RESULTS, RECOVERY, RESILIENCE:
20 STORIES ON THE ROAD TO IDA20
Foreword

As the world continues to tackle the urgent challenges created by the global COVID-19 pandemic, we are faced with both a daunting task and a tremendous opportunity to ensure a green, resilient and inclusive development for the poorest countries. The twentieth replenishment of the International Development Association (IDA)—the World Bank’s fund for the poorest—presents an occasion for the world to come together in support of the most vulnerable.

Before we begin considering the long road to recovery, however, it is important to take stock of the achievements and lessons from the past. The pandemic is expected to push as many as 63 million people into poverty, joining the 480 million already in poverty worldwide.

IDA has a long history of supporting the most vulnerable countries through crises, and COVID-19 has been no exception. IDA’s rapid and robust response has helped protect many hard-won development gains of recent decades.

The 20 powerful results stories featured in this booklet highlight how the systems that IDA helped build and strengthen over the years are being relied upon now to save lives, protect the poor and vulnerable, create jobs, save business, and build a more resilient recovery. From Afghanistan to Zambia, these stories tell the journey of women, men and their communities making a difference and building the foundation for a better future.

The pandemic reversed gains in global poverty reduction for the first time in a generation, and while advanced economies are rebounding, many of the world’s poorest countries are being left behind. Now, in order to build back better from this global shock, we must all redouble our efforts. Just as it has over the course of its 60-year history, IDA will remain a steadfast partner as countries work to re-position themselves on the path to a more prosperous and resilient tomorrow.

I hope you enjoy reading these development stories as much as we have enjoyed compiling them.

Akihiko Nishio
Vice President, Development Finance
In Bangladesh, only two-thirds of rural households have access to grid electricity. And the fortunate ones that do have access, suffer from frequent power cuts. Since 2012, an IDA supported project—the Second Rural Electrification and Renewable Energy Development (RERED II) Project—has helped increase access to clean and renewable energy for 7.3 million beneficiaries, more than 60 percent of whom are women, in remote rural areas.

The dispersed nature of rural settlements and the numerous rivers that crisscross the country make grid electrification in many areas of Bangladesh both difficult and expensive. Off-grid renewable energy, such as solar home systems and solar mini-grids, are helping to solve the problem. Thanks to these interventions, more than 5.4 million people and over 8,000 shops and businesses have electricity.

**Key Numbers**

- 5.4 million people gain access to electricity through solar home systems
- More than 60% of beneficiaries are women

“We can study much better now,” says Kusum Hati Roy, a 10-year-old student whose family received assistance purchasing a solar home system as a result of RERED II. “The solar lights have helped us a lot with our education.”

Using a micro-credit scheme and partnering with 61 non-governmental organisations, RERED II also supported the installation of more than 1,000 solar irrigation pumps—a low-cost technology that allows for a switch from diesel pumps—benefitting 35,000 farmers. Solar mini-grids, biogas digesters, and nearly 2 million improved cookstoves have been distributed across the country as part of RERED II’s support for renewable energy in the country.

The improved cookstoves emit 90 percent less carbon monoxide, require 50 percent less biomass fuel, and include a chimney that further reduces indoor air pollution. They are made by local entrepreneurs using locally procured raw materials, strengthening rural supply chains and generating jobs in rural communities. The cookstoves also reduce cooking time by approximately half, freeing women and children from the time burden of collecting firewood for cooking.

“My fuelwood usage has gone down so much,” says Shefali Ghosh, a young mother. “I used to buy fuelwood once every 2 months, now I buy fuelwood once every 5 months. This has helped us save money.”

These improved cookstoves have reduced the use of firewood by 58 percent and greenhouse gas emissions by almost 3 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent. The expansion of renewable energy is helping Bangladesh to reduce poverty, improve the environment, create jobs, and open new opportunities for rural people.

“Lighting Up Rural Communities in Bangladesh”

My fuelwood usage has gone down so much. I used to buy fuelwood once every 2 months, now I buy fuelwood once every 5 months. This has helped us save money.

— Shefali Ghoshhy
Providing a Safety Net to Workers Hit by COVID-19 in Cambodia

Siem Reap, a resort town located in northwest Cambodia, is a major tourist hub. It is the closest city to the world-famous temples of Angkor. When the COVID-19 pandemic halted global travel and tourists stopped coming to the town, Yu Thy and his wife, Neath Sim, lost their jobs and were worried about their future. They had to return home to Chaem Kravien commune in Tboung Khmum province.

“We’re very glad that we have a house and land. If we hadn’t land, we would have been badly affected by COVID-19 and would have had to move from place to place selling our labor.”

— Yu Thy

Nearly 50 families received land under this project after losing their city jobs because of COVID-19.

Thy and Sim have no plan to go back to Siem Reap when the tourists return to Cambodia. They are happy to improve their vegetable gardening, animal raising, and cash crop on their land at home.

Similarly, 30-year-old Yan Leng Sung, and her husband Pha Sophon, 29, returned to her parents’ house in Kratie province in mid-2020 after losing their jobs as construction workers in Thailand. Despite earning about 3 million riel ($750) per month, their expenses in Thailand were high, and they could save little.

Leng Sung’s parents received a residential plot and three hectares of farmland through the LASED project. Since returning, the couple has helped the family expand their cassava crop. This year they expect to harvest about 10 tons, and at the current price of 450 riel per kilogram, they stand to gain about 4.5 million riel ($1,125).

LASED has played an essential role in helping Cambodians withstand the economic effects of COVID-19. Joint IDA and government surveys show that after the initial shock caused by the pandemic, employment has remained relatively stable. Other IDA projects have helped build a resilient health service delivery system in Cambodia and facilitated e-learning for nearly three million pre-school, primary and secondary school pupils to learn from home while schools are closed.

