



## 1. Project Data

**Project ID**  
P086528

**Project Name**  
ZA-GEF Isimangaliso Wetland Park

**Country**  
South Africa

**Practice Area(Lead)**  
Environment & Natural Resources

**L/C/TF Number(s)**  
TF-96152

**Closing Date (Original)**  
30-Nov-2014

**Total Project Cost (USD)**  
21,700,000.00

**Bank Approval Date**  
03-Dec-2009

**Closing Date (Actual)**  
28-Feb-2017

	<b>IBRD/IDA (USD)</b>	<b>Grants (USD)</b>
Original Commitment	9,000,000.00	9,000,000.00
Revised Commitment	9,000,000.00	9,000,000.00
Actual	9,000,000.00	9,000,000.00

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## 2. Project Objectives and Components

### a. Objectives

The objective of the project, according to the grant agreement, is to improve access to information needed to select the best feasible option for maintaining the availability of fresh water of adequate quality to the Lake St. Lucia System, a wetland of global biodiversity importance, and to increase access among local communities to conservation-compatible economic opportunities (Grant Agreement, p.6).

The statement of the objective is identical in the project appraisal document (PAD, p.viii). The Lake St. Lucia System refers to the Lake St. Lucia and its estuary, in addition to the uMfolozi River and the uMfolozi-



Umsunduze footplain.

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

No

**c. Will a split evaluation be undertaken?**

No

**d. Components**

**Component 1: Hydrology and Ecosystem Functioning** (Appraisal Estimate US\$11.3 million, Actual/Latest Estimate not available in the ICR) was to ensure the restoration of Lake St. Lucia System to a state of improved ecological functioning based on evidence-based and peer-reviewed research findings. The project was to finance: (i) an analysis of alternatives to determine the most feasible solution to the hydrological issues of the Lake St Lucia System; (ii) support to follow-up actions and investments to implement the selected alternatives (contingent upon finding a feasible solution); and, (iii) support for Park Conservation Management.

**Component 2: Promoting Conservation Compatible Local Economic and Cultural Development** (Appraisal Estimate US\$6.8 million, Actual/Latest Estimate not available in the ICR) aimed to create a stronger constituency among nearby communities for supporting conservation of iSimangaliso Park. This component included: implementing a conservation-compatible small, medium and micro enterprise program; developing an education and academic support program to improve access by local youth to tertiary education fields in the area of conservation and tourism; establishing a capacity building program for nearby communities around the park to build skills and capacities of residences to participate in the parks co-management process; and create a socio-economic environment Development (SEED) program.

**Component 3: Institutional Capacity Building for Biodiversity Conservation** (Appraisal Estimate US\$1.5 million, Actual/Latest Estimate not available in the ICR). This component included financing (i) institutional capacity building for the iSimangaliso Wetland Authority and other stakeholders; and (ii) support for administrative operations of the iSimangaliso Wetland Authority.

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

**Project Cost:** The original project cost was estimated at US\$ 21.7 million. At closing, the total cost of the project was US\$ 58 million. The increase of project cost was a result of the implementation of the recommended solution to reestablish ecological integrity to the St. Lucia Lake System requiring significant infrastructure work that included the removal of dredge spoil.

**Financing:** The project was financed through a US\$ 9 million grant from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) that was fully disbursed at closure.



**Recipient Contribution:** At appraisal, the iSimangaliso Park Authority made a commitment of US\$12.7 million towards this project. At closing, the iSimangaliso Park Authority contributed a total of US\$49 million.

**Dates:** The project closing date was extended three times for a total of 27 months from November 30, 2014 to February 28, 2017. The main reason for the extension was due to delays in the completion of the Analysis of Alternative Systems report for restoration of the Lake St. Lucia System. Two additional extensions were granted on 05/30/2016 and on 09/30/2016, for a total of a 9-month extension. The implementation of the preferred solution on the Lake St. Lucia System was affected by delays in the conclusion of the study, procurement processes, and a drought.

### 3. Relevance of Objectives & Design

#### a. Relevance of Objectives

The iSimangaliso Wetland Park is a World Heritage Site with great ecological and biodiversity importance; as well as an economic asset to nearby communities. It is the third largest protected area in South Africa, covering over 328,000 ha.

The Lake St. Lucia and adjacent estuary is a dominant feature of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park, which at the time of appraisal, was under considerable threat from hydrological imbalances brought by human activities, such as sugar cane, mining, and forest plantation. Left unchecked, alterations to freshwater flows, diminishing volume of water, and increase in salinity in the Lake St. Lucia System threatened the survival of numerous wetland-dependent flora and fauna. At the time of the appraisal, there was no consensus among stakeholders on how best to preserve the Lake St. Lucia System and the estuary.

