

# Evaluation of the Implementation of the AfDB's One Bank Approach

## Summary Report

Corporate evaluations

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## Acknowledgments

<b>Task Manager(s)</b>	Leticia Fordiani Taimo Jansen, Senior Evaluation Officer, IDEV 2 Mohammed Jalaludeen Issahaq, Principal Evaluation Officer, IDEV 1
<b>Team Member(s)</b>	Bilal Bagayoko, Evaluation Officer, IDEV 2
<b>Consultant(s)</b>	Ernst & Young France: Arnauld Bertrand, Jeremie None, Romane Gerardin, Thomas Baussard, Juliette Cohen-Jonathan
<b>Internal Peer Reviewer (s)</b>	Andrew Anguko, Chief Quality and Methods, IDEV 0; AbdulKareem Lawal, Senior Consultant, Evaluation Quality Assurance, IDEV 0; Joseph Mouanda, Chief Evaluation Officer, IDEV1; Girma Kumbi, Chief Evaluation Officer, IDEV 2
<b>External Peer Reviewer(s)</b>	Steve Kayizzi-Mugerwa
<b>Internal Bank Reference Group</b>	<p><b>Presidency (PRST/URPR):</b> Fathallah El-Guernaoui, Principal Legal Counsel, Public Sector Operations, Policy, and Governance; Faith Wanjiku Kamau, Senior Legal Counsel, Private Sector; Caterina Mattioli, Senior Legal Counsel, Private Sector (PGCL); Adewale Edoho Iyanda, Chief Corporate Governance Policy/Shareholder; Chioma Onukogu, Director (PSEG.0). <b>Senior Vice-President's Office (SNVP):</b> Felicia Avwontom, Division Manager, Business Process Reengineering, SNBT.1; Dominique Puthod, Chief Strategy &amp; Policy Officer, SNSP.1; Richard Schiere, Chief Quality Assurance Officer; Helmi Hmaidi, Quality Results and Monitoring Officer (SNDR.3); Amira Mosad Elmissiry, Chief Accountability Officer; Charles Mulingi, Principal Results Specialist; Ihcen Naceur, Principal Results Officer (SNDR.1); Spankie Sefiwa Boitumelo, Chief Performance Management Partner, SNDR.2; Emmanuel Kwadzo Boafor, Chief Program and Budget Officer, SNPB.0. <b>Regional Development, Integration and Business Delivery Complex (RDVP):</b> Gertrude Phiri, Lead Specialist Budget Results and Business, RDSA; Gassia Assadourian, Chief Program Officer &amp; MIC-TAF Coordinator, RDSA; Helio Bertachini Neto, Principal Quality, Results and Monitoring Officer, SNDR.3/RDGS; Bruno Boedts, Operations Manager, RDGW.4. <b>Economic Governance and Knowledge Management (ECVP):</b> Ann Dao Sow, Division Manager, ECAD.1; Ferdinand Bakoup, Lead Economist, ECSA. <b>Finance (FIVP):</b> Densil Magume, Adviser to the VP, FISA; Veronica Giardina, Chief Resource Mobilization &amp; Partnerships, FIRM.1. <b>Private Sector, Infrastructure, and Industrialization (PIVP):</b> El Hadj Mamadou Bah, Chief Policy Economist, PISD.1; Cheick Mohamed Lemine, Chief Portfolio Management Officer, PINS.2. <b>People &amp; Talent Management (PTVP):</b> Taurai Musakaruka, Advisor to the VP; Olukanyinsola Tanidabi Oyewole, Special Assistant to VP (PTSA). <b>Business Continuity &amp; Corporate Services (TCVP):</b> Mary Cherwon, Principal Business Continuity Officer, TCBC. <b>Staff Council (SCO):</b> Foster Nicholas Ofosu, SCO President; Jerome Berndt, SCO Representative</p>
<b>Knowledge Management and Communications Officers</b>	Jacqueline Nyagahima, Principal Knowledge Management Officer; Arsène Birindwa, Communications Consultant (IDEV.3)
<b>Division Manager</b>	Madhusoodhanan Mampuzhasseril, IDEV.2
<b>Evaluator-General</b>	Karen Rot-Munstermann

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>AfDB</b>	African Development Bank Group	<b>PIVP</b>	Private Sector, Infrastructure and Industrialization Vice Presidency
<b>AsDB</b>	Asian Development Bank	<b>PTCS</b>	Corporate Services and People Development Complex
<b>ATRS</b>	Activity Time Recording System	<b>PTVP</b>	People and Talent Vice Presidency
<b>BDU</b>	Business Delivery Unit	<b>RDSA</b>	Regional Development and Business Delivery Office for Southern Africa
<b>CoP</b>	Community of Practice	<b>RDVP</b>	Regional Development, Integration and Business Delivery Complex
<b>CSP</b>	Country Strategy Paper	<b>RMF</b>	Results Measurement Framework
<b>CSPE</b>	Country Strategy and Program Evaluation	<b>SLA</b>	Service-Level Agreement
<b>DAM</b>	Delegation of Authority Matrix	<b>SMCC</b>	Senior Management Coordination Committee
<b>DBDM</b>	Development and Business Delivery Model	<b>SCO</b>	Staff Council Office
<b>ECSA</b>	Office of the VP for Economic Governance and Knowledge Management	<b>SO</b>	Sovereign Operation
<b>ECVP</b>	Chief Economist/VP for Economic Governance and Knowledge Management	<b>SBPB</b>	Program and Budgeting Department
<b>FIVP</b>	Vice Presidency for Finance	<b>SNBT</b>	Business Transformation Department
<b>GCI</b>	General Capital Increase	<b>SNPB</b>	Programming and Budget Department
<b>HQ</b>	Headquarters	<b>SNVP</b>	Senior Vice President
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources	<b>SRAS</b>	Strategic Resource Assessment Software
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology	<b>TCVP</b>	Technology and Corporate Service Vice Presidency
<b>IDEV</b>	Independent Development Evaluation	<b>ToC</b>	Theory of Change
<b>IT</b>	Information Technology	<b>TM</b>	Task Manager
<b>IDB</b>	Inter-American Development Bank	<b>TSF</b>	Transition Support Fund
<b>IsDB</b>	Islamic Development Bank	<b>TYS</b>	Ten-Year Strategy of the African Development Bank
<b>KPI</b>	Key Performance Indicator	<b>UA<sup>1</sup></b>	Unit of Account
<b>MDB</b>	Multilateral Development Bank	<b>UDAP</b>	Updated Decentralization Action Plan
<b>NSO</b>	Non-Sovereign Operation	<b>WBG</b>	World Bank Group
<b>OBA</b>	One Bank Approach		
<b>PD</b>	Presidential Directive		
<b>PEVP</b>	Power, Energy, Climate and Green Growth Vice Presidency		
<b>RMC</b>	Regional Member Country		
<b>PGCL</b>	Office of General Counsel and Legal Services		

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Unit of Account (UA) = 1,32647 United States Dollars (USD) as at the month of May 2025

# Executive Summary

## Background and Context

This summary report presents an evaluation of the Implementation of the One Bank Approach (OBA) of the African Development Bank Group (AfDB or 'the Bank'), focusing on the implementation of the workstreams and actions identified in *Delivering as One Bank – Strengthening Accountabilities for Delivering Quality and Development Impact in a Matrix Organization* (February 2020). The evaluation, initiated in 2023 by Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV), forms part of a broader series of corporate evaluations, including evaluations of human resource (HR) management ([HR1](#) and [HR2](#)), [decentralization](#), and a [comparative study of multilateral development bank \(MDB\) operating models](#). Collectively, these evaluations aim to strengthen accountability and improve the Bank's effectiveness and efficiency.

The AfDB's OBA has evolved over two decades as a response to the need for greater coherence, efficiency, and impact in delivering development results for Regional Member Countries (RMCs). While first referenced in the 2010 Bank Group Annual Report, its roots lie in earlier initiatives such as the 2003 Results Measurement Framework and subsequent quality improvement reforms.

The 2008 global financial crisis highlighted vulnerabilities in global development progress, reversing gains in poverty reduction and exacerbating income inequality. In response, the Bank recognized the urgency of redefining its role and strengthening its operating model, as RMCs increasingly looked to the AfDB for technical and intellectual leadership in a rapidly changing development landscape. By the early 2010s, it was evident that the Bank also had to transform its operations to remain relevant. This required rethinking its modalities at both country and regional levels, improving access to resources, strengthening collaboration across the Bank Group, and deploying staff more strategically between headquarters and field offices. RMC authorities consistently urged the Bank to assume its "rightful place" as Africa's apex development finance institution and to lead the continent's development agenda.

Momentum for the OBA accelerated with the adoption of the Development and Business Delivery Model (DBDM) in 2016, which restructured the Bank around five institutional pillars. An [IDEV evaluation of the DBDM](#) (2019)

confirmed both progress and persisting challenges. In response, the Bank's Management endorsed the evaluation findings and formalized the OBA in the 2020 *Delivering as One Bank* document. This defined the OBA's principles – quality, delivery, and joint accountability – and introduced five workstreams: business processes, people management, budget management, tools for joint accountability, and change management and communication. The aim of the OBA is to "increase the Bank's efficiency and development effectiveness by strengthening accountabilities for results and breaking down the institutional silos that hamper performance."<sup>2</sup>

To guide this evaluation, IDEV reconstructed a Theory of Change (ToC) for the OBA. The ToC describes how the five workstreams are expected to generate outcomes. Implementation of the workstreams is intended to produce intermediate results such as a) stronger incentive structures, strategies, systems, and processes; b) greater synergies across sector departments; c) improved knowledge management; and d) better integration of sovereign and non-sovereign operations. These outcomes are expected to enable more effective use of the Bank's financing windows to deliver integrated solutions. Staff will be incentivized to prioritize such corporate integrated solutions, while RMCs will increasingly view the Bank as a provider of these solutions. Ultimately, the OBA aims to help the Bank respond more effectively to RMC investment and development needs, thereby achieving a stronger impact on Africa's development.

## Evaluation Purpose, Scope and Methodology

The **purpose** of this evaluation is to provide actionable findings and lessons for the Bank's Management and Board of Directors on the implementation and results of the OBA since its formalization in March 2020. The **scope** covered the period from April 2020 to April 2025 and assessed the OBA's **relevance, coherence, effectiveness, and efficiency**.

The evaluation addressed six questions:

- (1) To what extent do the five workstreams collectively, and the actions under each of them, align with (or add value to) the AfDB's

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<sup>2</sup> Delivering as One Bank, p.4

institutional context (strategies, organizational culture, etc.)?

- (2) To what extent are the five workstreams coherent with other ongoing reform processes in the Bank, such as decentralization, delegation of authority, and various HR reforms?
- (3) To what extent have actions under the five workstreams been timeously implemented as planned?
- (4) To what extent have the five workstreams, and the actions under them, achieved their intended short-term and longer-term impacts?
- (5) What are the main factors that facilitated or impeded the implementation of (the actions under) the five workstreams and achievement of the intended results?
- (6) What are the lessons to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of the One Bank Approach?

**The methodology is a process evaluation anchored on a ToC.** A mixed-method approach drew on multiple data sources: a) document review; b) interviews with 240 stakeholders; c) nine country and regional case studies; d) a staff survey with 410 responses; and e) a benchmarking exercise comparing the AfDB model with peer multilateral banks, informed by [IDEV's 2024 Comparative Study of Multilateral Development Bank Operating Models](#).

**Limitations:** As most actions under the workstreams were recently implemented, performance data were insufficient to assess long-term outcomes. To address this, the team relied on document reviews to reconstruct the ToC, conducted representative case studies, and strategically planned country visits. The evaluation also mitigated overlaps with other AfDB evaluations and studies by leveraging existing findings and tailoring data collection to avoid duplication and stakeholder fatigue.

## Findings

### Relevance

**The evaluation found that the OBA is well aligned with the AfDB's strategic direction.** It shares objectives and actions with the GCI-VII<sup>3</sup> proposal—particularly in business processes, people management, and accountability—and supports the Bank's 2024–2033 Ten-Year Strategy, especially in advancing institutional effectiveness, integrated delivery, and client

responsiveness. The Strategy explicitly references the OBA, introduced in 2020, as a key reform to improve coherence and responsiveness to client needs.

This alignment was confirmed by both document reviews and stakeholder interviews. Stakeholders highlighted OBA's role in operationalizing strategic priorities, such as delivery, regional integration, and responsiveness to evolving RMC needs. Survey respondents also emphasized its contribution to fostering integrated planning and delivery across sector departments and regional operations. By promoting a unified institutional model, the OBA strengthens collaboration, client orientation, and the Bank's capacity to address complex development challenges.

The OBA was found to have articulated a coherent reform agenda with defined actions and monitoring tools, many of which informed subsequent initiatives. At the corporate level, it addressed long-standing weaknesses – poor coordination, fragmented communication, and limited efficiency – highlighted in earlier IDEV evaluations. At the action level, it avoided duplication by building on existing strategies and fostering synergies across workstreams, with change management emerging as a central enabler of success.

Compared with similar initiatives in other MDBs, the OBA was found to be broader in scope. It covers not only business processes and joint accountability but also HR, budget, and change management, while incorporating approaches found in peers: empowerment of regional and country offices in business delivery (e.g., Asian Development Bank "AsDB"), use of service-level agreements (SLAs) for coordination (e.g., Islamic Development Bank "IsDB"), and cross-team collaboration in country strategies (e.g., Inter-American Development Bank "IDB" and World Bank Group "WBG").

However, the evaluation identified gaps that limited the OBA's feasibility and relevance. Institutional interdependencies, external shocks such as COVID-19, shortcomings in alignment of key performance indicators (KPIs), limited integration of technology, and weak performance monitoring and evaluation were found to have created challenges. For example, the evaluation found that while KPIs were established, refined and cascaded down, the design of those KPIs did not differentiate sufficiently, considering the specificities of NSOs and the incentives to support collaboration between different team

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<sup>3</sup> The Seventh General Capital Increase of the African Development Bank

members working on an operation. Staff also reported gaps in understanding the OBA's purpose and mechanisms. Despite these challenges, the five workstreams were found to be highly relevant and necessary to advance the AfDB's reform agenda.

### Coherence

**The evaluation found that the OBA was largely coherent with other ongoing reform processes at the Bank, including the 2020 Performance Management Framework and the 2021 People Strategy.** These HR reforms, although introduced after the OBA, were found to reinforce its focus on joint accountability through mechanisms such as shared KPIs, signaling consistency in the Bank's transformation agenda. However, challenges remain in practice, such as ensuring that staff contributions are fairly recognized across units. The implementation of shared KPIs was also found to be uneven, with some departments not fully integrating these indicators into their performance evaluations. Interviews suggested that the lack of an institutional mechanism to share KPIs among staff working in different departments or complexes but contributing to the same project hampered collaboration.

The evaluation also found that several OBA workstreams demonstrate coherence with key GC1-VII commitments, notably in strengthening quality assurance and improving budget processes, which reinforces the OBA's link to the Bank's strategic priorities.

The OBA was also found to support decentralization efforts in theory; however, in practice, challenges exist. The OBA was designed to support the Updated Decentralization Action Plan (UDAP, 2016) through a matrix structure with dual reporting lines intended to enhance cross-functional collaboration and improve coherence between headquarters and field offices. In practice, however, staff interviews indicated that the structure did not sufficiently clarify roles and responsibilities, leading to confusion. The evaluation identified misalignments and sequencing issues as factors that have hindered the OBA's contribution to decentralization. Uneven workloads across regional offices, insufficient delegation of authority to Directors General, Deputy Directors General, and country managers, and unclear decision-making processes were found to constrain effective coherence between the two initiatives. Furthermore, staff perceptions suggest that the OBA may not fully align with broader reforms such as the DBDM and UDAP, as its implementation appears to have shifted authority

and resources toward HQ-based departments, contributing to operational ambiguities and workload pressures in regional offices.

