

WORLD BANK GROUP ACCOUNTABILITY · PROCUREMENT

Follow the Money: \$32.5 Billion of World Bank-Financed Contracts in Africa Went to Overseas Companies

Who captures World Bank contract awards in Sub-Saharan Africa, FY2020–FY2026

A distributional analysis of 123,673 contract awards worth USD 54.6 billion, drawn from the World Bank Group’s public procurement record.

Summary of findings

1. Of the USD 54.6 billion in contracts financed by Sub-Saharan African borrowing over FY2020–FY2026, firms domiciled in the borrowing country captured 41 percent. The remaining 59 percent was awarded to suppliers based outside that country.
2. The single largest beneficiary economy is China, whose firms won USD 12.66 billion — 23 percent of all regional contract value — on roughly 859 contracts. No African supplier economy approaches this share.
3. Chinese capture is concentrated in civil works, where Chinese firms account for an estimated 39 percent of regional value. The average Chinese contract is USD 14.7 million; the average for all other suppliers is about USD 0.34 million.
4. A further 10 percent of regional value flows through United Nations agencies acting as procurement intermediaries, principally in fragile and conflict-affected states.

Scope and method

This note describes the distribution of World Bank contract awards in Sub-Saharan Africa. “Sub-Saharan Africa” is taken to mean the Bank’s two operational regions, Eastern and Southern Africa (USD 30.1 billion) and Western and Central Africa (USD 24.5 billion). Together they account for USD 54.6 billion across 123,673 awards — roughly 44 percent of the Bank’s global procurement value over the period, the largest regional share of any World Bank region.

Each award records the supplier’s country of domicile and the borrowing country. A contract is treated as “domestic” where the supplier economy matches the borrower economy by name. Name matching is used in preference to the source file’s country codes because several borrowers — including Côte d’Ivoire, Somalia and Namibia — carry blank borrower codes in the underlying data, which would otherwise understate their domestic share. One award has been excluded as a clear source-data error (see Data note). The figures describe where contract value accrues; they do not measure value-for-money, execution quality, or development outcome, and should not be read as doing so.

The aggregate picture: a minority stays

Firms based in the borrowing country won USD 22.2 billion of the regional total, or 40.6 percent. Foreign suppliers — firms based in any country other than the borrower — won USD 32.5 billion, or 59.4 percent. The pattern is most pronounced in civil works, which make up 52 percent of all regional value: in the works category, domestic firms captured 38 percent and foreign firms 62 percent. The evidence is most consistent with a portfolio in which the construction of large infrastructure is

performed predominantly by suppliers from outside the borrowing economy, while domestic firms cluster in smaller goods and service contracts. The sector and procurement-type breakdown is in Annex B.

Supplier economy	Contract value	% of region	Contracts	Avg / contract
China	\$12.66bn	23.2%	859	\$14.74M
United Nations (“World”)	\$5.65bn	10.3%	888	\$6.37M
Nigeria	\$3.48bn	6.4%	9,118	\$0.38M
Ethiopia	\$2.10bn	3.8%	13,447	\$0.16M
India	\$1.79bn	3.3%	566	\$3.16M
Ghana	\$1.55bn	2.8%	4,160	\$0.37M
Tanzania	\$1.39bn	2.5%	2,197	\$0.63M
Senegal	\$1.37bn	2.5%	3,448	\$0.40M
Côte d’Ivoire	\$1.35bn	2.5%	5,212	\$0.26M
Burkina Faso	\$1.33bn	2.4%	6,161	\$0.22M

Top ten supplier economies by contract value, Sub-Saharan Africa, FY2020–FY2026. “World” denotes UN and multilateral agencies, retained so totals reconcile.