In addition, the relatively large population living in and around the iSimangaliso Wetland Park is considered primarily rural poor with 80 percent of households living below the poverty line. The population harvests the Park for subsistence natural resource. While the practices are regulated, there is a continuous need to improve employment and livelihood opportunities, particularly among youth.

The objective compliments South Africa's National Development Plan 2030, which aims to introduce policies to reduce inequality and improve job creation. The projects objective also aligns with South Africa's 2015 National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan priorities, including the need to tackle the root causes of biodiversity loss.

The South Africa's Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) (2008-2012) mostly prioritized urban and rural development while strengthening state capacity. It also prioritized the support of South Africa's public goods, in particular conserving globally significant biodiversity, supporting South Africa's efforts to mainstream biodiversity conservation into its economy (CPS 2010, p.14). In the South Africa CPS (2014-2017) current at closure, the overarching priorities focus on reducing inequality, promoting investment, and strengthening institutions. Within the priority of promoting investment, the CPS highlights the need to continue to invest in



South Africa's biodiversity conservation and wildlife management (CPS 2014, p. 23). Moreover, vocational training for low-income youth is a strategic priority within the strengthening institutions overarching priority (CPS 2014, p. 32). Finally, the current CPS also discusses the project and puts a relevant objective within the matrix (CPS 2014, p 30).

**Rating**

High

**b. Relevance of Design**

The project financed technical assistance, works, goods, training, workshops and operating costs in order to select the most adequate solution to improve the hydrology and ecosystem functioning of the Lake St. Lucia System and overall park management. Various option studies (component 1) were to enable the recipient select the most ecologically feasible solution and implement the investment for improved ecological functioning. Training, capacity building, and conservation management program to manage the parks physical assets (components 1 and 3) were to improve the management effectiveness of the park. The activities under component 2 that targeted small, medium, and micro enterprise (SMMEs) through business support services and sub-grants were expected to increase the share of conservation-compatible SMMEs that are commercially viable.

While the results framework had clear linkages between the activities and expected outcomes, the link between the outcomes and the project development objectives was weak. The objective focused on access to information and economic opportunities and could have been more explicit as to reflect the conservation-related outcomes defined in the results framework and related to the implementation of the selected investments (ICR, para. 22).

**Rating**

Modest

**4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)**

**Objective 1**

**Objective**

Improve access to information needed to select the best feasible option for maintaining the availability of fresh water of adequate quality to the Lake St. Lucia System.

**Rationale**

**Outputs:**



The Scoping Report, Wetland Restoration Options Study, the EIA Study, and the Alternative Reports were prepared. The Alternative Report provided simulation models and potential costs and benefits results for three potential scenarios to improve water quality in the Lake St. Lucia Estuary.

The socioeconomic and synthesis report was in draft form when the project closed. The project also conducted additional studies conducted by the implementing agency, including a series of management plans for dunes, estuaries, and zonation. These studies provided information to support land use planning (for example, setback lines, buffer zones) (ICR, p. 13).

As part of the project more than 62 meetings, workshops, open days, and conferences were held with a range of stakeholders (scientists, general public, farmers, ratepayers, traditional leaders, land claimants, governmental departments, and NGO representatives. An electronic newsletter was also distributed to 14,000 people every two weeks.

The project also focused on strengthening the capacity of the iSimangaliso Authority. It supported the training of park staff, studies and management plans, infrastructure support for some visitor centers, removal of invasive species (Casuarina plants from dunes), reintroducing wildlife, and labeling indigenous trees. A total of 511 people were trained (comprising of iSimangaliso staff, community members, and journalists). The types of training they received include: Environmental management Inspector (EMI) training, Legal training, GIS training, Wilderness Trails, Awareness Raising Events, and Mobile Workshop for Community Leaders.

**Outcome:**

As a result of the Alternative Report and consultation process, the broadly agreed solution to improve water quality was to remove dredge spoils. As a result, two firms removed 624,212m<sup>3</sup> of dredge spoils obstructing the natural course of the uMfolozi River (ICR, p. iii) into the Lake St. Lucia. The project also enabled iSimangaliso to leverage further funding and a total of 1,384,413 m<sup>3</sup> of dredge spoils was removed, in addition to levees blocking water flow and non-native trees in the mouth area.

