

IDEV

Independent Development Evaluation
African Development Bank

From experience to knowledge...
From knowledge to action...
From action to impact

Management Action Record System: Status of Adoption of IDEV's Recommendations 2019 Report

What is the Management Action Record System?

In response to the recommendations made in IDEV's independent evaluations, AfDB Management commits to certain actions. The Management Action Record System (MARS) is an automated IT system for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of these Management actions. The MARS is a joint initiative of IDEV, the Bank's Delivery, Performance Management and Results Department and its Corporate IT Services Department.

Every six months, Bank Management reports to the AfDB Board of Directors on the status of implementation of the actions. For its part, IDEV undertakes an annual assessment of the level of adoption (implementation) of the recommendations, thereby aggregating all the actions per recommendation.

What did IDEV assess?

IDEV undertook its first yearly assessment of the adoption of evaluation recommendations, as captured in the AfDB's MARS. It provides the Board with an analysis of the progress made by Management in adopting agreed evaluation recommendations. The report is aimed at improving accountability for the implementation of recommendations, enhancing evaluative learning and assisting the Board in its oversight role. The overall objective was to examine the extent to which AfDB Management has adopted the agreed recommendations—it did not purport to assess the MARS system itself. The assessment also provides the Bank's Senior Management with lessons on ways to improve the adoption of IDEV's recommendations.



AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP



MARS Report Brief

What did IDEV find?

The assessment showed that:

- I The AfDB's process of tracking the implementation of evaluation recommendations is close to the practices of comparator organizations. Also, the amount of evidence in the MARS has significantly improved over time.
- I The analyzed **action plans were highly aligned** (84%) with the agreed recommendations.
- I **Most of the action plans (77%) have been implemented**, but generally **with significant delays** (avg. > 1 ½ years), which led to a low score in terms of implementation. The level of implementation considers the extent to which actions have been implemented as planned, going beyond the simple implementation status by taking into account the extent of the delay in implementation.
- I The overall **level of adoption of IDEV's recommendations was low**. In this assessment, adoption of recommendations was rated high in only 9% and substantial in 17% of cases. Adoption measures the extent of **both alignment and implementation**. Since implementation scores lower, this drives the rating for adoption (Figure 1).
- I **Timeliness has been the main challenge in the implementation of actions plans**. Lack of timeliness was the main reason for weak implementation ratings (68% of the cases), followed by a combination of lack of timeliness and lack of evidence (13%) and lack of implementation (10%).
- I **Agreed recommendations were more likely to be adopted than partially agreed recommendations**. Of the 175 agreed recommendations, 50 (29%) were adopted at least substantially, compared to only 2 of the 23 partially agreed recommendations.
- I **Performance (the level of adoption of recommendations) differed per type of evaluation, with recommendations from Country Strategy and Program Evaluations showing the highest rates of adoption** (Figure 2).
- I **Recommendations concerning quality at entry (9 out of 21), client engagement (7 of 19) and results measurement (8 of 26) were more likely to be adopted (at least substantially) than average**.
- I **The number of actions in response to recommendations at least substantially adopted has improved since 2015 with a significant jump in 2017**, which can be linked to the start of Management reporting to CODE on the implementation status of actions in September 2017 (Figure 3).

What did IDEV recommend?

The report makes the following recommendations:

1. **Compliance and timeliness** – Management should **strengthen a culture of results and accountability** by: i) continuing to track the implementation of the actions it agreed to take in response to IDEV's evaluation recommendations, and ii) holding Departments accountable for the timely implementation of these actions, including through the use of key performance indicators.
2. **Evidence on implementation** – Management should **record more systematically within MARS the evidence on the implementation of the actions it has taken** to address IDEV's recommendations.
3. **Absorptive capacity** – IDEV and Management should work together to **improve the quality of evaluation recommendations and ensure the number of recommendations made by IDEV remains manageable**—ideally not exceeding five per evaluation.

In addition, IDEV proposed to retire 116 of the 198 assessed recommendations because they had been implemented or were no longer relevant. The Board agreed with this proposal.

What was the methodological approach?