Luckily, unlike many others, they had a house and land to return to. Since coming home, the couple has been growing vegetables, raising fish and chickens, and tapping their rubber trees. They have earned 600,000 riel ($150) by selling garden produce. They have 80 chickens ready for sale, and they can make around 800,000 riel ($200) per month from the rubber trees on their 1.5 hectares of farmland.
Saving Lives with Face Masks Made in Post-Conflict Central African Republic

In the Central African Republic, where years of prolonged violence and conflict have ravaged the country’s health care system, an innovative approach is saving lives and putting people to work. As the global COVID-19 pandemic bore down on the country, the government made the difficult decision to mandate the use of facial masks. Like many countries, however, they were faced with a dearth of masks in local and international markets. The IDA supported LONDO project was able to quickly rise to the challenge, locally producing more than 2.4 million masks in record time.

The LONDO project is the largest cash-for-work program in the country, supporting stabilization and social cohesion in a war-torn country through temporary employment. Usually, it carries out small infrastructure works and road maintenance, which are critical in a country where young people are particularly vulnerable to recruitment into armed groups and violence. As the COVID-19 crisis shakes the country’s economy and fragile stability, potentially pushing more than 140,000 people into extreme poverty, according to recent World Bank estimates, the project’s ability to rapidly adapt to meet the critical need of the moment is even more important.

The LONDO project, and its transition to mask making, is an extraordinary solution provided by simply leveraging the local resources available. The initiative to make 10 million masks—providing two free masks to every citizen—is providing livelihoods to 18,000 tailors, will generate more than 1.6 million workdays, and should inject about $17 million into the local economy.

“I can make up to 700 masks a week,” Amal Soulemayne says with a smile. Ms. Soulemayne is a seamstress by training and the mother of four, whose husband was killed as a result of the violence in the country. She was recently recruited as part of the LONDO project’s mask initiative.

“This seed that they have sown in my life is germinating and will mature durably and invariably.”

With the money she earned, Ms. Soulemayne started repairs on the makeshift house where she lives with her children. She plans to use the rest of her savings to open her own sewing workshop one day.

For Soulemayne, and other citizens of this vulnerable country, cash-for-work programs offer an opportunity to secure a better and safer future. The LONDO project has been successful in providing access to a livelihood for many, while also supporting small businesses and contributing to a life-saving public health effort. This is all working together to help the Central African Republic prepare for recovery and build peace in the country.

Key Numbers

- **2.4 million masks** were produced in record time
- **1.6 million workdays** were generated

The IDA has supported the LONDO project with funding to continue providing critical cash-for-work programs, supporting social stability in the Central African Republic.
Building Resilience to Climate Shocks in Djibouti

Djibouti, like many IDA countries, was grappling with poverty even before the global COVID-19 pandemic. Djibouti is extremely water scarce. Some 192,000 people, about 20 percent of the population, have no access to potable water. And in rural areas, where pastoralism provides a critical means of survival, communities and their herds do not have access to water within a reasonable distance. These communities are especially vulnerable to climate shocks, threatening their food security and livestock.

A recent prolonged drought in the region spurred desertification and exposed more than 75 percent of rural households to food insecurity.

With the help of IDA, Djibouti implemented its first community-based rural development project that allowed communities to select activities based on their needs and implement them at their own pace, in consultation with local partners. Some subprojects included water mobilization and soil conservation technology, agriculture and livestock production support, and additional income activities.

The project helped construct and overhaul some 116 water access points, including cisterns, open reservoirs, boreholes, wells, and micro-dams—providing almost 2 million cubic meters of water for households, livestock, wildlife, and irrigation. Nearly 10,000 homes in rural areas now have access to drinking water. For the beneficiaries, these achievements are groundbreaking—helping to reduce the drudgery, travel distance, and time entailed in fetching water, particularly for women, and providing additional scope for economic and household activities.

Aside from increasing the water supply, the project reduced the demand for water by diversifying community livelihoods to rely less on livestock and pasture, and expanded irrigation to 84 hectares of agricultural land. It also distributed micro-irrigation kits to 50 gardens to support private enterprises. The project also helped provide laboratory equipment and veterinary drugs to treat and vaccinate livestock.

In addition, the project had many social components, including a nutrition education program that helped address malnutrition in target communities. Ninety-one percent of participating women understood the health benefits of early breastfeeding, and 57 percent knew it is essential to give complimentary food to children ages 6–23 months to prevent stunting.

The project “achieved positive results and today embodies benchmarks and models that show improved access to water for people, livestock, and poverty reduction in rural areas,” says Ibrahim Elmi, the Secretary General for the Djibouti Ministry of Agriculture.

As Djibouti responds to the coronavirus pandemic, the country has a solid foundation for a resilient and sustainable future.

**Key Numbers**

- 116 water access points were constructed, providing drinking water for nearly 10,000 rural homes
- Income generating activities reached nearly 2,000 beneficiaries—47% of whom were women

Video

Climate Resilience in Djibouti
Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the risk of food insecurity in Haiti has been exacerbated. According to the World Food Programme, nearly 35 percent of the Haitian population already needed urgent food support before the pandemic. Now, due to external threats such as the volatility of global financial markets, decreased migrant remittances from overseas, and the closure of the border with the Dominican Republic, the threat of food insecurity is distressing.

To support food security in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Bank activated funding through the IDA-supported Haiti Resilient Productive Landscape project. The financing will be used to safeguard production for the next two cropping seasons, maintain purchasing power of the rural and urban poor, and preserve the food markets and value chains. This funding will allow 21,500 farmers in the Southern and Nippes regions to finance inputs and materials such as seeds and fertilizers and will support plowing and land preparation. The funding also supports communications campaigns to promote social distancing and sanitation measures during implementation.

