



1. Project Data

Project ID

P160500

Project Name

CAR Rural Connectivity

Country

Central African Republic

Practice Area(Lead)

Transport

L/C/TF Number(s)

IDA-D2230

Closing Date (Original)

30-Dec-2022

Total Project Cost (USD)

26,601,063.37

Bank Approval Date

30-Jun-2017

Closing Date (Actual)

29-Jul-2022

IBRD/IDA (USD)
Grants (USD)

Original Commitment

45,000,000.00

0.00

Revised Commitment

29,914,057.05

0.00

Actual

26,601,063.37

0.00

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2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

According to the International Development Association (IDA) Financing Agreement (p.5) dated October 11, 2017, and the Project Appraisal Document (p.14) dated June 19, 2017, the project objective is “to improve rural road connectivity to markets and social services, and in the event of an Eligible Crisis or Emergency, to provide an immediate and effective response.”



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

No

c. Will a split evaluation be undertaken?

No

d. Components

The project consisted of four components:

A. Rural Roads Rehabilitation and Maintenance. (*Appraisal cost: US\$44.0 million; actual cost: US\$27.8 million*). This component was to finance the rehabilitation and maintenance of rural roads in two selected areas in the North-West and North-East of the Central African Republic:

A.1. North-West Road Rehabilitation. This sub-component was to finance the improvement of a network of 500 kilometers (km) of targeted rural roads in Ouham and Ouham-Pendé prefectures through labor intensive public works (LIPWs) and mechanized works, community-based road maintenance activities, and the implementation of road safety measures. The Public Works Implementation Agency of Central African Republic (AGETIP-CAR in French) was to organize the LIPWs on behalf of the project implementation unit (PIU). The National Office for Public Works and Equipment (ONM in French) and private contractors were to implement the mechanized works under performance-based arrangements.

A.2. North-East Road Rehabilitation. This sub-component was to finance the ongoing emergency works on the 330 km Kaga Bandoro-Ndélé road that started under the State and Peacebuilding Fund-financed Local Connectivity Emergency Project (P157923 - LCEP), and the extension of the emergency works to the 440 km Ndélé-Birao road through labor intensive public works and mechanized works. The sub-component was also to finance community-based road maintenance activities and the implementation of road safety measures on these roads. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) was to implement the LWIPs, and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) was to implement the mechanized works in this high conflict isolated area.

B. Project Implementation, Management and Monitoring. (*Appraisal cost: US\$9.1 million; actual cost: US\$1.63 million*). This component was to finance technical assistance, training and operation costs, monitoring and evaluation costs, and hiring of supervising entity for the capacity building of the PIU in project implementation, management, and monitoring.

C. Resettlement. (*Appraisal cost: US\$0.3 million; actual cost: US\$0.18 million*). This component was to finance the cost of resettlement compensations consisting of cash compensation for land, moving allowances, and compensation for temporary income losses.

D. Contingency Emergency Response. (*Appraisal cost: US\$0.0 million; actual cost: US\$0.0 million*). This component was to provide funding for eligible expenditures in case of a crisis or emergency. The project did not use this component.

Revised Components

Because of continued adverse security situation and insufficient funds to finance underestimated project scope, the project could not complete some projects activities and transferred them to the Emergency



Infrastructure and Connectivity Recovery Project (P176540 - EICRP) resulting in a reduction in the original project scope and early closure of the project. These activities were as follows:

A.1. North-West Road Rehabilitation. The project could not complete the mechanized rehabilitation of 500 km of roads and transferred these incomplete activities to the EICRP (Labor-intensive Road maintenance works were completed along with rehabilitation of 33 bridges and 63 basic socio-economic infrastructures, such as schools, health centers, and drying areas).

A.2. North-East Road Rehabilitation. The project cleaned, reprofiled, and graded all 333 km of the Kaga Bando-Ndélé road but graveled only 142 km of the road. The project could not implement spot improvement works for the 444 km Ndélé-Birao and open the road because technical studies and safeguard documents were not completed as scheduled. The project transferred all uncompleted works under this subcomponent to the EICRP.

Upon the request of the residents in the project areas, the construction or rehabilitation of some socioeconomic infrastructure was added to the project scope. These additional works were expected to cost US\$0.2 million, such as wells, drilling reparations, school rehabilitations, health center rehabilitations, and construction of markets. Project restructuring papers did not include these additions, but the Implementation Status and Results Report dated January 23, 2020, reported the addition of these activities to the project scope (ICR, p.10).

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

Project Cost. The total project cost was originally estimated at US\$53.40 million. On July 29, 2022, the project closed with a total cost of US\$29.61 million. The actual cost was lower than the cost estimated at appraisal because some works could not be completed due to security concerns. The PIU could not complete the technical studies and works of the 333 km road section between Kaga and Bando-Ndélé, and the project funds were insufficient to rehabilitate the roads due to the further deterioration of the project roads because of road closures and adverse climate conditions. Rather than processing an additional financing to cover the cost of increased project scope, it was agreed to prepare a new project, close this project earlier than its original closing date and transfer all uncompleted works to the new project. The Emergency Infrastructure and Connectivity Recovery Project (P176540 - EICRP) was approved in June 2021 and the uncompleted works and cancelled financing from the Rural Connectivity Project (RCP) were transferred to the EICRP.

