



# IDEV

Independent Development Evaluation  
African Development Bank

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

## Promoting Inclusive Growth: An evaluation synthesis

### What did IDEV evaluate?

The Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) undertook an evaluation synthesis on inclusive growth, drawing on findings and lessons from 55 evaluations, 12 research papers, and other documentation produced by the African Development Bank (“AfDB” or “the Bank”), multilateral and bilateral development institutions, and other partners from 2013 to 2021. This synthesis aimed to capture the evolution in thinking and implementation experiences from a broad range of interventions such as (i) agricultural development; (ii) financial inclusion; (iii) economic infrastructure; (iv) private sector/small and medium enterprise (SME) development; (v) social services; (vi) education and skills development; (vii) social protection; (viii) governance; and (ix) women and youth empowerment. Key findings have contributed to IDEV’s [evaluation of the AfDB’s Ten-Year Strategy 2013–2022](#) and will inform the design and implementation of the next strategy 2013–2023, where inclusive growth continues to be a core priority.

### What did IDEV find?

#### Relevance

The effectiveness of sectoral inclusive growth interventions was hindered by weak targeting of affected populations, reducing their potential impact. While these interventions aligned with various policies and commitments, they often fell short of addressing barriers faced by marginalized groups. Corporate policies and organizational capacity played a role in shaping the focus on specific demographics like youth and women. Neglecting the desired outcomes for these groups in intervention designs led to reduced relevance of the interventions.

#### Effectiveness

The interventions assessed generally showed better success in achieving short-term outputs and outcomes rather



Evaluation Highlight

An IDEV Evaluation Synthesis



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than demonstrating impact on areas such as employment and jobs, enterprise growth, profitability, well-being, and quality of life for poor, excluded, and marginalized groups like women and youth. Approaches that addressed multiple challenges simultaneously had broader positive effects. Involving the private sector had potential benefits and limitations in reaching and serving underserved populations.

## Efficiency

Differences in measurement made it difficult to assess efficiency within and among groups of interventions. Nonetheless, the observed commonalities in efficiency drivers included: innovative information and communication technology options, the complexity of program/project design, and the adequacy of resources and monitoring systems.

## Sustainability

Sustainability was difficult to establish in the absence of evidence of critical outcomes, but the synthesis found a mixed record of institutional sustainability. Weak financial sustainability was found prevalent across all intervention types. Successful engagement of the private sector actors,

political will, and commitment improved the likelihood of sustainability.

## What Lessons did IDEV draw?

- Intentionally targeting groups excluded from participating in and benefiting from growth processes is crucial to achieving inclusive growth outcomes.
- Political support and institutional capacity are prerequisites for initiating and sustaining reform programs for inclusive growth.
- Balancing profitability outcomes and targeting of underserved is essential for inclusive growth through private sector engagement.
- Developing and/or amplifying the use of alternative financial products for poor and underserved populations can increase access to social and economic opportunities.
- Evidence-based programs and measurement systems that specifically address outcomes for underserved and marginalized groups can increase impacts related to inclusive growth.

## About IDEV

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

**Evaluation Task Manager:** May Esther Mwaka, Principal Evaluation Officer, IDEV.2  
**Publication coordinated by:** Marc Ghislain Bappa, Knowledge Management Officer and Maria R. Muzaaki, Knowledge Management Consultant, IDEV.3  
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IDEV

Independent Development Evaluation  
African Development Bank

African Development Bank Group  
Avenue Joseph Anoma 01 BP 1387, Abidjan 01 Côte d'Ivoire  
Phone: +225 27 20 26 28 41  
Email: [idevhelpdesk@afdb.org](mailto:idevhelpdesk@afdb.org)

