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REVIEW OF THE PILOT PHASE OF THE IDB'S NEW RECOMMENDATION TRACKING SYSTEM

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List of Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CED	Central Evaluation Department
CPE	Country Program Evaluation
ECG	Evaluation Cooperation Group
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IED	Independent Evaluation Department of the Asian Development Bank
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office of the International Monetary Fund
ITE	Information Technology Department
MAR	Management Action Record of the World Bank
MDBs	Multilateral Development Banks
OECD/DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OVE	Office of Evaluation and Oversight
PC	Programming Committee of the IDB
PEC	Policy and Development Effectiveness Committee of the IDB
ReTS	Evaluation Recommendation Tracking System
SEC	Office of the Secretary
SMO	Strategy Monitoring Division
SPD	Office of Strategic Planning and Development Effectiveness

Table of Contents

I.	Introduction and Recommendations.....	3
II.	Review Approach.....	6
III.	The ReTS system and the Board-approved ReTS protocol.....	10
IV.	Analysis of the Process - Steps and Content	15
V.	The Learning Objective of the ReTS	30
VI.	Conclusion and Recommendations	31
	References.....	35
	Annex A – Terms of References.....	36
	Annex B – Methodological Approach	38
	Annex C –User Survey Questionnaire.....	44
	Annex D – Review Matrix.....	49
	Annex E – Review of internal document related to the ReTS for sample evaluations.....	50
	Annex F - Individuals Interviewed	52

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Introduction and Recommendations

1. Since the establishment of the Office of Evaluation and Oversight (OVE) in 1999, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has made significant strides in meeting the good practice standards established by the Evaluation Co-operation Group (ECG) that represents the evaluation arms of the major multilateral development banks (MDBs). This was a central finding of the Independent Review Panel on Evaluation at the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB, 2011). At the same time, the Panel concluded that “because feedback and learning loops are weak, the IDB evaluation system is not achieving its goal of contributing to the improvement of development results.”
2. The panel noted the absence of a tracking system for recommendations from evaluations and included in its recommendations the development of such a system as a matter of urgency to improve the follow-up to recommendations. The proposed objectives for such a system focused on the panel’s findings of the need for a deeper interaction between management and OVE, as well as a stronger accountability tool for the implementation of recommendations endorsed by the IDB’s Board.
3. Management and OVE started working on the Recommendation Tracking System (ReTS) system in 2012. The system was launched in March of 2013. Shortly thereafter, the protocol that would guide the operation of the system and the process for the tracking of evaluations recommendations was developed. By mid-2013, Management and OVE presented to the Board of Executive Directors a protocol for the implementation of a new evaluation tracking system.¹ The protocol describes its scope as being comprehensive by “encompassing all major steps related to the issuance of recommendations, validation, and reporting on implementation status by OVE, as well as the preparation of both Management’s response and their corresponding action plans and subsequent updating.” It is important to recognize that the protocol makes a clear distinction between the *process* and the *system*.
4. The protocol included a provision to conduct a joint review of the pilot phase to assess whether the system is an effective mechanism for ensuring that OVE’s recommendations are implemented, and to what extent the system and the protocol are effectively promoting greater management accountability and encourage the application of lessons learned. This review fulfills the requirement for a joint review associated with the Board approval of the Protocol for Implementation of the Recommendation Tracking System (ReTS).
5. The analysis conducted in this review points to the continued relevance of the recommendations from the external review, specifically the continued need to work on strengthening the accountability and the learning aspects from evaluations. However, much progress has been made that can provide the basis for significant improvements in the future.

¹ The Protocol was approved in its final form by the Committee of the Whole on August 7, 2013 (CGA 13/22 – DEA 12/22).

These steps are directed at all concerned parties – OVE, Management, as well as the Board of Executive Directors.

6. The pilot phase has revealed the complexity of *system* aspects of the ReTS, as well as a number of *process* steps that prevent greater accountability and learning. The recommendations contained in this report are aimed at simplifying the follow-up process, while at the same time increasing the transparency. Together, the expectation is that Board Committees will benefit by being able to focus on areas of evaluation recommendations where only the institution's governing structure can provide the necessary guidance. At the same time, the focus in following up on recommendations from OVE evaluations should remain at a broad enough basis to ensure that actions are not taken out of context, and can therefore form useful inputs into the institutional learning cycle.