Financing. At appraisal, the IDA financing was estimated at US\$37.30 million. By project closing in July 2022, the project had disbursed US\$29.61 million from IDA grants. The project refunded the undisbursed amount to the national IDA envelope of the Central African Republic.

Co-financing. The French Development Agency (FDA) was to provide US\$ US\$8.40 million to project financing, but none materialized as the FDA did not complete their funding approval process (ICR, p.15).

Borrower's contribution. At appraisal, no borrower's contribution was estimated, and none materialized at project closing.

Restructurings: The project was restructured twice:



First Restructuring (Level 2 – October 10, 2017). Because of the reorganization of the ministries in CAR, the agency responsible for the implementation of the project was changed from the Ministry of Equipment, Transport, Civil Aviation and Territorial Management to Ministry of Public Works and Road Maintenance. The project was restructured to reflect this change in the Financing Agreement that had not been signed yet. There were no other changes proposed in this restructuring.

Second Restructuring (Level 2 – July 26, 2022). The project was restructured to reduce the project scope because of uncompleted works, revise the results framework in accordance with the reduced project scope, cancel the undisbursed US\$17.24 million, and close the project on July 29, 2022, five months earlier than the original closing date of December 30, 2022. These changes were required because of the implementation challenges caused by the worsening security situation in the project area and the need for additional financing to rehabilitate further deteriorated project roads. Rather than processing an additional financing, the WB management decided to close this project and transfer its uncompleted works and unused funds to the EICRP that was active at the time of project restructuring (for changes in the project scope, please see Revised Components above).

Dates. The project was approved on June 30, 2017. The Financing Agreement was signed on October 11, 2017, and the grant became effective on April 10, 2018. The Mid-Term Review was conducted in December 2020. The project closed on July 29, 2022, five months earlier than the original project closing date of December 30, 2022. The reasons for early project closing are given in the second restructuring entry above.

Reason not to undertake a split assessment of project's performance. The reduction in the project scope and the revision in the results framework would normally require a split assessment of the project's performance but the project was restructured just before its closing and the disbursement after the restructuring was negligible (only one percent of the total disbursed amount). Additionally, the achievement of the only indicator that was revised was significantly lower than the decreased target. These low disbursement amount after restructuring and the lower achievement compared to original and revised targets of one of the indicators (the other indicators' targets were not revised) would not have a material effect on the outcome rating; hence, this review does not undertake a split assessment of the project's performance.

3. Relevance of Objectives

Rationale

Alignment with Bank Strategy. The project objective is highly aligned with the World Bank's current strategy as defined in the Country Partnership Framework for FY2021-25 (CPF) for the Central African Republic (CAR). The project sought to address the development problem of insufficient or non-existent access to rural roads in the remote North-West and North-East regions of the country, which is a major barrier to the development of the main economic activity of agriculture and residents' access to social and economic services—one of the main root causes of the conflict situation in the country, i.e., neglect of the rural population. This development problem fits under the first focus area of the CPF, i.e., human capital and connectivity to boost stabilization, inclusion, and resilience and contributes to the achievement of "Objective 1.5: Build resilient infrastructure (power, mobility, water) for improved connectivity" (CPF, p.2). The project was to support the achievement of this objective through the rehabilitation of long-neglected rural roads in the remote project areas and maintenance of these roads by local communities. The project



was to finance labor intensive public works to create immediate employment opportunity to the residents in the project areas. The project's expected outcome of improved connectivity in rural areas through access to all-weather roads is highly aligned with the objectives of the CPF.

Alignment with Government Strategy. The project objectives are highly relevant to the country context. The project objectives support the government's strategic objective to improve the socioeconomic welfare of the rural population thorough road connectivity as defined in the government's Plan for Recovery and Peacebuilding (RCPCA—French acronym). The project objective is also aligned with the government's transport strategy that aims at connecting the country to gateway ports in neighboring countries and the enhancing the rural transportation network and services in remote areas to strengthen national cohesion. Given the fragile and conflict-affected situation (FCS) in the Central African Republic, the project objectives are appropriately pitched for the development status in the country as described in the CPF. The insufficient capacity to implement the project was to be addressed by the technical support and the cooperation of the UNOPS and MINUSCA in project implementation.

Previous World bank Experience. Before this project, the WB financed the US\$ 4.9 million Local Connectivity Emergency Project (P157923 - LCEP), which was piloted "to reconnect the rural population of the Northeast part of the Central African Republic to urban centers and local markets by rehabilitating the Kaga-Bandoro-Mbrés-Bamingui-Ndélé road." Based on the experience gained during the implementation of the LCEP and the recognition that more rehabilitation works were needed to close the infrastructure gap in the remote areas of the country, the Rural Connectivity Project was prepared to be implemented in a larger area. The project was designed to scale up the activities implemented under the pilot project. The results expected from the project's intervention were realistically set in an FCS context, such as the number of months a road is accessible in a year, reduction in travel times, and the number of farmers with access to improved roads. The project was to be implemented in high security risk areas where the impact of the project on the socioeconomic welfare of the farmers and local communities could not be easily measured. Therefore, while the project objective was pitched at the output level, it was sufficiently challenging in an FCS country and appropriate with the WB's experience in the country and the sector.

