future
	3= Limited but convincing evidence that the project incorporated environmentally sustainable practices to deliver similar projects in the future
	4= substantial improvements in incorporated environmentally sustainable practices to deliver similar projects in the future
Impact	
▪ To what extent have the Bank's governance Institutional Support Projects in Zimbabwe generated or are expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects ▪ What key lessons can be drawn about what works and does not work, where and under what circumstances? ▪ What challenges still remain that need to be addressed if the Bank is to achieve its governance objectives?	1= the project did not bring any positive effect or negative effect on governance and financial management in Zimbabwe
	2= The project only had minor impacts on governance and financial management in Zimbabwe
	3= the project had some positive impacts on governance and financial management in Zimbabwe, but did not achieve the initial targets (as specified in PAR and measured in PCR)
	4= the project significantly improved governance and financial management in Zimbabwe

Ratings for Overall Cluster Performance - Six-point Rating Scale

Rating	Judgement Score
Highly Successful (6):	The intervention achieved or surpassed all main targets, objectives, expectations, and results and had no shortcomings in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability.
Successful (5):	The intervention achieved almost all of the main targets, objectives, expectations, and results and had at most minor shortcomings in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability.
Mostly Successful (4):	The intervention achieved the majority of the main targets, objectives, expectations, and results and had moderate shortcomings in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability.
Mostly Unsuccessful (3):	The intervention achieved few of its main targets, objectives, expectations, and results and had significant shortcomings in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability.
Unsuccessful (2):	The intervention achieved only a minority or almost none of its targets, objectives, expectations, and results and had major shortcomings in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability.
Highly Unsuccessful (1):	The intervention achieved none of its targets, objectives, expectations, and results and had severe shortcomings in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

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Endnotes

1 1 Unit of Account (UA) = 1.37097 United States Dollars (USD) as at October 2025

2 The Capacity Building for Public Finance and Economic Management Project-CBPEFM (2012); The Governance and Institutional Support Project-GISP (2013); The Strengthening Institutions of Transparency and Accountability-SITA (2015); The Institutional Support for State Owned Enterprise Reform and Delivery project-ISSERDP (2017); The Tax and Enhancement of Accountability Project-TAEP (2019); The Institutional Support Project for Governance and Public Finance Management-ISPGPFM (2021); The Support to Arrears Clearance And Accountability Enhancement-SACAGE (2022); and The Institutional Support for State Enterprise Reform Project – ISSERP (2023).

3 Implementation progress refers to compliance with covenants, project systems and procedures, and project execution and financing.

4 The Capacity Building for Public Finance and Economic Management Project-CBPEFM (2012); The Governance and Institutional Support project-GISP (2013); The Strengthening Institutions of Transparency and Accountability-SITA (2015); The Institutional Support for State Owned Enterprise Reform and Delivery project-ISSERDP (2017); The Tax and Enhancement of Accountability Project-TAEP (2019); The Institutional Support project for Governance and Public Finance Management-ISPGPFM (2021); The Support to Arrears Clearance And Accountability Enhancement-SACAGE (2022); and The Institutional Support for State Enterprise Reform Project – ISSERP (2023).

5 MEFMI - Macroeconomic and Financial Management Institute of Eastern and Southern Africa (MEFMI); African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF); Eastern and Southern African Management Institute (ESAMI), African Tax Administration Forum (ATAF), Collaborative Africa Budget Reform Initiative (CABRI), African Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (AFROSAI)

6 Due to prolonged negotiations, the SMP is now scheduled for 2026, subject to fulfilment of all Conditions Precedent.

7 More details on the ratings scales and judgement criteria can be found in the Annex 4.

8 The Department for International Development has now been subsumed into the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO).

9 Implementation progress refers to compliance with covenants, project systems and procedures, and project execution and financing.

10 Satisfactory (3) projects include CBPFEM, GISP, ISGPFM and Highly satisfactory (4) projects include SITA, TAEP, SACAGE, ISSERDP, ISSER



IDEV

Independent Development Evaluation
African Development Bank

An IDEV **Project Cluster Evaluation**



About this evaluation

Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) evaluated a cluster of eight governance Institutional Support Projects funded by the African Development Bank ("the Bank") in Zimbabwe between 2012 and 2024. The evaluation was undertaken at the request of the Bank's Management to assess the effectiveness of its governance support in the context of Zimbabwe's arrears clearance process at the time. It examined the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact, efficiency, and sustainability of the Bank's support.

Overall, the evaluation found that the project cluster was well aligned with national priorities and the Bank's strategic frameworks, and that most planned outputs were successfully delivered. The interventions contributed to improvements in public financial management, debt management, revenue administration, and transparency. This strengthened the country's readiness for arrears clearance and contributed to meaningful, though uneven, governance reforms. However, the impact on deeper governance outcomes remained limited and fell short of transformative change.

Key lessons include the need to deliberately integrate gender and inclusivity considerations in governance reforms; to strengthen and rely on existing national institutions to enhance sustainability and efficiency; and to incorporate political economy analysis and coordinated, long-term approaches in fragile contexts.

The evaluation recommended strengthening project design through better integration of political economy analysis, adaptive implementation mechanisms, and targeted social inclusion measures. It also called for a more programmatic and coordinated approach to governance support, aided by integrated monitoring and evaluation systems, and for comprehensive sustainability strategies that address financial, institutional, and political dimensions from the outset.



IDEV

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Design & layout: GK Graphics (www.gkgraphics.in)