The single largest beneficiary

Chinese-domiciled firms are the largest single source of supply to the region by a wide margin. Their USD 12.66 billion is more than three times the next economy (Nigeria, at USD 3.48 billion) and exceeds the combined total of every African supplier economy except Nigeria. The concentration is striking on a per-contract basis: Chinese firms won their share across only 859 awards averaging USD 14.7 million each, against an average of roughly USD 0.34 million for all other suppliers — a ratio of more than forty to one. This is consistent with Chinese participation being weighted toward a small number of large civil-works contracts rather than broad participation across the portfolio. Of the USD 12.66 billion, the overwhelming majority falls in the works category, where Chinese firms account for an estimated 39 percent of all regional value. These figures are, if anything, a lower bound: Chinese contractors routinely register local subsidiaries — CGC Nigeria, China Jiangxi (Ghana), Yangtse River — that the data count as domestic rather than Chinese, so the genuine Chinese share is higher than the supplier-economy field records, and reported domestic capture correspondingly lower.

The largest individual contractors reflect this. After three UN agencies, the leading firms by value are China Road and Bridge Corporation, CGCOC Group, Sinohydro Corporation, TBEA Co. and China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation — each a Chinese state-owned or state-linked enterprise. Chinese firms’ share of regional works has remained substantial throughout the period, ranging between roughly 29 and 47 percent across fiscal years without a clear secular trend. In several borrowers the build-side of the World Bank portfolio is, in value terms, substantially a Chinese undertaking: an estimated 55 percent of all contracts in Tanzania, 39 percent in Kenya, 31 percent in Madagascar and 30 percent in Côte d’Ivoire.

The intermediary layer

A further USD 5.65 billion — 10.3 percent of regional value — is recorded against suppliers coded to the economy “World,” overwhelmingly United Nations agencies: UNICEF, the UN Office for Project Services, the World Food Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the International

Organization for Migration. These agencies act as implementing intermediaries rather than commercial contractors, and their share is concentrated in fragile and conflict-affected settings where domestic procurement capacity is limited. This value does not “leave” the region in the same sense as a commercial works contract, but neither does it accrue to domestic firms or build domestic market capacity.

Country variation

Domestic capture varies widely across the roughly 46 sovereign borrowers in the region (43 with portfolios above USD 5 million are set out in full in Annex A). At the upper end, Ghana (73 percent), Nigeria (72 percent), Burkina Faso (72 percent) and South Africa (69 percent) retain most contract value onshore.¹ At the lower end sit two distinguishable groups. The first is fragile and conflict-affected states, where capture is lowest and the residual flows mainly to UN intermediaries — South Sudan retains just 4 percent of USD 0.69 billion. The second is a set of resource and infrastructure economies where the dominant external supplier is China rather than the UN — Angola (27 percent domestic), Tanzania (35 percent) and Mozambique (37 percent). The two groups share a low domestic-capture rate but differ entirely in who benefits.

What the data do, and do not, establish

These figures describe distribution, not desert. Foreign capture is not in itself evidence of failure. Large civil works often exceed domestic contracting capacity; the Bank’s open and competitive procurement rules are designed to award contracts to the most capable qualifying bidder regardless of nationality; and a firm winning a competitive international tender has, on the face of it, earned the work. A high foreign-capture rate may reflect a thin domestic construction sector as much as anything about the procurement itself.

What the data do establish is a distributional fact that sits in tension with two stated commitments of the institution. The Bank’s development model places weight on the use and strengthening of country systems and on the growth of domestic markets; yet the build-side of its largest regional portfolio accrues, in the majority, to firms outside the borrowing economy, and is dominated in the works category by the state enterprises of a single external country. Sovereign borrowers carry the debt and the guarantee; a majority of the resulting contract value is realised elsewhere. Whether that distribution is consistent with the institution’s objectives for local capacity is a question the procurement record raises but cannot, on its own, resolve. The relationship between IBRD voting power and contract capture is set out in Annex C. The twenty largest individual contracts in the region — ranging from the Cameroon–Chad transport corridor to COVID-19 vaccine purchases and major dam and road works — are listed in Annex D.

