



Inclusive Digitalization in Eastern and Southern Africa Project

(IDEA)

Environmental and Social Quarterly Progress Report

October – December 2025

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ASCENT:	Accelerating Sustainable & Clean Energy Access Transformation
COMESA:	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
ESF:	Environmental and Social Framework
ESCP:	Environmental and Social Commitment Plan
ESHS:	Environment, Social, Health and Safety
E&S:	Environment and Social
ESS:	Environmental and Social Safeguards
GRM:	Grievance Redress Mechanism
IDA:	International Development Association
IDEA	Inclusive Digitalization in Eastern and Southern Africa
LMP:	Labor Management Plan
KPIs:	Key Performance Indicators
MPA:	Multiphase Programmatic Approach
PIU:	Project Implementation Unit
PSC :	Project Steering Committee (IDEA)
SEP:	Stakeholder Engagement Plan
SEA/SH:	Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
WB:	World Bank

1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive Digitalization in Eastern & Southern Africa (IDEA) is a regional Multiphase Programmatic Approach (MPA) for Eastern and Southern Africa (AFE), funded by the World Bank. It includes three focus areas of : (i) building the foundations for affordable and quality broadband connectivity, data hosting capability, enabling access to digital technology and digital services including (ii) interoperable and safe data platforms and trusted online transactions at national and regional level; (iii) advancing high-impact digitally-enabled applications in priority sectors (with an initial focus on social protection and financial services), digital skills and competencies to increase productive digital usage and enhance economic and social activities. It will be implemented through country-specific programs and regional platforms. Each participating country will sign a separate agreement with the World Bank and will have its own funds for the program's implementation. The regional platforms are implemented by COMESA and the World Bank. This quarterly report captures progress on the implementation of environmental and social safeguards activities carried out by COMESA under the regional platforms for the period October – December 2025.

1.1 Basic Project Data

Table 1 gives a summary of the basic data for the Project and financing sources.

Table 1: Basic Data for the Project

Project Title	Inclusive Digitalization in Eastern and Southern Africa Project using the Multiphase Programmatic Approach (P502532)
Executing Agency	COMESA
Financing Sources	IBRD/ International Development Association (IDA)
Expected completion Date	31 October 2032

COMESA will implement a \$ 10 million regional platform consisting of five components as follows:

Component 1: Regional Harmonization and Planning Platform: This component aims to enhance the enabling environment for regional digital market development and integration and create a platform to inform and mobilize investments for regional digital infrastructure. Activities under this component include:

Component 2: Regional Knowledge and Capacity Building: This component aims to support holistic knowledge transfer throughout the program cycle, to build capacity and support institutional strengthening for participating countries in a sustainable manner and to increase the efficiency and impact of the program activities by leveraging regional synergies between countries.

Component 3: Regional Project Coordination and Management: This component will set up the IDEA's regional Program Coordination Unit (PCU) at COMESA. Ensures efficient and coordinated implementation of the IDEA Program at the regional level.

Table 2 shows the financial architecture of the COMESA platform.

Table 2: Financial Architecture - COMESA IDEA Platform

Component (ID)	Cost (USD)
Regional Harmonization and Planning Platform.	4 100 000.00
Regional Knowledge and Capacity Building	2 400 000.00
Regional Project Coordination Management	3 500 000.00
Total	10 000 000.00

1.2 Project E&S Category and Information Disclosure

The overall project E&S category was rated as **Moderately Satisfactory**. The Environmental and Social (E&S) documents prepared and disclosed on the COMESA IDEA project website are the Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP) and Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)

1.3 Status on ESCP Implementation

Table 3 summarizes progress on activities implemented during the reporting period in accordance with the 2025 work plan.

