

THE EDUCATION RECORD

**\$12.7 Billion Committed to
Education in Africa.**

79 Percent Below Satisfactory.

What the IEG Database Shows. And Why It Will Not Change.

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\$12.7bn

Committed to education in
Africa, FY2015–2026

\$10.0bn

Below Satisfactory — 79% of
committed resources

23.2%

FCS Africa education S+
(FY26 list)

63.1%

South Asia education S+ —
same GP, same evaluator

Executive Summary

The World Bank committed \$12.7 billion to education in Africa between FY2015 and FY2026. Of that, \$10.0 billion — 78.8 percent — went to projects that did not achieve Satisfactory development outcomes as rated by the Independent Evaluation Group. The Africa education Satisfactory rate over the period is 29.4 percent. In three of twelve evaluation years, it was zero.

This paper documents that record — by region, by fragility status, by country, and by year — and then asks why it has not changed. The answer lies not in the difficulty of delivering education in Africa, but in an institutional architecture that has no financial, career, or reputational consequence for failing to deliver it.

A structured analysis of lessons learned across 204 IEG-evaluated education projects in Africa confirms this finding. Implementation capacity constraints are cited in 79 percent of projects — and in 88 percent of those rated below Satisfactory. **Only 16 percent identify financing as a primary issue.** The dominant constraints are operational and institutional: over-complex design (68 percent), sustainability failures (63 percent), procurement bottlenecks (64 percent), and weak learning measurement systems (61 percent). The pattern holds across fragile and stable countries alike. The failure is systemic.

On 12 February 2026, the World Bank released Building Human Capital Where It Matters (Holla, Schady, and Silva, 2026), alongside the expanded Human Capital Index Plus. The report found that deficits in nutrition, learning, and workplace skills are costing low- and middle-income countries 51 percent of their future labor earnings. Two-thirds of these countries experienced declines between 2010 and 2025. The diagnostics are excellent. The delivery is not. This note documents the gap between what the Bank's research arm knows and what the Bank's education portfolio delivers.

This is the seventh paper in the mdbreform.com series. It extends the IDA performance analysis, the FCV strategy submission, the MTI institutional architecture paper, the Board governance paper, the game theory analysis, and the DPF policy paper to the sector that matters most for Africa's future.

Part I: The Record

1. The Learning Crisis the Bank Itself Has Documented

Before examining what the Bank’s education portfolio has delivered in Africa, it is worth establishing what the Bank’s own research says is at stake.

The 2026 HCI+ report found that 86 of 129 low- and middle-income countries experienced declines in nutrition, learning, or workforce skill development between 2010 and 2025. In Sub-Saharan Africa, 9 in 10 children cannot read a simple text by age 10. The Africa Pulse (October 2025) estimated that providing universal basic education ensuring foundational learning could double GDP per capita in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2050, and that an extra year of education boosts incomes by 12.4 percent in the region.

Africa’s working-age population is expected to double by 2050, adding approximately 700 million people to the labor force. Whether that becomes a demographic dividend or a demographic crisis depends on whether those young people acquire the foundational reading and numeracy skills that make them employable. The Bank is the largest external funder of basic education in IDA countries. Its research department has documented the crisis with precision. The question is whether the Bank’s education portfolio is addressing it.

2. The Education Portfolio in Africa, FY2015–2026

Between FY2015 and FY2026, the Independent Evaluation Group rated 685 World Bank education projects globally, representing \$62.9 billion in commitments. Of these, 282 — 41.2 percent — achieved Satisfactory or Highly Satisfactory outcomes. The remaining \$33.9 billion went to projects IEG rated below Satisfactory.

Within the education portfolio, performance deteriorates at each level of disaggregation. IDA-only education: 38.7 percent Satisfactory on \$32.8 billion. Africa education: 29.4 percent Satisfactory on \$12.7 billion — meaning \$10.0 billion of \$12.7 billion committed went to projects that did not meet the Satisfactory threshold.

South Asia provides the internal benchmark. On an almost identical committed volume — \$12.9 billion to Africa’s \$12.7 billion — South Asia achieves 63.1 percent Satisfactory. Same Global Practice. Same independent evaluator. Same six-point rating scale. The gap is 33.7 percentage points.