### Effectiveness

The OBA was expected to improve the Bank's effectiveness by streamlining business processes, fostering collaboration across departments and regional offices, strengthening accountability through shared KPIs, delivering more integrated solutions to clients through improved internal and external coordination, improving budget management, and implementing change management and communication.

**The evaluation found that the Bank has made significant progress since 2020 in streamlining its business processes as part of the reforms to deliver as One Bank. However, operational, institutional and corporate procedures remain lengthy and complex.** While the business process workstream led reforms, other initiatives also contributed to improved cohesion. Despite these efforts, approval procedures remain cumbersome. For instance, data from the Bank's Annual Development Effectiveness Reviews indicate that the time from concept note to first disbursement increased from 22 months in 2019 to 24 months in 2024, suggesting the need for further simplification.

**The evaluation also found that the OBA contributed to positive organizational cultural shifts (i.e. shared values, norms, and behaviors that shape how staff collaborate, make decisions, and engage with clients). Specifically, improvements were noted in cross-departmental collaboration, improved communication between sector departments and regional offices, and a growing sense of joint accountability.** However, these changes were deemed uneven across the institution. Some units aligned well with OBA principles, while others remained siloed. Incentive structures were also found to remain insufficiently aligned to effectively support the readiness and willingness of teams to work as One Bank.

**The evaluation found that while staff broadly supported the OBA in principle, its implementation was inconsistent across the institution. Interviews and survey responses highlighted the need for clearer internal communication, more targeted training, and simplified operational procedures.** These gaps underscore the importance of strengthening change management, which is critical to the success of all OBA-related reforms. Some important challenges—such as staffing gaps, weak incentives, and limited focus on client

needs – also limited staff’s capacity to collaborate effectively.

**The Bank’s focus on integrated solutions for RMCs was found to produce mixed results.**

Persistent challenges in interdepartmental cooperation – particularly among sector departments – reflected structural and behavioral barriers to collaboration. A key issue was the lack of formal incentives for Task Managers to coordinate beyond individual projects, which limited integrated operations and weakened development outcomes. However, the evaluation also noted improvements in the Bank’s collaboration with other development partners since the launch of the OBA, and clarification of responsibilities helped clients to identify their counterparts within the Bank.

As part of OBA implementation, the Bank has undertaken a transition to product-based budgeting grounded in agreed and accurate cost coefficients. **The evaluation found that budget reforms promoted a culture of results and transparency but raised concerns about alignment.** Sector departments gained greater control over budget allocation, which they welcomed, but which country office and regional staff perceived as risk-averse and insufficiently responsive to regional and Non-Sovereign Operation (NSO) needs. Case studies and interviews highlighted risks of misalignment with regional priorities and reduced flexibility for cross-sector collaboration, especially for transactions requiring rapid coordination.

**The evaluation identified several key actions taken to improve management and internal communication.** Most notably, in 2020, the AfDB developed a change management approach built on three pillars: standardization of tools and processes, development of management skills, and fostering ownership among staff. However, despite a robust approach and framework, **the evaluation found that the implemented actions have been insufficient to lead to significant change in the work culture**, which would result in the expected outcomes of the OBA.

**Finally, the evaluation identified unintended consequences of the OBA, such as operational inefficiencies, increased complexity, and specific challenges for NSOs,** as pointed out in staff interviews and survey responses. The dual reporting structure was found to create confusion over lines of authority, adding stress for staff. Also, the multiplication of departments and points of contact, especially in NSO teams, complicated coordination and contributed to bottlenecks. Finally, sectoral budget control was sometimes seen as poorly

aligned with dynamic operational (such as those required by NSOs) needs, highlighting a tension between operational agility and financial prudence.

### Efficiency

**The evaluation found that the actions under the five OBA workstreams were either completed or in progress.** By April 2025, nine of the 21 main actions had been completed, five were ongoing, and seven had been launched as continuous initiatives without fixed end dates. **However, only half of the 14 time-bound actions were completed on schedule**, with delays concentrated in the people management workstream. In contrast, budget management and joint accountability reforms advanced more efficiently.

**Several factors were found to have contributed to delays.** Interdependencies created "chain delays": for instance, the late adoption of the One Bank Delegation of Authority Matrix (DAM) postponed updates to operational manuals and Information Technology (IT) systems. The 2021 OBA Progress Report also flagged delays in delivering key guidance documents and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) platforms. In addition, the Bank’s policy design process – marked by extensive consultation – slowed progress, particularly on staff mobility guidelines. Complex actions were often underestimated, leading to missed deadlines, while external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic further constrained timely implementation by limiting staff mobility and transfers. In addition, the rollout of the *Delivering as One Bank* document in early 2020 coincided with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, limiting staff engagement and ability to collaborate more widely as attention was shifted to crisis response.

**Weaknesses were also identified in monitoring and managing OBA implementation.** Shortcomings in monitoring frameworks were found to reduce the Bank’s ability to track progress and address issues in a timely manner. Although the 2020 *Delivering as One Bank* document committed to dedicated monitoring and reporting tools, the evaluation found that these were either not fully operational or not systematically used.

### Conclusion

The evaluation concludes that the OBA has become a defining reform in the AfDB’s journey toward greater institutional integration and responsiveness. Its strength lies in aligning with the Bank’s strategic aspirations and fostering a unified culture of delivery. Through its five

workstreams – business processes, people management, budget management, joint accountability, and change management – it has established a foundation for greater coherence and cross-functional collaboration. Staff recognize its value in addressing long-standing coordination and accountability gaps.

However, the evaluation shows that strategic alignment alone does not deliver transformation. Implementation progress has been uneven, shaped by structural tensions and cultural complexities. The experience with the OBA highlights that design coherence does not automatically translate into practice – it depends on how change is executed, experienced, and sustained. The reform underscores the need for institutional agility in navigating competing priorities, evolving mandates, and diverse stakeholder expectations. While structural tools such as matrix arrangements and joint KPIs are useful, they are insufficient without behavioral incentives, strong feedback mechanisms, and clearly defined authority. Otherwise, reforms risk generating inertia, confusion, or reform fatigue.

The implementation of the OBA also revealed tension between reform ambition and the Bank’s absorptive capacity. Achieving integration and efficiency requires sustained leadership commitment, adaptive management, and a participatory approach. Outcomes are shaped not only by technical design, but also by how expectations are managed, how incentives influence behavior, and how ownership is established across the institution. Sustaining reform momentum will therefore depend less on completing discrete actions and more on internalizing reform as a continuous process. This involves cultivating a shared purpose, reinforcing collaboration, and embracing adaptive learning.

In this sense, the OBA is not just a reform but a strategic inflection point – an opportunity for the Bank to redefine itself as a cohesive, learning institution capable of navigating complexity and delivering transformative impact.

## Lessons

**Lesson 1: Clear communication, visible leadership, and targeted staff support are critical for embedding complex institutional reforms.** The evaluation found that limited staff familiarity with the OBA’s purpose and practical application hindered uptake. Internal communication strategies, visible Management support, and targeted training, when combined with ongoing dialogue and feedback, can help build a shared understanding and staff ownership.

**Lesson 2: Clarifying roles, aligning performance expectations, and addressing capacity gaps help improve collaboration across teams.** Case studies showed that unclear responsibilities among sector departments, regional offices, and ecosystem functions created tensions and weakened cooperation. Greater awareness of institutional guidance (e.g., Rules of the Game, DAM), alignment of KPIs to joint responsibilities, and adequate staffing – particularly in country offices – can foster cross-team collaboration.

**Lesson 3: Adaptable business processes, stronger digital tools, and proactive risk management can support implementation of the OBA workstreams in diverse contexts:** The evaluation found that delays and inefficiencies were partly due to rigid or only partially digitized processes, especially in private sector operations and transition countries. Limited tool adoption and weak anticipation of risks further fragmented implementation. More flexible systems and proactive risk management can improve delivery.

**Lesson 4: Reforms affecting both central and decentralized functions require clear definition of roles and deliberate trade-offs.** The evaluation found that strengthening central oversight without clarifying shifts in authority or resources created tensions with decentralized structures, particularly in relation to budget authority and operational roles. Deliberate coordination across governance levels is essential to ensure coherence, ownership and effective implementation.

**Lesson 5: Flexibility and innovation can help institutions navigate complex reform agendas.** The OBA’s multiple interdependent reforms were found to introduce coordination difficulties and some resistance to change. Allowing flexibility in how processes are applied across operational contexts and strategically using digital and technical innovations can help overcome bottlenecks and support smoother implementation.

## Recommendations

IDEV makes the following recommendations:

- 1. Consolidate and sustain change management efforts to fully embed the OBA reforms across the institution, while actively promoting staff understanding, uptake, and collaboration.**

Key priority actions for consideration include:

- ➔ Explicitly articulating a Bank-wide culture of change, setting clear expectations for

adaptability, collaboration, and results orientation. This may include leveraging existing change management tools and practices to sustain reform momentum, address resistance, and ensure that ongoing and future reforms are consistently embedded in daily operations.

- ➔ Strengthening staff understanding and ownership of the OBA through mandatory induction and refresher training on the OBA, adding clear and practical illustrations to guidance materials (DAM, “Rules of the Game”), targeted communication campaigns showcasing real-world examples of cross-sector collaboration, and structured cross-departmental training initiatives (such as workshops, peer learning sessions, and targeted capacity building activities) to address operational overlaps and clarify shared accountabilities.
- ➔ Defining and communicating clear roles and responsibilities for change leadership at all levels, ensuring accountability for embedding reforms.
- ➔ Shifting emphasis from structural adjustments to the institutional culture, developing and implementing incentives and collaboration mechanisms including recognition programs for cross-department teamwork.

## **2. Clarify institutional roles and align performance frameworks to strengthen shared accountability and reduce operational tensions across departments and regions.**

Key priority actions to consider include:

- ➔ Ensuring full alignment of KPIs among all staff members and departments involved in an operation, to reflect joint responsibility and accountability and promote unified delivery.
- ➔ Strengthening the implementation of the KPI framework by ensuring its consistent application at all levels, for example by

establishing clearer accountability mechanisms and regular monitoring to ensure KPIs are actively used to drive performance and support cross-departmental collaboration.

## **3. Further streamline business processes and address staffing constraints to improve operational effectiveness.**

Key suggested actions include:

- ➔ Enhancing the effectiveness and responsiveness of business processes by adapting their implementation to diverse operational contexts—such as transition states and private sector operations—while maintaining accountability standards, and by simplifying and digitizing high-impact processes (i.e. project onboarding, procurement, disbursement) through user-centric IT design to enhance accessibility, efficiency, and uptake.
- ➔ Accelerating ongoing efforts in workforce planning, strategic staffing, talent deployment, and career development (as set out in the Management Responses to the HR1 and HR2 evaluations<sup>4</sup>), to more effectively address staffing needs in regional and country offices and fragile contexts, while ensuring alignment with broader HR reforms.

## **4. Strengthen monitoring, reporting, evaluation, and risk management of reform implementation.** Key priority actions to consider include:

- ➔ Developing and operationalizing a comprehensive implementation plan, results matrix, and reporting mechanism for all remaining and future reforms, ensuring clear indicators, baselines, timelines, responsibilities, and follow-up.
- ➔ Incorporating the underlying assumptions and interlinkages between reforms into monitoring frameworks to reinforce coherence and strategic alignment, while also enhancing the ability to anticipate and manage implementation risks.

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<sup>4</sup> See ADB/BD/WP/2025/63/Add.2/Rev.1 and ADB/BD/WP/2025/62/Add.2

# 1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

This summary report presents the findings of the evaluation of the implementation of the One Bank Approach (OBA) of the African Development Bank Group (AfDB or 'the Bank'). The evaluation was conducted by the Independent Development Evaluation function (IDEV) of the AfDB as part of its [2022–2024 Work Program](#) and complements other recent corporate evaluations such as the [Evaluation of the AfDB's Human Resource Management System: Recruitment, Retention, Career Development and Performance Management](#), the [Evaluation of the AfDB's Human Resource Management System: Workforce Planning and Incentive Structure](#), and the [Evaluation of the AfDB's Decentralisation](#). It assessed the implementation of the OBA since 2020 and provides findings and lessons for Bank Management, staff, and the Board of Directors.

The report is organized in four sections. Section 1 introduces the evaluation framework (purpose, scope, questions, and limitations). Section 2 provides a brief background on the OBA's evolution within the Bank. Section 3 presents the evaluation findings on the OBA's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, and efficiency. Section 4 highlights the main conclusions, lessons, and recommendations. Supplementary evidence is provided in the annexes.

## 1.1. Evaluation Purpose and Scope

The main objective of the evaluation was to examine the implementation and results of the OBA, as defined in the February 2020 document *Delivering as One Bank – Strengthening Accountabilities for Delivering Quality and Development Impact in a Matrix Organization*. The OBA aimed to “increase the Bank's efficiency and development effectiveness by strengthening accountabilities for results and breaking down the institutional silos that hamper performance.”<sup>5</sup>

The 2020 document identified five workstreams with related actions: (1) business processes, (2) people management, (3) budget management, (4) tools for joint accountability, and (5) change management and communication (Technical Annex 1). These workstreams were introduced in response to [IDEV's 2019 evaluation of the Bank's Development and Business Delivery Model](#) (DBDM).

As part of this evaluation, the team reconstructed a Theory of Change (ToC) for the OBA (See Annex 1). The ToC set out the expected sequence of results from implementing the five workstreams of the OBA. Anticipated intermediate results include improved incentive structures, strategies, systems, and processes; stronger synergies across sector departments; enhanced knowledge management; and better integration of sovereign and non-sovereign operations. Collectively, these outcomes are expected to improve the Bank's efficiency in delivering integrated solutions. Bank staff would be incentivized to focus on such solutions, and Regional Member Countries (RMCs) would increasingly view the Bank as a reliable provider. Ultimately, this should strengthen the Bank's ability to meet RMCs' investment and development needs and contribute to greater development impact in Africa.

The evaluation:

1. Assessed the extent to which actions under the five workstreams contributed to the implementation and success of the OBA;
2. Examined the relevance, coherence, efficiency, and lessons learned from the OBA; and,
3. Compared the Bank's OBA to providing integrated solutions to RMCs' needs with approaches adopted by other multilateral development banks (MDBs), drawing on IDEV's 2024 [Comparative Study of MDB Operating Models](#).

This evaluation covered the period from April 2020 to April 2025 and assessed all actions under the five OBA workstreams identified in *Delivering as One Bank*.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Delivering as One Bank (2020), p.4

<sup>6</sup> Section 2 and Technical Annex 1 provide more detail on the workstreams. While all of them are covered broadly here, other evaluations provide further details for certain workstreams and actions to avoid duplication. For instance, questions related to revision of the Delegation of Authority Matrix (workstream 1) and staff movements (workstream 2) are covered by the [Evaluation of the African Development Bank's Decentralisation](#). Likewise, questions related to rightsizing and strategic staffing (workstream 2) are covered by the [Evaluation of the African Development Bank's Human Resource Management System](#).

## 1.2. Evaluation Questions

To deliver on the above objectives, the evaluation addressed six questions:

1. To what extent do the five workstreams collectively, and the actions under each of them, align with (or add value to) the AfDB's institutional context (including strategies and organizational culture). To what extent were they relevant, necessary, and sufficient in addressing the shortcomings identified by the DBDM evaluation?
2. To what extent are the five workstreams coherent with other ongoing reform processes in the Bank, such as decentralization, delegation of authority, and various human resources (HR) reforms? In particular, how has the Bank adjusted its business processes to align with the ongoing decentralization of skills, staff, and responsibilities?
3. To what extent have actions under the five workstreams been implemented in a timely manner as planned? If they were not implemented in a timely manner, what were the reasons? To what extent has the OBA implementation been cost-efficient?
4. To what extent have the five workstreams, and the actions under them, achieved their intended short-term and longer-term impacts? This refers specifically to promoting behavior and organizational culture change, thereby increasing the Bank Group's capacity to deliver on its objectives as One Bank. What were the unintended results of the implementation of the five workstreams, if any?
5. What are the main factors that facilitated or impeded the implementation of (the actions under) the five workstreams and achievement of the intended results? What were the missed opportunities, if any?
6. What are the key lessons to be derived from attempts to improve the delivery of the AfDB's OBA? What can the AfDB learn from the One Bank approaches of other MDBs?