7. The specific recommendations emerging from the analysis in this review are:

- ***Strengthening accountability of the Lead Department in the follow-up to OVE recommendations;***
 - By asking the Management's Evaluation and Audit Committee² to identify lead departments for engaging with OVE already at the stage when OVE's work program is discussed and approved. Lead departments are assigned on the basis of the evaluation as a whole.
 - Anchoring the preparation of the response and draft action plan with the assigned lead department. The lead department is responsible for providing an institutional response and can therefore seek the input from other departments as needed. Lead departments remain at the evaluation level and are not sub-divided by individual recommendations. Final approval of action plans rests with a representative of senior management, such as a counselor in the office of the Executive Vice President.
 - Similarly, only action plans and implementation reports approved by the lead department will be posted in the ReTS system and accessible across the institution, including Board members.

² The Evaluation and Audit Committee was conceived in the early 1990s to provide Senior Management with systematic follow-up on evaluation recommendations along with the necessary support to, among other duties, ensure compliance with and effective implementation of the recommendations stemming from evaluations. The Committee has lost its influence following the Realignment (2007) and its future role is currently being revisited.

- ***Ensuring greater clarity around the intent of the Board in endorsing (or not) the recommendations and approving their implementation;***
 - OVE and Management – specifically the designated lead department and a permanent designated contact point for OVE in management (which can be the Office of Strategic Planning and Development Effectiveness), discuss recommendations at the draft stage to eliminate ambiguities and separate as needed areas of agreement from areas of disagreement. The category of ‘partially agree’ should in practice be eliminated.
 - Committee Chairs, based on an assessment of views by Committee members, can approve the implementation of the recommendation, but set a timeframe for management to elaborate a more detailed Action Plan based on the committee discussion and submit it to the committee for information. The timeframe for the elaboration of the Action Plan may in those cases extend beyond the regular 90 days. Committee members can request further discussions with management if needed.
 - Management finalizes the management response to the evaluation reflecting the outcomes of the committee discussion, particularly ensuring that the chairperson’s recommendations regarding the implementation of OVE recommendations are consistent with the final management response. The final management response³ should be made available to the committee Chair and OVE by the time the Committee of the Whole discussion of the evaluation and the Chairperson’s report is scheduled.
 - OVE discloses its evaluations as soon as the committee chairperson’s report is available and the Committee of the Whole has discussed the recommendations. OVE discloses the evaluation report either together with the chairperson’s report and the final management response, or ensures that those documents are linked to the disclosed report. In any case, OVE should have the freedom to disclose its evaluation following a 20 working day period after the committee discussion of the evaluation report.
- ***Strengthening the connection with the institutional learning cycle;***
 - Agreement between OVE and Management on the criteria for assessing implementation progress, which may include a category for evidence of institutional learning and adaptability in response to emerging evidence. This should be an opportunity for management to keep the implementation focused on

³ The final response should be consistent with management oral representation at the Committee. It should acknowledge the acceptance of the Chairperson’s recommendations regarding the implementation of recommendations to the extent that they differ from the initial management response.

meaningful change in line with evolving country and other external circumstances.

- Focusing the implementation updates on the institutional response in the form of a narrative with substantiating evidence included in the ReTS, based on agreed assessment criteria with OVE.
- Use OVE's Annual Report and the institutional strategic planning cycle to retain and use evidence in the ReTS system on recurrent issues that have emerged from OVE evaluations. This should allow OVE to contribute evaluative evidence to important longer-term institutional issues.