**Key Numbers**

- Nearly 35% of the Haitian population already needed urgent food support before the pandemic
- 21,500 farmers received seeds and fertilizers, and support for plowing and land preparation

"During the last planting seasons, we recorded a decrease in productivity, which has consequently caused a drop in our income," said Abelard Jeremie, a pastor, who lives in the rural Southern Plain, one of the most important food production regions in the country. The local agriculture sector contributes as much as 45 percent of Haiti's food needs and is a principal source of income for many rural families.

"Because of our decreased income, we did not have enough savings to sustain the next cropping season," says Jerrica St Vil, a community health worker and neighbor of Mr. Jeremie’s.

Working in coordination with other donors, the Haiti Resilient Productive Landscape project is providing support in the form of subsidies, technical assistance, and inputs to farms for the spring and autumn planting seasons. This support will strengthen and improve nutrition, food availability in both urban and rural areas, and the resilience of vulnerable families.

A total of 17,600 farmers across the two regions will receive a subsidy. Inputs and services to improve their productivity, such as seeds including corn, beans, sweet potato cuttings, vegetables, seedlings, fertilizers, manure, and humus are being provided, along with assistance with land preparation and technical support to sow 11,500 hectares during the next two cropping seasons.

"I received seeds to grow corn and peas. I also got support for plowing and fertilizer. Today, my plants are already starting to grow," said Ms. St Vil proudly.

"Our community welcomed this project with joy. This support is important for us because members of the entire production chain, including farmers, agricultural workers, merchants, and consumers will benefit," said Mr. Jeremie.
Coping with circumstances of extreme poverty, households are sometimes forced to make choices that ultimately reduce their chances of improving longer-term economic prospects—such as taking children out of school so they could work. Moreover, poverty and inequality can take a heavy toll on health and education, especially for children.

An IDA-supported conditional cash transfer program has helped to reverse some of these trends in Honduras. First termed Bono 10,000—and later renamed to Bono Vida Mejor—the program provides cash to extremely poor households, with the amount provided dependent on the number and age of children in the household. Health grants were provided to children up to five years old who completed childhood immunizations, and education grants were provided to children to attend primary and lower secondary school.

Key to the program’s success was setting up systems to manage and target payments, as well as address questions or complaints from beneficiaries. These included a management information system, a compliance verification mechanism, a social registry for poverty targeting, a grievance redress mechanism, and an improved system of making payments.

The Sub-Secretary of Social Integration under the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion, and the National Center for Information on the Social Sector led the implementation of the program. IDA and the Government of Honduras also worked closely with the Inter-American Development Bank, which provided co-financing.

During the highest point of coverage, 8,700 households among Indigenous and Afro-Honduran communities received cash transfers, and more than 90 percent of all program grantees were women.

In focus groups in Paraiso Zamorano, Cortes y Comayagua, beneficiaries remarked on the impact the program had on their lives.

"We now have a better life; we have improved our living conditions,” said one participant.

Before, the floor of my house was made of mud, but now we have a ceiling, a floor made of cement, as well as a latrine.

— Cash transfer recipient

The Government of Honduras and IDA continue to build on the success of the program. In November 2018, for example, the government committed to allocate 10 percent of the Solidarity and Social Protection Fund for the Reduction of Extreme Poverty to the program each year, which is expected to cover about one-third of the annual cash transfers.

IDA’s support is focused on unifying the rural and urban components of the conditional cash transfer program, as well as standardizing the procedures, rules, and delivery systems of the national conditional cash transfer program.
Transforming Kenya’s Transport Sector through Digital Integration

Before 2014, Kenya’s aspiring drivers had to visit several government offices to be licensed to drive. Fragmented services and manual procedures created loopholes and opportunities for cartels that processed fake licenses and motor vehicle logbooks, contributing to a thriving underground economy that exposed banks and insurance firms to potential fraud and losses.

To combat these issues, the Kenyan government established the semi-autonomous National Transport and Safety Authority (NTSA) to harmonize the operations of key road transport departments and manage road safety.

To manage essential transport services, the NTSA launched the Transport Integrated Management System (TIMS) electronic data platform in 2016.

“TIMS has made our work easier,” said Richard Kanoru, the Secretary General of the Matatu Transport Vehicles Association. “Matatu” refers to vans and minibuses that are the most common means of passenger transport across all regions of Kenya. “At a click of a button and within five minutes, an operator can apply for all the necessary licenses to operate a Matatu. Our business costs have come down significantly because we don’t need intermediaries to get services from NTSA.”

The TIMS platform was established with funding from IDA under the Eastern Africa Regional Transport, Trade and Development Facilitation Project (EARTTDFP)—a $500 million credit approved in June 2015 to facilitate transport and trade between Kenya and its partners in the Eastern Africa region.

TIMS is a sophisticated, yet easy to access digital platform that incorporates motor vehicle registration and transfers, licensing, and inspection in a secure public access online portal. The system provides a cashless, secure, and transparent payment system directly linked to mobile money and internet banking platforms that are now widely used for payment across Kenya. It has an inbuilt short message service (SMS) that updates users on the status of their applications.

Moreover, a secure database that is linked to other government institutions, including Kenya Revenue Authority and the National Registration Bureau, enables the system to automatically verify the personal data of the applicants.

The system also brings together all the transport sector stakeholders, including government agencies, financial institutions, motor vehicle dealers, diplomatic community, public transport service operators and the public. Consolidation of data has assisted national security and traffic law enforcement agencies in fighting crime. It has also enabled financial institutions, mainly banks and insurance firms, to access verifiable data on a secure platform, hence, reducing opportunities for fraudulent access of credit and insurance claims.

Since 2017, more than a million vehicles and motorcycles have been registered on the TIMS platform. E-stickers now replace the physical inspection stickers for public transport vehicles, and more than half a million applications for smart driving licenses have been processed. Data on each of these documents is stored on a chip that is integrated with TIMS and can be retrieved by law enforcement agencies from any location using mobile technology.