Portfolio	S+ Rate	Projects	Committed	Below-S+
Education — Global (all)	41.2%	685	\$62.9bn	\$33.9bn (53.9%)

Education — IDA only	38.7%	349	\$32.8bn	\$18.9bn (57.5%)
Education — Africa	29.4%	204	\$12.7bn	\$10.0bn (78.8%)
Education — South Asia	63.1%	65	\$12.9bn	\$4.1bn (31.8%)

Source: IEG Master Database March 2026. IEG-rated projects, FY2015–2026. S+ = Satisfactory or Highly Satisfactory only.

The South Asia comparison eliminates the standard defence. South Asia contains fragile states, low-income countries, and institutional weakness. The delivery architecture operates differently there — and it is the Africa model that is failing.

3. What the MS+ Convention Conceals

If the Education GP were asked for its performance data at a Spring Meetings panel, the headline number cited would likely be approximately 79 percent — the Moderately Satisfactory or above (MS+) rate. This is the same convention the IDA21 Deputies Report used to tell 59 donor governments that 91 percent of IDA operations were satisfactory. It is also, by coincidence, almost identical to the 79 percent of committed resources that went to below-Satisfactory projects in Africa — a number that measures the opposite of what the GP would claim.

Moderately Satisfactory is defined by IEG as a project that achieved most of its objectives with minor to moderate shortcomings. By IEG’s own definition, it has not been Satisfactory. It partially achieved what it set out to do. The six-point scale was introduced in 1994 to provide finer gradation — not to redefine what counts as a pass. The honest headline for education in Africa is 29 percent. The number that appears in panel decks is 79 percent. The gap between the two is a communication strategy that has protected the delivery failure from accountability for three decades.

4. FCS vs Non-FCS — The FY26 Harmonized List

The standard defence of poor education outcomes in Africa is fragility. The World Bank’s FY26 Harmonized List of Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations, published July 2025, is the authoritative current classification. It includes both Ethiopia and Nigeria as conflict-affected. With the FY26 list applied:

Classification (FY26 List)	S+ Rate	Projects	Committed	Below-S+
Africa Education — FCS	23.2%	82	\$5.3bn	\$4.5bn (84.5%)
Africa Education — Non-FCS	33.6%	122	\$7.4bn	\$5.5bn (74.7%)
Gap	10.4pp			

Source: IEG Master Database March 2026 reclassified per World Bank FY26 Harmonized List (July 2025).

Fragility accounts for roughly ten percentage points. FCS Africa education achieves 23.2 percent Satisfactory; non-FCS achieves 33.6 percent. Both are catastrophic. But the non-FCS finding eliminates the fragility defence: three dollars in four committed to education in stable, non-conflict African countries go to below-Satisfactory projects. That residual failure is a delivery model failure, not a context failure.

The project-level evidence reinforces this. Across 204 evaluated education projects, only 20 percent cite fragility or conflict as a primary constraint — compared with 79 percent citing implementation capacity, 68 percent citing project complexity, and 58 percent citing institutional fragmentation. Implementation constraints affect 85 percent of projects in FCS countries and 75 percent in non-FCS countries. The gap is modest; the pattern is identical. The failure is not driven by context. It is driven by the way projects are designed and implemented.

5. FCS Country Breakdown

The country data within the FCS group shows the scale of the delivery failure in the countries the Bank classifies as most difficult.

FCS Country (FY26 List)	S+ Rate	N	Committed	Notes
Ethiopia	0.0%	8	\$1,334m	Largest Africa education portfolio — zero S+
Nigeria	11.1%	9	\$903m	One project in nine
Mozambique	25.0%	8	\$569m	
DRC	0.0%	4	\$550m	Zero S+ on \$550m
Mali	37.5%	8	\$444m	
Niger	20.0%	5	\$355m	
Burkina Faso	33.3%	9	\$329m	
Chad	25.0%	4	\$129m	
Sudan	75.0%	4	\$114m	Small N
Cameroon	0.0%	4	\$101m	Zero S+
Sierra Leone	50.0%	4	\$101m	

Source: IEG Master Database March 2026. FCS per FY26 Harmonized List. N≥2, sorted by committed volume.

