

THE FCI RECORD

The Jobs Engine That Does Not Create Jobs. \$4.4 Billion Committed. 64% Below Satisfactory.

What the IEG Record Shows

About the Bank's Jobs and Competitiveness Agenda in Africa.

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25.4%

Satisfactory — one in four

\$2.9bn

Below Satisfactory in a decade

0%

DPF Satisfactory — \$255M committed

3%

IEG lessons mentioning “jobs”

Executive Summary

The World Bank's Finance, Competitiveness and Innovation (FCI) Global Practice is the institutional engine for the Bank's jobs and economic transformation agenda. It manages the competitiveness projects, the growth poles, the investment climate reforms, the SME credit lines, the PPP programmes, and the financial inclusion operations that are supposed to generate employment across Africa. The 2025 Spring Meetings made job creation their central theme. The Bank says 1.2 billion young people will enter the workforce in the next decade and only a third will find regular jobs. FCI is the GP that is supposed to close the gap.

The IEG record for FCI in Africa: 67 evaluated projects, \$4.4 billion committed, 25.4 percent Satisfactory. This is the lowest Satisfactory rate of any major Global Practice in the Africa portfolio. \$2.9 billion — 64 percent — of committed resources went to projects that did not achieve Satisfactory development outcomes. The global FCI rate is 39.8 percent. Africa's FCI portfolio underperforms the global average by 14 percentage points.

The projects with “jobs” and “employment” in their names are the ones failing. The Ethiopia Competitiveness and Job Creation Project (\$250M) was rated Moderately Unsatisfactory. The Nigeria Growth and Employment Project (\$160M) was rated Moderately Unsatisfactory. The Nigeria PPP Programme (\$115M) was rated Highly Unsatisfactory. “Jobs” and “employment” are mentioned in only 3 percent of FCI project lessons in Africa — the GP that is supposed to create jobs does not track whether it creates them.

DPF in FCI: 5 projects, zero percent Satisfactory, \$255 million. Nine countries with two or more FCI projects returned zero Satisfactory — including Ethiopia (\$503M), Ghana (\$112M), Kenya (\$127M),

and Tanzania (\$135M). FCS countries (34.8%) outperform non-FCS countries (20.5%) — a remarkable inversion that suggests the problem is not country fragility but institutional design.

The Bank’s jobs agenda depends on FCI delivery. FCI cannot deliver at current performance levels. The sovereign guarantee ensures the Bank gets paid regardless. The 1.2 billion young people entering the workforce are the ones who bear the cost.

1. The Portfolio

The World Bank has committed \$4.4 billion to 67 IEG-rated Finance, Competitiveness and Innovation projects in Sub-Saharan Africa between FY2015 and FY2026. Of this, \$2.9 billion — 64 percent — went to projects that did not achieve Satisfactory development outcomes. The Africa FCI Satisfactory rate is 25.4 percent. The global FCI rate is 39.8 percent. South Asia achieves 36.7 percent on \$5.3 billion.

Eight projects were rated Unsatisfactory or Highly Unsatisfactory — the worst outcomes on the IEG scale. Two were Highly Unsatisfactory: the Nigeria PPP Programme (\$115M) and the South Africa Land Bank Financial Intermediation Project (\$93M). These are not marginal failures. They are complete breakdowns of project design and execution in the GP that manages the Bank’s private sector development agenda.

2. Regional Split

Region	Projects	S+	S+ Rate	Commitment	Below S+
Western and Central Africa	35	7	20.0%	\$2,524M	\$2,184M
Eastern and Southern Africa	32	10	31.2%	\$1,924M	\$1,184M
Total Africa	67	17	25.4%	\$4,448M	\$2,868M

Western and Central Africa’s 20.0 percent Satisfactory rate is the worst regional performance of any GP in Africa. Only one in five FCI projects in WCA achieves its development objectives.