Table 3: Implementation of E&S activities in Annual Work Plan

	Activity	Status (Pending initiation, in progress, finalized)	Comments (% of achievement for activity)
1	Stakeholder Engagement	Updating of the stakeholder engagement plan	100%
		Development of communication strategy completed. Ready for implementation	100%
2	Development of IDEA Website and Digital Communication	In progress: Concept Note and template developed Work in progress with assistance of COMESA IT Division.	60%
3	Finalization of the Grievance Redress Mechanism Manual	In progress: The Manual was developed, internally approved, and shared with the bank. Following receipt of the bank's feedback, it was updated and re-shared.	90%

	Activity	Status (Pending initiation, in progress, finalized)	Comments (% of achievement for activity)
4	Finalization of the Labour Management Procedure	In progress -The LMP was developed, internally approved, and shared with the bank. Following receipt of the bank's feedback, it was updated and re-shared	90%

1.4 Applicable WB Operational Safeguards Standards

Table 4 shows the ESS operational standards triggered under the Project.

Table 4: ESS standards triggered by the COMESA-IDEA Programme

Operational Standard #	Safeguard Details	Applicable to IDEA	
		Triggered (Yes/No)	Justification
ESS 1	Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts	Yes	COMESA is obligated to assess, manage and monitor environmental and social risks and impacts associated with its activities to achieve environmental and social outcomes consistent with the WB ESF
ESS 2	Labor and Working Conditions	Yes	COMESA recruited direct workers under the PIU and others are expected to be engaged as contracted workers to provide consultancy services under the Project. COMESA is expected to implement the LMP in a manner consistent with the WB ESF
ESS 10	Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure	Yes	COMESA activities under the IDEA programme can impact on different stakeholder groups and individuals. A Stakeholder Engagement Plan must be implemented to comply with the requirements of the WB ESF.

1.5 Main E&S KPIs of the Project

Table 5 gives a summary of the main reporting points in line with the E&S Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) of the Project.

Table 5: E&S KPI reporting points

S/N	Main E&S KPI Reporting Points	Status
1.	E&S Staffing	The E & S IDEA staffing comprises three experts. Two of the experts are from the COMESA ASCENT PIU responsible for

S/N	Main E&S KPI Reporting Points	Status
		implementing the ESCP of the Project. These include the Environmental Specialist; Social Safeguards Specialist and the third one is the Stakeholder Engagement & Communication Expert from the IDEA project.
2.	Contractor Staffing	No contractor(s) were recruited under the Project. Hence, no contractor E&S implementation reports were generated
3.	E&S Reporting	The Project submits E&S quarterly reports to the Bank. This is the fourth quarterly report for 2025.
4.	Physical missions on E&S related activities	No physical missions were undertaken during the reporting period
5.	Grievances/Complaints	Zero (0) complaints were received
6.	Incidents and Accidents	Zero (0) incidents or accidents were reported
7.	Cumulative expenditure on ESCP implementation as Percentage of the total annual budget	Zero Cumulative expenditure
8.	Overall E&S Performance	E&S performance of the project is Moderately satisfactory

1.6 Changes to the E&S risks during the reporting period

No new risks or impacts were recorded. Hence, the project retained the “Moderately satisfactory” E&S risk category. The project will continue to monitor environmental and social risks, which include health and safety, gender-based violence (GBV), sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH), working conditions, etc.

2. IDEA PROGRESS

2.1 IDEA First Phase Operation

The first phase of the MPA will include four operations for COMESA, DRC, Angola, and Malawi. The rationale for starting the IDEA MPA with COMESA is to ensure that an appropriate Regional Economic Community (REC) can lead regional coordination of IDEA and create key foundations and a mechanism for learning for regional implementation.

2.2 Project Objective of the COMESA Component

The overall objective of the COMESA operation is to enhance the enabling environment for expanding inclusive internet access and usage across the region.

2.3 Components with E&S Implications

Project components under the COMESA-IDEA programme which have the potential to generate environmental and social risks are the Regional Harmonization and Planning Platform (Component 1) and the Regional Knowledge and Capacity Building (Component 2).

