

NEWS RELEASE

World Bank Board Approves Action Plan for Democratic Republic of Congo Inspection Panel Case

WASHINGTON, September 11, 2018 – The World Bank’s Board of Executive Directors has considered the Inspection Panel’s [investigation](#) of the Second Additional Financing for the Democratic Republic of Congo’s (DRC) High-Priority Roads Reopening and Maintenance Project (ProRoutes) and today approved the Management Action Plan presented in the [Management Response](#).

The ProRoutes Second Additional Financing, approved by the Board on February 2016, seeks to create economic opportunity and reduce poverty by bringing connectivity to one of the poorest and most conflict-ridden areas in the world. Works included the reopening of the Bukavu-Goma national road in eastern Congo, between Sake-Kavumu, a 146-kilometer-long section.

On September 13, 2017, the Inspection Panel registered a Request for Inspection submitted by community members living in Goma and its vicinity. The Requesters alleged harm from the project’s Bukavu-Goma road works, with a focus on livelihood impacts, gender-based and other physical violence to the community, labor issues, and impacts on indigenous peoples.

The Panel’s investigation found severe harm to communities along the road, including cases of gender-based violence (GBV) and the taking of construction materials by the contractor from quarries by force and without compensation. As the project was implemented in a conflict-affected area, security forces were engaged by the contractor, resulting in some of the violence against local communities. The Panel also found that the Bank did not comply with several of its policies and procedures related to environmental and social assessment, consultation and disclosure of information, involuntary resettlement, health and safety, grievance redress and supervision. The Panel further found project preparation, identification of risks and mitigation measures to be inadequate.

Management submitted its initial Response on June 14, 2018. The Board considered the Panel’s Investigation Report on July 17, 2018, and asked Bank Management to update its Response and proposed Action Plan to fully reflect the steps it has taken and planned to take to address the Panel’s findings. Management submitted its revised Response on August 27, 2018, and the Board approved the updated Action Plan today.

“We take the findings of this investigation very seriously and accept full responsibility to correct weaknesses in our project appraisal and supervision. Our duty to serve with diligence is particularly important when we operate in some of the world’s most fragile and conflict-affected places,” said **Kristalina Georgieva, Chief Executive Officer of the World Bank**. *“From the moment we learned of these allegations, we have taken corrective action, and we commit to do better to live up to our mission of protecting and improving the lives of the most vulnerable people in all of the countries where we work.”*

“The Panel recognizes the critical importance of the project, but stresses the need for meaningful redress of the harms experienced by community members along the road,” said **Gonzalo Castro de la Mata, Chairman of the Inspection Panel**. *“The Panel highlights the required involvement of affected*

communities through ongoing consultations, and the need for strengthening systems and addressing institutional shortcomings, especially as they relate to supervision in countries affected by fragility, conflict and violence. The Panel notes that managing GBV risks in infrastructure projects remains an area of necessary learning and action for the Bank.”

Following the Panel’s findings, Bank management acted to address the alleged harm and additional issues and concerns identified by the Bank. Disbursements for all civil works were suspended to allow authorities and the Bank to apply corrective measures. The Bank is working with the Government of DRC to put in place measures to help prevent and address Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), and to engage nongovernmental organizations to support survivors of SGBV, regardless of an established connection to the project, ensuring access to comprehensive, expert and caring support under international best-practice principles of privacy and protection.

An existing World Bank-financed SGBV project, the [Great Lakes Emergency SGBV & Women’s Health project](#), is providing medical, psychosocial, legal and socioeconomic support to survivors in the project area, and the new [Gender Based Violence Prevention and Response Project](#), approved on August 30, 2018, will expand the coverage of these services to additional parts of DRC. The two GBV projects will be able to continue to provide support where needed, beyond the ProRoutes Project closing date. Likewise, livelihood impacts are being compensated by the authorities, and water supply interruptions are being resolved.

The World Bank Management’s Action Plan commits to the supporting the Government of DRC in its implementation of a series of measures, including:

- Providing robust support to SGBV survivors and putting in place measures to prevent future incidents of SGBV.
- Strengthening project Grievance Redress Mechanisms (GRMs), ensuring the effective operation of SGBV-dedicated GRMs, and processing of complaints received by these mechanisms.
- Training ProRoutes contractors’ workers and security personnel on SGBV prevention/humanitarian law.
- Continued monitoring of the risk of retaliation so that any concern regarding the safety of victims, complainants or witnesses can be immediately raised with the DRC authorities.
- Restoration of ProRoutes quarries and borrow pits, and compensation for losses.
- Undertaking of a compliance audit to make sure that water supply interrupted by the project in the communities has been fully restored.
- Helping enhance the institutional capacity of all stakeholders to manage preventive and remedial actions – from project contractors and SGBV service providers to provincial authorities and national institutions.

In addition, the Bank is implementing the following measures:

- Enhancing supervision for ProRoutes roads, including through the contracting of specialized NGOs.
- Identifying high-risk operations for SGBV in the Bank’s DRC portfolio and improving their risk mitigation measures.
- Issuing good practice notes for staff on managing SGBV and the Use of Security Forces in projects.

The Bank has received a commitment from the DRC Government that priority will be given to ensuring all the measures are fully implemented. World Bank management will report back to the Board within six months on progress in implementation of the Action Plan.

The Board confirmed the Panel's important role in promoting accountability at the Bank and its contribution to redressing harm to affected communities and providing valuable opportunities for institutional learning to prevent problems from recurring.

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