Overall, the relevance of objectives is rated High.

Rating

High

4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)

OBJECTIVE 1

Objective

To improve rural road connectivity to markets and social services.

Rationale



Theory of Change. The Government's National Plan for Recovery and Peacebuilding (Plan National de Relèvement et de Consolidation de la Paix en Centrafrique, RCPCA) identifies two main reasons as the root causes of the security crisis in CAR: (a) the widening socioeconomic gap between the elite and the rest of the population; and (b) the total neglect of large parts of the rural population whose primary economic activity is agriculture (ICR, p.5). Poor or non-existent road access adversely affects agricultural productivity in rural areas. Therefore, the project prioritized the North-West and North-East agriculture production regions where "improvement in rural connectivity could unlock some of the unrealized agricultural capacity" (ICR, p.5) and facilitate the rural residents' better access to social and economic services; hence, improved socioeconomic welfare of the long neglected rural populations. Therefore, the project was designed "to improve rural accessibility in areas with high agricultural potential and reduce isolation of communities in remote areas of CAR while promoting job creation through labor intensive community works" (ICR, p.6).

The project was to use the project's inputs—IDA grants—to finance civil works for the rehabilitation and community-based maintenance of rural roads in the North-West and North-East regions of the country. The expected outputs were improved road conditions on about 1,800 km of rural roads including road safety improvements and their sustained light maintenance by rural communities. These outputs were expected to lead to all-weather road access by rural residents to access basic socioeconomic services (such as markets, schools, and health centers), farmers to bring their produces to local markets, and humanitarian actors. The long-term impact of the roads would have been expected to improve socioeconomic welfare of the rural population in the project areas contributing to the improvement of security situation in the country. The project was to finance labor intensive public works to create direct employment opportunities and income to residents in the project areas contributing to the improvement of their economic welfare. If successfully implemented, the project was to contribute to high level outcome of economic development in lagging regions related to the country's fragile, conflict, and violence (FCV) situation. Overall, the theory of change of the project was simple and straightforward. The causal pathways from inputs to outcomes were valid and direct, and the achievement of the outcomes and project objective could be attributed to the project's intervention, but the continued adverse armed conflict in the project areas posed a high risk for the completion of the project activities, which materialized. The adverse security conditions also led to the underestimation of the project scope as access to North-East region was restricted to complete a proper survey of to determine the status of the roads, which were later found to be in worse conditions than estimated. Therefore, the project inputs—i.e., IDA grants—were insufficient to complete all project activities, which led to the transfer of uncompleted project activities to the EICRP.

Outputs

- **Roads rehabilitated in the North-West region.** At appraisal, the project's target was to rehabilitate 500 km roads in the North-West region in two phases; first phase was the spot improvement of the roads through labor-intensive road works, and the second phase was the mechanized rehabilitation of the roads. The achievement under the first phase was 472 km. The project could not complete the second phase of the works because of delays in the preparation of technical studies.
- **Roads rehabilitated in the North-East region.** The project was to implement the works on two road sections in this region. The first section was the road between Kaga Banodor and Ndélé. It is 322 km long and was to be rehabilitated consisting of three layers. This section was already rehabilitated under the LCEP. The project applied the first layer to 288 km of the road (89 percent). Second layer was completed on 248 km of the road (77 percent) and full rehabilitation was completed on 142 km of the road (44 percent). Additionally, 14 small bridges were constructed against the target of 114. The completion of the first and second layers on most of the road section resulted in the reopening of the



road and reducing the travel time between these two cities significantly. The second road section was the 440 km road between Ndélé and Birao, which crosses through the Manovo-Gounda Saint Floris National Park. Because of the delays in the completion of the technical studies and implementation of safeguards policies due to continued adverse security situation in the project area, the project could not start rehabilitation works on this road section.

- **Roads with improved road safety measures.** The road safety measures were implemented on the 614 km roads the project rehabilitated in both regions. The original target was 1,250 km, which was revised to 600 km at the second restructuring.
- **Community-based maintenance organizations that are operational.** The target was to have 200 community-based maintenance organizations operational. At project closing, no community-based maintenance organizations were operational.

Outcomes

- **Improved passability of the road between Kaga Bandoro-Ndélé and Ndélé-Birao.** Before the project, the number of months in a year the 773 km roads were passable was five months. The target was to improve the road quality so that the road would be passable 12 months. The achievement was seven months.
- **Reduction in travel time between Ndélé-Birao.** The travel time of the 440 km road before project was ten days. The target was to decrease the travel time to seven days. The achievement was nine days.
- **Proportion of improved project roads under routine maintenance.** The original target was to have all project roads under routine maintenance, which was revised to 50 percent of the roads at the second restructuring. At project evaluation, no project roads were under routine maintenance, which is a significant risk for the sustainability of the roads that were rehabilitated under the project.
- **Improved access to basic social services (markets, schools and health centers) in the project area.** The target was to increase the number of social services by 20 from a baseline value of zero. The achievement was 63 social services consisting of markets, schools, and health centers built under the project in the North-West region only.
- **Farmers in the project area with improved access to markets.** The target was 90,000 farmers to have improved access to markets. The baseline was zero and the achievement was 36,000 farmers—40 percent of the target.
- **Reduction in travel time between Kaga-Bandoro and Ndélé.** The results framework did not include an indicator to capture the reduction in the travel time between these two towns, but the ICR (p.30) reports that after the rehabilitation of the road by labor-intensive works the travel time dropped from one week to one day.
- **Direct project beneficiaries.** The project roads connected 105,000 rural residents to markets, schools, and health centers. The target was 115,000 residents.