The full evaluation matrix with all evaluation questions and sub-questions is available in Technical Annex 2.

## 1.3. Evaluation Approach and Methodology

The evaluation was designed as a **process evaluation**.<sup>7</sup> It assessed the relevance, coherence, efficiency, and effectiveness of institutional processes and reforms aimed at enhancing the Bank's responsiveness to RMCs under the OBA. It examined the extent to which the five workstreams and actions outlined in the Management Response to IDEV's 2019 DBDM evaluation and the *Delivering as One Bank* document were implemented, and whether they achieved their intended results.

The evaluation was **theory-based** and guided by the ToC presented in Annex 1. It applied a **multi-level, mixed-methods approach to triangulate information**, reduce bias, and test the robustness of findings. The evaluation comprised the following components:

1. **Desk review** of institutional frameworks, strategies, and policy guidelines related to the OBA, including data on the Bank's actions under the five workstreams.
2. **Eighty-seven individual and group interviews** involving 240 participants, including Board members, Senior Management, staff at headquarters (HQ) and in regional and country offices, and external stakeholders. Interviewees included heads of departments or units in charge of each workstream (past and present), other members of Management, the Evaluation Reference Group, Staff Council representatives, country focal points, project implementation unit members, development partners, and civil society organizations. In total, 17 interviews were conducted at HQ with 42 participants; the remaining 70 interviews were conducted as part of case studies.

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[Workforce Planning and Incentive Structure](#) and questions related to reforms aiming at strengthening the performance culture to attract and retain talented staff are covered under the [Evaluation of the African Development Bank's Human Resource Management System: Recruitment, Retention, Career Development and Performance Management](#)

<sup>7</sup> A process evaluation examines the nature and quality of the implementation of interventions. It is intended primarily to inform decisions about improving implementation.

3. **Country and regional case studies** across nine countries to assess OBA implementation and capture RMC perceptions of changes in the Bank's responsiveness. These case studies included 70 interviews with 196 participants (out of the total of 240 interviewees).
4. **Online survey** administered to Bank staff, capturing perceptions of the OBA. A total of 410 responses were recorded.<sup>8</sup>
5. **Benchmarking study** comparing the Bank's OBA with similar approaches by other MDBs. Peer institutions included the World Bank Group (including the International Finance Corporation), the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), the Asian Development Bank (AsDB), and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The benchmarking drew heavily on [IDEV's 2024 Comparative Study of MDB Operating Models](#) and was complemented with additional evidence from document reviews and interviews with development partners, including the *Agence Française de Développement*. The benchmarking study compared the design, implementation, effects, and impacts of One Bank-type approaches on staff and clients.

The full evaluation methodology is presented in Annex 1.

## 1.4. Evaluation Limitations and Mitigation Measures

Most actions under the five workstreams have been implemented only recently. Consequently, the evaluation team lacked sufficient data to assess the longer-term effects of the reforms and their expected results with a high degree of confidence. To address this, the evaluation team: (i) conducted a detailed review of available documentation to reconstruct the specific ToC for the Bank's OBA, identify relevant stakeholders, and map the actions undertaken under each workstream; (ii) selected an optimal sample for the country-specific case studies; (iii) ensured that country visits were well prepared to maximize opportunities for data collection; and (iv) applied practical considerations when synthesizing and consolidating findings to ensure that the results reflected the reforms being evaluated.

In addition, the evaluation had some overlap with other IDEV evaluations (on decentralization and human resources, and the comparative study of MDB operating models), which involved consulting some of the same stakeholders and reviewing the same documentation. To mitigate duplication of effort and stakeholder fatigue, the evaluation leveraged preliminary findings from related evaluations and built upon existing knowledge. Data collection was carefully designed and coordinated to avoid repetitive consultations by tailoring interview questions to focus specifically on the OBA and to gather additional details not covered in the other evaluations.

## 2. THE AFDB'S APPROACH TO ESTABLISHING A ONE-BANK CULTURE

**The OBA was first referenced in the Bank Group Annual Report of 2010.** However, the Bank had already recognized the need for a more streamlined and effective way of addressing the needs of its RMCs, including improving their access to financing. This priority was reflected in earlier initiatives such as the Results Measurement Framework (RMF) introduced in 2003, followed in 2005 by the agenda on "harmonization, alignment and monitoring for results." These initiatives focused on strengthening internal review processes, improving project and program quality at entry, and enhancing in-country policy dialogue and supervision.

The 2008 global financial crisis eroded poverty reduction gains and deepened income inequality. This underscored the need for the Bank to clarify its role in supporting RMCs, which increasingly sought its technical and intellectual leadership on development issues. By the early 2010s, it was evident that the AfDB needed to fundamentally transform its operating model to remain relevant to its RMCs and Africa as a whole. This required reassessing: (i) operational modalities at both the country and regional levels; (ii) the quality, sources, and structure of its funding (and how RMCs accessed its resources); (iii)

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<sup>8</sup> The survey gathered staff members' views (at HQ and in ROs and COs) on the extent to which the way they worked had changed, the impact of the reforms, and their understanding of the organizational culture.

synergies and collaboration across Bank Group entities; and (iv) staff deployment at HQ and field offices to strengthen responsiveness to client needs. At successive Annual Meetings, RMC authorities increasingly urged the AfDB to assume its “rightful place” as Africa’s apex development finance institution and to be at the forefront of the continent’s development agenda.

In 2010, the simultaneous mobilization of resources for the Sixth General Capital Increase of the African Development Bank (GCI-VI) and the Twelfth Replenishment of the African Development Fund (ADF-12) highlighted both the opportunities and challenges of institutional harmonization and alignment. These resource mobilization exercises demonstrated the potential for innovation – particularly within the Bank Group – to reduce duplication and enhance effectiveness and impact.

**These developments culminated in the adoption, in September 2010, of the “One Bank” RMF** as the central instrument for capturing the contribution of the AfDB Group to: (i) development outcomes in Africa; (ii) development outcomes at the country level; (iii) operational effectiveness; and (iv) organizational efficiency. Although the Bank regularly adjusted the RMF to meet its evolving needs, the framework has consistently provided the foundation for subsequent institutional reforms and policies, including the refinements to the Bank’s organizational structure.

**In 2013, the Bank introduced its second “One Bank” RMF (2013–2016)** – the fifth RMF in a series that began in 2003. Subtitled *Managing for Results*, it was designed as a corporate management tool to address institutional strengths and weaknesses and to guide Management in implementing the long-term strategy more effectively. The 2013 One Bank RMF aimed to assess policy and structural changes within the institution since 2003. During that decade, the AfDB evolved from a centralized structure with a handful of country offices, fewer than 1,000 staff, and an active portfolio of UA 8 billion, into a decentralized institution with offices in 34 countries, more than 2,000 staff, and a portfolio exceeding UA 22 billion.

**In 2016, under new leadership, the Bank launched the “High 5s” agenda to accelerate delivery of its Ten-Year Strategy (TYS 2013–2022).** The five strategic priorities were: (i) Light Up and Power Africa; (ii) Feed Africa; (iii) Industrialize Africa; (iv) Integrate Africa; and (v) Improve the Quality of Life for the People of Africa. At the same time, the Bank introduced the **Development and Business Delivery Model (DBDM)**, which restructured its operational model, organizational structure, and pricing framework. The DBDM was built on five institutional pillars: (i) moving closer to clients to enhance delivery; (ii) reconfiguring headquarters to support regional operations more effectively; (iii) strengthening the performance culture to attract and retain talent; (iv) streamlining business processes; and (v) improving financial performance and increasing development impact.

**In 2018, two years after the launch of the DBDM, the AfDB Board of Governors requested an independent evaluation of its implementation to inform its consideration of the Seventh General Capital Increase (GCI-VII). IDEV conducted the evaluation, which was delivered in June 2019.**<sup>9</sup> It found that while the DBDM reforms had achieved positive results – particularly by strengthening the Bank’s regional presence and increasing proximity to clients – challenges (or “unfinished business”) remained. Chief among them was the failure to institutionalize the working arrangements required for a fully integrated *One Bank* organization. The evaluation issued four strategic recommendations:

- Place stronger emphasis on change management, which had been relatively neglected.
- Establish “a clear implementation plan and results matrix” for all ongoing and new reforms to ensure adequate oversight.
- Create realistic timelines for reforms where none existed.
- Adjust key performance indicators (KPIs), particularly joint ones, to strengthen their relevance and applicability.

**In its response to the evaluation, Bank Management welcomed the findings and recommendations, and outlined the principles on which the new One Bank organization would be based.**<sup>10</sup> In February 2020, Management issued the document *Delivering as One Bank – Strengthening Accountabilities for Delivering Quality and Development Impact in a Matrix Organization.*<sup>11</sup> The document responded directly to the 2019 evaluation recommendations and articulated three guiding principles for the OBA:

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<sup>9</sup> ADB/BD/WP/2019/116

<sup>10</sup> ADB/BD/WP/2019/116/Add.1

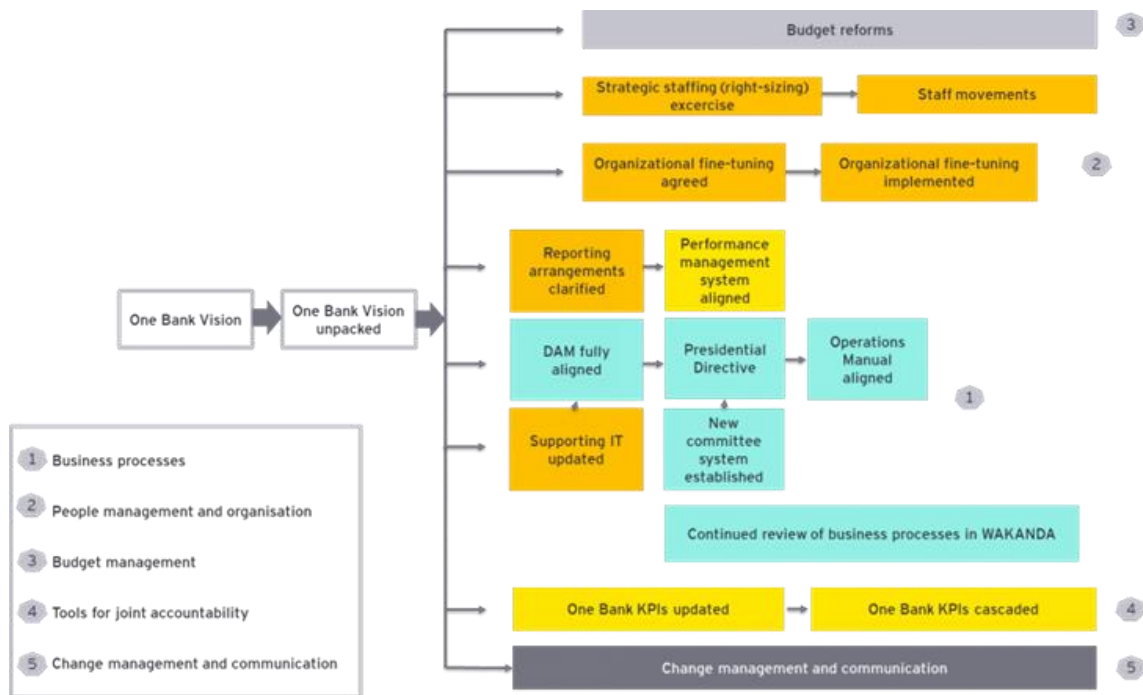
<sup>11</sup> ADB/BD/IF/2020/70

- **Quality:** Strong technical expertise and quality control mechanisms ensure that sector departments lead the delivery of high-quality operations, supported by operations support departments.
- **Delivery:** Client-facing Business Delivery Units (BDUs) prioritize implementation of the shared work program in each of the Bank’s regions.
- **Joint accountability:** All organizational units contributing to the work program share accountability for results, supported by incentives to promote effective collaboration.

The *Delivering as One Bank* document also described the proposed organizational model. It distinguished between client-facing BDUs at regional and country levels and central services at HQ, clarifying their respective roles in relation to the project life cycle and resource management. Its most significant contribution, however, was the identification of five workstreams required to implement the OBA: 1) business processes, 2) people management, 3) budget management, 4) tools for joint accountability, and 5) change management and communication (see Figure 1 and Technical Annex 1 for details).

The development of the OBA based on a corporate evaluation reflects practices observed in other MDBs, such as the IDB and the World Bank Group (WBG). Similar alignment with institutional reforms has also been noted at the AsDB through its *Strategy 2030*, at the IDB through its Ninth General Capital Increase commitments, and at the IsDB through its Ten-Year Strategy and the President’s Five-year Program.

**Figure 1: One Bank Approach – Summary of Workstreams**



Source: African Development Bank (2020). *Delivering as One Bank: Management’s Report on Progress Implementing the One Bank Approach* (ADB/BD/IF/2021/201)

### 3. FINDINGS

This section presents the evaluation’s findings on the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, and efficiency of the OBA.

#### 3.1. Relevance

The relevance of the OBA was assessed by examining the extent to which its five workstreams, and the actions under each of them, aligned with (or added value to) the Bank’s institutional context (strategies and organizational culture). The evaluation also considered whether the OBA sufficiently addressed the shortcomings identified in the 2019 evaluation of the DBDM.

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The evaluation found that the OBA aligns closely with the AfDB’s corporate strategies and institutional culture, as reflected in key documents such as the proposal for the GCI-VII and the 2024–2033 Ten-Year Strategy. Evidence from staff consultations and document reviews indicates that the OBA provides a structured plan for reforms, supported by specific actions and monitoring tools. It also responds to critical gaps identified in the DBDM evaluation, particularly in coordination, communication, operational efficiency, and collaboration. However, the evaluation found that complex institutional dynamics and external shocks – including interdependent reforms and the COVID-19 pandemic – posed challenges to the OBA’s design and implementation, affecting both its feasibility and relevance. Additional shortcomings identified included weak alignment of KPIs, limited integration of technology across OBA workstreams, gaps in performance monitoring and evaluation, and uneven staff understanding of the OBA.

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**The evaluation found that the OBA aligns well with the Bank’s strategic direction**, as reflected in key documents such as the GCI-VII proposal, which shares several objectives and actions with the OBA – particularly in areas like business processes, people management, and accountability tools. In addition to aligning well with earlier strategies, the OBA was also subsequently reinforced in later institutional documents. For example, the Sixteenth General Replenishment of the ADF (ADF-16) recognized progress made under the OBA, and the Ten-Year Strategy 2024–2033 cited the OBA as a reform to enhance coherence and responsiveness to client needs. OBA alignment can be observed at several institutional levels and with various types of Bank documents, as shown in Table 1.

At the same time, the evaluation found limited alignment at the country and regional strategy levels, as few Country Strategy Papers (CSPs) explicitly referenced the OBA. This weak visibility was identified as a potential barrier to operationalizing the OBA in practice.

**Table 1: OBA alignment with other institutional documents**

AfDB document	OBA alignment
Updated Decentralization Action Plan 2016–2018 (2016)	The OBA is aligned with this action plan through its Workstream 2, “People Management.”
Proposal for a 7th general capital increase (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The OBA reflects five objectives of the GCI-VII, specifically in three workstreams: (i) business processes (e.g., new DAM fully implemented); (ii) people management and organization; and (iii) tools for joint accountability (One Bank KPIs updated and cascaded).</li> <li>Actions 21 and 22, respectively, “Fine-tune and improve the Bank’s organizational structure to enhance organizational efficiency” and “Institutionalize the organizational arrangements that guide and underpin the matrix/One Bank delivery model,” directly target/are directly targeted and implemented by the One Bank Approach.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other actions specifically concern workstreams: Action 31, “Introduce budget coefficients to use administrative resources more efficiently,” pertains to Workstream 3, “Budget management.”</li> </ul>
Sixteenth general replenishment of the resources of the African Development Fund (ADF-16) (2023)	It recognizes the progress made in the OBA delivery model, the revised DAM, and the alignment with the AfDB's strategic goals.
Ten-Year Strategy 2024–2033 (2024)	The strategy mentions and includes OBA in its section 8, “Boosting the Bank’s impact.” It also outlines specific actions related to the One Bank Approach, such as the “Operations Manual” and “Wakanda,” <sup>12</sup> which are listed under the section “8.1 Adapt the Bank’s operational model to deliver at speed and scale.”