The assessment considered the evaluation recommendations with all their actions due by December 2018, which represents 198 recommendations from 36 evaluations, with 304 sub-recommendations and 587 actions. The analysis focused on the recommendations with all their actions due because it is difficult to assess the implementation and adoption of a recommendation when some of its related actions are not yet due. Management draws up an action plan for each recommendation and self-assesses and reports on the status of implementation at the action level. IDEV cross checked as much as possible the relevance of the evidence provided by Management in the MARS IT platform and used a four-point scale (High, Substantial, Moderate and Low) to assess Management's action plan for each recommendation in terms of:

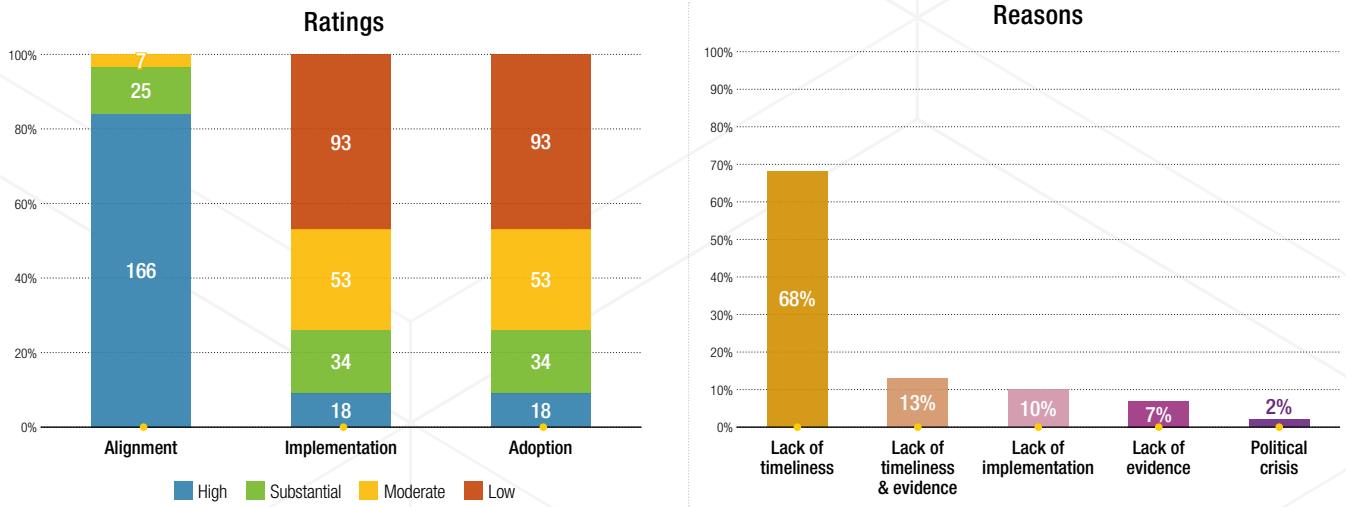
Level of alignment of the action plan to the recommendation

+ **Degree of implementation** of the action plan as planned (whereby the longer the implementation delay, the lower the score)

= **Level of adoption** of the recommendation

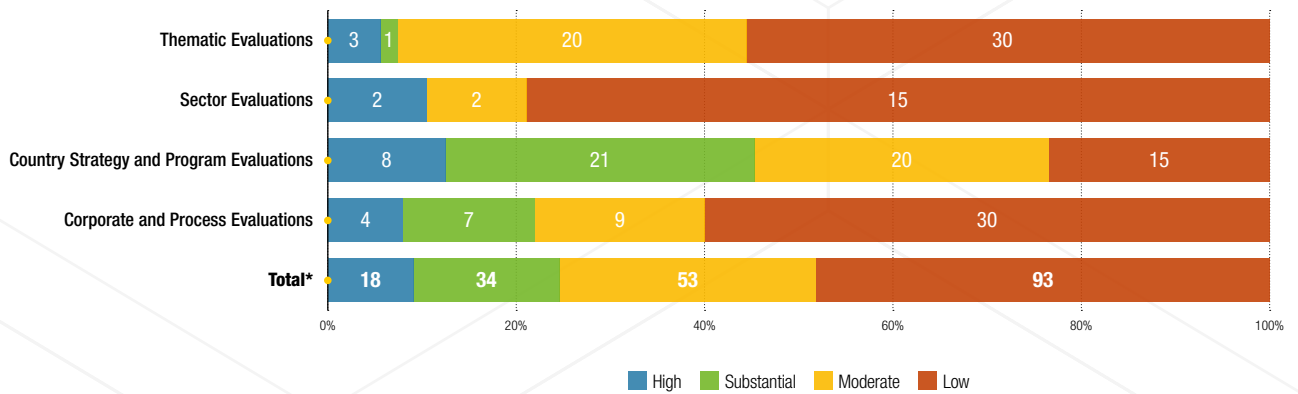
Finally, IDEV carried out an institutional comparison of the process of monitoring, reporting and assessment of the implementation of evaluation recommendations among eight International Financial Institutions.