- **Person-days of employment created through the labor-intensive public works.** The project created 58,300 person-days of employment for the residents in the project areas through the labor-intensive road rehabilitation works. The share of women was 28 percent. The targets were 150,000 and 33 percent, respectively. One of the goals of the project was to create employment for the local population through project works, to contribute to their economic welfare and address one of the root causes of fragility in the project regions.

The project was successful in continuing with the further rehabilitation of the Kaga Bandoro-Ndélé road section that was partially improved under the WB-financed pilot LCEP. The connectivity between these two towns improved significantly through the reduction of travel time from one week to one day. The project also successfully completed the first phase rehabilitation of 472 km in the North-West region but there is no evidence showing what the impact of this road rehabilitation was on the connectivity of rural residents and farmers other than the 63 socioeconomic buildings constructed or rehabilitated under the project, such as markets, schools, and health centers. Furthermore, the project could partly rehabilitate the roads where works could start. The project could not start the road rehabilitation works between Ndélé and Birao, which is in the most isolated region of the country. The main reason for under achievement of the project outputs and outcomes was the continued adverse security situation in the project areas, which adversely affected project implementation. Because of the security concerns consultants were not able to complete technical studies and safeguards documents. The insufficient capacity of the consultants contributed to these delays. As it was found out during implementation that the project funds would not have been sufficient to finance the rehabilitation of all roads in the North-East region because of their extremely deteriorated conditions, the WB management decided to initiate a more comprehensive project rather than processing an additional financing. All uncompleted rehabilitation works under the project were transferred to the new project, i.e., the EICRP. As the project could not deliver the establishment of community-based maintenance arrangements, there is a high risk that the improvements achieved in road conditions may not be sustained. The EICRP is expected to establish these community-based maintenance arrangements along with the completion of the works transferred from the Rural Connectivity Project.

Overall, the project was partially successful in delivering the project outputs of improved road conditions that would have been expected to improve the connectivity of the farmers to the markets and the rural residents' access to socioeconomic services. Therefore, the project's efficacy in achieving the project objective to improve rural road connectivity to markets and social services is rated **Modest**.

Rating
Modest

OBJECTIVE 2

Objective

To provide an immediate and effective response in the event of an Eligible Crisis or Emergency.

Rationale

The project did not implement any activity to address any eligible crises or emergencies. Therefore, the project's efficacy in achieving this objective is not rated.



Rating

Not Rated/Not Applicable

OVERALL EFFICACY

Rationale

Because of continued adverse security situation in the project areas, lack of sufficient funds to rehabilitate the roads that were in much worse condition than previously estimated, and the delays in the preparation of the technical studies and safeguards documents, the project could partially deliver the project outputs and outcomes. Therefore, the project's efficacy in achieving the first objective to improve rural road connectivity to markets and social services is rated Modest. Since the project did not trigger an emergency response, the project's efficacy in achieving the second objective to provide an immediate and effective response in the event of an eligible crisis and emergency is not rated. Overall, the project's efficacy in achieving the project objectives is rated **Modest**.

Overall Efficacy Rating

Modest

Primary Reason

Low achievement

5. Efficiency

Economic Analysis

Because of the emergency to provide basic road infrastructure in the conflict-affected areas, lack of reliable data, and almost no traffic on project roads due to extremely poor road conditions, an economic analysis was not conducted at appraisal. Instead, a cost-effectiveness analysis was conducted to design the project to maximize its impact and minimize costs. Based on the theory, it was assessed that the project would have had a positive impact on the socioeconomic lives of the rural residents and farmers as the roads were not accessible before the project, and improvement in road conditions would allow the rural residents to access markets, schools, and health centers much more easily while connecting them to urban centers. A quantitative analysis was not conducted at appraisal.

However, during project implementation in 2020, but before the start of rehabilitation works, an economic analysis was conducted for the road section between Kaga-Bandoro and Ndélé utilizing the WB's Highway Development and Management Model (HDM-4) with a 20-year evaluation period and a discount rate of 12 percent. The benefits were defined as the savings from vehicle travel costs and travel time as a result of road conditions that improved under the rehabilitation works. Costs were defined as rehabilitation costs and maintenance costs. The assumptions are conservative; they did not include quantifiable benefits from increased economic and social benefits stemming from the rural population's improved road access. The analysis resulted in an economic internal rate of return (EIRR) of 20.3 percent and a net present value (NPV) of CFAF 22.2 billion for the road section between Kaga-Bandoro and Ndélé. At the time of the project completion, same methodology



was used to conduct an economic analysis for the completed portion of the Kaga-Bandoro and Ndélé road—142 km from Kaga-Bandoro to Mbrés. The analysis resulted in an EIRR of 18.8 percent.