¹Reported domestic capture counts a supplier as domestic where its registered economy matches the borrower by name, and so includes locally registered subsidiaries of foreign firms. This matters most for China: Chinese contractors routinely register a local subsidiary in the country where they work — CGC Nigeria, CGC Côte d’Ivoire, China Jiangxi (Ghana), Yangtse River — which the data record as domestic. Reported domestic capture is therefore an upper bound, and the reported Chinese share a lower bound. Visibly Chinese-named firms registered locally account for at least USD 0.74 billion of nominally domestic awards (204 contracts); reclassifying them moves regional domestic capture from 41 to about 39 percent and China’s share from 23 to about 25 percent, and at the country level lowers Ghana from 73 to roughly 69 percent and Nigeria from 72 to roughly 70 percent. This is a floor: Chinese firms registered under a purely local name, and subsidiaries of other foreign parents, are not separately identifiable, so the genuine local share is lower still and the true Chinese share higher.

This analysis is descriptive and is offered as a companion to the wider examination of delivery on the World Bank's Africa platform. Where that work asks what the portfolio achieves, this note asks a narrower and more answerable question: who is paid to build it.

Data note and limitations

The dataset records contract awards in Investment Project Financing only; it excludes Development Policy Financing and Program-for-Results, which disburse without contract-level procurement. One award has been excluded as a clear source-data error: a contract recorded at USD 474.6 million for the acquisition of two million fish fingerlings under the Burkina Faso Livestock Resilience project (WB contract 1806694) — an implied unit price of roughly USD 237 per fingerling, and the largest single goods award in the regional dataset.² Its exclusion raises Burkina Faso's domestic-capture rate from an artificial 80 percent to 72 percent and lowers the regional total from USD 55.1 billion to USD 54.6 billion; it does not materially affect any regional finding. Supplier domicile reflects the contracting entity's registered country, which may differ from ultimate ownership; a locally registered subsidiary of a foreign parent is counted as domestic, so reported domestic capture is, if anything, an upper bound. Figures for China's share of works and country-level external-supplier shares are estimates derived from the supplier-economy field. Percentages for borrowers with small portfolios are sensitive to individual large contracts. All values are nominal US dollars. Totals reconcile to the regional aggregate of USD 54.6 billion.

²A systematic scan for anomalous awards — single contracts dominating a country's portfolio, procurement-method/value mismatches, and implausible unit prices — identified this as the only clear value error in the region. The other large awards it surfaced were verified as legitimate: COVID-19 vaccine purchases (Pfizer, Janssen and UNICEF across many borrowers), Nigerian transmission-substation rehabilitation, and major road works in Botswana, Comoros and Guinea-Bissau. One further award is flagged but retained — a USD 30.9 million fertiliser purchase recorded under Request for Quotations, a method normally reserved for low-value procurement. Several description fields contain administrative notes in place of contract descriptions, indicating loose data entry at source.

Annex A — Contract awards by African country

All sovereign Sub-Saharan African borrowers, FY2020–FY2026, ordered by total contract value. Domestic capture shown in red below 20 percent and green at or above 65 percent.