The evaluation also found that the OBA is conceptually aligned with the Bank’s digital transformation agenda. Since 2020, the Bank has accelerated its digitalization efforts, culminating in the adoption of the *Digital Ambition 2030* in January 2025. Earlier initiatives, such as the *Digital Strategy 2018–2022* and the interim *Digital Action Plan 2022–2023*, laid the groundwork for this agenda. Evidence indicates that the OBA’s emphasis on streamlining business processes and responsiveness fits within this digital shift.

**Evidence from document reviews and stakeholder interviews confirmed the OBA’s role in operationalizing AfDB strategic priorities** such as enhanced delivery, regional integration, and responsiveness to the evolving needs of RMCs. **The evaluation found that the OBA also reflects and reinforces the Bank’s institutional culture**, particularly its emphasis on collaboration, strategic coherence, and client orientation. Stakeholders and survey respondents consistently highlighted the OBA’s contribution to integrated planning and delivery across departments and operations. By promoting a unified institutional model, the OBA was found to strengthen organizational effectiveness and build capacity to respond to complex development challenges.

**The OBA outlined a coherent reform agenda with defined actions and monitoring tools**, many of which are mirrored in subsequent strategic initiatives (discussed in the coherence section of this report). This coherence across reforms demonstrates a consistent trajectory in the Bank’s transformation agenda. **Additionally, the OBA was found to have added value at both the corporate and action levels.** At the corporate level, it consolidated previously fragmented reform areas into a unified framework, thus responding to long-standing institutional challenges identified in earlier IDEV evaluations. At the action level, the evaluation found that the OBA reduced duplication of efforts by building on existing strategies and documents, and fostered synergies across workstreams. Evidence further showed that change management emerged as a central element underpinning the effectiveness of the other four workstreams.

**The evaluation found that the OBA has addressed some of the shortcomings identified in the 2019 DBDM evaluation, particularly regarding role clarification, alignment of incentives, and strengthening change management.** Strategic recommendations from the DBDM evaluation – such as the need to adjust KPIs and clarify OBA principles – were incorporated. Additionally, the approach outlined a clear plan for reforms with specific actions that can be tracked, along with designated responsibilities and monitoring tools. Although a timeline for implementing these reforms was established, the evaluation noted that the complexity of certain items may have been underestimated, resulting in unrealistic timelines. For example, the deadline for updating reporting arrangements, rightsizing, or organizational fine-tuning under the People Management workstream was pushed from 2020 to late 2021.

**Despite these areas of relevance, the evaluation found design shortcomings in three domains: KPI alignment, integration of technology, and measuring the performance of the OBA.**

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<sup>12</sup> The Wakanda program is an African Development Bank initiative to redesign and modernize the Bank’s core operational business processes—especially through upgrading its SAP system—to increase institutional efficiency under the One Bank Approach.

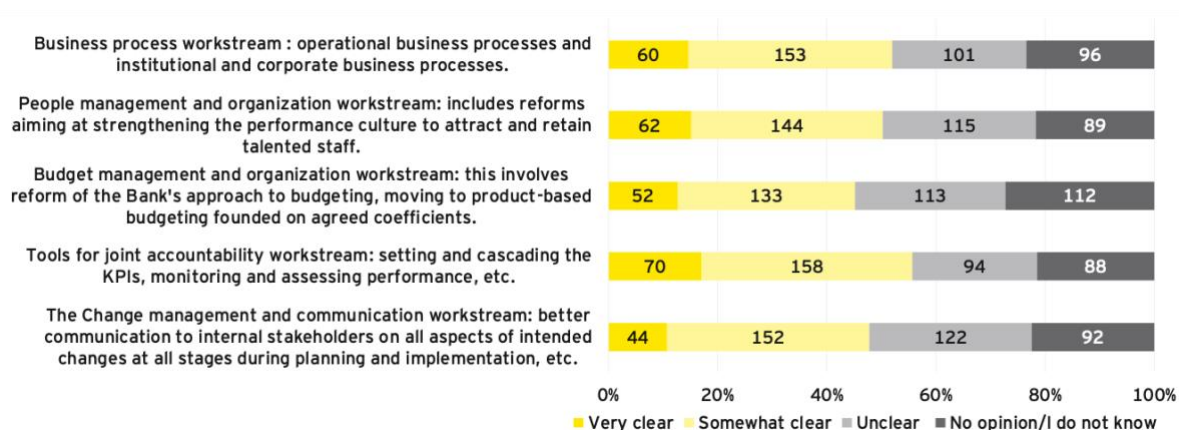
- **Although the OBA was intended to foster collaboration across teams, its design did not establish a unified client vision or a harmonized performance framework to guide alignment. As a result, KPIs remained fragmented.** While the OBA has initiated efforts to refine KPIs to enhance accountability, the evaluation found, based on a review of internal strategy documents, KPI frameworks (including GCI-VII and RMF 2024-2033), and interviews with staff across operations, sector departments, and NSOs, that the sources of those KPIs were not sufficiently explained. In addition, they were not adequately articulated with other frameworks' key institutional reforms (e.g., GCI-VII KPIs and RMF) to facilitate their tracking and better highlight their coherence with the Bank's other institutional efforts. The evaluation also found that the design of those KPIs did not differentiate sufficiently, considering the specificities of NSOs and the incentives to support collaboration between different team members involved in an operation (operations, sector departments, and ecosystem<sup>13</sup>). This design gap has undermined cross-collaboration and coordination, thereby diluting the intended impact of the reform. A more detailed discussion on KPI alignment is presented in the effectiveness section of the report.
- **Despite the Bank's broader push toward digitalization – reflected in initiatives such as the creation of the Technology and Corporate Services Complex, a new Information Technology (IT) business model, enhanced Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure, and the Wakanda program – technology and innovative solutions were not meaningfully integrated into the design or implementation of the OBA.** While Workstream 1 (business process reengineering) included some digitalization efforts, these remained high-level and did not extend across the other workstreams. As a result, the OBA did not fully leverage the Bank's evolving digital capabilities to support the delivery of reform. This disconnect limited the potential for operational efficiency and responsiveness, particularly in areas where digital tools could have supported coordination, data sharing, and streamlined workflows. The evaluation found that this gap, combined with capacity constraints, contributed to implementation challenges and reduced the overall effectiveness of the reform. In contrast, other MDBs such as the AsDB and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, as well as bilateral agencies like *Agence Française de Développement*, have successfully utilized technology to streamline processes and improve service delivery.
- **The RMF offers a baseline for performance tracking – in particular, the RMF 2024-2033 supports the implementation of the TYS 2024-2033 as it plays a crucial role in enabling joint monitoring, enhancing accountability and driving results across the institution. However, it does not adequately capture the OBA's impact on collaboration or project delivery outcomes.** The evaluation identified a gap in the availability of clear, targeted metrics to assess the success of the Approach. Without robust indicators, it is difficult to pinpoint areas for improvement or to demonstrate the added value of the reform. This limitation in the monitoring and evaluation framework has constrained learning and adaptive management, reducing the potential for continuous improvement and strategic decision-making.

**Furthermore, the evaluation found that Bank staff lack clarity and a shared understanding of what the OBA involves, as shown by survey results.** While the One Bank concept is frequently referenced in speeches and communications within the Bank, interviews and more in-depth consultations revealed that many staff members have a limited understanding of its specificities (i.e., objectives, content, and implementation timeline). When staff were asked how well they understood the different activities, processes, and procedures of the OBA's workstreams, **most respondents to the online survey answered, "somewhat clear"** (see Figure 2). Moreover, the proportion of respondents who felt "unclear" about the specifics of the five workstreams was larger than the proportion of respondents who felt "very clear". This **gap was particularly important for the People Management and Change Management workstreams.**<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Staff working in departments such as gender, climate, E&S, procurement, etc.

<sup>14</sup> For the people management workstream, 19.3 percent chose "very clear," while 35.8 percent chose "unclear" (321 respondents). For the change management workstream, 13.8 percent chose "very clear," while 38.4 percent chose "unclear" (318 respondents).

**Figure 2: Responses to the question: “Please indicate the extent to which you are clear about the different activities/processes/procedures under each of the five workstreams that were identified to ensure delivering as One Bank”**



Source: IDEV’s One Bank Evaluation Survey (410 respondents)

The survey revealed differences in staff understanding depending on the Bank complex in which they worked, their level of seniority, and their involvement in implementing OBA-related actions. These findings were corroborated by staff interviews. For example, managers and directors were more often aware of strategic elements such as complex KPIs and service level agreements, while operational staff in country offices were often unfamiliar with these higher-level arrangements. Similarly, staff directly involved in specific workstreams – such as procurement officers engaged with Wakanda system updates or regional staff affected by budget reforms – demonstrated significantly greater clarity about those initiatives compared to those with no direct involvement.

While the OBA is intended to provide a meaningful framework guiding daily operations and decision-making across the institution, these diverging perceptions – particularly between Senior Management and other staff – have limited its practical resonance. Managers and senior staff were more likely to acknowledge a growing culture of collaboration, whereas others felt less engaged and questioned the OBA’s tangible impact, with some referring to it as a mere “slogan,” highlighting gaps in engagement and ownership across the Bank.

**The evaluation found that the OBA is broader in scope than similar initiatives undertaken by other MDBs, as it encompasses not only business processes and joint accountability but also HR, budget, and change management dimensions.** While this comprehensive approach is unique, the evaluation also found notable similarities with other MDBs, such as empowering regional and country offices in business delivery (e.g., AsDB), using service-level agreements (SLAs) to enhance coordination (e.g., IsDB), and promoting cross-team collaboration in the preparation of country strategies (e.g., IDB and WBG).

**Finally, the evaluation found that complex institutional dynamics and external shocks,** such as interdependent reforms and the COVID-19 pandemic, posed challenges to the design and implementation of the OBA, affecting its feasibility and relevance. These factors are further examined in the effectiveness section, where their impact on implementation is discussed in more detail.

### 3.2. Coherence

The coherence of the OBA was assessed by examining the coherence of the five workstreams with other ongoing reform processes within the Bank, such as decentralization, review of delegation of authority, and various HR reforms. It also specifically examined how the Bank adjusted its business processes to align with the ongoing decentralization of skills, staff, and responsibilities.

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The evaluation found that the OBA is conceptually coherent with key Bank reform strategies, including HR reforms, quality assurance, budget management, and decentralization. Its emphasis on joint accountability, strategic staffing, and operational planning aligns with the goals of the GCI-VII. The OBA aligns well with the HR reform strategy, particularly in fostering joint accountability through KPIs. However, the implementation of shared KPIs was found to be uneven, and the practical application of the framework was deemed to not fully recognize all contributions equitably. The OBA was also found to support decentralization efforts in theory; however, in practice, challenges exist, such as disproportionate workloads, insufficient delegation of authority to Directors General/Deputy Directors General and Country Managers, and limited operational clarity regarding roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes. Furthermore, staff perceptions suggest that the OBA may not fully align with broader reforms such as the DBDM and UDAP, as its implementation appears to have shifted authority and resources toward HQ-based departments, contributing to operational ambiguities and workload pressures in regional offices.

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**The evaluation found that the OBA principles and actions were consistent with the HR reform strategy and management framework.** For instance, the design of the OBA workstreams and subsequent HR reforms (notably the Performance Management Framework (2020) and the People Strategy (2021)) were found to be strongly coherent, particularly regarding tools for joint accountability. The OBA's emphasis on joint accountability through KPIs is meant to foster a collaborative culture and ensure that all departments contribute to the Bank's objectives. However, the evaluation found that **the implementation of shared KPIs has been uneven**, with some departments not fully integrating these indicators into their performance evaluations. Interviews suggested that the lack of an institutional mechanism to share KPIs among staff working in different departments or complexes but contributing to the same project or joint initiative hampers collaboration. Despite some successful collaborations driven by motivated individuals, overall cooperation was found to remain weak, with several sectors still operating in silos due to unclear KPI sharing mechanisms, resulting in limited synergies between departments/complexes. Although a framework for joint accountability is in place, its practical application does not yet ensure that all contributions are recognized and rewarded equitably.

**The actions identified under the OBA's five workstreams were found to be partially coherent with other reform processes, particularly those outlined in the GCI-VII proposal.** Firstly, evidence indicates that **the OBA demonstrates coherence with the Bank's quality assurance reforms, particularly those under GCI-VII Objective 2 (improve the quality and development impact of operations) and Action 7**, intended to fully implement the Quality Assurance Plan. This was reflected in the OBA's support for readiness reviews and quality assurance tools under Workstream 1: Business process improvement. These reforms aim to enhance the development impact of operations through improved readiness reviews and quality assurance tools. The OBA's workstreams have supported these efforts by integrating mechanisms that promote operational rigor and consistency, thereby reinforcing the Bank's commitment to delivering high-quality projects. **In addition, the OBA's budget management workstream is coherent with GCI-VII Objective 6, which focuses on improving the Bank's long-term financial sustainability.** Specifically, the introduction of budget coefficients and the emphasis on annual work planning reflect GCI Action 31's goal of optimizing administrative resource use. These measures have helped operational and regional staff better manage resources, although further harmonization is needed to ensure consistent application across departments.

**Secondly, the OBA's strategic staffing and rightsizing initiatives were deemed conceptually coherent with GCI-VII Objective 4, which seeks to ensure that the Bank has the right skills in the right places.** Documents such as the "Memorandum – Right-sizing and Strategic Staffing"<sup>15</sup> and "RDVP Strategic Staffing Proposal 2022–2026"<sup>16</sup> clearly mention the alignment and coherence of the OBA, strategic staffing, and GCI-VII: "*The Strategic Staffing analysis and determination of the Optimum Footprint considers the decentralization growth agenda of the Bank*". This entails having adequate staff in the regional and country offices for effective coordination of the work program with all stakeholders within the Bank and RMCs, in alignment with the OBA. **However, the evaluation revealed that implementation gaps persist** – particularly in regional offices – where Regional Directors-General (RDGs) expressed the view that the disproportionate workload placed on certain departments relative

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<sup>15</sup> Memorandum Right-Sizing and Strategic Staffing Review, revised, 16 December 2020.

<sup>16</sup> RDVP Strategic Staffing Proposal 2022–2026, 24 June 2022.

to staff capacity remains a constraint. This suggests that while the frameworks are aligned, operational coherence remains uneven and requires stronger execution and support.

**Finally, the OBA was found to be broadly coherent with the Updated Decentralization Action Plan (UDAP 2016) and GCI-VII Objective 5, which aim to bring decision-making closer to the client, thereby improving responsiveness and effectiveness in addressing local needs.** The introduction of tools such as the revised DAM and the “Rules of the Game” document and coordination mechanisms like Annual Work Planning Week and quarterly regional meetings held by RDVP reflected efforts to operationalize this coherence. **In practice, however, misalignments and sequencing issues were found to have hindered the OBA’s contribution to decentralization.** Collaboration between Task Managers and the ecosystem, and their capacity to work as a collective team to ensure responsiveness to clients’ needs and timeliness, are important aspects to support the One Bank delivery model (action 22 of the GCI-VII: “Institutionalize the organizational arrangements that guide and underpin the matrix/One Bank delivery model”). However, while the DAM and supporting guidelines (such as the “Rules of the Game”) aimed to clarify roles, the evaluation found that the 2021 One Bank DAM and the 2023 Updated One Bank DAM have diluted Task Managers’ decision-making power regarding issuing no-objection approvals, extending projects, and revising goods and services of different categories. This created a dependency on overburdened sector managers and the ecosystem, which sometimes caused tensions. The power shift was perceived as a step backward in terms of delegation of authority, resource management, and accountability for RDGs and country managers, compared to the direction taken by the DBDM and the UDAP. Bank staff interviewed perceived that HQ-based sector departments were granted greater power under the OBA (in terms of both authority and resource management). In this sense, the OBA appears to be contrary to the spirit of the DBDM and the UDAP, which aimed to empower Directors-General, Country Managers, and staff, while also holding them accountable. The introduction of a dual reporting matrix structure was found to create operational ambiguities between sector departments and regional offices. Interviewees highlighted persistent workload imbalances in regional departments, suggesting that strategic staffing efforts under the OBA have not yet fully addressed the resource needs of decentralized units.