Figure 1: Ratings of the action plans on level of implementation and main reasons for the low and moderate level of implementation



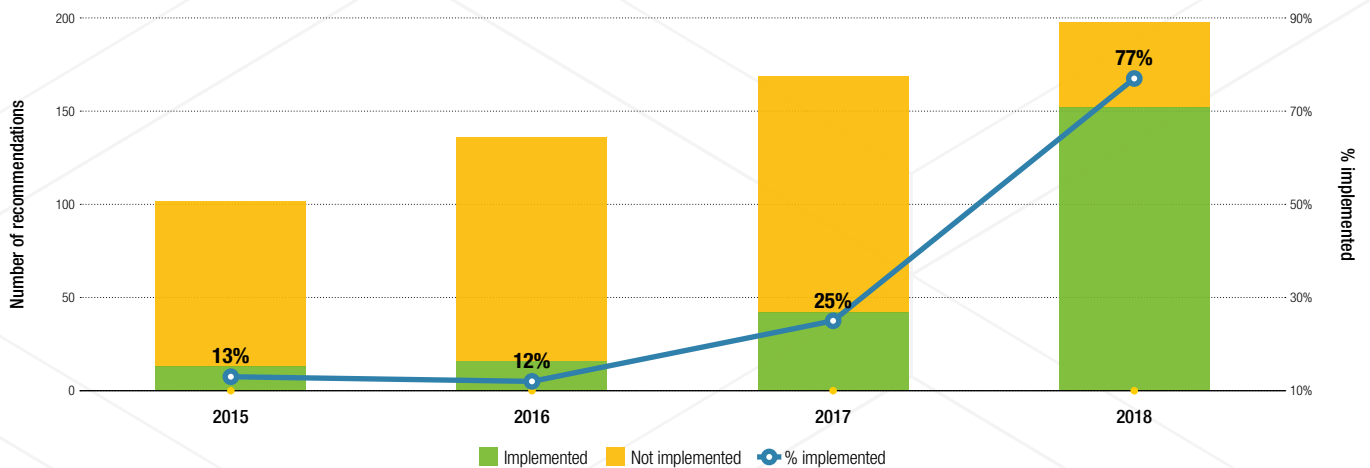
Source: IDEV assessment, number of action plans = 198

Figure 2: Level of adoption per type of evaluation



* Excludes evaluation types with less than 10 recommendations
Source: IDEV assessment.

Figure 3: Implementation of IDEV's recommendations due between 2015 and 2018



Source: Management response

About IDEV

Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) at the African Development Bank carries out independent evaluations of Bank operations, policies, strategies and processes, working across projects, sectors, themes, regions, and countries. By conducting independent evaluations and proactively sharing best practice, IDEV ensures that the Bank and its stakeholders learn from past experience and plan and deliver development activities to the highest possible standards.

What did Management Respond?

Management agrees with IDEV's recommendations and feels that the valuable lessons and recommendations in its report will strengthen the Bank's culture of results and accountability. IDEV's assessment shows that since MARS was set up, Management's compliance with recommendations increased from 13% in 2015 to 77% in 2018. However, the assessment also shows that Management often implemented actions later than scheduled. The assessment also raised important questions around the overall number of recommendations and Management's capacity to absorb them. At present, Management is yet to implement 311 actions and at a rate of one action per working day, it would take more than a year to implement them. This is one of the reasons why IDEV and Management have agreed to retire from MARS old recommendations that are implemented or no longer relevant.

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