3. The Projects That Name Jobs — and Fail

The Bank’s jobs agenda is built on FCI projects. The projects that explicitly target jobs and employment in their names are the ones failing:

Project	Country	Commitment	Rating
Competitiveness and Job Creation (P143302)	Ethiopia	\$250M	Moderately Unsatisfactory
Growth and Employment (P103499)	Nigeria	\$160M	Moderately Unsatisfactory
Public/Private Partnership Program (P115386)	Nigeria	\$115M	Highly Unsatisfactory

Bagré Growth Pole Project (P119662)	Burkina Faso	\$115M	Moderately Unsatisfactory
Housing Finance Development (P131973)	Nigeria	\$300M	Moderately Unsatisfactory

Combined: \$940 million committed to projects explicitly designed to create jobs and stimulate competitiveness. Zero Satisfactory. “Jobs” and “employment” appear in only 3 percent of IEG project lessons across the FCI Africa portfolio. The GP that is supposed to create jobs does not systematically track whether it creates them.

4. Nine Countries, Zero Satisfactory

Country	Projects	Commitment	S+ Rate
Ethiopia	2	\$503M	0%
Tanzania	2	\$135M	0%
Kenya	2	\$127M	0%
Ghana	4	\$112M	0%
ESA (regional)	2	\$95M	0%
Benin	2	\$75M	0%
Niger	2	\$68M	0%
Guinea	2	\$40M	0%
Togo	2	\$30M	0%

Ghana: four FCI projects, zero Satisfactory, \$112 million. Ethiopia: two projects, zero Satisfactory, \$503 million — including the \$250 million Job Creation project. These are the Bank’s showcase economies for the jobs agenda. Combined: 20 projects, \$1.2 billion, zero Satisfactory.

5. FCS vs Non-FCS: The Inversion

Category	Projects	S+ Rate	Commitment
FCS	23	34.8%	\$1,952M
Non-FCS	44	20.5%	\$2,496M

FCS countries outperform non-FCS countries by 14 percentage points. This is the opposite of every other sector. The non-FCS portfolio — stable, non-fragile African countries — delivers Satisfactory outcomes on only one in five projects. The Bank’s competitiveness and innovation operations fail at higher rates in stable countries than in fragile ones. The problem is not country risk. It is project design.

6. By Lending Instrument

Instrument	Projects	S+ Rate	Commitment
IPF	61	26.2%	\$3,843M
DPF	5	0.0%	\$255M
PforR	1	100.0%	\$350M

DPF in FCI: five projects, zero percent Satisfactory, \$255 million. The macroeconomists' instrument — policy lending designed to improve the business environment through regulatory reform — returns nothing in the competitiveness space. A gazetted investment law does not create an investor. A registered business registry does not create a business.

The one PforR — the Nigeria Kaduna Economic Transformation (\$350M, Satisfactory) — is the single largest success in the portfolio. It suggests that results-based financing, when applied to a specific sub-national reform programme with political commitment, can work. But it is one project.

7. Annual Trend

Closing FY	Projects	S+	S+ Rate	Commitment
FY2015	2	0	0.0%	\$53M
FY2016	5	1	20.0%	\$131M
FY2018	9	1	11.1%	\$349M
FY2019	6	0	0.0%	\$658M
FY2020	5	2	40.0%	\$228M
FY2021	7	1	14.3%	\$270M
FY2022	7	1	14.3%	\$580M
FY2023	8	3	37.5%	\$1,133M
FY2024	14	6	42.9%	\$825M

FY2019: zero percent Satisfactory across 6 projects and \$658 million — the largest single-year commitment failure. FY2018: 11.1 percent — one in nine. Some improvement in FY2023–24, but heavily driven by two large Nigeria projects. The underlying portfolio outside Nigeria remains weak.

8. What the Lessons Say — And What They Don't

Constraint	Projects Citing	% of Portfolio
Implementation capacity	56	84%
Design complexity	49	73%
Institutional capacity	46	69%

Financial sector constraints	38	57%
SME-related constraints	30	45%
Reform constraints	28	42%
Market constraints	25	37%
Private sector constraints	24	36%

What the lessons do not say is equally important. “Jobs” appears in 3 percent of lessons. “Employment” in 4 percent. The GP designs projects around competitiveness, investment climate, financial intermediation, and growth poles. It does not systematically track whether these interventions produce employment. The theory of change – improve the business environment, and jobs will follow – is assumed, not measured.