To assess the economic impact of the road rehabilitation in the North-West region, i.e., in Ouham and Ouham-Pendé provinces, the project team conducted two economic analyses, one for before-project and the other after-project, using the Roads Economic Decision Model (RED). The ICR (p.14) states that the RED is an appropriate model for economic evaluation of low-volume roads such as those in the North-West region. The analyses resulted in a before-project EIRR of 20 percent and an NPV of CFAF 3.0 billion and after-project EIRR of 21 percent and an NPV of CFAF 2.6 billion. An economic analysis was not conducted for the Ndélé-Birao section where project could not implement any rehabilitation works.

Overall, the economic analyses confirm that the rehabilitation of the rural roads in the project areas is economically justifiable, but around half of the project activities could not be completed and their economic benefits did not materialize.

Administrative and Operational Efficiency

The project could not implement some project activities because of delays in the preparation of technical studies and safeguard documents and insufficient project funds. A preliminary analysis revealed that funds allocated were not sufficient for the rehabilitation of the road from Kaga-Bandoro to Birao passing through Ndélé because of significant deterioration of the road and the 70 km extension of the road from Ndélé to Birao required to bypass the Manovo Gounda Saint Floris National Park. The cost of the road rehabilitation works in the North-West region was also insufficient. Financing gap was estimated at around US\$48.5 million. As the ICR (p.20) states “the financial and contractual estimates of rehabilitation works were no longer feasible even before project effectiveness.” Therefore, the project focused on the rehabilitation of the Kaga-Bandoro and Ndélé section of the road, which was already improved under the LCEP, and the remaining part from Ndélé to Birao was transferred to the EICRP. The continued security situation in the project areas adversely affected the project implementation and efficiency resulting in frequent project implementation interruptions. The onset of the COVID pandemic significantly slowed down project implementation because of an eight-month hard stop during which the consultants could not complete their works. At project closing, only 57 percent of the project funds were disbursed. There were significant shortcomings in financial management and procurement mostly because of the insufficient capacity of the PIU (see section 10.b Fiduciary Compliance).

Overall, the project’s efficiency in achieving the project objectives is rated Modest because of under achievement of project benefits and significant shortcomings in administrative and operational efficiency that adversely affected project implementation and delivery of project outputs and outcomes.

Efficiency Rating

Modest

a. If available, enter the Economic Rate of Return (ERR) and/or Financial Rate of Return (FRR) at appraisal and the re-estimated value at evaluation:

Rate Available?	Point value (%)	*Coverage/Scope (%)
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Appraisal	0	0 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
ICR Estimate	0	0 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable

* Refers to percent of total project cost for which ERR/FRR was calculated.

6. Outcome

The project objectives were highly aligned with the WB strategy and relevant to the country context; the project was designed to address the lack of sufficient road connectivity, which is a major barrier for socioeconomic development of the rural areas, a root of fragility in the country. Following the achievements of the pilot LCEP, the project was designed to improve road connectivity in a larger area. Overall, the relevance of objectives is rated High. The project could partially deliver project outputs and outcomes because of continued adverse security situation in the project areas and delays in the preparation of technical studies and safeguards documents. Therefore, the project's efficacy in achieving the project objective is rated Modest. The economic analyses conducted at the project evaluation show that rehabilitation works are economically viable, but the project was not successful delivering the expected outcomes. Additionally, there were significant shortcoming in the administrative and operational efficiency of the project stemming from the under-estimation of rehabilitation costs, PIU's lack of financial management and procurement capacity, and consultants' insufficient capacity to complete the works. The efficiency of the project in achieving the project objective is rated Modest. Overall, the project's outcome is rated **Moderately Unsatisfactory** in accordance with the Bank Guidance (p.38).

a. Outcome Rating

Moderately Unsatisfactory

7. Risk to Development Outcome

Ongoing armed conflict in the project areas poses a major risk for the sustainability of project outcomes. The continued armed conflict in the project areas had an adverse impact on the implementation of the road rehabilitation works. The adverse security situation could prevent the completion of the pending road rehabilitation works under the follow-on EICRP or the start of the works on the Ndélé-Birao section. An increased level of armed conflict could also result in poor maintenance of the roads or even cause direct damage on the partially rehabilitated roads. Lastly, a continuation of the armed conflict could severely disturb agricultural and other economic activities in the region diminishing the impact of improved road access on the socioeconomic welfare of the rural population.

Even in the absence of an armed conflict, the risk of insufficient road maintenance is high. The project could not establish community-based maintenance arrangements. Such maintenance arrangements could be established under the EICRP, but the Road Maintenance Fund does not have sufficient funds to cover the maintenance cost of roads in the country. The current budget of the fund would cover the maintenance of only five percent of the roads. Therefore, it is highly likely that the roads rehabilitated under the project will not be maintained adequately.



8. Assessment of Bank Performance

a. Quality-at-Entry

The development of the roads connecting remote regions of the country to urban centers and markets was of high strategic importance for the government of CAR to improve the socioeconomic welfare of the rural population as outlined in the National Plan for Recovery and Peacebuilding (2017) and address the root causes of fragility—i.e., the widening socioeconomic gap between the elite and the rest of the population, and the total neglect of large parts of the rural population. The selection of the project areas was appropriate to address the root causes of fragility and based on the following reasons (ICR, p.5): (i) their extreme isolation, especially the North-East region; (ii) the population served; (iii) the agricultural potential; (iv) their role in the security crisis (North-West region), and (v) their strategic locations along the corridors connecting the capital Bangui to Cameroon and Chad (North-West region), and Sudan (North-East region). The project's approach was simple and straightforward consisting of the rehabilitation of roads that were accessible for only a couple of months in a year.