Country	Region	Total value	Contracts	Domestic capture	Largest external supplier	Its share	China share
Nigeria	WCA	\$4.27bn	8,677	72%	China	12%	12%
Tanzania	ESA	\$3.69bn	2,242	35%	China	55%	55%
Ethiopia	ESA	\$3.62bn	11,676	45%	China	28%	28%
Mozambique	ESA	\$2.89bn	4,223	37%	China	22%	22%
Congo, Democratic Republic of	ESA	\$2.85bn	5,193	37%	China	26%	26%
Madagascar	ESA	\$2.27bn	8,186	43%	China	31%	31%
Cote d'Ivoire	WCA	\$2.23bn	4,808	50%	China	30%	30%
Kenya	ESA	\$2.09bn	4,664	48%	China	39%	39%
Senegal	WCA	\$1.94bn	2,569	55%	China	25%	25%
Cameroon	WCA	\$1.61bn	3,485	45%	China	18%	18%
Niger	WCA	\$1.59bn	3,248	41%	China	17%	17%
Ghana	WCA	\$1.42bn	2,965	73%	World	11%	6%
Somalia, Federal Republic of	ESA	\$1.36bn	2,700	37%	World	42%	2%
Uganda	ESA	\$1.26bn	1,566	49%	China	23%	23%
Malawi	ESA	\$1.25bn	3,445	59%	China	21%	21%
Burkina Faso	WCA	\$1.14bn	4,324	72%	World	11%	3%
Angola	ESA	\$1.12bn	1,711	27%	China	21%	21%
Rwanda	ESA	\$1.11bn	1,654	56%	China	19%	19%
South Africa	ESA	\$1.00bn	218	69%	China	16%	16%
Chad	WCA	\$0.70bn	1,453	33%	World	36%	9%
South Sudan	ESA	\$0.69bn	289	4%	World	85%	0%
Burundi	ESA	\$0.63bn	2,189	39%	World	16%	14%
Mali	WCA	\$0.60bn	1,832	61%	World	14%	13%
Benin	WCA	\$0.55bn	1,619	47%	China	10%	10%
Central African Republic	WCA	\$0.54bn	1,729	39%	World	18%	17%
Liberia	WCA	\$0.49bn	1,497	36%	China	22%	22%

Country	Region	Total value	Contracts	Domestic capture	Largest external supplier	Its share	China share
Zambia	ESA	\$0.45bn	1,103	44%	China	32%	32%
Gambia, The	WCA	\$0.37bn	802	38%	China	17%	17%
Congo, Republic of	WCA	\$0.37bn	1,689	64%	World	15%	0%
Guinea	WCA	\$0.33bn	950	48%	World	12%	6%
Sierra Leone	WCA	\$0.30bn	936	43%	China	13%	13%
Comoros	ESA	\$0.26bn	1,502	23%	Egypt, Arab Republic of	28%	23%
Lesotho	ESA	\$0.24bn	1,453	47%	China	20%	20%
Mauritania	WCA	\$0.21bn	1,423	74%	France	7%	0%
Botswana	ESA	\$0.20bn	59	16%	China	77%	77%
Cabo Verde	WCA	\$0.19bn	582	41%	Portugal	40%	6%
Gabon	WCA	\$0.18bn	629	63%	China	14%	14%
Togo	WCA	\$0.17bn	722	34%	World	32%	8%
Guinea-Bissau	WCA	\$0.14bn	310	8%	Senegal	50%	10%
Eswatini	ESA	\$0.13bn	423	60%	India	24%	1%
Sao Tome and Principe	ESA	\$0.12bn	558	42%	Portugal	18%	1%
Sudan	ESA	\$0.03bn	248	59%	India	31%	0%
Zimbabwe	ESA	\$0.02bn	255	68%	World	9%	4%
Regional / multi-country programs	—	\$7.99bn	21,845	—	—	—	—

Region: ESA = Eastern and Southern Africa; WCA = Western and Central Africa. “Largest external supplier” is the leading supplier economy other than the borrower itself; its share is of that country’s total. Regional / multi-country programs are shown as a single reconciling line and carry no meaningful capture rate. Figures exclude the one documented data error. Columns reconcile to the regional total of USD 54.6 billion. Three borrowers — Namibia (USD 2.2 million, 3 contracts), Mauritius (USD 1.9 million, 14 contracts) and Seychelles (USD 1.1 million, 5 contracts) — are omitted: their portfolios are too small to yield meaningful percentages, with individual consultant contracts determining all shares. Three other entries warrant contextual notes: Comoros’ largest external supplier is Egypt (28%) because a single USD 65 million port-extension contract by the Arab Contractors Company accounts for one-quarter of the entire Comoros portfolio; Eswatini’s top foreign supplier is India (24%) reflecting two power-transmission construction contracts; and Sudan’s India figure (31%) reflects seven small nutrition-product procurement contracts totalling USD 8 million in a portfolio of only USD 27 million.

Annex B — Contract awards by sector

Who captures regional contract value, by economic sector and by procurement type.