M&E quality was Modest or Negligible in 37 of 67 projects (55%) – more than half the portfolio cannot adequately measure whether its interventions achieved anything. Bank Performance was rated MU or U in 16 of 67 projects (24%) – one in four projects had the Bank’s own design and supervision flagged as problematic.

9. The Jobs Agenda and the FCI Record

The 2025 Spring Meetings made job creation their central theme. The Bank frames the challenge starkly: 1.2 billion young people will enter the workforce in the next decade, predominantly in Africa and South Asia. Only a third are expected to find regular jobs. FCI is the GP positioned to close the gap.

The IEG record says FCI cannot deliver this agenda at current performance levels. One in four projects achieves Satisfactory outcomes. The projects explicitly targeting jobs fail. The GP does not systematically measure employment outcomes. The business environment reforms it conditions disbursements on produce legal compliance without functional institutional change – the same isomorphic mimicry documented in the DPF portfolio.

The Bank’s jobs argument runs through every sector initiative: Health Works promises millions of health sector jobs on a portfolio with a 34.6 percent Satisfactory rate. AgriConnect promises agricultural employment on a 35.7 percent rate. Mission 300 promises energy access that powers economic growth on a portfolio where the Bank has turned from policy adviser to debt collector in Nigeria. Water Forward promises resilient infrastructure on a 24.5 percent rate. Education promises human capital on a portfolio where 79 percent of committed resources are below Satisfactory.

If the sectors cannot deliver, the jobs will not materialise. The sovereign guarantee ensures the Bank gets paid regardless. The 1.2 billion young people entering the workforce bear the cost of the gap between the initiative and the outcome.

10. The Structural Finding

FCI is the World Bank's private sector development GP — the institutional home for competitiveness, innovation, financial inclusion, and economic transformation. Its Africa portfolio delivers Satisfactory outcomes on one in four projects. Its DPF portfolio returns zero Satisfactory on \$255 million. Its projects that explicitly name jobs fail. Its lessons do not track employment. Its M&E frameworks cannot measure impact in more than half the portfolio.

The constraint is not that Africa's business environments are difficult — they are. The constraint is that FCI's intervention model — investment climate reform through regulatory change, credit lines through financial intermediaries, growth poles through infrastructure investment — does not produce the functional institutional change that transforms a business environment into a source of employment. The regulatory change is gazetted. The credit line is disbursed. The growth pole is built. The jobs do not follow — because the binding constraint was never the regulation, the credit, or the infrastructure. It was the governance, the market systems, and the institutional capacity to enforce what was reformed.

The global FCI portfolio achieves 39.8 percent Satisfactory. Africa achieves 25.4 percent. The 14-point gap reflects the same sustainability and institutional capacity constraints that drive underperformance across every sector in Africa. FCI's intervention model works better where institutions already function. In Africa, where they do not, the model produces compliance without transformation — the same isomorphic mimicry the DPF paper documented, replicated in the competitiveness space.

Data and Sources

IEG outcome data: IEG Master Database March 2026 (10,542 deduplicated rated projects). Finance, Competitiveness and Innovation GP = IEG Global Practice classification. Africa = ESA + WCA. S+ = Satisfactory or Highly Satisfactory only. FCS: World Bank FY26 Harmonized List, July 2025. Commitment data: World Bank Projects Database, April 2026.

IEG evaluations referenced: Independent Evaluation Group (2024), *Assessing IDA's Support for Jobs*. Independent Evaluation Group (2023), *Approach Paper: Evaluation of World Bank Group Support to Jobs and Labor Market Reform through IDA*. IEG project-level lessons: ICRR/PPAR database, FY2015–2026.

This paper extends prior analyses at mdbreform.com: the IDA Performance Record; the Education Record; the Health Record; the Energy Record; the Agriculture Record; the Water Record; the FCV Strategy Submission; the DPF Incentive Trap; the Board Governance paper; the Game Theory analysis. Full data at mdbreform.com/data/.

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