Ethiopia stands out: \$1.334 billion in education commitments — the largest in Africa — and zero projects achieving Satisfactory outcomes. DRC: \$550 million, zero Satisfactory. Cameroon: \$101 million, zero. These are not marginal portfolios. Ethiopia and Nigeria together account for \$2.2 billion of the \$5.3 billion FCS education commitment.

6. Non-FCS Country Breakdown

The non-FCS country data confirms that underperformance extends well beyond fragile settings. These are the Bank’s core education partners in stable African countries — the countries at the centre of the growth-and-jobs narrative.

Non-FCS Country (FY26 List)	S+ Rate	N	Committed	Notes
Kenya	33.3%	9	\$1,003m	Flagship portfolio — two in three failing
Tanzania	37.5%	8	\$807m	
Ghana	33.3%	9	\$710m	Three of nine S+
Côte d’Ivoire	55.6%	9	\$655m	Best non-FCS performer
Senegal	30.0%	10	\$631m	
Uganda	50.0%	8	\$557m	
Malawi	14.3%	7	\$519m	One of seven S+
Madagascar	20.0%	5	\$462m	
Guinea	50.0%	8	\$451m	
Mauritania	16.7%	6	\$179m	
Zambia	0.0%	3	\$134m	Zero S+
Namibia	0.0%	2	\$90m	Zero S+
Liberia	0.0%	3	\$57m	Zero S+

Source: IEG Master Database March 2026. Non-FCS per FY26 Harmonized List. N≥2, sorted by committed volume.

Kenya, Ghana, and Tanzania — three flagship non-FCS education portfolios at \$700 million to \$1 billion each — achieve 33 to 38 percent Satisfactory. Côte d’Ivoire, at 55.6 percent, is the only country in the top ten that approaches a majority of projects succeeding. Zambia (\$134 million), Namibia (\$90 million), and Liberia (\$57 million) record zero. These are stable countries with functioning governments.

7. Annual Trend — Twelve Years, No Structural Improvement

The year-by-year data is the most direct rebuttal of any claim that the problem is being addressed.

Evaluation Year	S+ Rate	Projects	Committed
FY2015	0.0%	8	\$1.1bn
FY2016	0.0%	9	\$0.6bn
FY2017	33.3%	6	\$0.4bn
FY2018	0.0%	4	\$0.4bn
FY2019	33.3%	6	\$0.2bn
FY2020	25.0%	8	\$0.4bn
FY2021	25.0%	8	\$1.0bn
FY2022	100.0%	5	\$0.4bn
FY2023	83.3%	12	\$0.5bn
FY2024	20.0%	10	\$0.6bn
FY2025	40.0%	10	\$0.3bn
FY2026	12.5%	8	\$0.6bn

Source: IEG Master Database March 2026. Africa (ESA + WCA), Education GP.

Three of twelve years record zero percent Satisfactory. FY2022–2023 show a brief recovery on small cohorts and it has fully reversed. FY2026 — the year of the Spring Meetings and the HCI+ launch — records 12.5 percent Satisfactory on \$600 million committed. One project in eight. The twelve-year trend line is flat. No corrective mechanism has been triggered at any point in the period.

The annual data shows what happened. The project-level evidence shows why. A structured coding of lessons learned across all 204 IEG-evaluated education projects identifies the constraints that project teams themselves cite as the reasons for underperformance. The results are consistent with the portfolio record and eliminate several common explanations.

Implementation capacity is the most pervasive issue. It is cited in 79 percent of all projects and approximately 88 percent of those rated below Satisfactory. In contrast, only around 45 percent of Satisfactory projects report such issues. The constraints include weak project management units, procurement bottlenecks, limited technical capacity, and high staff turnover. The pattern is consistent across FCS countries (85 percent) and non-FCS countries (75 percent). Implementation capability is the primary determinant of outcomes.

Over-complex design is the second dominant pattern. Sixty-eight percent of projects identify excessive complexity as a constraint, rising to 75 percent among underperformers. Many operations attempt to combine school construction, teacher training, curriculum reform, and system strengthening within a single project. This overwhelms implementation systems and diffuses accountability. Satisfactory projects are simpler: only 40 percent report complexity issues.

Procurement and administrative delays affect 64 percent of projects and 70 percent of underperformers. These include slow procurement cycles, financial management weaknesses, and safeguards compliance delays. The problem is more acute in fragile settings (70 percent) but remains widespread in stable countries (60 percent).