### 3.3. Effectiveness

Under the effectiveness criterion, the evaluation assessed the extent to which the actions under the five workstreams (business processes, people management, budget management, joint accountability, and change management and communication), and the five workstreams collectively, achieved their intended short-term results. which were as follows:

- Improved incentive structures, strategies, systems, and processes for encouraging dialogue, collaboration, and teamwork between headquarters and country and regional offices and across sectors.
- Heightened synergies between sectors, knowledge management, and sovereign and non-sovereign operations.
- Enhanced effective and efficient use of financing windows to deliver integrated solutions (including joint projects) and high-quality, client-centered solutions.

The long-term expected results of the OBA were to effectively and efficiently deliver as One Bank, as demonstrated by the following:

- Staff focus more on corporate integrated solutions, not only on own unit delivery solutions.
- RMCs perceive the AfDB as an integrated solution provider.
- An increased use of integrated solutions targeted at addressing Bank clients’ investment and development needs.

The evaluation also assessed the unintended results of the implementation of the five workstreams, as well as the main factors that facilitated or impeded the implementation of the actions under these five workstreams.

This section is organized into seven subsections. The first five subsections report on findings related to the expected results of the OBA: 1) improved business processes; 2) enhanced staff capacity and collaboration to deliver as ‘One Bank’; 3) more integrated solutions delivered to clients through improved internal and external coordination; 4) improved budget management; 5) change management

and communication implemented. These subsections are then followed by 6) unintended outcomes of the One Bank Approach; and 7) factors affecting implementation and effectiveness.

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The evaluation found that the OBA has contributed to streamlined business processes, improved budget management, and positive shifts in organizational culture, collaboration, and accountability across the AfDB, though these impacts have been uneven. While improvements were noted in communication and coordination between sector departments and regional offices, and in Bank collaboration with other development partners and clients, persistent challenges – such as complex processes, weak incentive structures, staffing gaps, tensions over budget authority, and limited client centricity – continue to hinder effectiveness. Misaligned KPIs, weak sector cooperation, and unclear reporting structures were further found to reduce joint accountability. Unintended consequences of the OBA include operational inefficiencies, increased complexity, and specific challenges for NSOs. Despite progress in standardizing tools and promoting change, remaining communication gaps and varied perceptions of the OBA’s purpose and structure among staff reveal ongoing difficulties and trade-offs in achieving a unified institutional culture.

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### 3.3.1. Improving business processes

***The evaluation found that since 2020, the Bank has made significant progress in improving its business processes as part of the reforms to deliver as One Bank. However, the desired results have not yet been fully achieved, as business processes remain relatively lengthy and complex.***

The Bank’s achievements under the business process workstream were found to include the promulgation of the 2021 and 2023 DAM revisions, and updates to IT tools and processes through the Wakanda initiative, which aimed to drive operational effectiveness and to support the Bank’s transformation agenda by transforming the core business processing system (SAP) and simplifying/streamlining core institutional processes. In addition, operations were digitized, and solutions were modernized/standardized in the following domains: mission travel, consultant recruitment, human resources, work program and budget synchronization, sovereign and non-sovereign operations, trust fund management, and the recently added corporate procurement domain. This was achieved through the implementation of a central repository for resource documents and templates for SOs and NSOs, the development of a contract renewal and probation process for HR management, and the performance of multiple updates in SAP applications, among others.

**Outside of the business process workstream, other actions have also indirectly impacted the processes to deliver as One Bank.** For instance, staff report that budget reforms have increased the transparency of the budgeting exercise, and work program sessions allow for more cross-team collaboration. However, these reforms did not systematically translate into enhanced business processes. The 2023 DAM revision, for instance, has received mixed opinions from staff. While staff commended the DAM revisions for clarifying roles and responsibilities, the document is deemed to remain complex and can generate operational challenges. For example, interviewees in Tunisia reported inconsistencies and mistakes in the signatures required for a development project that included foreign partners, which delayed the approval process. Similarly, staff in Cameroon noted that the business processes reflected in the DAM enable two similar projects to be initiated by different departments without the duplication being detected, creating redundancies and preventing synergies.

**More generally, despite efforts to improve business processes, challenges were found to persist in the form of lengthy approval procedures and complex administrative processes, which delay project delivery.** For example, data from the Bank’s recent Annual Development Effectiveness Reviews indicate that the time from concept note to first disbursement increased from 22 to 24 months between 2019 and 2024.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, between 2019 and 2022, the disbursement ratio of ongoing projects decreased from 16.2 to 15 percent.<sup>18</sup> Evaluation country case studies confirmed these trends.

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<sup>17</sup> Latest data available. Annual Development Effectiveness Reviews from 2020 to 2025

<sup>18</sup> Latest data available.

For instance, the 2023 Kenya Country Strategy and Program Evaluation found the “project start-up process, particularly from its approval to signature, to be lengthy.”<sup>19</sup>

**Staff consultations indicated that the implementation of the OBA introduced new processes that have further complicated timely project delivery.** For example, to address gaps between regional and sector teams, it introduced an element of enforcing collaboration between SOs and NSOs as a tick-box activity, even where there are no synergies. This is perceived to have contributed to an increase in the average time from concept note to first disbursement. Another key issue mentioned by staff was the use of unrealistic metrics to flag projects. For instance, an infrastructure/public works project with lengthy procurement procedures follows the same flagging criteria as a simple Program-Based lending operation, which does not sufficiently differentiate between projects. Finally, staff mentioned that the Bank currently lacks sector-specific KPIs to monitor delivery in different sectors.

In the NSO context, investment officers interviewed have not observed the improvements in the time required to approve private sector investment decisions that were expected to result from the OBA's implementation. (This process can involve up to six committees before reaching the Board.) Some ministries and clients shared similar concerns about approval procedures, due diligence, and procurement processes, which, in their view, were delaying delivery. For example, in Côte d'Ivoire, transmitting a non-objection note regarding a water and sanitation project reportedly took more than six months, leading to the intervention of the minister in charge. In some cases, these delays generated reputational costs for the Bank. For example, Senegal's National Agency for the Promotion of Investments and Major Projects chose the West African Development Bank over the AfDB to finance the second section of the Dakar-Diamniadio Regional Express Train due to excessive delays at the AfDB.

**The evaluation found that challenges in business processes and operational effectiveness were generally attributed to centralization of decision-making, inadequate staffing, and an insufficiently client-centric approach.** Staff attributed the challenges described above to several causes, including:

- Insufficient decision-making power given to regional hubs and staff contributes to delays.
- Insufficient staffing in field offices contributes to Task Managers and sector experts being overworked, which in turn affects responsiveness (e.g., a TM in Mozambique was reportedly in charge of 14 projects).

Other contributing factors identified by the evaluation include a lack of clarity surrounding initiatives such as the Wakanda program, as reported in staff interviews and internal documentation. The absence of convergence in staff's understanding of the OBA concept, set out in the Relevance section, was also found to contribute. Additionally, limitations in the Bank's digital systems were frequently cited by staff and RMC stakeholders in interviews as a barrier to supporting the complex business processes defined under the OBA. For example, the SAP system was described as a legacy platform that is difficult to adapt to evolving business needs, while systems like the Bank-Wide Program Processing Schedule were viewed as overly complex. These IT systems were also perceived by staff and RMC stakeholders as insufficiently client-centric, which was seen to hamper responsiveness and operational efficiency.

### **3.3.2. Enhancing the capacity of staff and cross-collaboration to deliver as 'One Bank'**

*The evaluation analyzed how the OBA has enabled collaboration across the Bank, finding improvements in teamwork and communication, but also persistent challenges such as misaligned incentives, uneven application of joint accountability tools, and unclear roles. It highlights gaps in staff understanding of the OBA and limited change management support, as well as people management issues – particularly staffing imbalances and a focus on retention over recruitment – that continue to constrain collaboration.*

**Evidence from the staff survey pointed particularly to improved collaboration across Bank departments, sector departments, and regional offices.** This helped to break down silos and promote teamwork, resulting in greater synergy and efficiency in project execution. Enhanced communication and information sharing were deemed to have facilitated decision-making and project planning, providing greater transparency within the Bank. Staff also felt that there is a stronger focus on accountability and ownership, with clearer roles and responsibilities. Additionally, operational

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<sup>19</sup> IDEV (2023), “Kenya: Evaluation of the AfDB's Country Strategy and Program (2014–2023)”, p. 53.

efficiency and innovation were deemed to have improved, driven by streamlined processes and better resource management.<sup>20</sup>

Likewise, interviews with staff revealed cases of similar behavioral changes induced by the OBA, particularly in terms of improved team collaboration. The origination of NSO transactions, for instance, although led by investment teams, now includes contributions from risk, legal, and sector teams, as per interviews with NSO teams in the Regional Development and Business Delivery Office for Eastern Africa. However, some staff members interviewed found that personal relationships and informal networks often drive collaboration more than institutional mechanisms established by the OBA. Personality traits, leadership styles, and perceived power (i.e., control) appear to play a key role in collaboration and the successful implementation of the OBA, as discussed further in section 3.3.7.

**From the stakeholders' perspective, several ministries, including in Côte d'Ivoire, indicated that the Bank was able to mobilize relevant experts across sectors and the ecosystem when needed, reflecting its ability to leverage resources across Bank departments (including sector departments).** Evidence of cross-team collaborations improving project synergies was also identified in recent country strategy and program evaluations (CSPEs) and related analysis. For instance, IDEV highlighted the strong cross-sectoral collaboration in the Bank's interventions in Eswatini, specifically around the Mkhondvo-Ngwavuma Water Augmentation program. While Priority Area I of the project focuses on water and irrigation infrastructure, agro-processing, and transport development, Priority Area II aims to strengthen the private sector by improving economic governance, the investment climate, and financing opportunities for small- and medium-sized enterprises.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, recent interventions in Tanzania under the Bank's 2021–2025 country program "were found to demonstrate positive synergy" between SO and NSO operations.<sup>22</sup> A notable example highlighted in the Tanzania 2023 Mid-Term Evaluation is the project to interconnect hydropower plants with the national grid, which is expected to improve the supply, reliability, and affordability of electricity, thereby fostering an enabling environment for private sector development and economic growth in the region.

**At the same time, the evaluation found that incentive structures remain insufficiently aligned to effectively support the readiness and willingness of teams to work as One Bank.** Several joint accountability tools have been implemented since 2020, including work planning sessions, which have improved collaboration and coordination. However, according to staff consulted, the development of other tools, such as SLAs or shared KPIs, has had little impact on team collaboration. The following paragraphs provide a more detailed discussion of collaboration challenges between sector staff and the ecosystem, among sectors themselves, and between SO and NSO teams.

**The evaluation identified persistent challenges in cross-collaboration between sectoral and ecosystem staff, stemming from unclear roles, misaligned priorities, and limited incentives.** Sectoral staff interviewed (e.g., regional offices in West and Southern Africa) often raised the issue of insufficient incentives for ecosystem staff to be responsive to challenges, thereby affecting project approval or delivery. Some specifically mentioned the lack of clarity regarding the supporting and controlling roles of the ecosystem, which affected working relations with various sectors. This was compounded by confusion around the dual reporting structure, which several staff described as diluting accountability and creating a perception that "everyone is responsible, and no one is responsible." On the other hand, ecosystem staff highlighted diverging priorities as hindering collaboration with sectors. For instance, some legal staff interviewed shared their frustration about the business orientation of sectoral staff, who sometimes seek to bypass legal difficulties, while legal teams aim to address them. Similar differences – particularly in expectations, priorities, and working approaches – were observed regarding environmental and social requirements, with sectoral staff generally pushing to deliver projects quickly and ecosystem staff primarily concerned with following the guidelines, which sometimes introduced delays or required additional documentation and revisions that were not always anticipated in project timelines. Additionally, staff noted difficulties in coordinating knowledge production across different sectors and the ecosystem. For example, E&S experts and sectoral staff at the North Africa Regional Office reported facing coordination challenges during the production of social and environmental studies. Similarly, preparing the Country Policy and Institutional Assessment, which requires input from different teams, sometimes proved challenging at the Southern Africa Regional Office. Staff interviewed – particularly operational staff in regional offices – reported that responses from

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<sup>20</sup> Analysis of the 105 written responses to the Evaluation survey question "Could you describe the changes you observe in organizational culture since the implementation of the OBA?"

<sup>21</sup> Eswatini: Validation of the Mid-Term Review of the Country Strategy Paper (2020–2024).

<sup>22</sup> Tanzania: Mid-Term Evaluation of the AfDB Country Strategy and Program (2021–2025).

sector colleagues were regularly delayed, despite repeated requests, leading to interventions by Senior Management. While some reforms – such as budget management tools and work planning sessions – were well received and effectively integrated into daily operations, others, like the revised DAM, were perceived as overly complex and difficult to implement. Despite these challenges, staff also cited examples of successful collaboration, often attributed to strong interpersonal relationships and individual motivation. According to operations staff, ecosystem staff who are “proactive and willing to go the extra mile” can make a significant difference in achieving project goals.

**Under the OBA workstream focused on tools for joint accountability**, the evaluation reviewed the Bank’s efforts to refine and cascade KPIs in line with GCI-VII Action 22, which emphasizes institutionalizing arrangements that support joint accountability while maintaining individual responsibility. Based on corporate documentation, the evaluation confirmed that Bank-wide KPIs were formally adopted in 2019, refined in 2020–2021, and systematically cascaded to sector complexes and regional business delivery units. Bank-wide KPIs are regularly presented in corporate reports such as the Annual Development Effectiveness Reviews and include indicators tracking administrative efficiency, operational quality, and development outcomes – they monitor both the quality and the efficiency of the Bank’s activities, with indicators tracking, for instance, the administrative costs per UA 1 million disbursed, the quality of new operations (rated from 1 to 4), or the share of operations that achieved planned development outcomes. However, interviews and survey responses expressed views of persistent misalignment of KPIs across teams and individual staff members. In-country staff reported that KPIs are not sufficiently harmonized to support joint accountability, with sectoral staff noting that ecosystem colleagues’ KPIs often lack business-oriented indicators. Responsibility for project delivery tends to fall disproportionately on lead Task Managers, as reflected in individual KPIs, which discourages broader team involvement. Interviews with executives and Senior Management at HQ confirmed that shared KPIs are not systematically applied across the Bank. Some executives described relying on “informal shared KPIs” to coordinate joint work programs across vice presidencies. However, they noted that such arrangements remain transactional and do not reflect the collaborative spirit of the One Bank Approach. While examples of successful cross-Bank teamwork were cited, these were often attributed to strong personal relationships and individual motivation. Many staff, managers, and executives interviewed emphasized that collaboration is still largely dependent on individual willingness rather than institutional mechanisms.