The project was designed based on the experience gained during the implementation of the pilot Local Connectivity Emergency Project to scale up road rehabilitations in isolated regions. The project's technical aspect consisting of simple spot road improvements in critical points to restore basic connectivity followed by mechanized rehabilitation of all road sections was appropriate. The project design included labor intensive public works to create direct employment opportunities for the residents in the project area. This was an appropriate intervention method to provide income to residents and contribute to the addressing of the root causes of fragility.

Project implementation and financial management arrangements benefited from the existing set-up under the WB-financed Central African Economic and Monetary Community Transport and Transit Facilities Project (P079736 - CEMAC TTFP). The PIU of the CEMAC TTFP was selected to oversee project implementation in both regions supported by supervision consultants to be hired under the project, but the project failed to hire supervision consultants. The safeguards aspects of the project were adequate; the project's impact on environment and involuntary resettlement of people was assessed to be minimal as the rehabilitation works were to be implemented on the existing right-of-way. Project funds were allocated for the payment of compensations to project-affected people. The PIU and UNOPS had sufficient capacity and experience to implement the project activities.

However, the project's scope and budget were underestimated. The exact status of the roads in the North-West project area and between Ndélé and Birao could not be adequately assessed because of adverse security conditions that limited access to the project areas. Insufficient funding led to early closing of the project and transfer of most of the rehabilitation works to the EICRP. At appraisal, a cost-benefit analysis was not conducted because of the emergency nature of providing basic road infrastructure conflict-affected project areas, lack of data, and low traffic on project roads. Most of the risks were adequately identified mitigation measures were in place, but they were ineffective against the continued adverse security situation in the project areas.

Overall, the quality-at-entry is rated **Moderately Unsatisfactory** because of the significant shortcomings in adequately assessing the project scope and funding.



Quality-at-Entry Rating

Moderately Unsatisfactory

b. Quality of supervision

In-person missions were held twice a year until the onset of COVID, after which the project team supervised the project virtually. The presence of one of the Task Team Leaders in Bangui during the implementation of rehabilitation works facilitated close contact with the authorities during the COVID lock-down.

Because of the under-estimation of the project scope and insufficient funds, the project team shifted its focus on the Kaga-Bardoro-Ndélé road section to achieve the project outcomes (this road section had already been partially rehabilitated under the LCEP). The project team was proactive in shifting the strategic course of the project based on the preliminary assessment of the then current road conditions and the M&E data. The decision to close the project five months earlier and transfer the uncompleted works to the active EICRP was an appropriate decision that would be expected to use limited IDA funds more efficiently and achieve the expected outcomes of improved road connectivity.

The project team adequately supervised fiduciary and safeguards aspects of the project and intervened when needed, such as the road design change in the North-East region to bypass a national park and revision of the financial management arrangements to entrust the PIU with the fiduciary responsibility rather than the Road Fund being responsible for the payments. The project team's supervision of the successful transfer of uncompleted activities to the EIRCP and the works that would continue the Kaga Bandoro-Ndélé road was also sufficient.

It should be noted that continued adverse security situation in the project areas, which was beyond the control of the project team, had adversely affected project implementation and supervision. For example, insurgent groups had established 17 checkpoints on the road between Kaga Bandoro-Ndélé and there were incidents of altercations included arms. However, the project's supervision and follow-up of UNOPS activities was insufficient that led to project implementation delays. Additionally, the project team did not take sufficient action to address the shortcomings in the results framework to better capture the project outputs and outcomes (see section 9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization below).

Overall, the quality of supervision is rated **Moderately Satisfactory**.

Quality of Supervision Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

Overall Bank Performance Rating

Moderately Unsatisfactory

9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization



a. M&E Design

The project objectives were clearly specified and sufficiently challenging for an intervention in an FCS country. The theory of change was sound, and causal links from project activities to the achievement of project outputs and outcomes were direct and valid, but it was not adequately reflected in the results framework. The indicators did not capture the outcomes expected in each project area. They were designed to capture the impact of the project on road access in the North-East region, but not in the North-West region. Intermediate results indicator measured the achievement of the outputs at project level rather than road section level. There were no specific indicators capturing the achievement of socioeconomic infrastructure or their impact on rural residents. The M&E design did not cover the project's impact on drivers of fragility. Although the indicators were measurable, time-bound, and relevant, they were not specific and some of them were not achievable as the project funds were not sufficient to implement all road rehabilitation works. The M&E arrangements were in place. The PIU was responsible for M&E, and the project was to hire an M&E specialist to support the PIU. The UNOPS in the North-East project area and contractors in the North-West project area were to provide data to the PIU for M&E implementation.