Kenya’s information and communications technology (ICT) sector has become a significant driver of economic development and job creation in all areas. The infusion of ICT in the transformation of the transport sector has cemented Kenya’s reputation as Africa’s Silicon Savannah.
For the 50 percent of the Kyrgyz Republic’s population that lives in rural areas, agriculture is vital for reducing poverty, improving income inequality, increasing food security, and generating employment. Drought, however, poses a risk to that economic growth. The 2010 drought severely affected the agriculture sector. As the droughts of 2011, 2012, and 2014 compounded the situation, the agriculture sector’s contribution to economic growth declined.

Livestock production can act as a social safety net against hardships and financial distress for rural household, providing regular income and food security. But in the Kyrgyz Republic, livestock production was suffering. Years of unsustainable use of pastures had degraded them and reduced their value for animal grazing. Lack of investment in infrastructure and mismanagement of natural resources meant that remote mountain pastures were not being sufficiently utilized. And poor animal husbandry practices, sub-par feed quality, and animal health issues were exacerbating the issue.

Building on the country’s legal reforms in 2009, an IDA-supported project worked to strengthen community-based governance and management of pasturelands to improve the livelihoods of the rural population. It also set out to increase the productivity of the livestock sector by expanding access to essential animal health services.

Between 2014 and 2019, nearly 198,000 people, including almost 100,000 women, benefited from training that improved livestock management practices across 140 rural communities. In addition, nearly 750 veterinarians were trained, representing more than a 100 percent increase in the number of community-based veterinary practices, significantly improving the overall animal health situation in the country.

By increasing access to common pastures for the poorest livestock herders and promoting better management of common natural resources, the project has also helped alleviate poverty, enhanced the capacity of state pasture institutions, and helped strengthen the voices of vulnerable groups. Now, with IDA’s support, activities like monitoring of pasture conditions and just-in-time alerts on weather changes are helping pasture communities to mitigate the risks associated with climate change.
Banking the Unbanked in Malawi

In 2011, the financial sector’s contribution towards growth and poverty reduction in Malawi was limited. Only 17 percent of adults in Malawi were banked. While the country had achieved notable reforms, much of the business environment work remained outstanding, particularly financial sector reform. Access to finance was the greatest problem among businesses in Malawi, as the formal financial sector remained small and serviced mostly the urban population.

The project supported improvements in financial literacy and the regulatory framework in the financial sector. The national payments system was modernized, and all commercial banks were connected to a single switch. A Microfinance Institution Hub was developed, and a new Automated Trading System is leveraging technology to improve efficiency of transaction processing. The Reserve Bank of Malawi built on these digital innovations to enhance its capacity, and it is now fielding knowledge-sharing requests from peers in the Global South.

As a result, Malawi has borne witness to a digital transformation and increased access to finance. The percentage of adults using financial institutions, for example, rose from 19 percent at the start of the project in 2011 to 40 percent at the closing in June 2018. The proportion of women that are formally banked increased from 17 percent in 2011 to 38.5 percent in 2018.

These improvements to digital financial services have also made banking more accessible for Malawians living in rural areas, where physical banks are few and far between. In addition to mobile banks, which can travel to rural areas to provide services to their customers, banks are now able to safely link payment of services with mobile phones, allowing customers and service providers to send and receive mobile payments.

Now, after the close of FSTAP, the government is working to build on its strong legacy. In August 2020, the IDA-supported Financial Inclusion and Entrepreneurship Scaling Project was approved for $86 million and seeks to further improve access to financial services for micro, small and medium enterprises.

Key Numbers

40% of the adult population are now using financial institutions

The proportion of formally banked women more than doubled to 38.5%
In 2015, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck central Nepal. Less than one month later, a second 7.3 magnitude earthquake was recorded. These earthquakes left more than 8,700 deaths and some 25,000 injuries in their wake. Reconstruction of safer housing for around 715,000 homes that were destroyed or severely damaged emerged as the biggest need, as per a World-Bank supported Post Disaster Needs Assessment.

Today, with $700 million in financing from IDA, the project is helping more than 330,000 homeowners from poor rural households in 32 affected districts of Nepal rebuild their homes using disaster resilient construction techniques and materials. The project has also introduced a culture of resilient construction in the country by strengthening institutional capacity, and training engineers and masons.

This also paved the way for women across the country to take on new opportunities in occupations that were previously male-dominated.

“Mason-training transformed my life. It provided me with an opportunity to not only gain new skills and experiences but also to serve my community,” recounts 38-year-old Kamala B. K. from Nuwakot in central Nepal.

Kamala is one of 149 women mobile masons hired by the National Reconstruction Authority in 14 districts most affected by the earthquake. Women mobile masons make up 20 percent of the total mobile masons recruited (compared with a nationwide rate of 8 percent among engineers employed for housing reconstruction). Furthermore, as many field engineers are not able to be present on the ground owing to COVID-19 related restrictions, the locally based mobile masons have become even more sought-after experts in the villages.

Overall, the project takes an intentionally owner-driven approach to housing reconstruction: homeowners make all decisions on reconstruction of their homes, with technical assistance about reconstruction methods that can withstand natural disasters.

As of March 2021, 245,485 resilient houses have been reconstructed with full or partial support from IDA credits. Housing reconstruction has also generated an estimated economic value equivalent to $3.76 billion across the 11 most affected districts. Furthermore, more than 70 percent of project beneficiaries opened bank accounts to receive project grants. Most had never had a bank account before and, of these accounts, 30 percent were opened by women.
Strengthening Recovery and Peacebuilding in North-East Nigeria

The violent attacks carried out by Boko Haram since 2009 have left deep scars for the 15 million people that call the region of North-East Nigeria home. Some 20,000 people have died, and 2.2 million people have been forcibly displaced by the conflict. About 70 percent of those displaced are hosted in the states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe.