**The evaluation found that while the staff widely supports the OBA in principle, its practical application remains uneven, with a need for clearer communication, training, and simplification of procedures often expressed by staff. This relates to change management (as discussed later in this report in section 3.3.5), as it affects all OBA actions.** The evaluation also found that staff perceptions of the OBA vary by type and level of staff. Bank staff generally hold a positive view of the OBA, appreciating its emphasis on integration, client centricity, and improved coordination across sectors and regions. Staff interviews and survey responses highlighted strong support for the OBA’s relevance, with many Task Managers noting its benefits in fostering collaboration and aligning projects with local needs. Successful examples, such as the multi-disciplinary team in Egypt’s Food Security and Economic Resilience Project, illustrate the approach’s potential to enhance teamwork and streamline operations. External stakeholders, while largely unaware of the reform, also recognized the value of better internal integration, drawing parallels with similar initiatives in other institutions such as the United Nations and the World Bank. In addition, the evaluation found that introducing a budget coefficient generated a better understanding of project cost structures, thereby improving the overall budgeting process. Similarly, staff greatly appreciated the widespread adoption of annual and quarterly work planning sessions. Consultation with in-country staff revealed that these activities are now well integrated into business practices and contribute to improving collaboration and efficiency.

However, as previously discussed in the relevance section of this report, the evaluation found gaps in staff understanding of the OBA, based on survey responses and interviews. These gaps were often associated with staff position, length of service at the Bank, and whether individuals had been directly involved in implementing specific OBA-related actions or reforms. Staff and Management interviews indicated that the OBA is commonly understood as a framework for inter-team collaboration, with limited awareness of its broader structure and objectives. Many staff members – particularly those in country offices or with less than one year of experience – reported being unclear about the specific processes and workstreams, especially in areas such as people and change management. While the evaluation acknowledges that not all staff are expected to be familiar with every aspect of the OBA, findings suggest that general understanding is important for effective change management and engagement. The evaluation did not identify a consistent communication or training strategy accompanying the rollout

of the OBA, and staff interviews did not point to systematic efforts to simplify procedures or clarify roles across the institution.

**In addition to the above, the evaluation notes that some important management challenges remain, thus limiting staff capacities to collaborate effectively.** First, inconsistencies and delays in implementing strategic staffing and staff movements have led to unequal staffing across regions, sometimes resulting in understaffing. This situation, in turn, contributes to an excessive workload for the existing staff, thereby reducing time for collaboration between teams, each of which is already stretched thin in delivering its portfolio. This situation is exacerbated in transition countries, where interviewees reported that incentives for staff to relocate are insufficient, particularly in Central Africa, thereby deepening staffing gaps. Secondly, in relation to the limitations associated with cross-collaboration between sectoral and ecosystem staff as discussed above, staff demotivation has been reported in multiple instances due to the perceived inadequate consideration of individual contributions. Findings from a benchmarking study conducted as part of this evaluation show that other multilateral MDBs have experienced challenges like those that the AfDB faces. While internal collaboration has generally improved among MDBs implementing an OBA, achieving synergies remains limited due to weak incentives for staff collaboration. In some cases, this is linked to the absence of joint KPIs (e.g., IsDB). Collaboration often remains ad hoc, personality-driven, or opportunistic (e.g., IDB and WBG). Moreover, in institutions like the WBG and AsDB, collaboration – particularly between SOs and NSOs – has been hampered by differences in business models and operational contexts among teams.

### 3.3.3. Delivering more integrated solutions to clients through improved internal and external coordination

***The evaluation found that the Bank's focus on integrated solutions for RMCs has yielded mixed results.***

**The evaluation found that cooperation between and among sector departments remained weak, pointing to insufficient incentives for Task Managers to collaborate beyond their own projects, which affects project delivery.** While CSPs increasingly promote integrated projects across sectors, operational staff interviewed in Central Africa reported that sectors continue to work mostly in silos (e.g., infrastructure, health), with few multisectoral operations emerging. Similarly, in East Africa, the 2023 Kenya CSPE identified “weak collaboration between sectors in terms of maximizing synergies and portfolio coherence.”<sup>23</sup> Specifically, the CSPE highlighted missed opportunities for synergies between the Enable Youth Project and other finance operations. Staff interviewed in the North and East Africa regional offices stated that the fact that Task Managers are primarily responsible for KPIs limited to their own projects hamper coordination and can sometimes generate intersectoral competition for resources. More generally, both operational and ecosystem staff reported that accountability for project delivery continues to rest too heavily on Task Managers, undermining the principles of joint accountability.

**The evaluation also found that collaboration between SO and NSO teams remains limited, despite some positive experiences.** Some efforts to create synergies between SO and NSO operations were identified during interviews. For instance, staff in North Africa mentioned cases where budget support was combined with policy advice to enhance the business environment in sectors offering opportunities for private sector investment. Public-private partnerships are also often promoted in North Africa, according to regional Management. Similarly, social sector staff in the regional office in East Africa indicated that they are working increasingly with NSO teams, notably on small-scale projects, feasibility studies, and project preparation. Similar improvements in collaboration were observed in other MDBs that adopted a One Bank Approach, as found by the benchmarking study conducted as part of this evaluation. For instance, the AsDB reported improved collaboration between SO and NSO teams, while the IDB reduced regional silos and improved collaboration between HQ and regional offices.

However, staff based in country offices in East Africa reported difficulties in identifying which NSO officers were responsible for which projects, as they were scattered across various sectors. In that regard, the recent introduction of a regional NSO lead position has helped coordinate teams. This regional focal point can now connect the right NSO officer with other country or regional staff requiring NSO inputs, as highlighted by staff in East Africa. The evaluation also found cases of harmonization challenges between SO and NSO operations. For example, in North Africa, staff interviewed reported that the State's decision to guarantee an investment, initially considered as private, required revising

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<sup>23</sup> Kenya: Evaluation of the AfDB's Country Strategy and Program (2014–2023)

the entire approval process. Lastly, according to staff interviewed, NSO teams often operate with confidentiality requirements, which limit information sharing with other Bank departments.

**The evaluation found evidence of partial improvements in the AfDB's collaboration with development partners since the launch of the OBA**, as noted in several CSPEs published after 2020. These evaluations found collaboration through the Bank's participation in relevant thematic and sector working groups, as well as its engagement in joint strategic planning and the implementation of support activities. Examples include co-financing projects, such as the Dar es Salaam Bus Rapid Transit project, which was co-financed by the World Bank and the Japan International Cooperation Agency. The Bank's involvement in coordinating work with other partners was also found to have contributed to improved task-sharing and coherence in strategies, particularly in sectors such as economic governance, infrastructure, and agriculture. The volume of co-financed projects has significantly increased, with active co-financing resources rising from UA 909 million in 2020 to UA 2,614 million in 2023, driven by partnerships with entities such as Japan's Accelerated Co-financing Facility for Africa and the Korea Economic Development Cooperation Fund.<sup>24</sup> This improvement is attributed to the diminishing impact of the COVID-19 crisis and enhanced engagement efforts by AfDB Management.<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, interviews with development partners suggest that coordination with the AfDB has improved only somewhat in recent years, mainly attributable to decentralization efforts through the people management workstream.

**The evaluation found that actions under the people management workstream (in addition to the DAM revisions) have contributed to clarifying responsibilities within the Bank in certain areas, helping both staff to better understand their role and clients to identify their counterparts.** For example, the regional offices now lead policy dialogue, with the support of sectoral staff on technical matters. This role clarification of regional offices has been clear since the OBA, according to the staff interviewed. Similarly, Task Managers have been identified as the primary focal points for project supervision by several ministries and clients interviewed (e.g., Côte d'Ivoire), reflecting a clear perception of their roles extending beyond the Bank as well. More generally, the creation, population, and automation of regional offices have allowed the Bank to develop identifiable "one-stop shops" in most African countries, an evolution appreciated by clients, according to interviews with staff and RMCs, particularly in North Africa and West Africa. However, as noted earlier, in other areas the clarification of roles did not go far enough, and confusion remained.

#### 3.3.4. Improving budget management

***The evaluation found that, as part of the OBA implementation, the Bank has undertaken several initiatives that have enabled a more effective transition to product-based budgeting, grounded in agreed-upon and accurate cost coefficients, thereby promoting a culture of results and transparency. However, the increased control of sector departments over budgetary decisions has raised concerns about overlooking regional needs and hindering cross-sector coordination.***

**The evaluation found that throughout 2020 and 2021, the Bank successfully established, piloted, and fine-tuned budget coefficients.** These are standard costs for key deliverables throughout the operations cycle (such as project preparation, supervision, and field missions). They are based on historical data found in the Bank's Activity Time Recording System (ATRS) and cost accounting system. In parallel, the Bank has made significant efforts to update and implement its ATRS and Strategic Resource Assessment Software (SRAS), a budget planning and monitoring tool, while engaging stakeholders and providing training to promote its utilization. Updates introduced since December 2020 include the possibility for ATRS coordinators (managers or focal points) to access and follow up on the timesheets submitted by staff in their complex and to monitor timesheets of entire cost centers, as well as other improvements to make the ATRS more ergonomic and user-friendly. As a result, the ATRS achieved a 93 percent completion rate in 2023, providing more accurate data to inform the refining of budget coefficients. By the end of January 2025, ATRS expanded its use to consultants paid from the administrative budget. This initiative supported the Bank's transition toward a more accurate coefficient-based budgeting approach.

**The evaluation found that, in practice, budget reforms have promoted a culture of results and transparency. However, the increased control of sector departments over budgetary decisions has raised concerns about overlooking regional needs and hindering cross-sector coordination,**

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<sup>24</sup> 2023 Retrospective Review Report on Bank Group Budgets and Work Programme Performance, p20

<sup>25</sup> 2020 Retrospective Review Report on Bank Group Budgets and Work Programme Performance, p16

**as explained below.** Interviews with in-country staff revealed that the introduction of product-based budgeting and the use of budget coefficients have made budgeting more transparent. Managers and teams now have a better overview of all allocations and expenditures per operation/project. This has facilitated better planning and reallocation of resources as needed. In turn, regional managers interviewed indicated that a “culture of results” was growing within the Bank.

However, staff interviewed report that sector departments’ increased control over budget management has had mixed results. Through a review of documentation and interviews with Senior Management, the evaluation noted that control over budget management has shifted several times in recent years. First, regional offices were empowered by the implementation of decentralization (UDAP) and the DBDM starting in 2016–2017. Then, control over operational budgets was transferred to sector departments when the OBA was deployed in 2020. Sectoral staff generally welcomed this evolution, highlighting gains in flexibility and responsiveness in project delivery, as fewer approvals were required from the regional office. Despite these observations, some Task Managers in North Africa and East Africa (who are typically sector specialists) were concerned that they had too little control over budget utilization, while still being responsible for project delivery. Some country office staff also warned of the risk of overlooking regional needs by shifting budget control from regions to sectors. For instance, some regional managers complained that sector departments sometimes programmed activities without their prior notification, which affected the coherence of the regional portfolio (e.g., in Central Africa). In addition, regional staff and NSO officers perceived sector-led budgeting as risk-averse and insufficiently responsive to the dynamic nature of NSO operations. Additionally, staff noted that the growing influence of sector departments in budget allocation sometimes led to misalignment with regional priorities and reduced flexibility for cross-sector collaboration, particularly when transactions emerged unexpectedly or required rapid coordination across units. Ultimately, the decision of where budget and control sit comes with inevitable trade-offs, as both have advantages and obstacles, as demonstrated by both the positive results from the OBA and the current challenges that must be navigated.

### **3.3.5. Implementing change management and communication**

*The evaluation identified several key actions taken to improve the Bank’s approach to change management and internal communication under the OBA. Most notably, the AfDB developed a change management approach in 2020 based on three pillars – standardization of tools and processes, developing change management skills, and fostering ownership. However, despite a robust approach and framework, the evaluation found that the implemented actions have been insufficient to lead to significant change in the work culture, which would result in the expected outcomes of the OBA.*

The evaluation found that the OBA’s change management workstream focused on supporting the success of the other four workstreams identified by Management in response to the 2019 DBDM evaluation. This (DBDM) evaluation found that the absence of detailed, well-sequenced action plans and a robust monitoring and reporting system undermined effective change management for the DBDM. These gaps limited regular progress reviews and adaptive course correction. To address this, the DBDM evaluation recommended establishing a clear change management structure, informed by lessons from the TMT, DAPEC, and the evaluation itself. **However, the current evaluation of the OBA found that these foundational issues remain unresolved.** The lack of clear, targeted metrics and indicators continues to constrain monitoring, learning, and strategic decision-making, reducing the potential for continuous improvement and limiting the reform’s ability to demonstrate its added value.

The evaluation found that under the OBA’s change management workstream, the Bank took steps to improve change management and internal communication, notably developing a change management approach in 2020 based on three pillars – standardization of tools and processes, developing change management skills, and fostering ownership. Key efforts included strengthening internal communications, engaging leadership, and raising staff awareness of the reform’s objectives. For instance, continuous staff training and the creation of change management networks and communities supported the implementation of this approach. According to the Bank’s Business Transformation Department (SNBT.1), as of mid-2024, 1,327 staff had participated in change management competency-building trainings, and 96 staff had participated in “Delivering Project Results” workshops. In addition, a Change Agents’ Network, comprising staff from various Bank units who are trained and prepared to be the voice and catalysts of change across the Bank, was established in 2020 with over 120 agents. Their role is to develop, support, and communicate change plans for their respective teams and Management, be aware of change initiatives within the Bank, meet regularly with

other change agents, upskill through change management programs, and report on progress.<sup>26</sup> While the change agents described the network as a beneficial platform to share good practices with other colleagues, they stated that support for their change initiatives/projects was sometimes inadequate and that the Bank did not recognize and reward their work sufficiently. A “Change Management Community of Practice (CoP)” was established, which, as of May 2025, counts over 370 members. The CoP is an online portal where SNBT.1 posts insights, questions, and resources that may be useful to staff. Its purpose is to share knowledge of the application of change management, including information on change projects in the Bank, both large and small, as well as best practices regarding the change management process that should be adopted to support successful project execution.<sup>27</sup>

Creating both change agent networks and CoPs is in line with best practices in change management, where creating an enabling environment through informal learning networks such as CoPs can contribute to the adoption of change.<sup>28</sup> However, the evaluation found that the extent of staff engagement with the content of the communications (i.e., emails, newsletters) is unclear, and the change agents’ ability to influence change within the Bank appears to be limited. “Building a change management CoP takes change management,”<sup>29</sup> which should include a structured process, increased awareness and knowledge of the roles of the CoP, and increased adoption rate.

While the actions mentioned above helped to partially build a shared understanding of the OBA across teams, their overall effectiveness was found to be tempered by structural limitations that continue to affect the broader reform effort. In particular, the absence of a comprehensive change management framework and integrated monitoring tools – issues previously identified in the DBDM evaluation – meant that these efforts, though valuable, were not sufficient to fully enable adaptive management or strategic oversight.

**Despite the development of a robust change management approach and framework, the evaluation found that the implemented actions have been insufficient to lead to significant change in the work culture, which would result in the expected outcomes of the OBA.** Although a robust change management approach has been implemented, the evaluation found that engagement in change processes remains uneven across Bank departments. This unevenness is shaped by factors such as the degree of leadership support, individual motivation, and varying departmental priorities. These factors have challenged the effective implementation of change efforts.

Furthermore, limited human and financial resources were found to have constrained the Bank’s capacity to sustain and embed change management activities across the institution. Communication and staff engagement on the OBA was conducted primarily through emails to staff, change management training sessions, change management networks, and the CoP. While the Bank has sent multiple general e-mails to staff to communicate certain updates (e.g., ATRS, Wakanda program), the evaluation found limited evidence to support the effectiveness of e-mails alone in promoting the adoption of the new way of working. In addition, staff felt that the timelines for implementing OBA workstreams and the reasons for delays (e.g., the Wakanda program) were not well communicated. Similarly, the communication of key information, such as reporting lines or strategic goals, was perceived to occur late at times. For example, according to interviews with staff at the Southern Africa regional office, some employees only learned about the revised DAM months or even a year after joining the Bank. This could point to the need for stronger staff onboarding and regular reminders regarding document accessibility and availability on the Bank’s intranet. Some country offices also reported miscommunication (or lack of communication) between teams. For instance, staff in the West Africa regional office noted that colleagues can visit the same countries and meet the same stakeholders during the same period without being aware of each other’s presence. Overall, inadequate communication within regional hubs points to weak implementation of the One Bank culture.