The IRC does not provide information or data in terms of changes or improvement in water quality in the Lake St. Lucia System as a result of the removal of the dredge spoils. The completion of the removal of the dredge spoils was finalized in the last few months of the project.

Improvement in the iSimangaliso Wetland Park management effectiveness was measured through the GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT). Throughout the life of the project the METT improved from 71 to 80, achieving its targeted value. The ICR does not describe which elements of the METT were improved or provide any specifics about this tool.

**Rating**  
Substantial



## **Objective 2**

### **Objective**

Increase access among local communities to conservation-compatible economic opportunities.

### **Rationale**

#### **Outputs:**

Business trainings were carried out for 185 SMMEs (original target 150), of which 137 completed the program and 48 dropped out. The project also provided 106 sub-grants (original target 50) to these SMMEs to further their businesses of ZAR 7875 million.

In addition, 77 youth attended university courses related to conservation, development, and tourism. Of the 77 youth that participated, 50 or 40 graduated, 16 were still studying, and 11 left the program (ICR, p. 17). The original target at appraisal was training 30 youth (PAD, p. 45)

393 local or community leaders participated in capacity strengthening workshops to learn more about how to effectively implement co-management agreements. At appraisal, it was estimated the project to reach 200 community leaders (PAD, p. 45). There were a total of 29 co-management trust workshops implemented, of which 4 were aimed at youth (94 youth participated).

#### **Outcomes:**

At the end of the project, a qualitative rating system determined that out of the 106 SMMEs that received grants, 81 were commercially viable (77% of those that received grants or 59% of those that participated in the training; original target at appraisal was 50% or 75 SMMEs). These 81 SMMEs showed steady growth and improved operational ability or stable (ICR, p. iv).

The ICR explains that not all SMMEs that were provided business training and grants were working on specific environmental or conservation businesses. Instead, to be part of the program, the business simply had to not be environmentally damaging (ICR, p. 20).

Over 50 students graduated from tertiary classes on development, conservation and tourism. The ICR provided information on 22 out of the 50 that completed the course (almost 50%). In early 2016, out of the 22 students tracked down, 13 had employment, 3 were continuing on postgraduate studies, and 7 had internship programs in the iSimangaliso Wetland Park.

### **Rating**

Substantial

## **5. Efficiency**



The PAD determined that a full economic and financial analysis was not applicable for the entire project. Instead, an incremental cost analysis was developed for some of the activities in the first two components. In Component 1, it was determined that the Alternative Reports would take into account economic and financial considerations before a chosen solution to improve water quality. For Component 2, only SMMEs that had a commercially viable business plans would be eligible for sub-grants (PAD, 17).

At the end of the project, the ICR makes assertions to support the projects efficiency based on qualitative aspects that are not strictly measures of economic efficiency. For example, it refers to the high quality of technical staff under component 1 and the increased level of counterpart funding needed to implement the selected investment as measures of efficiency, or describing stakeholder interactions as efficient. The ICR could have attempted to carry out a cost-benefit analysis and estimate benefits expected from removing the dredge soil implemented under the project. A cost-effectiveness analysis could have been done for Component 2 comparing the scholarship program with other alternatives or cost-benefit ratio, instead of just indicating that the scholarship program funded 2.2 times the target number of youth.

There was a 27-month delay in the project that affected the efficiency rating. The delays of the reports postponed the actual implementation of the agreeable solution. Some of the delays with regards to the study were caused by poor quality of hydrological data managed by the Department of Water. The project also experienced additional delays due to the need to go through two procurement processes, instead of one, to identify a firm to remove the dredge spoils. The first bid process failed, and it was necessary to re-tender the work (ICR, p. 31). According to the implementing agency, there were also delays in receiving funds from the Bank.

### 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 (%)
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 objective is highly relevant to the country's environmental challenges and Bank's strategy. Relevance of



design is rated modest for weak linkages between the expected outcomes and the objective that focuses on access. The achievement of the two project objectives is rated substantial. Evidence based and scientific information, shared with a range of diverse stakeholders, informed and led to the process of reconnecting the uMfolozi River to the St. Lucia Lake system. Entrepreneurs leading SMMEs and youth studying at the tertiary level gained more access to conservation-compatible economic opportunities. Efficiency is rated modest for lack of sufficient justification of economic efficiency and a 27 month delay partly due to factors that were under the control of the project. The overall project outcome rating becomes moderately satisfactory.