2.4 Progress on key Project activities

The COMESA PCU has made steady progress on the World Bank IDEA Project, which was launched in April 2025 after being approved in June 2024. Key highlights and progress for 2025 include the following:

- a) The 2nd IDEA Project Steering Committee was successfully held virtually on 1st December 2025 during which the AWP & B for 2026 was approved and is now ready for implementation.
- b) The Concept Note for the development and establishment of the IDEA website was prepared. The website is currently being developed with support from the IT Division. A template was developed to capture information for upload to the website. During the period under review, content development commenced and remains ongoing.
- c) Advancing implementation of the project's various components which include:
 - i. Launching and evaluating tenders for AI and Digital Financial Inclusion activities under Component 1 of the Project,
 - ii. Procuring staff and related equipment for the PCU under Component 3.
 - iii. Developing ToRs for the Least Cost Model under Component 2 of the Project.
 - iv. Procuring communication, visibility and promotional material for the Project under Component 3 of the Project.
- d) Updating the IDEA Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP).
- e) Development of the IDEA Communication and Visibility Plan
- f) Finalise on the development of the IDEA GRM and LMP.

3. COMPLIANCE WITH THE FINANCING AGREEMENT

3.1 Status of compliance with the ESCP

Table 6 provides the status of compliance with the ESCP.

Table 6: Compliance with the ESCP

Instrument or Covenant	Compliance Type	Requirements or Conditions of Covenant	Status of compliance
Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP)	Regular Reporting	Prepare and submit to the Bank quarterly monitoring reports on the environmental, social, health and safety (ESHS) performance of the Project, including but	Compliant: The Project submits E&S implementation progress reports to the Bank on a quarterly basis. This report is the fourth E&S performance report

Instrument or Covenant	Compliance Type	Requirements or Conditions of Covenant	Status of compliance
		not limited to the implementation of the ESCP	submitted to the Bank in 2025. The PCU will ensure that the quarterly reports are consistently submitted to the Bank within agreed timeframes
ESCP	Incidents and Accidents	Notify the Association no later than 48 hours after learning of the incident or accident and no later than 24 hours after any severe incident/fatal accident, including SEA/SH incidents	Compliant: No incidents or accidents were reported during the reporting period
ESCP	Consulting Firms Monthly Reports	Submit the contractor monthly reports to the Bank upon request and as annexes to the reports to be submitted under action A above.	Compliant: No contractor was recruited during the reporting period
ESCP	Organisational Structure	Recruit and maintain an environmental expert with OHS expertise, a social expert, and a stakeholder engagement/communication expert and train/sensitize them on the World Bank's ESF/ESSs requirements Maintain project implementation.	Compliant: There was no change in the organizational structure. The COMESA IDEA PIU recruited the Stakeholder Engagement and Communication Expert. The Environmental Specialist and Social Safeguards Specialist are from ASCENT PIU. These experts

Instrument or Covenant	Compliance Type	Requirements or Conditions of Covenant	Status of compliance
			constitute the E&S team
ESCP	Organisational Structure	Ensure that the consultancy, studies capacity building, training, and any other technical assistance activities under the Project are carried out in accordance with terms of reference that are consistent with the ESSs	In progress: E &S team will ensure activities are carried out in TORs that are consistent with ESS
ESCP	Environmental and Social Instruments	Prepare, disclose, adopt, and implement the ESCP, SEP and LMP in a form and substance acceptable to the Bank	Compliant: ESCP, SEP are disclosed on the COMESA website, and are being implemented
ESCP	Technical Assistance	Ensure that the consultancy, studies (including feasibility studies, if applicable), capacity building, training, and any other technical assistance activities under the Project are carried out in accordance with terms of reference acceptable to the Bank, that are consistent with the ESSs	In Progress: PIU will review outputs of technical studies including feasibility study reports where applicable.