B.1 By economic sector

Sector (primary World Bank Global Practice)	Total value	Contracts	Domestic capture	China share	Largest external supplier
Agriculture	\$10.93bn	40,358	46%	12%	World
Transportation	\$7.36bn	4,198	32%	52%	China
Energy & Extractives	\$7.27bn	4,707	13%	39%	China
Public Admin	\$5.82bn	17,515	49%	23%	China
Health	\$5.32bn	9,617	44%	3%	World
Not specified	\$4.71bn	10,233	47%	15%	World
Info & Communication	\$4.14bn	6,806	39%	24%	China
Water/Sanit/Waste	\$3.32bn	5,519	49%	29%	China
Education	\$2.87bn	13,656	71%	5%	China
Social Protection	\$2.19bn	8,338	31%	18%	World
Financial Sector	\$0.39bn	1,442	46%	6%	World
Industry & Trade/Ser	\$0.31bn	1,283	59%	7%	China
Digital Development	\$0.00bn	1	0%	0%	Nigeria

Sector is the primary (first-listed) World Bank Global Practice for each project; projects spanning several practices are assigned to their first. "Not specified" covers awards with no Global Practice recorded in the source. Reconciles to USD 54.6 billion.

B.2 By procurement type

Procurement type	Total value	Contracts	Domestic capture	China share	Largest external supplier
Works (construction & civil works)	\$28.51bn	21,464	38%	39%	China
Goods (equipment & supplies)	\$13.54bn	44,121	44%	11%	World
Consultant services	\$9.25bn	49,713	43%	0%	World
Non-consulting services	\$3.32bn	8,375	40%	1%	World

Procurement type is recorded directly in the source. "Works" corresponds to construction and civil works; "Goods" to equipment and supplies, including pharmaceuticals and vaccines.

B.3 Two sectors in focus

Construction (civil works). Works contracts total \$28.51bn across 21,464 awards — the largest procurement type and the heart of the foreign-capture pattern. Domestic firms won 38% of works value; Chinese firms alone won 39%, making China the dominant single builder of the region’s World-Bank-financed infrastructure. This is the sector in which the headline distributional finding is concentrated.

Pharmaceuticals and medical supplies. Health-sector goods total \$4.19bn across 7,630 awards, of which only 34% was captured by domestic firms. Unlike construction, the external beneficiaries here are not commercial contractors but procurement intermediaries and global manufacturers: the four largest suppliers are UNICEF, UNOPS, the World Food Programme and UNFPA, with national agencies such as Ethiopia’s Pharmaceuticals Supply Agency among the few large domestic players. The distributional pattern is the same — most value realised abroad — but the mechanism is pooled multilateral procurement rather than competitive works tendering.

“Health-sector goods” denotes awards whose Global Practice includes Health and whose procurement type is Goods; it is a proxy for pharmaceuticals, vaccines and medical equipment, not an exact pharmaceutical classification.

Annex C — Shareholding and African contracts

Each major World Bank shareholder's IBRD voting power against the share of Sub-Saharan African contract value its firms won, FY2020–FY2026.

Country	IBRD voting power	Share of Africa contracts	Contracts ÷ votes
United States	15.98%	0.64%	0.0×
Japan	6.88%	0.03%	0.0×
China	5.75%	23.18%	4.0×
Germany	4.09%	0.59%	0.1×
United Kingdom	3.75%	0.43%	0.1×
France	3.75%	1.98%	0.5×
India	2.95%	3.28%	1.1×
Saudi Arabia	2.67%	0.05%	0.0×
Italy	2.64%	0.43%	0.2×
Canada	2.44%	0.26%	0.1×
South Africa	0.74%	1.78%	2.4×
Nigeria	0.69%	6.37%	9.2×

IBRD voting power: World Bank, Subscriptions and Voting Power of Member Countries, as of 16 April 2026 (the standard “World Bank shareholding” figure). Share of Africa contracts: each economy’s supplier value as a share of the USD 54.6 billion regional total. The high-ratio rows reflect two distinct mechanisms: China wins as a foreign supplier across many borrowers, while Nigeria and South Africa win as domestic firms building at home. Chinese contractors also register local subsidiaries counted as domestic, so the Chinese ratio is a lower bound. Much African lending is financed by IDA rather than IBRD; IDA voting is contribution-weighted and would shift individual shares but not the overall pattern. The United States holds 16 percent of the votes and wins 0.6 percent of the contracts; China holds 5.8 percent and wins 23 percent.