**The cultural transformation envisioned under the OBA (i.e., fostering greater collaboration and coordination – a One Bank culture) was not explicitly stated in the 2020 OBA document, although it was an implied objective.** However, perceptions remain mixed on the extent of actual cultural change induced by the OBA. The lack of clarity on this implied objective may have contributed to mixed staff perceptions regarding the practical relevance and impact of the OBA, and to challenges in implementing related actions. For some staff interviewed, the OBA remains a concept with little practical implication. This finding points to issues with implementing OBA actions, staff misperception

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<sup>26</sup> AfDB Change Agents’ Work Program Outline.

<sup>27</sup> AfDB Change Management Approach.2020.

<sup>28</sup> Prosci. 2025. Change Agents: Catalysts for Organizational Growth.

<sup>29</sup> Prosci. 2025. Seven Success Factors to Building a Community of Practice.

of the actual impact of the OBA actions, and/or challenges with implementation of the change management approach. The absence of clearly defined cultural change goals likely weakened shared understanding and hindered effective operationalization of the change management approach, as suggested by mixed staff perceptions and difficulties in implementing related actions.

### 3.3.6. Unintended outcomes of the One Bank Approach

The evaluation found that the implementation of the OBA has had several unintended consequences.

**Firstly, the evaluation found that the dual-line reporting structure introduced by the OBA has caused confusion and, sometimes, stress among staff** because it was unclear whom to approach for specific issues, such as leave requests. For example, interviews with regional offices mentioned that decentralization introduced unclear reporting structures, whereby staff may report administratively to a regional director but technically to a sector manager, resulting in inefficiencies. This lack of clarity can impact performance evaluations due to limited congruence between reporting lines. The challenges stemmed from poor implementation of the new structure or flaws in its design, such as misunderstandings regarding roles and redundant processes.

**Secondly, the evaluation found that splitting and multiplying sector departments and other Bank departments**, prompted by activity growth and recent major organizational reforms, **has increased the number of points of contact**. This sometimes made communication and collaboration across the Bank more complex. For instance, dividing NSO teams across sectors has made it more difficult for country staff interviewed to identify their relevant NSO counterparts. At the same time, according to some staff interviewed, the multiplication of departments has increased demand on the ecosystem and specific experts, contributing to bottlenecks. Similarly, as mentioned in the [Evaluation of the AfDB's Decentralization](#), this division and multiplication of departments inadvertently created regional silos, which may undermine the OBA by weakening cross-regional collaboration, knowledge sharing and internal cohesion.

**Finally, evaluation case studies found that increased budgetary control by sector departments created specific challenges for NSOs**. Some investment officers interviewed expressed concerns about a misalignment between the sector-led budgeting practices, which are perceived to be risk-averse, and the dynamic nature of NSO operations. As a result, investment officers feel that insufficient budgets are being allocated for critical transactions. Indeed, staff recalled that sectors were often reluctant to include budgets for transactions unless they were confident that the transactions would materialize. For NSO operations, this is seen as problematic because the pipeline's readiness can be unpredictable. Deals may accelerate, slow down, or emerge unexpectedly mid-year. However, interviews with regional and sector staff revealed that this approach reflects a deliberate effort to manage financial risk and ensure budget credibility. From their perspective, allocating funds only to likely transactions helps avoid overcommitting resources and supports more disciplined financial planning. These differing views highlight a tension between operational agility and financial prudence, suggesting a need for improved coordination and shared understanding across units to better align budgeting practices with the realities of NSO operations. Similar challenges were observed at the World Bank or the AsDB, for instance, as different ways of doing business hinder the integration of SO and NSO operations, as noted by the benchmarking study component of this evaluation.

### 3.3.7. Factors affecting implementation and effectiveness

The evaluation found that the following factors affected the implementation and effectiveness of the OBA:

- 1. Design and Contextual Challenges:** The design and implementation of the OBA itself were found to have presented challenges, as evidenced by staff interviews and documentation reviewed. Delays in execution were often linked to the interdependence of various reform actions, whereby setbacks in one area (e.g., rightsizing) had cascading effects on others, such as staff availability. Some delays were also attributed to the complexity of the policy design process, including extensive consultations that slowed the adoption of key guidelines, such as those related to staff mobility. Additionally, the Bank's diverse operating contexts – such as differences between NSO and SO operations – have complicated the harmonization of processes and expectations. External shocks, including the COVID-19 pandemic and trade restrictions, further disrupted implementation timelines and affected the achievement of intended outcomes. For example, staff interviews and corporate evaluation reports indicated that COVID-19 caused delays in recruitment and corporate reform implementation.<sup>30</sup> . In addition, the rollout of the *Delivering as One Bank* document in early 2020 coincided with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, limiting staff engagement and ability to collaborate more widely as attention was shifted to crisis response.
- 2. Leadership, Culture, and Capacity as Enablers of Collaboration:** Evidence from staff surveys and interviews highlighted that strong leadership and a collaborative culture were critical enablers of the OBA. Staff consistently reported that clear strategic direction and well-defined roles – particularly when reinforced by senior managers – empowered them to collaborate across departments. This was also echoed in benchmarking findings from the WBG when it undertook reforms to its operational model between 2014 and 2019. Leadership support is particularly valuable in resolving challenges related to cross-departmental coordination and ensuring alignment with institutional goals. New OBA instruments, such as work planning meetings, have further strengthened collaboration by giving structure to already cooperative teams, reinforcing a culture of shared accountability. Additionally, a culture of teamwork and openness among staff has helped break down silos and foster a shared One Bank spirit. Training and learning opportunities, including change management and operational programs such as the Operations Academy, were mentioned by staff as valuable for enhancing competence and adaptability, and reinforcing OBA principles. Individual traits, such as personal resilience and willingness to collaborate, were also cited as contributing significantly to successful implementation.
- 3. Institutional Structures, Tools, and Processes as Operational Enablers:** Institutional frameworks, systems, and tools were deemed to have played a significant role in facilitating collaboration across the Bank. Staff highlighted that organizational structures, clear policies, and shared IT platforms such as SAP and SharePoint have made it easier to coordinate work and access information. These tools support accountability by clarifying roles and responsibilities, reducing task overlaps, and enabling joint ownership of outcomes. The presence of structured operational guidelines, such as the DAM and the “Rules of the Game,” has provided a consistent foundation for collaborative and coordinated work, and encouraged accountability (i.e., by defining responsibilities, it prevents task overlaps and ensures joint accountability). Together, these institutional enablers have helped create an environment that fosters collaboration across departments more seamlessly and effectively. However, interviews with staff across regional and country offices revealed that the articulation of these mechanisms, along with communication and engagement strategies, was not always sufficient for staff to fully understand or implement the OBA.
- 4. Structural and Cultural Barriers to Collaboration:** Despite progress, the evaluation found that several structural and cultural barriers to collaboration persist, hindering the full realization of the OBA. Staff interviewed across departments reported a persistent silo mentality and limited buy-in from some managers and departments, with some teams still working in isolation or withholding information from others. In shared projects, transactional behaviors between departments and complexes have also been observed, undermining trust and cooperation. Communication challenges further exacerbate these issues, with staff citing inadequate tools and unclear messaging around OBA principles. Many staff members expressed a lack of clarity regarding how the OBA should function at the operational level, particularly among newer staff members. Additionally, the evaluation found that the dual role of ecosystem teams – balancing support and control functions – has created confusion and tension with sector teams, ultimately hindering project delivery as previously mentioned. Misalignment of KPIs, especially across these types of

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<sup>30</sup> Evaluation of the African Development Bank's Human Resource Management System: Workforce Planning and Incentive Structure.

departments, was also deemed to discourage collaboration, as current frameworks are perceived to often fail to recognize or reward joint efforts.

- 5. Operational and Resource Constraints:** The evaluation found that resource limitations and centralized decision-making have constrained operational efficiency under the OBA. Inadequate staffing, particularly in regional and country offices, has overburdened teams that are then unable to fully engage in collaborative efforts. For example, some Task Managers were found to be managing disproportionately large portfolios, limiting their capacity to contribute to cross-functional initiatives. For example, interviews in Uganda indicated that a single Task Manager was responsible for projects worth nearly 1bn UA – approximately 80 percent of the country portfolio. Understaffing of some regional and country offices was already observed in the 2025 [Evaluation of the AfDB's Decentralization](#), which noted that despite a 69 percent increase in the Bank's portfolio between 2015 and 2024, staff numbers only grew by 16.2 percent, partly due to delays in strategic staffing implementation as noted in the [Evaluation of the AfDB's Human Resource Management System: Workforce Planning and Incentive Structure](#). Centralized decision-making was cited by field staff as slowing project approvals and reducing autonomy, affecting responsiveness and delivery speed. Furthermore, partial automation of key business processes – such as procurement and document sharing – was also identified in staff interviews as a source of inefficiency, despite some improvements under the OBA.

### 3.4. Efficiency

*The efficiency criterion assessed the extent to which actions under the five OBA workstreams have been implemented in a timely manner (as planned).*

The evaluation found that all items under the five workstreams have either been implemented or are ongoing. Only half of the time-bound actions (seven out of 14) were completed on time, with the remainder either completed late or still ongoing, mainly within the people management workstream. Nonetheless, budget management and joint accountability reforms were implemented more efficiently.

**The evaluation found that all items under the five workstreams have either been implemented or are ongoing.** More specifically, by April 2025, nine of the 21 OBA main actions were completed, five were ongoing, and seven were launched and are considered 'continuous' (e.g., monitoring, communication) as shown in Table 2 and described in detail in Technical Annex 3.<sup>31</sup> As the lead teams reported in progress reports and other relevant documentation, implementation was particularly efficient in the budget management and tools for joint accountability workstreams. Notable achievements include the successful establishment of budget coefficients and the design and cascading of top-level KPIs, all the way to country offices and individual staff members.

**Table 2: Summary of OBA items' overall implementation status by workstream (April 2025)**

	Business Processes	People Management	Budget Management	Joint Accountability	Change Management & Communications	Total Actions
Completed	1	1	3	3	1	9
Ongoing	2	3	0	0	0	5
Continuous	0	1	2	0	4	7
<b>Total Actions</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>21</b>

Source: AfDB documentation, Evaluation Team

As per the 2020 *Delivering as One Bank* document, "The objective [was] to launch the One Bank Approach in 2020 formally. However, many linked reforms and changes [had to be rolled out] over a

<sup>31</sup> "Continuous actions" are activities, such as monitoring, that require repeated and permanent attention. They can never be considered as completed, as opposed to "Ongoing actions," which are in the process of being completed (e.g., implementation of a particular policy).

longer period.<sup>32</sup> More specifically, several items, such as the clarification of roles, responsibilities, and reporting lines, were planned for 2020, while other items, such as staff movements and budget reforms, were planned as multi-year activities. In practice, as presented in Table 3 below, the evaluation found that only half of the OBA items with a timeline attached were completed on time (seven of 14<sup>33</sup>). Seven other items were completed late or are still ongoing. The remaining seven items are “continuous actions” without an expected date of achievement (e.g., monitoring results). Budget management and tools for joint accountability reforms were implemented the most quickly, whereas business processes and people management reforms encountered the most delays.

**Table 3: Summary of OBA items’ time implementation status by workstream (by April 2025)**

	Business Processes	People Management	Budget Management	Joint Accountability	Change Management & Communications	Total Actions
On time	0	0	3	3	1	7
Late	3	4	0	0	0	7
Continuous	0	1	2	0	4	7
Total Actions	3	5	5	3	5	21

Source: AfDB documentation, Evaluation Team

**The evaluation found that the timely implementation of the OBA workstreams was affected by multiple factors, including:** 1) interdependencies across items, causing “chain delays” (e.g., delays in adopting the One Bank DAM postponed updates to operation manuals and IT system alignments; the 2021 OBA Progress Report identified critical challenges, such as late delivery of guidance documents and ICT platforms); 2) the Bank policy design process, with extensive consultations delaying the staff mobility guidelines, as well as underestimation of the time required for complex items, which led to postponed deadlines; and 3) external factors like the COVID-19 crisis further hindered timely implementation, limiting staff movements and transfers.

**The evaluation identified some weaknesses in the monitoring and management of the OBA implementation.** In particular, the shortcomings in the OBA monitoring frameworks may have hindered the Bank’s ability to identify and address implementation issues in a timely manner. Indeed, as highlighted in the 2020 *Delivering as One Bank* document, the Bank committed to developing dedicated monitoring and reporting tools to track progress on implementing the One Bank workstreams. Most notably, in addition to quarterly reports to the Senior Management Coordination Committee (SMCC),<sup>34</sup> the 2020 document called for progress reports to the Board of Directors (six months and 12 months after the OBA’s launch). A “Delivery on One Bank Dashboard” was also intended to be launched in Q4 2021,<sup>35</sup> as noted in the 2021 *Management’s Report on Progress*, to track implementation of the full range of One Bank changes, evaluate how well staff and managers were working as One Bank, and assess key implementation risks. However, of those tools, the evaluation team only had access to the Mid-2021 Progress Report to the Board. SNBT reported that in initial discussions with the IT department, a project management tool would replace the dashboard; however, this has yet to be developed.

The benchmarking study revealed that the WBG has faced similar challenges. The absence of a dedicated team to steer and monitor reforms limited the WBG’s ability to make timely course corrections based on organizational performance data. The WBG also found that the lack of clearly defined metrics for organizational effectiveness hindered its ability to track progress and adapt reforms. More robust data on service quality and client satisfaction could have strengthened its focus on results and improved reform outcomes. These insights underscore the importance of institutional mechanisms that enable centralized oversight, real-time learning, performance tracking, and agility in the delivery of reform.

**Nonetheless, the evaluation found evidence of monitoring mechanisms outside of those planned under the OBA.** For instance, achievements related to long-term reforms, such as budget reforms or the Wakanda program, are subject to specific and separate reporting. Moreover,

<sup>32</sup> AfDB (2020), *Delivering as One Bank – Strengthening Accountabilities for Delivering Quality and Development Impact in a Matrix Organisation*, para. 63.

<sup>33</sup> 14 items were time-bound: 7 were considered on time and 7 were late.

<sup>34</sup> *Delivering as One Bank*, para. 63

<sup>35</sup> *2021 Management’s Report on Progress*, para. 22

Management's annual updates on the GCI-VII commitments also track progress on the part of the OBA (e.g., action 22 of the commitments tracks "ONE BANK – Institutionalize the organizational arrangements that guide and underpin the matrix delivery model"). Ultimately, when evaluating the effectiveness of the OBA, the RMF provides a framework for assessing performance. However, it does not adequately capture the impact of the OBA on collaboration and project delivery, which makes it challenging to identify areas for improvement or demonstrate the added value of the approach.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS, LESSONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4.1. Conclusions

The evaluation concludes that the OBA has emerged as a defining reform in the AfDB's journey toward greater institutional integration and responsiveness. Its conceptual strength lies in its alignment with the Bank's strategic aspirations and its ambition to foster a unified culture of delivery. Its five interlinked workstreams – on business processes, people management, budget management, joint accountability, and change management – have laid an important foundation for greater institutional coherence and cross-functional collaboration. Staff across the Bank recognize the value of the OBA in addressing long-standing coordination and accountability gaps. However, the evaluation revealed that strategic alignment alone does not guarantee transformation, and that the path from design to impact is characterized by uneven progress, structural tensions, and cultural complexities.

The experience of the OBA has illuminated the intricate interplay between structure and behavior, showing that coherence in design does not automatically translate into coherence in practice – it is fundamentally about how change is executed, experienced, and sustained. It has also underscored the importance of institutional agility in navigating competing priorities, evolving mandates, and diverse stakeholder expectations. While structural tools like matrix structures and joint KPIs are useful, they alone cannot drive transformation. Without complementary behavioral incentives, strong feedback mechanisms, and clearly defined authority and ownership, such tools risk generating inertia, confusion, or reform fatigue. Complex interdependencies, uneven capacity, and limited operational readiness have made implementation more fragmented than intended.