Instrument or Covenant	Compliance Type	Requirements or Conditions of Covenant	Status of compliance
ESCP	Labor Management Procedures	Adopt and implement the Labor Management Procedures (LMP) for the Project,	In Progress: Aspects of the LMP will be incorporated in consultancy procurement ToRs and contracts with consultants. The IDEA LMP was developed and submitted to the Bank for approval.
ESCP	Grievance Redress Mechanism	Establish and operationalise the Grievance Redress Mechanism prior to engaging Project workers and thereafter maintain it throughout Project implementation.	Partially Compliant: The COMESA IDEA PCU updated the project GRM to ensure it is sensitive to the SEA/SH. In addition, the workplace GRM will be developed. The developed GRM was submitted to the Bank for approval during the period under review.
ESCP	Stakeholder Engagement	Implement the IDEA Stakeholder Engagement Plan	Compliant: IDEA Stakeholder Engagement Activities are being implemented
ESCP	Training and Capacity Support	Undertaking training of project workers in line with the provisions of the ESF	Compliant: no training done this quarter.

3.2 Implementation of the Grievance Redress Mechanism

The Project did not receive any grievance from the stakeholders as indicated in Table 7.

Table 7: Details of the grievances/complaints from the stakeholders

Description of issues/complaints received during the reporting period	Date of receipt (DD-MM-Yr)	Description of resolution	Status of issues/complaints
No grievance received	N/A	N/A	N/A

3.3 Implementation of the IDEA Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Table 8 shows stakeholder engagement activities undertaken during the reporting period.

Table 8: Activities in implementing the Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Activities implemented during the reporting period	Dates and venues of engagement activities	Engagement Method	Purpose of the Meeting	Categories of stakeholders involved in the engagement process
The IDEA 2nd Project Steering Committee Meeting (PSC)	was held on 1st December, 2025	Virtual	To Sensitize key stakeholders on the IDEA Project Progress, Review and approve the 2026 AWP&B, Review and approve the TORs of the proposed TWG.	PCU Member states

3.4 E&S risks from unplanned and emergency situations

No risks from unplanned or emergency situations were reported

4. CAPACITY BUILDING & SENSITISATION ACTIVITIES

4.1 Capacity and Sensitization Activities

As part of efforts to strengthen institutional capacity and sensitization of IDEA activities, the IDEA PCU organized the 2nd IDEA Project Steering Committee Meeting (PSC) on 1st December 2025 with the objective to Sensitize key stakeholders on the IDEA Project Progress, review and approve the 2026 AWP&B, and review and approve the TORs of the proposed TWG. The following decisions with impact on capacity development and sensitization came out:

- a) Implementing Member States and the COMESA PCU should develop intervention strategies to expedite implementation of activities in their 2026 Work Plans.
- b) Coordination among all stakeholders should be enhanced.
- c) The World Bank should be engaged to provide technical expertise in key operational areas for both the COMESA IDEA PCU and implementing Member States; and
- d) Dissemination and sensitization of programme activities and benefits should be strengthened at both COMESA and Member State levels.

5. CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

5.1 Overall Self-rating on E&S Performance

The E&S performance of the Project during the reporting period is moderately satisfactory.

5.2 Key activities planned for the Next Quarter

Item Code	Action Item	Objectives	Timeline
1	Finalize the GRM manual and ensure its operationalization	To ensure effective management of grievances and accountability.	February 2026

Item Code	Action Item	Objectives	Timeline
2	Finalize the LMP	To ensure fair, safe, and lawful management of project workers, with effective grievance resolution throughout project implementation	February 2026
3	Finalize on the IDEA Project website.	To promote, publicize and make IDEA project visible among the key stakeholders	30 March 2026
4	Develop and implement Stakeholder Engagement Plans (SEPs) for IDEA assignments (ie AI and DI activities)	To promote effective and meaningful stakeholder engagement in AI and DI activities.	30 March 2026
5	Establish and roll out the Worker Grievance GRM and LMP for the IDEA project.	To establish a formal complaint process that project staff will use when a project activity negatively impact them	30 March 2026
6	Translation, design and disclosure of GRM communication materials on the website	To ensure transparency and accessibility for all stakeholders	30 March 2026
7	Implement the approved Communication and Visibility Plan for IDEA	To sharpen the communication tool of the IDEA Project	30 March 2026