**a. Outcome Rating**  
Moderately Satisfactory

## 7. Rationale for Risk to Development Outcome Rating

**Government Commitment:** The commitment by the iSimangaliso Park Authority was strong to the project and the relinking of the uMfolozi River to the St. Lucia Lake system is completed. There was political commitment to leverage and raise additional funding from other sources to finalize the completion of the relinking of the river to the Lake. This is an important indication of the potential of the iSimangaliso Wetland Authority and local government to continue to fundraise for further conservation programs.

**Local Capacity:** A large number of stakeholders were consulted throughout this process in over 62 events held with the community, 106 SMMEs received sub-grants, and 50 youth completed additional training in the area of conservation, development, and tourism. There is also some evidence in the ICR that the implementing agency's capacity has improved, and that it has integrated new ideas and concepts into its overall conservation strategy and implementation plans. The low turnover of staff in the Authority is another indication of the likelihood that investments on staff capacity will materialize after the project has been completed and remain within the Park.

**Environmental.** It is not yet clear what impact the preferred solution had on the water quality of the St. Lucia System. Improvement of water quality will have to be assessed independently in order to determine whether the project met the overarching objective or goal of the project.

**a. Risk to Development Outcome Rating**  
Substantial

## 8. Assessment of Bank Performance

**a. Quality-at-Entry**

The World Bank participated actively in the design phase, according to the ICR. Several background studies





were conducted in the preparation phase that informed the design of the project. Consultative meetings were also held starting in 2008 with a range of stakeholders to better understand the challenges faced by the iSimangaliso Park. A safeguard workshop was held prior to appraisal on November 2008.

The project also built on key results, experiences, and lessons learned from similar projects that aimed to combine conservation and socioeconomic development activities. Key lessons incorporated into the design, included a) involving key stakeholders throughout the life of the project b) integrate income improvement activities for local community c) work with existing governance structure and d) the holistic management of watershed is important to take into account, including analyzing both the lower and upper parts of the watershed.

The activities under each component were reasonable to achieving the projects objective. That said, as discussed in the Relevance of Design and M&E sections in more detail, there were weaknesses in the result framework related to the linkages between access and conservation-oriented outcome indicators.

### **Quality-at-Entry Rating**

Moderately Satisfactory

#### **b. Quality of supervision**

There were 11 supervision missions to South Africa by the World Bank during the life of the project. The implementing agency stated that the support from the World Bank was consistent and professional from the design to the implementation stage (IRC, p. 31).

The scheduled external midterm evaluation was cancelled, and an internal midterm review was conducted instead. The midterm review concluded that the project design continued to be relevant and it recommended an 18-month project extension due to delays in the reports. Additional audits and assessments included: internal annual self- assessment, assessment of environmental and social impact, protected area management effectiveness evaluation, external implementation completion review, and annual internal and external audits. Overall, the project experienced a 27-month delay. In hindsight, a scoping study could have been cancelled in favor of the Analysis of Alternatives (ICR, para. 74).

The World Bank provided fiduciary training to the implementation team and support during the supervision missions. Support was given to the iSimangaliso Authority on procurement. The Authority indicated challenges in the financial management process and expressed difficulties with the high turnover of World Bank staff in the financial management, and a lengthy process to obtain financial clearance.

### **Quality of Supervision Rating**

Moderately Satisfactory

### **Overall Bank Performance Rating**



Moderately Satisfactory

## 9. Assessment of Borrower Performance

### a. Government Performance

The Government of South Africa participated in project preparation and consultations. It also supported the project by legislating and clarifying the rights and duties of the iSimangaliso Authority and the KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Authority with respect to the management and development of the park. The agreement to work collaboratively and to assist each other to improve the enhancement of the park was effective throughout the life of the project, according to the ICR. The Department of Environmental Affairs and representatives from the South Africa National Park attended the final project meeting. The government of South Africa was also involved in the participation and communication plan to engage diverse stakeholders throughout the project.

#### Government Performance Rating

Satisfactory

### b. Implementing Agency Performance

The iSimangaliso Authority was the implementing agency. The iSimangaliso Authority showed characteristics of high level of capacity, thoroughness and attention to detail (IRC, p. 22). Its commitment to the project is demonstrated by their ability to secure alternative funds to start Component 2, while GEF disbursements were delayed.

Throughout the life of the project, the implementing agency hired additional technical officers and 13 interns, of which 9 were eventually employed. The Authority sought to work with known consultants and specialists and encouraged them to apply to competitive tender processes. The ICR shows no indication that there were any conflicts or complications operating and working with the Authority.