8. This should allow OVE to contribute evaluative evidence to important longer-term institutional issues. Revamping the ReTS process and system requires of course the support from the IDB's Board, as it is an essential tool for institutional oversight. Moreover, it requires a high-level champion within Management and OVE to work out many of the details that can only be derived from a mutual understanding. This review, while highlighting the issues and making recommendations, can in those areas only offer some guiding principles that should be part of any agreement and roll-out of an updated process. In that sense, the author would strongly urge to allow for sufficient time to conclude a meaningful dialogue and roll-out process. The current cycle, i.e., the updating of the ReTS in the fall and OVE's Annual Report in early 2016 should therefore be seen as a transition period and not attempt to make an assessment, based on current data in the ReTS system, of the implementation of evaluation recommendations.

I. Review Approach

9. In line with the protocol, this review was guided by a joint working group comprised of staff from OVE and the Office of Strategic Planning and Development Effectiveness (SPD).⁴ In order to address the accountability and learning objectives, and develop a better understanding of the dynamics between the ReTS *process* and *system*, significant care was taken in developing and agreeing on a sound methodological approach to the review.⁵ This included developing a shared understanding of the evaluation reports that were conducted within the timeframe of the pilot phase, the purposeful sampling of the evaluations for in-depth review, and the development of a review matrix that followed in its questions the sequence of the Board approved protocol. In addition, a survey among users of the ReTS system, including staff who were instrumental in its development, was conducted.

10. Furthermore, the steps elaborated in the protocol were to be examined from three inter-related perspectives, namely:

- Whether each step was followed as envisaged in the protocol;

⁴ Members of the working group included Ana Maria Linares and Miguel Soldano (both from OVE), as well as Clotilde Charlot and Sylvia Boulos (both from SPD).

⁵ A full description of the methodological approach is included as Annex B.

- Whether the information available in the ReTS is sufficient and appropriate to allow the subsequent steps to be carried out with consistency and confidence;
- Whether the understanding of each user of the ReTS in their respective roles is consistent with the protocol and an effective use of the ReTS.
- The review also considered the role of the ReTS in promoting a virtuous learning cycle from evaluation, and in that light the governance of the management of the ReTS and the role of OVE's Annual Report.

11. ***The approach covers both compliance with the Board-approved protocol, as well as an inquiry into the de facto process.*** It probes the extent to which the protocol is followed in the behavior of each contributor and the incentives that could have an impact on the overall value-added of the ReTS to the IDB. It should be emphasized that the purpose of this review was to examine the pilot phase to identify improvements either as a result of simplifications, clarifications, or other content and process adjustments.

12. To further allow for insights to emerge from the review, the working group selected a limited number of evaluations (eight) that were completed during the pilot phase for in-depth review and interviews. The selection was purposeful and non-random to cover two corporate evaluations, two thematic evaluations, two country program evaluations, and two evaluations with a project-level focus. In each category, the selection was made to bring the maximum variety of evaluation recommendations into the review while keeping the scope manageable. Ultimately, the focus of much of the work centered on a balanced review of the recommendations as they constituted the essential unit of account.

13. The evaluations for which extensive interviews were conducted in addition to a desk review of available documents included:

- Mid-Term Evaluation of the IDB-9 Commitments (only Recommendations 2, 7, and 9)
- Evaluation of the Results of the Realignment
- Country Program Evaluation: Paraguay (2009-2013)
- Country Program Evaluation: Dominican Republic (2009-2013)
- IDB's Response to Key Challenges in Citizen Security, 1998 – 2012
- Climate Change at the IDB: Building Resilience and Reducing Emissions
- Evaluability Review of Bank Projects 2012
- Fifth Independent Evaluation of SCF's Expanded Project Supervision Report Exercise

14. ***To provide additional broad-based input into the review, as well as to establish a baseline against which future progress can be measured, a brief user survey was conducted.*** The survey focused on key stakeholder groups and was sent to all Bank staff who either had distinct knowledge of the ReTS based on their involvement in the development phase, actively contributed to the ReTS by providing input and/or managing the ReTS, or have been active or

interested users of the system. This resulted in a total of 130 individuals who received the questionnaire, of whom 88 had a defined role in the ReTS.⁶ Overall, 95 responses were received, resulting in a response rate of 73 percent. The distribution of respondents by their demographic criteria mirrored the overall population that received the survey.