Sustainability failures are among the most consistent findings, cited in 63 percent of projects and 72 percent of underperformers. Interventions are frequently implemented as stand-alone activities or pilots without being integrated into government systems. Without sustained financing, institutional ownership, and integration into routine operations, improvements are not maintained.

Learning measurement weaknesses are a distinctive feature of the education portfolio. Sixty-one percent of projects report weak learning assessment systems. Projects aim to improve learning outcomes but lack the data systems to track progress. This finding connects directly to the IEG's 2024 evaluation, which found that projects with learning outcome objectives receive **lower** IEG ratings than projects without them — the system punishes ambition in measurement.

Teacher management constraints are identified in 57 percent of projects. These include weak accountability mechanisms, ineffective training programmes, and limited alignment between teacher performance and incentives. Given that teacher quality is widely recognised as the most important school-level determinant of learning, this gap is particularly significant.

Financing constraints, by contrast, are cited in only 16 percent of projects — the lowest incidence of any structural constraint in the portfolio. Among underperforming projects, the figure is 18 percent. Among Satisfactory projects, 10 percent. Financing has no explanatory power. The education sector's constraint is not money. It is execution.

Table: Quantified Constraints from 204 Africa Education Projects (FY2015–2026)

Constraint	All Projects	Non-S+	S+	FCS	Non-FCS	Interpretation
Implementation capacity	79%	~88%	~45%	~85%	~75%	Primary driver of failure
Project complexity	68%	~75%	~40%	~72%	~65%	Over-design linked to failure
Procurement delays	64%	~70%	~35%	~70%	~60%	Major implementation bottleneck
Sustainability / system integration	63%	~72%	~40%	~66%	~61%	Weak long-term impact
Learning measurement gaps	61%	~65%	~35%	~64%	~59%	Core sector failure
Institutional fragmentation	58%	~60%	~40%	~63%	~55%	Coordination failure
Teacher management	57%	~62%	~40%	~60%	~55%	Weak incentives
Community engagement gaps	47%	~50%	~35%	~52%	~44%	Moderate effect
Fragility constraints	~20%	~22%	~15%	—	—	Secondary factor
Financing constraints	16%	~18%	~10%	~18%	~15%	Not a binding constraint

Source: Structured coding of IEG “lessons learned” sections, 204 projects. S+ = Satisfactory or Highly Satisfactory. Non-S+ = below Satisfactory. FCS per FY26 Harmonized List.

The table reveals the same hierarchy observed in the water portfolio. **Process failures outweigh resource constraints by a factor of five to one.** The average incidence of implementation, procurement, and institutional constraints is 58 to 79 percent. The incidence of financing constraints is 16 percent. The FCS and non-FCS columns confirm that the same structural issues dominate in both groups, with a gap of only 10 to 15 percentage points. The education delivery failure is not a fragility problem and it is not a financing problem. It is a design-and-implementation problem.

The comparison between Satisfactory and non-Satisfactory projects identifies what distinguishes success. Successful projects are simpler, better aligned with existing systems, and more realistic in their objectives. They invest in basic implementation capacity and pay attention to sustainability. The probability of failure rises sharply when complex design, weak implementation capacity, and procurement delays occur together — a combination present in the majority of the portfolio.

8. The Private Sector in Education — IFC's Record

The World Bank's engagement with education in Africa is not limited to the public sector portfolio documented above. The International Finance Corporation — the Bank Group's private sector arm — has invested over \$3.1 billion in education globally over the past 25 years, with a current portfolio of \$543 million. IFC's education strategy focuses on tertiary education, EdTech, and vocational training. But the most consequential chapter of IFC's education story is the K–12 private school portfolio that IFC invested in for two decades and then abandoned.

Between FY2001 and FY2020, IFC made 25 direct investments in K–12 private schools, committing \$156.5 million, plus 27 indirect investments through private equity funds. Sub-Saharan Africa accounted for the largest number of K–12 projects. The record was poor by any measure: the loan cancellation rate for K–12 investments was 56 percent, compared with 15 percent for IFC's overall portfolio. Nineteen of the 25 direct investments — 76 percent — were either fully or partially cancelled. Eight projects were closed without using IFC's financing at all and were therefore never monitored for outcomes.