That said, there were delays in the project when it came to the completion of the studies and procurement processes.

#### Implementing Agency Performance Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

#### Overall Borrower Performance Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

## 10. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization

### a. M&E Design

The M&E design was supported by three outcome indicators. The first outcome indicator is a binary indicator



that aims to measure to what extent action and investments contributed to the agreed hydrological solution. The indicator is redundant, as the whole project was designed in order to take action. The second indicator measured iSimangaliso Wetland Park Managements effectiveness through the GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (MET). While this is a useful proxy indicator, the target score was achieved in 2014 if the target was met, it would have been useful to revise the target. Moreover this indicator does not adequately measure whether the implementing partner increased its capacity. Finally, the third outcome indicator aims to show whether the SMMEs were commercially viable. However, commercial viability was defined only as not degrading environmental and natural resources. This narrow definition does not adequately measure whether neighboring communities had increased access to economic opportunities. Overall these outcome indicators measure did not effectively measure the objectives.

The M&E plan included conducting internal annual self-assessments to review the stakeholders' performance against the work plan, assessment of environmental and social impact, a protected area management effectiveness evaluation (conducted as baseline, midterm and final), midterm evaluation, ICR, and annual audits.

## **b. M&E Implementation**

A baseline for the environmental, socio, and economic components was carried out. The agency collected both qualitative and quantitative data throughout the project.

According to the PAD (PAD, p. 43), the outcome level indicators were supposed to be measured as follows:

- **PDO 1:** Evidence of implementation of follow up actions and investments contributing to the agreed hydrological solution was assessed once a year through an interview during the Supervision Mission. The World Bank was responsible for collecting this data.
- **PDO 2:** The GEF Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (MET) consists of 30 questions related to different aspects of protected area management. Data was collected through the baseline, midterm and final report. The Implementing agency was responsible for data collection
- **PDO 3:** Comercial viability of the SMMEs was accessed through a survey that the iSimangaliso Authority distributed to the SMMEs. This survey was distributed at baseline, midterm, and final report.

The GEF project coordinator was responsible for supervising data collection, which was conducted by the implementing agency's staff or contractors. The implementing partner held biannual strategic meetings and produced a quarterly business plan report.

## **c. M&E Utilization**

The ICR states that the M&E was integrated into the broader management, planning and monitoring frameworks of the Authority. (ICR, p. 9). However, the ICR does not describe how data or information were used to inform decisions regarding implementation of project activities.



## M&E Quality Rating

Modest

## 11. Other Issues

### a. Safeguards

South Africa was selected to participate in the Pilot Program for Use of Country Systems (UCS) under OP 4.00. This was the first project in South Africa to be piloting this program and the second one in Africa. South Africa was chosen as a pilot because it has an established legal and regulatory system and a favorable reputation for effective implementation of its systems governing EA, protection of natural habitats (NH), protected areas, and physical cultural resources (PCR). It is also the first UCS pilot that is a GEF operation.

The project was classified under Environmental Category B Partial Assessment. At appraisal, it triggered the following safeguards Environmental Assessment OP 4.01, Natural Habitats OP 4.04, Physical Cultural Resources OP 4.11, Involuntary Resettlement OP 4.12 (PAD, p. 20) A Safeguard Diagnostic Review (SDR) was developed in May 2009 and finalized before project appraisal.

The ICR reports that compliance with environmental and social safeguards was satisfactory throughout the project period (ICR, p. 10). The ICR does not include detailed information on what actions the recipient undertook to mitigate any potential harm that the safeguards may have triggered. It does not provide any information on whether subprojects triggered environmental or social safeguards. The ICR states actions relating to the (EA, NH, PCR) were outlined in the PIM (IRC 10). It adds that on 2013, a Compliance with Safeguard Policies report described ongoing satisfactory compliance with the safeguards. The ICR does not provide information on authorship of the Compliance Report, and whether conducted internally or externally. Important activities that may have impacted the safeguards took place after 2013 but the ICR does not mention whether there was a follow up compliance report or not.

### b. Fiduciary Compliance

A Financial Management Assessment of the iSimangaliso Authority classified the implementing agency's financial management risk at moderate and the financial management arrangement satisfied the World Bank's OP/OB 10.02 minimum requirements. All audits of the financial statements were unqualified. For the most part of the seven years of this project disbursements remained steady, although there were some delays.