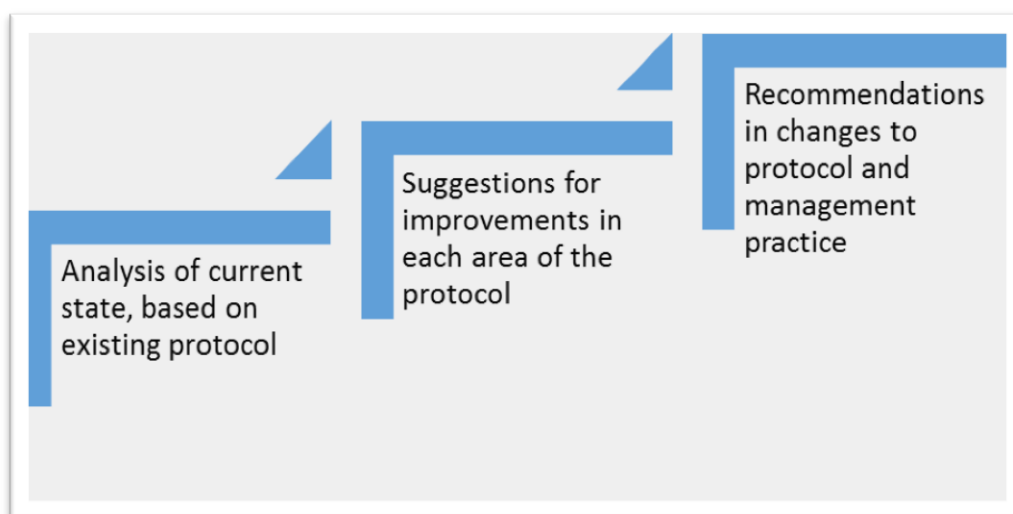
15. *The structure of this review largely follows the steps described in the protocol.* However, in conducting the review, it became apparent that particular features of the IT *system* supporting the ReTS had an important bearing on the *process*. In order to facilitate an understanding of the dynamics and quality of the process, this review therefore begins with a description of the characteristics of the system before turning to the analysis of the steps of the process itself. It concludes with a summary of the main findings and suggestions for changes to the process and the system.

16. *Recommendations include changes to Protocol and Management Accountabilities.* Combining the suggestions from each of the stages in the current protocol, it became evident that additional steps not envisaged in the protocol were necessary to achieve the goals of the protocol and do justice to the recommendation and findings from the external review. The concluding summary therefore goes beyond the findings and suggestions to introduce additional elements that, in combination, form the recommendations from this review. The three levels, all building on each other, are captured in Figure 1 and capture the logical flow of the subsequent sections of this review.

17. Finally, this review was only possible thanks to the many individuals who were generous and forthcoming in making time available to share their experience and perspectives. All findings and suggestions in this report are those of the author. While they have benefited from inputs by the joint working group and the managements of OVE and SPD, neither has limited the content of this report.

⁶ The full Survey Questionnaire is included as Annex C. The survey was conducted with the generous support of the External Feedback System (EFS) Team.

Figure 1: Report Structure



II. The ReTS system and the Board-approved ReTS protocol

a. Evolution of the ReTS IT System

18. ***Management’s efforts to align the IT System to the steps and roles outlined in the Board-approved ReTS protocol have dominated the pilot phase of the ReTS.*** The approval by the Board in August of 2013 of the protocol governing the use of the ReTS led to a series of adjustments to the IT system that had been deployed a few months earlier. In its two years of existence, the system has undergone numerous minor and major upgrades. A fourth release on an updated development platform (Sharepoint 2013) has recently been completed and a new round of changes is anticipated pending the revisions to the protocol and the adjustments in the internal management workflows that may result from this review.

19. ***The absence of a clear governance structure and the lack of a coordinated approach have led to the development of much greater detail in the content of the ReTS than required in the protocol.*** New roles were added, increasing the complexity of the system. On a positive note, this proliferation of changes has translated into a significantly more advanced IT application.

20. By and large, the steps outlined in the protocol have been implemented, though often more in form than in content. Table 1 below captures the system’s current compliance with the key features and steps established in the protocol.