The implementation of the OBA also revealed a persistent tension between reform ambition and the Bank's absorptive capacity. While the goals of integration and efficiency remain valid, their realization depends on sustained leadership commitment, adaptive management, and a shift toward a more learning-oriented and participatory implementation approach. The experience suggests that reform outcomes are shaped not only by technical design but also by how expectations are managed, how incentives influence behavior, and how ownership is cultivated across the institution. Looking ahead, the OBA's trajectory suggests that sustaining reform momentum will depend less on the completion of discrete actions and more on the Bank's capacity to internalize reform as a continuous process. This involves cultivating a shared understanding of purpose, reinforcing a culture of collaboration, and embracing adaptive learning.

In this sense, the OBA is not merely a reform initiative but a strategic inflection point – an opportunity for the Bank to redefine itself as a cohesive, learning institution capable of navigating complexity and delivering transformative impact.

### 4.2. Lessons

**Lesson 1: Clear communication, visible leadership, and targeted staff support are critical for embedding complex institutional reforms.** The evaluation found that limited staff familiarity with the OBA's purpose and practical application – particularly across its five workstreams – hindered effective uptake. Experiences suggested that internal communication strategies, visible Management support, and targeted training can help build a shared understanding. Additionally, establishing mechanisms for ongoing dialogue and feedback may enhance staff ownership and support consistent implementation.

**Lesson 2: Clarifying roles, aligning performance expectations, and addressing capacity constraints help improve collaboration across teams.** Case studies pointed to challenges in sharing project delivery responsibilities, which contributed to tensions and weakened collaboration. Ambiguity around the roles of sector departments, regional offices, and ecosystem functions was identified as a contributing factor. Insights from the evaluation suggest that improving awareness of institutional guidance (e.g., Rules of the Game, DAM), aligning KPIs to reflect joint responsibilities, and ensuring adequate staffing – particularly in country offices – can foster cross-team collaboration.

**Lesson 3: Adaptable business processes, stronger digital tools, and proactive risk management can support implementation of the OBA workstreams in diverse contexts.** The evaluation observed that delays and inefficiencies were partly attributable to business processes that were either inflexible or only partially digitized, particularly in complex operational settings such as private sector operations or transition countries. Gaps in tool adoption and risk anticipation further contributed to fragmented implementation. These findings highlight the importance of adaptable systems and proactive risk management in supporting effective delivery.

**Lesson 4: Reforms affecting both central and decentralized functions require clear definition of roles and deliberate trade-offs.** The evaluation found that reforms aimed at strengthening central oversight without clarifying shifts in authority or resources created tensions with decentralized structures. These dynamics affected ownership and coherence, especially in relation to budget authority and operational roles. The findings highlight the need for deliberate coordination across governance layers to support effective implementation.

**Lesson 5: Flexibility and innovation can help institutions navigate complex reform agendas.** The OBA includes multiple interdependent reforms, and the evaluation found that this complexity introduced coordination difficulties, delays, and some resistance to change. Experiences suggest that allowing a degree of flexibility in how processes are interpreted and applied – particularly in varying operational contexts – can help address such challenges. Likewise, the strategic use of digital and technical innovations may offer practical solutions to overcome bottlenecks and support smoother implementation.

### 4.3. Recommendations

The evaluation makes the following recommendations to the Bank:

#### 5. Consolidate and sustain change management efforts to fully embed the OBA reforms across the institution, while actively promoting staff understanding, uptake, and collaboration.

Key priority actions for consideration include:

- Explicitly articulating a Bank-wide culture of change, setting clear expectations for adaptability, collaboration, and results orientation. This may include leveraging existing change management tools and practices to sustain reform momentum, address resistance, and ensure that ongoing and future reforms are consistently embedded in daily operations.
- Strengthening staff understanding and ownership of the OBA through mandatory induction and refresher training on the OBA, adding clear and practical illustrations to guidance materials (DAM, “Rules of the Game”), targeted communication campaigns showcasing real-world examples of cross-sector collaboration, and structured cross-departmental training initiatives (such as workshops, peer learning sessions, and targeted capacity building activities) to address operational overlaps and clarify shared accountabilities.
- Defining and communicating clear roles and responsibilities for change leadership at all levels, ensuring accountability for embedding reforms.
- Shifting emphasis from structural adjustments to the institutional culture, developing and implementing incentives and collaboration mechanisms including recognition programs for cross-department teamwork.

#### 6. Clarify institutional roles and align performance frameworks to strengthen shared accountability and reduce operational tensions across departments and regions.

Key priority actions to consider include:

- Ensuring full alignment of KPIs among all staff members and departments involved in an operation, to reflect joint responsibility and accountability and promote unified delivery.
- Strengthening the implementation of the KPI framework by ensuring its consistent application at all levels, for example by establishing clearer accountability mechanisms and regular monitoring to ensure KPIs are actively used to drive performance and support cross-departmental collaboration.

**7. Further streamline business processes and address staffing constraints to improve operational effectiveness.**

Key suggested actions include:

- Enhancing the effectiveness and responsiveness of business processes by adapting their implementation to diverse operational contexts—such as transition states and private sector operations—while maintaining accountability standards, and by simplifying and digitizing high-impact processes (i.e. project onboarding, procurement, disbursement) through user-centric IT design to enhance accessibility, efficiency, and uptake.
- Accelerating ongoing efforts in workforce planning, strategic staffing, talent deployment, and career development (as set out in the Management Responses to the HR1 and HR2 evaluations<sup>36</sup>), to more effectively address staffing needs in regional and country offices and fragile contexts, while ensuring alignment with broader HR reforms.

**8. Strengthen monitoring, reporting, evaluation, and risk management of reform implementation.**

Key priority actions to consider include:

- Developing and operationalizing a comprehensive implementation plan, results matrix, and reporting mechanism for all remaining and future reforms, ensuring clear indicators, baselines, timelines, responsibilities, and follow-up.
- Incorporating the underlying assumptions and interlinkages between reforms into monitoring frameworks to reinforce coherence and strategic alignment, while also enhancing the ability to anticipate and manage implementation risks.

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<sup>36</sup> See ADB/BD/WP/2025/63/Add.2/Rev.1 and ADB/BD/WP/2025/62/Add.2

## 5. ANNEXES

### Annex 1: Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation was designed as a **process evaluation**. It assessed the relevance, coherence, efficiency, and effectiveness of institutional processes and reforms aimed at enhancing the Bank's responsiveness to RMCs under the OBA. It examined the extent to which the five workstreams and actions outlined in the Management Response to IDEV's 2019 DBDM evaluation and the *Delivering as One Bank* document were implemented, and whether they achieved their intended results.

The evaluation was **theory-based** and guided by the Theory of Change (ToC) presented in Figure 3. It applied a **multi-level, mixed-methods approach to triangulate information**, reduce bias, and test the robustness of findings. The evaluation comprised the following components.

#### 1. Key Steps of the Evaluation

This evaluation covered the period from April 2020 to April 2025 and assessed all actions under the five OBA workstreams identified in *Delivering as One Bank*.

The evaluation took place from March 2024 to July 2025, adhering to a structured process that was divided into three phases: inception, data collection, and analysis/reporting. Each phase involved specific tasks and deliverables.

##### a. Inception Phase (March-September 2024)

- Conducted scoping interviews with key HQ stakeholders.
- Performed a preliminary documentary review to establish context.
- Developed the evaluation framework anchored in a Theory of Change (ToC) approach.
- Designed data collection strategy and tools, ensuring alignment with evaluation objectives.
- Produced an Approach Paper, validated through structured meetings.

##### b. Data Collection Phase (October-February 2024):

- Conducted an in-depth documentary review and secondary data analysis.
- Held interviews and focus groups with stakeholders at HQ and in nine Regional Member Countries (RMCs).
- Performed field visits in four countries (Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Chad and Uganda) and virtual missions in five countries (Cameroon, Tunisia, South Africa, Kenya and Mozambique)
- Developed one Case Study report.
- Implemented an online survey targeting Bank staff.
- Conducted benchmarking analyses.

##### c. Analysis and Reporting Phase (December-July 2025):

- Conducted transversal analysis to integrate findings.
- Formulated preliminary findings, conclusions, and lessons learned.
- Produced a Draft Technical Report.
- Produced a Summary Report, incorporating stakeholder feedback.

#### 2. Technical Methods and Data Collection Tools

The evaluation deployed multiple data collection techniques to ensure **triangulation** and enhance the **validity** of findings:

##### a. Key Informant and Grouped Interviews

**Eighty-seven individual and group interviews** involving 240 participants, including Board members, Senior Management, staff at headquarters (HQ) and in regional and country offices, and external stakeholders. Interviewees included heads of departments or units in charge of each workstream (past and present), other members of Management, the Evaluation Reference Group, Staff Council

representatives, country focal points, project implementation unit members, development partners, and civil society organizations. In total, 17 interviews were conducted at HQ with 42 participants; the remaining 70 interviews were conducted as part of case studies.

**b. Country and Regional Case Studies**

The case study component was designed collect data across nine countries to assess OBA implementation and capture RMC perceptions of changes in the Bank’s responsiveness. These case studies included 70 interviews with 196 participants (out of the total of 240 interviewees conducted as part of the evaluation).

It had the following methodological considerations:

- Multi-method approach: Combined document review, secondary data analysis, benchmarking, and interviews with stakeholders.
- Stratified sampling: 10 countries were selected based on regional distribution, linguistic diversity, economic classification (Low-income, middle-income and transition states), and Country Strategy Papers approved before and after 2021.
- Hybrid data collection: Both physical and virtual methods were used, adjusting to accessibility constraints.

**c. Online Survey**

- Objective: To quantify stakeholder perceptions on AfDB’s One Bank Approach. Particularly on the extent to which the way they worked had changed, the impact of the reforms, and their understanding of the organizational culture.
- Target audience: HQ, regional and country office staff.
- Deployment: It ran for 24 days (25th of October - 18th of November 2024).
- The survey was conducted in three languages: English, French and Portuguese.
- Response rate: 18% (410 responses of 2298)
- Cross-validation: Findings were triangulated with interview and case study insights.

**d. Benchmark Analysis**

- Conducted a comparative assessment of AfDB’s One Bank Approach against other Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) (AsDB, IaDB, IsDB, WBG).
- Leveraged findings from IDEV’s Comparative Study of MDB Operating Models.
- Supplemented with additional document reviews and interviews with IFIs, UN agencies, and bilateral donors during field visits.

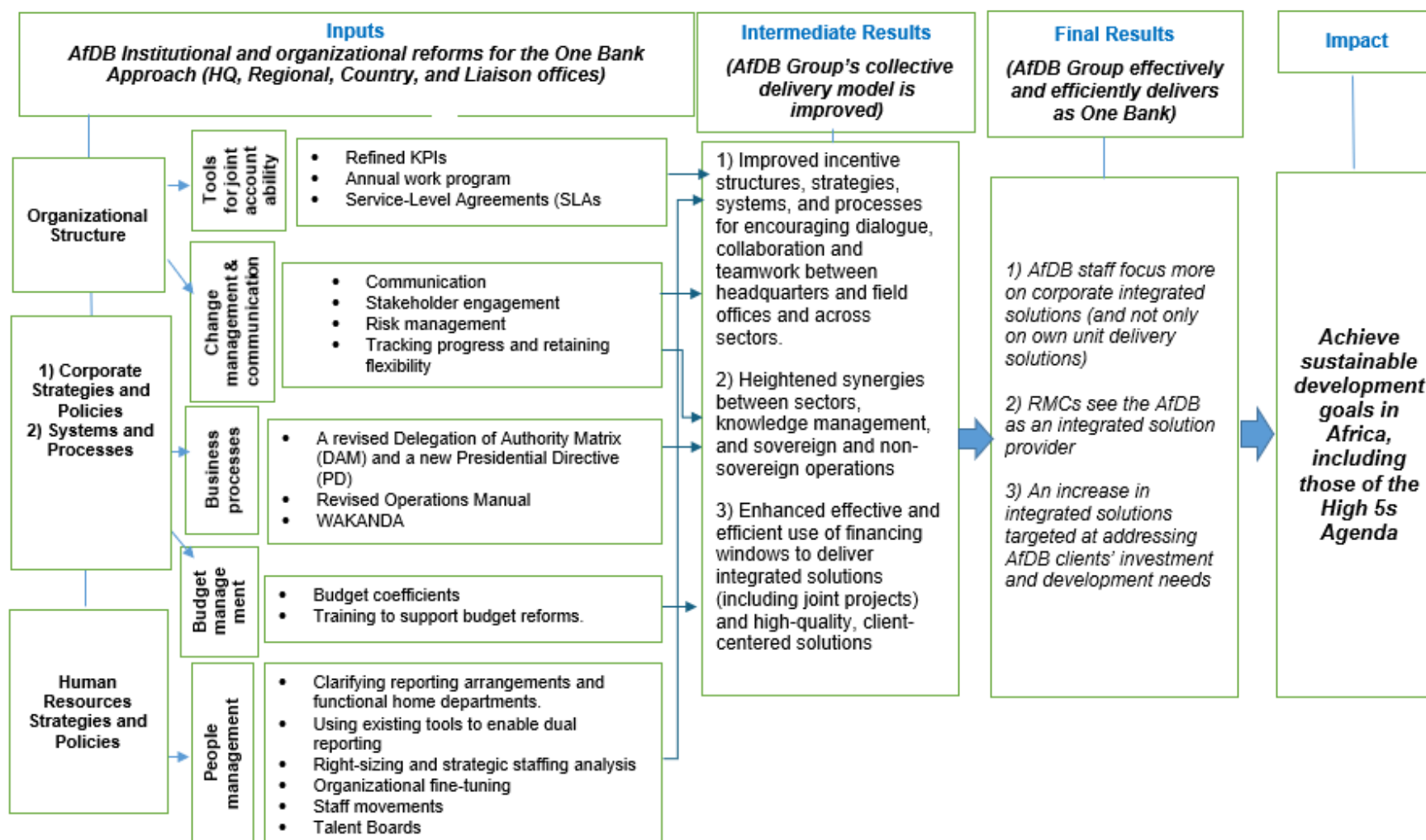
**e. Evaluation Limitations, Challenges, and Mitigation Strategies**

Several **methodological challenges** were identified and addressed:

Limitation	Mitigation Measures
Most of the actions under the five workstreams have only recently been implemented. We, therefore, might not have enough hindsight and record of performance to assess the longer-term effects of the reforms and the expected results with a high degree of confidence	To address this, the evaluation team: (i) conducted a detailed review of available documentation to reconstruct the specific ToC for the Bank’s OBA, identify relevant stakeholders, and map the actions undertaken under each workstream; (ii) selected an optimal sample for the country-specific case studies; (iii) ensured that country visits were well prepared to maximize opportunities for data collection; and (iv) applied practical considerations when synthesizing and consolidating findings to ensure that the results reflected the reforms being evaluated.
Our evaluation overlapped with other recent AfDB studies, including decentralisation, HR evaluations, and the comparative study on operating models.	We built on preliminary findings and insights from previous studies. For countries already covered by the AfDB decentralisation policy evaluation (e.g., Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire), we either reduced the number of external stakeholder interviews or ensured a diverse selection to avoid evaluation fatigue.  We also designed our data collection plan to limit the mobilisation of some similar stakeholders or tailor our questions to go to more details regarding OBA questions (and avoid re-asking similar questions raised as part of the decentralisation evaluation).

<p>The availability of the country office teams of the Bank involved in field missions was limited for some of them.</p>	<p>We adopted a flexible approach by granting for instance a specific time allowance for Uganda (field mission two months after the others).</p>
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Figure 3 Theory of Change of the One Bank Approach



**Assumptions:** Effective implementation of the DBDM – Taking into full consideration the recommendations made by the evaluation of the DBDM's implementation – Effective implementation of Reforms - Effective engagement of all stakeholders – staff are open to change/mindset.

**Risks:** Failure to provide adequate resources to relevant entities to enable timely delivery on commitments; Adverse impacts to performance of the COVID-19 pandemic; Resistance to change; Late delivery of action items identified in the workstreams; Challenges in implementing dual reporting.