Key Numbers

- 105,000 beneficiaries - 49% of whom are women - have gained access to roads, hospitals, water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, and public buildings
- Psychosocial support services have reached 13,500 households

“Living as an internally displaced person is not only traumatizing but makes you feel unwanted and imprisoned as well,” says Abubakar Abdullahi, a resident of Bama, in the state of Borno.

Reuniting families, rebuilding livelihoods and repairing badly damaged infrastructure in the region is a monumental endeavor—one that the World Bank’s 2016 Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment estimated would require nearly $6.7 billion.

Mr. Abdullahi was thankfully reconnected with his family two years after fleeing the violence. He has also received essential livelihood support through the IDA-supported Multi-Sectoral Recovery Project (MCRP).

The MCRP addresses the immediate need for high-impact, early recovery interventions—such as the delivery of non-food items, agricultural, and non-agricultural inputs—that complement humanitarian operations in North-East Nigeria.

For example, Mr. Abdullahi received two ewes and a ram. “It is a great means of livelihood which will help me improve my situation and will allow me to provide for my family,” he says.

The project also sets its sight on medium-term recovery and resilience building through investments in social cohesion, livelihoods, infrastructure, and public services.

Between 2017-2020, 587 infrastructure rehabilitation projects have been initiated, and the construction and repair of nearly 180 kilometers of roads and three bridges are underway. Over 105,000 beneficiaries (of which 49 percent are women) have gained access to rehabilitated roads, hospitals, schools, water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, and public buildings.

The project has also responded to the trauma of conflict and displacement, with psychosocial support services so far reaching 13,500 households.

The project’s success is due in no small part to partnerships with Nigerian institutions and international organizations and donors.

The Nigerian government, the North-East Development Commission and Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states have taken strong ownership of the project. Both federal and state-level governments have worked closely together, with clearly marked roles and responsibilities for each.

IDA has also collaborated on the project with the United Nations Development Programme, the European Union, the African Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank. The World Bank is also managing a $3 million trust fund from the United Kingdom’s Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office that focuses on institutional and capacity building in North-East Nigeria.

Looking ahead, the focus will shift from early recovery to long-term reconstruction and development of livelihoods. This includes an emphasis on the delivery of basic services, such as health and education, and support for agricultural investments and livelihoods.
Pakistan has made substantial progress in reducing poverty, and social protection programs have played an important role. However, a decade ago there was significant room for improvement. Less than 50 percent of expenditures reached the poorest 40 percent of the population in 2011. And poverty rates in rural areas were much higher than in cities.

It was against this backdrop that the IDA-supported Pakistan Social Safety Net Project was launched—which operated from 2009-17. The project focused on expanding and strengthening Pakistan’s flagship national safety net platform, known as Benazir Income Support Program (BISP).

Specific goals of the project included improving how benefits were targeted to eligible recipients, together with strengthening the management, accountability, and evaluation of the BISP. Central to these efforts has been the establishment of a National Socio-Economic Registry that hosts a database of more than 27 million households (about 167 million people). It is the first of its kind in South Asia. Its utility goes beyond the BISP, as some 70 organizations have leveraged the registry for their pro-poor social programs.

Notably, the BISP has placed an emphasis on making females the direct recipients of cash transfers. Scaling up digital payments has made benefits available to even the poorest women through branchless banking accounts. Over 15 million new female citizens have received benefits since the start of the BISP in 2008—a remarkable 70 percent increase overall in the number of women registered for cash transfers.

The investments made in the BISP and other social protection programs have played a critical role in Pakistan’s response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The national lockdown imposed to contain the health emergency has placed additional financial risks on the poor and vulnerable, particularly women, who often carry the burden of caring for the sick, elderly, and children.

With assistance from IDA, Pakistan expanded the support provided through the BISP to its 4.8 million women beneficiaries.

‘My husband is ill and has to stay at home. I’m so grateful that I’ve received Rs. 12,000 today, it will help us get by for a full month. We are thankful that the government has supported us and stands with us at a time like this,’ says Ms. Sakina, a resident of Quetta.

By continuing to focus on strengthening its social protection programs, Pakistan is opening numerous opportunities to further reduce poverty. At the household level, for example, increasing the income of poor families allows for investments in education for children and economic opportunities for parents. At the institutional level, investment in establishing social protection systems will foster greater efficiencies—allowing Pakistan to do more with limited resources.

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Strengthening Pakistan’s Social Safety Net Program

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Key Numbers

- 15 million women received cash transfer payments
- 70% increase in number of women registered for cash transfers

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Creating New Beginnings for Ex-Combatants in Rwanda

In the aftermath of Rwanda’s genocide, the new government established measures to address the impact of war and move toward national reconciliation. The 1994 genocide took the lives of nearly one million people and left the country devastated. Many from the former government army and militia fled to what is today the Democratic Republic of Congo where they spent decades struggling to survive.

Key Numbers

- 70,000 ex-combatants were demobilized and reintegrated into society.
- Nearly 300 former child combatants have received formal education, vocational training, or apprenticeship training.

Key to the new government’s strategy for peace and stability were the disarmament, demobilization, and repatriation of armed groups—including the former government army and militia. In 1997, the Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (RDRC) was established and has since demobilized and offered reintegration support to more than 70,000 ex-combatants. IDA supported these efforts with two consecutive projects: the Emergency Demobilization and Reintegration Program (2002-2008), and the Second Emergency Demobilization and Reintegration Project (SEDRP) (2009-2017).

Ex-combatants go through a process of demobilization that includes medical support, psychosocial screening, and counseling. The RDRC also provides training and classes to support the former soldiers as they reintegrate into Rwandan society. The most vulnerable ex-combatants, along with all female and children former combatants, are eligible to receive two years of formal education, vocational training, or apprenticeship training.

‘After completing this course, I am confident that this will help me move out of the poverty cycle,’ says Marie Tuyizere, a young tailoring student at the training center. ‘With the skills that I have acquired here, I will be able to venture into the job world and gain an income to support me and my family.’