Table 1: Status of System Compliance

Protocol step	System compliance
OVE uploads the recommendations into the system	Fully accomplished
Recommendations not endorsed by the Board of Executive Directors are kept in the system for record-keeping purposes	Fully accomplished
Lead Department identifies Action Plan Leader for each endorsed recommendation who uploads the Action Plan in the system within 90 days of the evaluation’s disclosure.	At the point of this review, all recommendations covered under pilot phase have action plans entered in the system. The Action Plan leader is clearly identified and typically represents the Lead department.
The system will notify OVE when the Action Plan has been finalized.	Fully accomplished ⁷
Executive Directors and Bank Staff have access on a ‘read-only’ basis.	Fully accomplished ⁸
Team Leaders will update implementation progress in the system on a continuous basis.	Rarely – updates typically occur when prompted by a reminder from SPD on a semi-annual basis.
SPD will ensure that the system is updated	Fully accomplished ⁹

⁷ The same caveat applies here as in the previous step related to the timeliness of the Action Plans.

⁸ Having access, however, is distinctly different from being able to access or accessing the system. This point will be elaborated below.

Protocol step	System compliance
at least twice a year (by June 30 and Dec. 31)	
Classification of implementation status of action plans and supporting evidence.	Fully accomplished ¹⁰

21. ***Having said this, the system remains in the first instance a repository of actions taken in response to evaluation recommendations.*** It also serves as a tracking system of milestones and accountable individuals, but remains characterized by several critical elements.

- The content is limited to the tracking of recommendations. This leaves out any additional information regarding the origins and context of the recommendations and the action plans.
- The system is open, on a read-only basis, to all staff and members of the Board. While this has great potential benefits as a learning platform, it does stifle the information that is entered into the system.¹¹
- The system tracks implementation of recommendations to a high level of detail. While this can be a potential bonus by allowing managers to delegate specific implementation tasks and track overall progress, it has in practice led to a diffusion of responsibility without a clear accountability structure that ensures the quality and institutional perspective of the information entered into the ReTS.

22. ***There is a lack of clarity regarding the responsibility and authority of users whose role has not been defined in the protocol.*** Specifically, the protocol only specifies that a lead department assign a Team Leader for the development of the action plans for the implementation of the Board endorsed recommendations.¹² The ReTS system, however, goes further by identifying Action Items that collectively reflect the key milestones for the implementation of the Action Plan. For each Action Item, an Action Item Designee is specified, as well as a Delegate. These roles are not defined in the protocol, nor is there a clear understanding – written or otherwise – what authority and responsibility comes with being an Action Item Designee or Delegate. Yet, effectively, the sum of the implementation of the Action Item constitutes the implementation of the overall Action Plan as a response to an evaluation recommendation.

23. ***Continuous changes to the IT system and updates of the content caused significant problems.*** Because of the lack of a governance structure, users frequently requested changes to

⁹ At the request of OVE, SPD advanced the timeline for providing updates in the fall of 2014 in order to facilitate the preparation of OVE's Annual Report and allow OVE to meet the end-2014 deadline for the completion of the report. Since then, SPD has issued guidance to permanently advance the semi-annual updates by two months.

¹⁰ As of end-2014, however, not on an on-going basis. A more significant issue is the basis for classification as addressed below in section IV.c.

¹¹ The World Bank's MAR system, for example, has strict firewalls built in that control access to material until it is released by the responsible Director for publication in the system.

¹² The consequences of requiring formal endorsement of each recommendation are discussed below

the IT system without a coordinating body. This has led to more features, but also a proliferation of changes that were not communicated across all users. Furthermore, requests to make changes in the content of the ReTS also often had to be handled by ITE without clear oversight by the Action Plan leader or the lead department.

b. Roles and Responsibilities in the ReTS System

24. ***The ReTS protocol specifies that the lead department assigns a Team Leader with the responsibility to prepare the action plans to implement the Board endorsed recommendations from a specific evaluation.*** The ReTS system, however, goes a step further by identifying and adding fields for action items that correspond to key milestones for the implementation of the action plan. For each action item, an Action Item Designee is specified as well as a delegate who serves in principle as a back-up to update the system.¹³ These roles are not defined in the protocol and there is no clear understanding – written or otherwise – of what authority and responsibility comes with being an Action Item Designee or Delegate.¹⁴