Procurement was done according to the South African Public Finance Management Act of 1999 and followed the Guidelines: Procurement under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits, dated May 2004 and revised on October 2006. A procurement plan was updated at least annually and in 2010 the implementing agency received a procurement training. A Post Procurement Review and the MTR found procurement processes to be sufficient and meeting World Bank's requirements. While the iSimangaliso Park followed all procurement compliances,



there were delays in procurement processes and there were administrative challenges in procuring equipment needed to support the small enterprises. The delays in procurement delayed the project by several months. There was a need to carry out a second tender.

**c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)**

Note Applicable

**d. Other**

Not Applicable

**12. Ratings**

Ratings	ICR	IEG	Reason for Disagreements/Comment
Outcome	Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	Relevance of objectives is rated high, and that of design is modest. Two objectives were sufficiently achieved but the efficiency is assessed as modest.
Risk to Development Outcome	Substantial	Substantial	---
Bank Performance	Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	IEG agrees with the ICR on moderately satisfactory rating for quality at entry. Supervision is rated moderately satisfactory for moderate shortcomings that affected the project's efficiency.
Borrower Performance	Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	Performance of IA is rated moderately satisfactory for moderate shortcomings that affected the project's efficiency.
Quality of ICR		Substantial	---

**Note**

When insufficient information is provided by the Bank for IEG to arrive at a clear rating, IEG will downgrade the relevant ratings as warranted beginning July 1, 2006.

The "Reason for Disagreement/Comments" column could cross-reference other sections of the ICR Review, as



appropriate.

### 13. Lessons

IEG selected three lessons from the ICR, with some adaptation of the language:

- **Scientific Research Can Delay Project Timelines.** It is imperative that evidence-based decisions are based on reliable scientific data, particularly when it involves ecological and biodiversity projects. However, setbacks in data collection and completion of studies led to significant delays in the project. Therefore, it is important to adequately identify the complexity of the study, duration, and the potential delays during the design phase so that it does not affect project timelines.
- **Designing Multi-Pronged Approach Projects to Improve Conservation.** The multi-pronged approach of this project included physical restoration of water system, increasing socio-economic opportunities, and strengthening institutional capacities. This approach ensures that the project is addressing several root causes related to conservation are addressed holistically.
- **Integrated Implementation Arrangements Increase Ownership.** This project design was created in partnership and with the involvement of the implementing agency. By working together at the design state with the key stakeholders, the iSimangaliso Authority was able to identify and prioritize challenges and opportunities of entry to address major long-term threats to the Park. The approach to integrate the project management and ownership within an existing conservation institution, instead of an independent group, contributed to strengthening capacities, efficiency, and effectiveness. It also prevented institutional silos, enabled better communication, and led to sustainability initiatives such as: the integration of the DMP, Zonation Plan, and the Estuarine Management Plan into the Parks Integrated Management Plan (ICR, p. 23).

### 14. Assessment Recommended?

Yes

Please explain

This project is considered a pilot at the World Bank within the conservation portfolio projects. It has a unique theory of change that integrates of a multi-pronged approach to address major long-term threats to the iSimangaliso Parks hydrological system. Given the emphasis on the socio-economic components to enable



the communities support of the Park and the relatively little evidence provided on the impact that Component 2 had, it would be good candidate for further assessment. In particular, it would be important to assess the sustainability of SMMEs, the potential role of the youth as the Parks ambassadors, and whether these components had an impact curving key and ongoing threats to water quality, such as mining and deforestation. Answering these critical questions, would enable the Bank to further hone its design of conservation projects and learn more about how best to integrate socio-economic opportunities that can help with conservation efforts.

In addition, an assessment would be important to determine if the removal of the dredge spoil in the St. Lucia Estuary was the appropriate intervention to improve the ecological functioning of the Park.

## **15. Comments on Quality of ICR**

The ICR is clearly written, concise and well organized. The ICR identifies useful lessons for similar projects and is upfront about some of the shortcomings of the project. It would have been helpful if the ICR provided more qualitative data to support descriptive narratives, particularly related to the outcome of the SMEEs in the socio-economic components. The ICR provided only limited qualitative evidence around efficiency of the project. The ICR alludes to the fact that more qualitative data was collected that measured the outcome and impact of the activities, but the data is not thoroughly incorporated into the ICR. A baseline and an internal midterm were conducted, but baseline data is not included in the ICR.

The ICR does not provide sufficient information on how safeguards were mitigated or actions taken by the South African Government or the implementing agency. It would have been helpful if the ICR also had a more detailed explanation of the M&R implementation and utilization, and all indicators were disaggregated based on sex.

### **a. Quality of ICR Rating** Substantial