b. M&E Implementation

Planned data collection could not be carried out adequately for approximately two years because of the delay in recruiting an M&E specialist. During that period, project implementation reporting was inconsistent and the PIU's attention to effective M&E implementation was insufficient. The lack of close monitoring of rehabilitation works adversely affected the achievement and quality of the project outputs (ICR, p.21). Following the hiring of an M&E specialist in 2020, the quality of M&E implementation improved. The shortcomings in the M&E design were not addressed during project implementation. The M&E design was not modified to adequately incorporate the changes in the project scope, such as the extension of the road from Ndélé to Birao to bypass the national park. The M&E functions and processes are likely to be sustained as the WB-financed EICRP uses similar M&E arrangements.

c. M&E Utilization

M&E findings were successfully used to process a major shift in the implementation direction that resulted in early closure of the project and preparation of a new project, which overtook the rehabilitation activities that could not be implemented because of security reasons and delays in the preparation of technical studies and safeguard documents. The M&E data were sufficiently used to provide evidence for the achievement of outputs and outcomes through rehabilitation works that were partially completed in a smaller section of the project roads.

While the project successfully used M&E data to process a major shift in implementation direction, there were significant weaknesses in M&E design and implementation, and it was difficult to assess the achievement of the outcomes of all project activities and test the links in the results chain. The M&E system as designed and implemented did not capture how the project addressed the drivers of fragility in CAR. Overall, the M&E quality is rated **Modest**.



M&E Quality Rating

Modest

10. Other Issues

a. Safeguards

At appraisal, the project was classified as Category B under Environmental Assessment (OP/BP 4.01) and triggered Physical Cultural Resources (OP/BP 4.11) and Involuntary Resettlement (OP/BP 4.12) safeguard policies.

Environmental Assessment (OP/BP 4.01). The project was classified as Category B because of the potential site specific and manageable impacts of road rehabilitation and maintenance activities on the environment. The preparation of the WB safeguard policies was deferred under the OP/BP 10.00, paragraph 12 because of the emergency situation in the country. In accordance with the provisions of OP/BP 10.00, paragraph 12, an Environmental and Social Safeguards Action Plan (ESSAP) was prepared at appraisal to guide the processing of this emergency operation. A French translation of the ESSAP was disclosed in country and on the WB's InfoShop. Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIA) and Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMP) were prepared after project approval but with significant delay for the North-East section from Ndélé to Birao—the preparation of ESIA and ESMP could only start towards the end of 2019, 21 months after the grant effectiveness, because of worsening security situation. The PIU hired social and environmental safeguard specialists to ensure compliance with the safeguard policies but the onset of COVID in March 2020 adversely affected the specialists' works who had to cancel their missions to project sites. There were moderate shortcomings in enforcing the health and safety measures at project sites that resulted in minor accidents and injuries (ICR, p.23). A bypass was added to the road section in Ndélé-Birao to mitigate the environmental risk the projects posed to the Manovo-Gounda Saint Floris National Park. This bypass extended the road section by approximately 70 km. **Overall, the project complied with the requirements of the Environmental Assessment Safeguard policy with moderate shortcomings.**

Physical Cultural Resources (OP/BP 4.11). The ICR does not provide information about the implementation of this safeguard policy. In their email dated May 11, 2023, the project team commented that the project was not expected to have an impact on physical cultural resources, but this policy was triggered because of the possibility that some physical cultural resources could have been found. **This policy was not triggered during project implementation as the project did not find any physical cultural resource.**

Involuntary Resettlement (OP/BP 4.12). Because of the emergency in the country, the project financed the cost of resettlement, which was expected to be low as road works were to be carried out within the existing right-of-way. The preparation of a Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) was deferred under the OP/BP 10.00, paragraph 12 (see Environmental Assessment above). The preparation of a RAP for Ndélé-Birao section in the North-East section was delayed because of worsening security situation. The project implemented the RAP for the Kanga Bando-Mbrés-Ndélé road sections through the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). The project-affected persons' (PAPs) complaints were registered and addressed appropriately, and compensations were made to the satisfaction of the PAPs (ICR, p.22). The project provided compensation to 663 PAPs in this road section.



b. Fiduciary Compliance

Financial Management. The financial management of the project was under the Road Maintenance Fund (FER), which was not a part of the project implementation unit. The project did not hire an accountant and an external auditor within the first five months of project implementation as agreed during appraisal. There were gaps in financial management such as the use of Excel sheets for expenditure statements on a quarterly basis rather than the use of an accounting software, inconsistencies in bank statement reconciliations, in compliance in the implementation of national tax codes to expenditures. The ICR (p.20) states that “these gaps in financial management compromised the ability to provide reliable information in a timely manner for the project’s effective implementation.”

The reorganization of financial managements arrangements improved the project’s compliance with the WB’s financial management requirements. It was transferred from FER to PIU. The PIU’s financial management capacity was strengthened. Following the reorganization of the financial arrangements, project’s financial reports, external audit reports, and annual work programs were finalized and submitted to the WB according to the schedule. The PIU adequately implemented the recommendations of the external auditor and the WB’s supervision missions, but with delay. The project team reported some issues flagged by the external auditor as follows: (a) insufficient verification of UNOPS project documents and determination of exchange rates; (b) absence of inventory of fixed assets; (c) inadequate attention in requesting quotations from affiliated entities; and (d) insufficient attention to contractual payment conditions when processing invoices. The PIU took sufficient measures to address these issues. However, the PIU could not implement some recommendations of the external auditor such as insufficient control of the UNOPS designated account and in compliance with the general and special conditions of the contracts. These shortcomings are expected to be addresses under the EICRP. There were no known issues of corruption or misuse of funds associated with the project. The project team confirmed that all project funds were accounted for at project closing.