Nearly 300 former child combatants have come through the program. Often forced to join armed groups and begin fighting as young as 9 years old, upon their return to Rwanda, they spend at least a year at Muhaga Children Rehabilitation Center. Here trained staff attempt to fill in the gaps of the childhood they missed. At the end of their stay, former child soldiers are either reunited with their families or placed within foster families.

Cooperatives have also been a great vehicle for social economic reintegration, as ex-combatants work alongside community members with the common goal of growing a business. The Abahuza Cooperative, a mototaxi business in the capital, Kigali, is an excellent example of this successful model. The cooperative began in 2009 with 10 ex-combatants and a few motorcycles. Today it is a thriving enterprise, employing more than 450 drivers—almost 100 of whom are ex-combatants.

‘I joined Abahuza Cooperative and I was well welcomed,’ says Martin Muhire, a former soldier. ‘I was given a motorbike and things have been going well ever since. We receive constant trainings from the Demobilization Commission and that helps significantly. I now own a home, all through this job.’

The successful demobilization, economic reintegration, and assimilation of former soldiers has been a crucial component of Rwanda’s long-term development strategy. With IDA’s support, the RDRC has helped to restore social norms and maintain stability for this recovering country.

‘After completing this course, I am confident that this will help me move out of the poverty cycle,’ says Marie Tuyizere, a young tailoring student at the training center. ‘With the skills that I have acquired here, I will be able to venture into the job world and gain an income to support me and my family.’

Nearly 300 former child combatants have come through the program. Often forced to join armed groups and begin fighting as young as 9 years old, upon their return to Rwanda, they spend at least a year at Muhaga Children Rehabilitation Center. Here trained staff attempt to fill in the gaps of the childhood they missed. At the end of their stay, former child soldiers are either reunited with their families or placed within foster families.

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More than 20 million herders across the Sahel region move their cattle, searching for water and pastureland. This is because 75 percent of the Sahel is too dry to allow livestock herders to remain in one place.

Each year, in early November, the first signs of drought appear—rivers start to dry up and pastures become scarce. So many families, often in small groups, begin a months-long journey in search of water and pastureland.

Today, however, the pastoralists face a new problem that they cannot overcome alone—climate change. Their traditional way of life is in danger. The rainy seasons are growing shorter, and the dry seasons are longer, sometimes lasting up to nine months. The drought in 2010 was particularly severe. Niger lost 4.8 million head of cattle, roughly 25 percent of the herd, representing a loss of more than $700 million for the country’s economy.

Water has become increasingly scarce, and farmers expand their fields as the population grows, encroaching on pastoral regions and transhumance corridors. This situation has seriously disrupted traditional herd management methods, resulting in more frequent and potentially more severe conflicts.

The IDA-financed Regional Sahel Pastoralism Support Project (PRAPS) supports countries of the Sahel—Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal. It helps to protect pastoral systems by improving resource management and animal health, facilitating access to markets, diversifying sources of income for pastoral households, and managing conflicts.

The project established infrastructure around water points, pasture for the livestock, vaccination stations, livestock markets, and fodder storage.

“One of the things that has most changed our lives is the training provided by water and forestry officials for combating brushfires,” explains Hamidj Barry, mayor of a village near the Senegal border. “It is a transmission of knowledge that we will keep forever.”

Between 2015 and 2020, the project helped establish and improve the management of more than 5 million hectares of pastureland, 181 water points, and 66 cattle markets. It also supported the economic activity of 20,700 people, 88 percent of whom were women.

The COVID-19 pandemic threatened these gains. As borders closed to contain the spread of disease, herds of cattle could not return to their homelands, and significant animal health risks arose as pastoralist concentrated at the borders. IDA is now providing additional financing to set up monitoring initiatives, strengthen existing early warning systems, and provide targeted responses to support those in agro-pastoral sectors.

Supporting Africa’s Sahel Pastoralists to Secure a Resilient Future

More than 20 million herders across the Sahel region move their cattle, searching for water and pastureland. This is because 75 percent of the Sahel is too dry to allow livestock herders to remain in one place.

Key Numbers

- 75% of the Sahel is too dry for livestock herders to remain in one place
- 5 million hectares of pastureland, 181 water points, and 66 cattle markets are supporting economic activity for 20,700 people

20 Stories On The Road To IDA 20

One of the things that has most changed our lives is the training provided by water and forestry officials for combating brushfires. It is a transmission of knowledge that we will keep forever.

— Hamidj Barry, mayor of a village near Senegal border

Video

In Search of Greener Pastures
But the experience of Ebola has also informed a better response to this pandemic—one that is effectively reducing learning losses. The IDA-supported Free Education (FREE) Project supports these efforts through several targeted interventions.

A top priority was to keep students safely up-to-speed on their studies through distance learning. The Radio Teaching Program—which went to air a week after schools were closed—has been hugely successful in this respect. The program reached approximately 14 million children (including 700,000 girls) during the period of school closures from the end of March until early October 2020.

Podcast
Learning during COVID-19

I like to listen to the radio program, as it is interactive and fun! Additionally, I received printing material as additional learning support.
—Fatmata, a junior secondary school student

In tandem, the project assisted the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education in the design and implementation of measures to keep children and teachers safe when schools re-opened. These built on the school safety protocols and psychosocial support guidelines developed during the Ebola crisis, and have been distributed to all 11,000 primary and secondary schools. About 22,000 teachers were also trained on health and safety protocols before schools reopened. All primary and secondary schools have been equipped with hygiene and safety products, such as face masks, soap, and infrared thermometers, benefitting about 2 million students.

The project is co-financed by the United Kingdom’s Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Irish Aid, and the European Union, whose contributions fed into a World Bank-administered Sierra Leone Education Multi-Donor Trust Fund. The World Bank has also become a grant agent for the Global Partnership for Education. Under this partnership, Save the Children is leading a consortium of non-governmental organizations focused on community engagement, and reaching the most marginalized and deprived groups. Partners of the consortium include Handicap International, Plan International, Concern Worldwide, the Foundation for Rural and Urban Transformation, Focus 1000, and Street Child of Sierra Leone.