In June 2022, IEG published *An Evaluation of International Finance Corporation Investments in K–12 Private Schools* — the first systematic evaluation of IFC's K–12 portfolio. The evaluation's conclusion was unambiguous: resumption of IFC investments in K–12 private schools is not advisable without making substantial changes to IFC's approach. IEG found that IFC's business model was poorly suited to supporting small schools; that IFC achieved success only with larger networks of schools catering to the middle class; and that IFC's focus on financial viability overlooked important measures of access, equity, and education quality. IFC's investments had no evidence of relevance to local education systems. In nine of the fourteen countries where IFC invested directly, the operations were single transactions with no planned or actual spillover effects.

IFC management agreed with IEG's findings and announced that it would not resume investments in fee-charging K–12 schools. The freeze — first imposed in 2017 when IFC stopped new K–12 investments for lack of viable opportunities, then formalised by President Malpass in March 2020 as a condition of IFC's \$5.5 billion capital increase — was extended indefinitely. The freeze covers all direct investments, advisory services, public-private partnerships related to school privatisation, and indirect investments through private equity funds.

IFC invested in K–12 education for twenty years. The cancellation rate was four times the institutional average. IEG found no evidence the investments were relevant to local education systems. IFC's own evaluator concluded that resumption was not advisable. IFC agreed. The private sector route to education delivery in low-income countries was tried, evaluated, and abandoned. The record should be part of any future discussion of public-private partnerships in African education.

The Bridge International Academies investment is the most prominent case within the K–12 portfolio. Between 2013 and 2016, IFC invested \$13.5 million in Bridge (now NewGlobe Schools) — the world’s largest for-profit primary school chain, operating across Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, Liberia, and India. In April 2018, the CAO received a complaint from the East Africa Centre for Human Rights on behalf of parents, students, and teachers in Kenya. The CAO investigation found that IFC had received reports of child sexual abuse at Bridge schools in 2013, 2016, and 2017 and had not acted on them as required by IFC’s own safeguard policies. IFC exited its equity position in March 2022. A Freshfields external review commissioned by the IFC Board (May 2024, completed March 2025) confirmed that IFC had not met its own safeguard requirements. The IFC Board approved a Management Action Plan in April 2025.

NewGlobe’s role in the World Bank’s public-sector education portfolio in Nigeria connects the IFC K–12 story directly to the Africa education delivery record documented in this note.

BOX — EdoBEST: WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THE GOVERNOR LEFT

Launched in 2018 by Governor Godwin Obaseki of Edo State, Nigeria, the Edo Basic Education Sector Transformation (EdoBEST) was a public-private partnership with NewGlobe Schools — Bridge International Academies’ parent company. The model combined tablet-delivered scripted lesson plans, real-time teacher monitoring, and structured pedagogy. Claimed results by 2024: enrollment rose from 230,000 to 384,000; grade 3 students achieving grade 5 outcomes in literacy and numeracy; 16,000 teachers trained. The World Bank approved \$75 million for EdoBEST 2.0 at secondary level and cited the programme at the 2026 HCI+ launch as evidence of what political will can achieve.

Then the governor left. The incoming Okpebholo administration, which took office in November 2024, alleged: N160 million per month paid to NewGlobe consultants for writing lesson notes; of \$75 million committed for EdoBEST 2.0, only \$5 million accounted for, with \$70 million unaccounted for. A 2025 academic study found the tablets publicised for the secondary expansion were ‘merely hypothetical’ — neither students nor teachers had access to them.

The IFC dimension is older. Between 2013 and 2016, IFC invested \$13.5 million in Bridge/NewGlobe. It exited in March 2022 following a CAO investigation finding IFC had received reports of child sexual abuse at Bridge schools in Kenya — incidents reported in 2013, 2016, and 2017 — and had not acted. The Freshfields external review (March 2025) confirmed IFC had not met its own safeguard requirements. The IFC Board approved a Management Action Plan in April 2025. Following a 2022 IEG evaluation, IFC reaffirmed a freeze on new for-profit K-12 investments.

The lesson: a \$75 million World Bank commitment was extended to a programme that — by its successor government’s account — had already broken down at the secondary level. The HCI+ can track learning poverty across 129 countries. It cannot measure the distance between a programme’s claimed results and its institutional durability when the political champion leaves.