Procurement. The WB approved a procurement plan that was prepared during appraisal to cover the initial 18 months of project implementation. The project was to use the WB’s procurement guidelines, but use of national procurement arrangement was allowed in situation of urgent need of assistance or capacity constraints as described under OP/BP 10.00, paragraph 12. The project completed most of the procurement as defined in the procurement plan for activities to be implemented in the North-West region. However, the procurement of the contracts for the project activities in the North-East region was significantly delayed because of the worsening security situation in the region. Because of this delay project activities could not be completed. The PIU and UNOPS had signed a memorandum of understanding that included procurement activities, but the PIU did not have the capacity to manage the memorandum of understanding adequately. The PIU’s updating of procurement information in the Systematic Tracking of Exchanges in Procurement (STEP) system of the WB was not regular and communication with the WB on the concluded contracts was insufficient and non-existent at times. Overall, the project had significant shortcomings in complying with the WB’s procurement guidelines.

c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)



None.

d. Other

None.

11. Ratings

Ratings	ICR	IEG	Reason for Disagreements/Comment
Outcome	Moderately Unsatisfactory	Moderately Unsatisfactory	The Quality at Entry is rated Moderately Unsatisfactory because of significant shortcomings in adequately assessing the project scope and funding. The Quality of Supervision is rated Moderately Satisfactory. Per Bank guidance, the Bank Performance is rated Moderately Unsatisfactory as the project's Outcome is rated Moderately Unsatisfactory.
Bank Performance	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Unsatisfactory	
Quality of M&E	Substantial	Modest	
Quality of ICR	---	Substantial	There were significant weaknesses in M&E design and implementation, and it was difficult to assess the achievement of the outcomes of all project activities and test the links in the results chain. The M&E system as designed and implemented did not capture how the project addressed the drivers of fragility in CAR.

12. Lessons

This review has drawn three lessons based on the information in the ICR.

- **Difficulties in estimating the project scope at appraisal in an FCV country can result in a mismatch between project funds and scope, and underachievement of project outcomes.** Although the project benefited from the experience gained during the



implementation of the LCP as a pilot, the project scope could not be adequately estimated at appraisal. It was later found that the road conditions were much worse than they were estimated at appraisal. The financing gap was around US\$48.5 million, which was close to the original project budget of US\$53.4 million, which included the 70 km extension of the road between Ndélé and Birao to bypass a national park. This mismatch resulted in a reduction of the project scope; hence, some project activities could not be completed and were transferred to the EICRP.

- **Weaknesses in the design and implementation of M&E system can be insufficient in capturing a project's impact on fragility drivers in an FCV country.** The fragility drivers were defined as the widening socioeconomic gap between the elite and the rest of the population; and the total neglect of large parts of the rural population whose primary economic activity is agriculture. The project was to address these fragility drivers through the improvement of road conditions for isolated rural populations to access social and economic services and farmers to bring their produces to markets. The indicators in the results framework broadly captured these project impacts in numbers of population with access to improved roads. The results framework did not capture how effective the project's intervention was in addressing the fragility drivers. Similarly, results framework broadly captured the impact of the labor-intensive public works (LIPW) in person-day employment created. The M&E framework does not provide any data to assess the effectiveness of the LIPW on addressing the fragility drivers in the project areas. Sufficiently capturing project's such impacts is critical in FCV countries to improve the efficacy and effectiveness of future interventions through lessons learned.
- **Insufficient post-project road maintenance arrangements can jeopardize the sustainability of the improved conditions on project-rehabilitated roads and the project's impact on the rural communities.** The project was not successful in introducing community-based road maintenance organizations that were to implement day-to-day light road maintenance to maintain good road conditions. Even if such organizations were established, the government does not have sufficient funds to maintain all roads in the country. The current budget is sufficient to maintain only five percent of the roads in the country. The project did not design a maintenance strategy that would include "the government's management and financing modalities and a clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of the local communities, with a strong emphasis on ownership and accountability" (ICR, p.28). Without proper maintenance, the risk is very high that the road conditions will deteriorate, and the limited outcomes achieved as a result of the project's intervention will be lost.

13. Assessment Recommended?

No

14. Comments on Quality of ICR



The ICR provides a detailed overview of the project. It is candid and concise and follows most of the Bank Guidance and its Appendix L, Preparation of ICR in FCV Setting for IPF Operations. The report is internally consistent; there is a logical linking and integration of various parts of the report. The report is results-oriented to the extent possible given the limited availability of M&E data in an FCV context and the shortcomings in the M&E design and implementation. The Fiduciary Compliance and Safeguards sections could have benefited from a more detailed discussion. The ICR erroneously reports the Forests (OP/BP 4.36) as a triggered safeguard policy although it was not triggered. Entries in the “Lessons and Recommendations” are based on specific experiences of the project, but they are mostly in the form of findings rather than lessons or recommendations. Overall, the quality of the ICR was **Substantial**.

a. Quality of ICR Rating
Substantial