Moving forward, IDA is committed to working hand-in-hand with partners on fostering a more resilient, inclusive, and personalized education system for the children of Sierra Leone.

The youth of Sierra Leone were already poorly served by an education system starved of resources. Then the global COVID-19 pandemic struck in March 2020, and schools shut their doors.

The pandemic brought grim reminders of the Ebola crisis of 2014, which led to eight months of school closures in Sierra Leone. The impacts were soon evident. Research by the World Bank estimated that girls aged 12–17 were 16 percent less likely to return to school after the Ebola crisis subsided. Child labor by girls increased by 19 percentage points.

Protecting Children From Learning Loss in Sierra Leone

The youth of Sierra Leone were already poorly served by an education system starved of resources. Then the global COVID-19 pandemic struck in March 2020, and schools shut their doors.

Key Numbers

- The Radio Teaching program reached 1.4 million children, including 700,000 girls
- 22,000 teachers were also trained on health and safety protocols before schools reopened

20 Stories On The Road To IDA20
Protecting the Health of Tajikistan’s Children During COVID-19

Tajikistan, one of the most remittance-reliant economies in the world, was hit particularly hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic slowed down Tajikistan’s economic growth to its lowest since the global recession—with lower-income households and children bearing the brunt of the impact.

Furthermore, remittances fell by 6.3 percent in 2020 compared with the previous year. More than 80 percent of households in Tajikistan that receive remittances spend them primarily on food and other basic necessities.

COVID-19 also took a toll on basic needs. When the pandemic struck, according to a World Bank survey, 41 percent of households reported that they had been forced to reduce their consumption of food, and 20 percent were unable to obtain medical care. The situation is threatening previously won gains in poverty reduction and has already worsened the state of food insecurity and malnutrition among struggling families.

Through the Tajikistan Emergency COVID-19 Project, IDA is financing cash transfers. The one-time assistance of 500 somoni (roughly $50) targets low-income families with young children under the age of three, with the goal of offsetting the impacts of the pandemic, such as increased prices and limited income opportunities. In partnership with UNICEF, the project raises awareness about good nutrition and parenting practices.

Children under the age of three are the most vulnerable to the lifelong consequences of malnutrition, which negatively affects their physical and cognitive growth. Therefore, it is critical to target assistance to children in that age group in vulnerable families.

— Oleksiy Sluchynsky, Senior Economist at the World Bank.

Mahina’s family is one of many impacted by the pandemic and lockdown. Her husband is a construction worker, but he was not able to work after many construction projects were suspended. The cash assistance Mahina received enabled her to buy food and medications for her one-year-old daughter Sarvinoz, who was recovering from surgery.

“The assistance was very important and timely for us. Sarvinoz has fully recovered and is healthy now,” says her mother.

Barfiyoj Shoimardonova, a 61-year-old resident of Shahrinav District who lives with her sons and their families, also received this cash support. Her husband, one son, and a grandson live with disabilities. She has five grandkids: the eldest is seven and the youngest just turned one. Barfiyoj’s eldest son works in Russia and is the main breadwinner in the family, but lately he has not been able to send much money because of the quarantine measures there.

“Since Russia was put on quarantine, remittance money has dropped. We have suffered. But thanks to the assistance, we bought wheat flour, helped the kids, fed them, and took care of them,” says Barfiyoj.

The emergency cash payments proved that the social protection system in Tajikistan is effective, even in the face of a shock like COVID-19. With IDA’s support, the model will now be expanded to deliver cash transfers to more groups impacted by the pandemic.
Strengthening Schools in Tonga for a Brighter and More Resilient Future

The Kingdom of Tonga, in the South Pacific, is known as the ‘Friendly Islands’ because of its rich culture and generous, warm-hearted people. Unfortunately, it is also known for being the country with the third highest risk for disasters in the world, given its extremely high exposure to cyclones, earthquakes, flooding, and the impacts of sea level rise. When disasters—now exacerbated by the effects of climate change—strike, the impacts can be devastating and widespread, affecting families’ livelihoods, healthcare, and education.

In February 2018, Tonga was hit by Category Four Tropical Cyclone Gita, which brought with it 220 kilometer-an-hour winds. The impact of the cyclone was massive, flattening homes and buildings, destroying schools, churches, and wiping out farms and livestock, leaving thousands of families’ livelihoods in tatters.

IDA’s Crisis Response Window was able to rapidly deliver emergency funds to assist Cyclone Gita disaster response and recovery initiatives. Further assistance was also made available through the Pacific Resilience Program (PREP), funded by IDA and the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. PREP seeks to strengthen Tonga’s resilience to natural disasters and climate change. The program began in 2015, but following the impacts of Cyclone Gita, the project received additional funding to support the reconstruction of schools—109 of Tonga’s 150 schools, home to 23,000 students, were impacted by the cyclone. This work has seen repairs and rebuilds of schools to higher resilience standards, to better defend them from future storms, cyclones and earthquakes.

“Cyclone Gita greatly affected our classrooms and we felt hopeless, but words cannot express how happy and appreciative we are for the blessing that we receive today. I believe that these new classrooms will improve the College’s performance, one hundred percent,” says Siu Pulu Palu, a teacher at Mo’unga ‘Olive College, in the far east of Tonga’s main island of Tongatapu.

“A good classroom atmosphere and a classroom that is safe and has better equipment, like having a whiteboard, will encourage students to do well in their studies. It will attract more students in the future as well. The students cannot wait to enter their new classrooms, in stronger schools and into brighter futures.”