25. The different roles inventoried in the ReTS IT system are captured in Table 2, which also provides a sense of their concentration, i.e. the users who have a large number of roles assigned to them, and those who have only minimal formal contact with the tracking system. The data in the table takes into account that several staff have multiple roles. For instance, the 64 Action Plans covered are assigned to a total of 23 Action Plan Leaders, which means that many have a lead role on multiple action plans. The same is true for their delegates, as well as the designees of action items and their delegates.

Table 2: Roles and their assignment and distribution in the ReTS

	Action Plans		Action Items	
Total	64		170	
	Unique Leaders	Unique Delegates	Unique Designees	Unique Delegates
Total	23	18	55	13
Concentration ^a	34%	38%	55%	54%
Spread ^b	48%	33%	65%	23%
^a Measured as share of total covered by top 20 percent of most frequently assigned users. ^b Defined by share of users with no more than two assigned items. All data are based on the evaluations included in the pilot phase. Not every Action Item has a Delegate in addition to the Designee.				

¹³ A delegate has also been added to back-up the Team Leader.

¹⁴ Yet, effectively, the sum of the implementation of the Action Item constitutes the implementation of the overall Action Plan as a response to an evaluation recommendation.

26. ***The high degree of delegation and user concentration is not accompanied with a commensurate understanding of the system.*** This is especially true at the action item level where a large number of Designees are responsible for two or fewer items. Indeed, action item designees or their delegates often feel far removed from the overall intent of the recommendation and the action plan, admitting that they are unaware of the broader picture within which their action item is being implemented.

c. Users' Perception of the ReTS System

27. ***The review found very significant variation in the perceived value-added of the system by users, ranging from “start over” to “keep it with significant improvements needed”.*** At the same time, none of the staff members interviewed was of the view that a tracking system for evaluation recommendations was not needed.

28. Some of the improvements that the interviewees saw as necessary to enhance the system's effectiveness include:

- Provide space in the system for interactions that are not accessible across the institution, but can provide for much needed information to preserve information and ensure continuity in updating the implementation status of action plans.
- Many staff have difficulties understanding what is expected of the content of the ReTS. While some have benefited from personal SPD interactions, there is no manual that provides guidance on the content that should be included in the Action Plans or how Action Items should be structured.
- Providing users with adequate tools and guidelines to facilitate their understanding of the ReTS system and of what is expected from them in terms of content. While some users have benefited from personal SPD interactions, many staff have difficulties understanding how to properly structure action plans and action items, and how to report on progress in their implementation;

Box 1: Unintended Side-Effects of the ReTS system

There has been a significant degree of confusion about the 90-day rule for preparing action plans in the ReTS as stipulated in the protocol. As currently designed, the system captures the last date when an Action Plan has been modified and considers this the preparation date of the Action Plan. By further delegating authority to individuals with specific action items, any changes, minor as they may be, introduced by the Action Item designee or delegate has the consequence of changing the date when the Action Plan was last modified – thus the notional preparation date. This demonstrates three problematic areas that have all been validated through interviews: (i) the high degree of delegation is not accompanied with a commensurate understanding of the system and the consequences of changes to the Action Plans, (ii) the Action Item designees or their delegates are often far removed from the overall intent of the recommendation and the Action Plan and are therefore unaware of the broader picture within which their Action Item is located, and (iii) the misalignment between the 90-day action plan rule articulated in the protocol and the design of the ReTS system that does not allow the Action Plan leader to ‘lock’ the system and prevent further modifications without specific notifications.