Part II: Why the Record Will Not Change

Part I is the empirical record — the public-sector portfolio, the FCS and non-FCS breakdown, the annual trend, and the IFC K–12 experience. The record has been flat for twelve years. South Asia’s 63.1 percent Satisfactory rate on the same institutional platform demonstrates that the failure is not inherent to education delivery in developing countries. The answer is that no part of the World Bank’s management architecture has a consequence tied to whether education projects in Africa deliver. Three features of that architecture explain why.

9. Who Runs the Bank — The Economist Inheritance

The World Bank was founded at Bretton Woods in 1944 as a financial institution, not a development agency. Its founding logic was the logic of a bank: capital allocation, creditworthiness, sovereign guarantees. Economists occupied the analytical and managerial apex from the beginning. From McNamara’s second term onwards (1974–1981), economists gained decisive influence, displacing engineers and sector specialists from the dominant managerial positions. Non-economist social scientists — anthropologists, sociologists, education specialists — have remained structurally outside the core decision channels that govern lending strategy.

The Young Professionals Program — the Bank’s premier leadership pipeline for over sixty years — recruits primarily economists with PhD qualifications from elite universities. YPs enter at grade GF, the sixth highest of ten grade levels, and rotate through departments in a two-year programme designed to build institutional breadth rather than sectoral depth. As the Bank’s own website notes, nearly a thousand YP alumni work at the World Bank Group today, and most hold senior management and technical leadership positions. They bypassed the field postings, sectoral apprenticeships, and country-specific experience that would shape an understanding of what education or health delivery actually requires.

A YP economist can, within fifteen years, become Country Director for an African country, managing a multi-billion-dollar lending programme across every sector the portfolio covers. They are not required to have spent a year in the field. They are not required to have managed a single project from approval to completion. They are not required to demonstrate sectoral expertise in education, health, water, or agriculture. The career payoff — promotion, management grade, headquarters assignment — is independent of whether the projects they approved delivered Satisfactory outcomes.

10. The Generalist Architecture — SD VP and Sectoral Rotation

The Sustainable Development Vice Presidency manages the Energy, Water, Transport, Agriculture, and Urban Global Practices — five technically distinct sectors, each requiring years of accumulated domain knowledge for competent project design and supervision.

Within the SD architecture, a manager can move from overseeing water projects in one country to energy projects in another without demonstrating competence in the receiving sector. The system treats country sector portfolios as rotational management assignments, not technical responsibilities. In Sierra Leone, the energy sector manager assigned to the country team was a water specialist. She had genuine expertise in water systems. She managed the energy portfolio because the rotational model placed her there.

Multiple sectors across the Bank suffer from the same malaise. There are too many generalist managers and the task team leader is expected to supply the technical knowledge. The manager supplied the institutional incentive: get the project to the Board, because that is the metric on which managers are evaluated. The IDA results for the last 20 years show the results for this.

The question the education record raises — and that the SD VP architecture makes general — is: why would a system optimised for loan approval produce different results in education than in energy, water, transport, or agriculture? The answer is that it would not. The 29.4 percent Satisfactory rate in Africa education is not an education-specific failure. It is the institutional equilibrium, expressed in one sector.

11. What the Bank Knows vs. What the Bank Funds

The Bank's Development Research Group has produced some of the best education research in the world. The 2025 synthesis by Angrist, Evans, Filmer, Glennerster, Rogers, and Sabarwal reviewed over 150 rigorously evaluated education interventions. The most cost-effective per Learning-Adjusted Year of Schooling: teacher monitoring with performance incentives, remedial instruction targeting struggling students, classroom observation and coaching. The least cost-effective: school construction (present in 62 percent of Africa education projects), textbook procurement (69 percent), technology without teacher support (47 percent).

The IEG's own 2024 major evaluation — 'Confronting the Learning Crisis' — documented the mechanism that sustains this inversion. Projects with learning outcome objectives receive lower IEG ratings than projects without them. Task Team Leaders face an incentive not to set ambitious learning indicators, because ambitious indicators are harder to achieve and generate lower ratings. The system punishes ambition. The system rewards projects that avoid measuring what they are supposed to deliver.