Ensuring that Tongan students get back to safe and conducive learning spaces, and that these spaces are available to students for years to come, is a key component of a green and resilient future. By the end of 2020, more than 9,000 students—around 40 percent of Tonga’s primary and secondary school students—had benefited from these IDA-supported efforts.

Key Numbers

- 9,000 students—around 40 percent of Tonga’s primary and secondary school students—benefited from the repair of schools
- 109 of Tonga’s 150 schools were strengthened against future natural disasters

Siu Pulu Palu, teacher at Mo’unga ‘Olive College.
Restoring Critical Services in Yemen

Years of conflict in Yemen have taken a heavy toll on the country’s institutions and infrastructure. Fighting has destroyed buildings, roads, and bridges, and made essentials like water, fuel, and oxygen extremely scarce. The government’s ability to deliver critical services have been severely impaired. This is true in the power sector, where over 85 percent of facilities have ceased to function, and of the healthcare system, where only half of the country’s health facilities are open.

The Emergency Electricity Access Project is helping to turn the lights back on where households have been forced into darkness. Working with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), and through supervised microfinance institutions (MFIs), IDA is financing high-quality, small-scale solar solutions. The project’s collaboration with MFIs is establishing solar microfinance structures in rural and peri-urban areas to make the solar market more inclusive, sustainable, and scalable in the long-term.

Hamama is one of the people who have benefitted from the program. Her family lives in an isolated and mountainous part of the country. While she and her family could shelter inside from the sun during the day, as the sun set, it became impossible to do chores or stay in the house safely.

"Now I can use the bathroom or kitchen safely at night, and even praying is easier in the light," she says.

The project has also restored electricity supply to critical services facilities, such as clinics and hospitals. At the Al-Salam Hospital, for example, power cuts from the main electrical grid and the high cost of diesel had severely hampered the ability to care for patients. Today, thanks to the installation of solar power, the hospital is open 24 hours a day.

The health center in the Horour-Dhamar Governorate was similarly affected by power outages, forcing residents to travel great distances to seek medical attention. But with support from the project, access to electricity has returned.

"Vaccinations and lab work are now accessible to us," says Ghawar Al-Haj, who lives in Horour.

Meanwhile, the Yemen COVID-19 Response Project builds on earlier and existing IDA-supported projects that aim to bolster the country’s healthcare system. In partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO), the project quickly mobilized teams to support surveillance and rapid response capacities. These efforts leveraged the 333 rapid response teams that were already in operation in Yemen, strengthening their ability to incorporate COVID-19 into their disease surveillance activities. Additional teams focused solely on COVID-19 were deployed in 84 priority districts.

Steps were also taken to strengthen laboratories and equip isolation units to treat severe cases of COVID-19 in coordination with national health authorities. This included procurement of additional lab equipment, such as diagnostic kits. Thirty-seven isolation units were established across the country to treat severe cases of COVID-19. The WHO also rehabilitated 19 isolation units to improve water, sanitation, hygiene, and ventilation infrastructures, and trained 1,473 healthcare workers on Infection Prevention and Control protocols based on WHO guidelines.

As these efforts continue, the project is now also playing a significant role in deploying vaccines through the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) Facility. The goal is to continue to repair and strengthen Yemen’s healthcare system, while also addressing the specific needs of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Key Numbers**

- 1,473 healthcare workers have been trained
- Electricity supply has been restored to clinics and hospitals

For a country where 20 million people—almost 80 percent of the population—depend entirely on aid to survive, the absence of adequate essential services is devastating. The burden of the global COVID-19 pandemic had the potential to push these exhausted systems to their breaking point. Together with partners, IDA is helping to provide critical resources and ensure that these essential services continue to support the people of Yemen.

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Empowering Rural Women in Zambia to Move out of Poverty

For those living in rural Zambia, poverty rates were stubbornly high, impacting as much as 78 percent of the population and disproportionately affecting adolescent girls and women. Although the country had achieved close to universal access to primary education, secondary school coverage was falling and included only about 40 percent of school-aged children.

Key Numbers

- 75,000 women from extremely poor households received livelihoods packages
- 28,000 girls from poor households have received tuition for secondary school

National data confirmed that investments in human capital development—health, education, and social protection for the poorest and most vulnerable households—were critical to national economic growth. According to national household data and World Bank analyses, when girls went to secondary school, they earned almost 100 percent more than their peers who did not. And when women worked outside of agriculture, their earnings increased by roughly 35 percent.

Based on this knowledge, Zambia made it a priority to help more girls and women reach their potential. With support from IDA, the Girls’ Education and Women’s Empowerment and Livelihoods (GEWEL) Program was created. The project works to increase access to livelihood support and access to secondary education for disadvantaged adolescent girls in extremely poor households in selected districts.

The GEWEL program targets women and girls at two critical points in life. First, by providing secondary school tuition, the program is helping adolescent girls transition successfully from primary to secondary school. These interventions have helped to increase education outcomes and delay early marriage and pregnancy. Second, GEWEL provides subsistence to sustainable livelihoods through skills training, grants, savings support, and mentorship to help women turn piecemeal work into viable microenterprises.

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For Karen Mwamba, a 45-year-old mother of three, this intervention was life-changing.

I got married when I was 17 years old, and like most men in the village, my husband was a peasant farmer. We survived from the little that we grew on our small piece of land. My husband and I were content with the kind of life we lived until we started having children. We had no means of feeding or paying their school fees.

—Karen Mwamba, a 45-year-old mother of three

With the productive grant she received from the GEWEL program, Ms. Mwamba bought three goats and used the remainder of the money to buy rice. She began selling rice in her rural community and has been able to successfully improve the quality of life for her family.

To date, the GEWEL program has supported more than 28,000 girls from poor households by covering their secondary school costs. In addition, 75,000 women from extremely poor households in 51 districts across all 10 provinces of the country have received livelihoods packages similar to Ms. Mwamba’s, consisting of life and business skills training, a productive grant equivalent to $225, mentorship, and support to form savings groups.