Annex D – The twenty largest contracts

Highest-value individual contract awards in Sub-Saharan Africa, FY2020–FY2026, by contract value.

Rank	Supplier	Economy	Borrower	Contract value	Category	Signed
1	PFIZER LABORATORIES PROPRIETARY LIMITED	South Africa	South Africa	\$345.0M	Goods	03/31/2021
2	CGCOC GROUP	China	WCA region	\$306.3M	Works	12/08/2023
3	JANSSEN PHARMACEUTICA NV	South Africa	South Africa	\$267.4M	Goods	02/26/2021
4	China Road And Bridge Corporation	China	Senegal	\$263.1M	Works	09/09/2019
5	CGCOC GROUP	China	WCA region	\$253.9M	Works	12/08/2023
6	WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (WFP)	UN	Somalia	\$205.4M	Consultant Services	03/24/2020
7	UNITED NATIONS OFFICE PROJECT SERVICES (U...	UN	Mozambique	\$198.0M	Consultant Services	09/24/2021
8	China Road And Bridge Corporation	China	Cote d'Ivoire	\$180.8M	Works	05/22/2024
9	UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF)	UN	Nigeria	\$172.4M	Goods	12/23/2022
10	SINOHYDRO CORPORATION LIMITED (中国水利水电建设集团...)	China	Kenya	\$172.3M	Works	08/14/2019
11	GROUPEMENT MERIDIAM AFRICA INVESTMENTS SA...	Senegal	Senegal	\$166.0M	Non-consulting Services	03/21/2022
12	CHINA FIRST HIGHWAY ENGINEERING COMPANY L...	China	DRC	\$148.0M	Works	06/03/2026
13	UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF)	UN	Ghana	\$147.5M	Goods	08/27/2021
14	China State Construction Finance Co., Ltd.	China	Kenya	\$146.5M	Works	04/15/2022
15	TBEA CO. LTD.	China	Tanzania	\$126.7M	Works	04/18/2024
16	INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION ...	UN	South Sudan	\$123.0M	Consultant Services	01/20/2023
17	SICHUAN ROAD & BRIDGE (GROUP) CORPORATION...	China	Horn of Africa region	\$121.4M	Works	06/27/2025
18	SICHUAN ROAD & BRIDGE (GROUP) CORPORATION...	China	Horn of Africa region	\$120.4M	Works	06/27/2025

Rank	Supplier	Economy	Borrower	Contract value	Category	Signed
19	CHINA HARBOUR ENGINEERING COMPANY LIMITED	China	Tanzania	\$119.8M	Works	02/12/2021
20	TBEA CO. LTD.	China	Tanzania	\$119.1M	Works	04/18/2024

Contracts are deduplicated by WB contract number: where a single contract is recorded against multiple consortium partners (e.g. the Mieso–Dire Dawa joint venture between Sichuan Road & Bridge and CCECC, WB contracts 1879489 and 1879491), the contract value shown is for the first-recorded member and reflects the source’s reporting structure; the total value of those joint-venture packages is larger. Supplier economy “UN” denotes United Nations and multilateral agencies. Chinese-firm contracts are shaded; UN contracts in gold. Pfizer and Janssen are recorded under South Africa, reflecting the subsidiary domicile of the contracting entities rather than ultimate ownership. Contract descriptions and project names are abbreviated; full detail is available in the World Bank Finances database. The Dakar BRT contract (rank 4) was signed in FY2019 but included in the FY2020–FY2026 dataset.