Both findings — DEC on what works, IEG on the incentive structure — are World Bank products. They are published, cited, and presented at panels. They have produced no measurable change in the

Africa education portfolio design. The disconnect is not a knowledge problem. It is an incentive problem.

IEG also found that 24 countries in the Africa Region lack a good-quality national learning assessment and have not participated in international or regional assessments in the past five years. The Bank is investing in education systems it cannot measure. The HCI+ initiative, which requires country-level learning data to compute its scores, cannot produce estimates for these countries. The investment and the measurement agendas are not connected.

Conclusion: If You Cannot Get Education Right, How Can You Get Jobs Right?

The World Bank's central message at the 2026 Spring Meetings was jobs. The IDA21 commitments. The Human Capital Index Plus. The Jobs Vice Presidency's Africa employment agenda. All converge on a single proposition: the human capital that Africa's doubling working-age population will need must be built now, in basic education, because without foundational literacy and numeracy the jobs agenda has nothing to build on.

The proposition is correct. The delivery record renders it incoherent.

The Bank committed \$12.7 billion to education in Africa between FY2015 and FY2026. Of that, \$10.0 billion went to projects rated below Satisfactory by the Bank's own independent evaluator. Ethiopia: \$1.334 billion, zero Satisfactory. DRC: \$550 million, zero. Kenya, Ghana, Tanzania — stable, non-fragile, at the centre of the Africa growth narrative — achieve around 33 to 38 percent Satisfactory. FY2026: 12.5 percent. One project in eight.

The Denizer-Kaufmann-Kraay analysis (2013) found that country-level factors explain approximately 20 percent of the variance in World Bank project outcomes. The remaining 80 percent is Bank-level: project design, task team quality, supervision intensity, instrument selection. The failure is not Africa's. It is the Bank's.

The quantified evidence from 204 evaluated projects leaves no ambiguity. **Four out of five projects face implementation capacity constraints. Two out of three are over-designed relative to execution capability. Three out of five face sustainability and measurement failures. Fewer than one in six identify financing as the primary issue.** The dominant constraints in Africa's education portfolio are operational and institutional, not financial. Improving outcomes will depend less on scaling up commitments or launching new indices and more on aligning project design with implementation capacity, strengthening delivery systems, and ensuring that interventions are embedded in national institutions. Without addressing these structural issues, the 29.4 percent will persist.

The question every IDA Deputy, every GPE board member, and every Spring Meetings panellist should ask the Education GP is not 'what does the new index show?' It is: what was the IEG Satisfactory rate on your Africa education portfolio last year? The answer is 12.5 percent. That number belongs on every slide deck about the Bank's education agenda in Africa. It currently appears on none of them.

This note is the education chapter of a larger analysis. The IDA paper documents \$117 billion below Satisfactory across the full IDA portfolio and makes the case for a

Challenge Fund. The FCV paper documents what happens when DPF is deployed in fragile states. The MTI paper documents the institutional architecture that keeps the largest Global Practice and the worst-performing Global Practice in the same body. The Board paper documents eighty-two years without a single formal accountability action. The game theory paper explains why internal reform cannot change the equilibrium without changing the payoff. The education record is not a separate story. It is the same story — told through the sector that matters most for Africa's future.

Data and Sources

IEG outcome data: IEG Master Database March 2026 (3,507 deduplicated rated projects, FY2015–2026). Education GP = IEG Global Practice classification. Africa = Eastern and Southern Africa + Western and Central Africa. S+ = Satisfactory or Highly Satisfactory only; Moderately Satisfactory does not qualify. Dollar commitments: World Bank Projects database, current USD. FCS classification: World Bank FY26 Harmonized List, July 2025.

Quantified lessons analysis: Structured coding of “lessons learned” sections from 204 IEG-evaluated education projects in Sub-Saharan Africa, FY2015–2026. Constraints classified by frequency and linked to outcome ratings (S+ vs non-S+) and FCS status (FY26 Harmonized List). Full dataset available at mdbreform.com/data/.

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This paper extends six prior analyses at mdbreform.com: the IDA Performance Record; the FCV Strategy Submission; the MTI Institutional Architecture paper; the Board Governance paper; the Game Theory analysis; and the DPF Incentive Trap paper. Full data at mdbreform.com/data/.

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