- Making access to the system, for the purpose of inputting or retrieving information, easier.¹⁵

d. Key Weaknesses of the ReTS IT System

29. ***Despite its positive performance in terms of compliance with the steps of the protocol, the review has identified a number of weaknesses in the IT System.*** These have emerged from a review of the system, as well as the perceptions of staff who work with the system on a regular basis. These weaknesses can be summarized as follows:

- The ReTS is in first instance a repository of actions taken in response to evaluation recommendations. It serves as a tracking system mainly for milestones and accountable individuals, as opposed to an effective management system that allows users to maneuver

Box 2: Findings from the User Survey

The user survey substantiated to a significant degree the observations from the interviews and the review of the system. Overall, among the interviewees (which represents a non-random sample, focusing on those who should have familiarity with the ReTS, and representing familiarity with all evaluations conducted during the pilot phase), there was a high degree of awareness. For instance:

Virtually all respondents (99 percent) were at least somewhat aware that Management is required to track the implementation of the Board-endorsed recommendations stemming from OVE's evaluations;

The same level of awareness was demonstrated when it comes to the use of the ReTS for the purpose of tracking the recommendations, as well as the knowledge of the Protocol that governs the process;

However, excluding the respondents who indicated that they had never accessed the ReTS Intranet system, nearly half found it at least somewhat difficult to locate the ReTS on the Intranet;

Among those who have accessed the ReTS intranet system, 56 percent disagreed at least somewhat with the statement that they used the system to obtain information on the status of implementation of OVE recommendations.

with greater ease. A management system also has the capacity to go from a broad overview of progress down to the specifics of the implementation status and the supporting material within individual evaluations and recommendations.

- The content of the ReTS is limited to the tracking of recommendation implementation, leaving out pertinent information regarding the rationale and context behind the recommendations and the action plans.¹⁶ While documents such as Committee reports and related evaluation documents are readily available at the portal operated by the Office of the Secretary (SEC), it is cumbersome at best for a ReTS user to piece them together.

¹⁵ This view was more prevalent among the occasional users, while those who use the system more frequently shared the opposite view. Indeed, the ReTS is located on the Intranet together with all other operational portals and is no more and no less difficult to locate than any other operational tool.

¹⁶ The full text of Management's response to the OVE evaluation, the Minutes of the Committee's meetings, the detailed minutes of the Committee deliberations and other Board records, the Report of the Committee Chairperson, etc.

- The system is open, on a read-only basis, to all staff and members of the Board. This does stifle the information that is entered into the system. For example, the World Bank's Management Action Records (MAR) which tracks the implementation of the Independent Evaluation Group's recommendations, has strict firewalls built-in that control access to material until it is formally released by the system's administrator responsible for publication. As implementation tracking information is intended to be updated on a regular basis and requires significant interaction between different levels of staff and management, the system does not allow access to any private exchanges that are kept confidential until they receive the green light from the relevant level of management.
- The tracking of recommendations implementation in the ReTS involves a higher level of detail than required by the protocol. Again, while this can be seen as a potential bonus as it allows managers to delegate specific implementation tasks and focus on tracking overall progress, it has in practice led to a diffusion of responsibility without a clear accountability structure that ensures the quality and institutional perspective of the information entered into the ReTS.

e. Main Findings

30. ***To summarize, at this point, the ReTS provides a comprehensive inventory of the recommendations by OVE, the Action Plans for each of the Board endorsed recommendations.*** It also provides a comprehensive collection of specific action items that constitute the key monitorable actions under each of the recommendations. The system identifies the lead individuals involved in the coordination between OVE and Management for each evaluation, the Leader and Delegate for every Action Plan associated with a recommendation, as well as the lead staff responsible for the individual action items. In most cases, the ReTS also identifies an alternate staff member who can update the system.

31. ***The system does not serve an institutional management function and is unlikely to fully represent the institutional response to OVE recommendations.*** As a result of the evolution of the ReTS IT system, the ReTS is a good repository of information, a tracking instrument for Action Items, but not a genuine reflection of the institution's response to OVE recommendations. It under-represents the institutional efforts to respond to OVE's Evaluation Reports.

III. Analysis of the Process - Steps and Content

32. This section of the report goes to the core of the ReTS process. It covers four stages; (a) the formulation of recommendations to their Board-endorsement for implementation. This step closes with the disclosure of the evaluation, which, in the protocol, is tied to the implementation of the Board-endorsed recommendations;¹⁷ (b) the assignment of responsibility for the elaboration of the action plans; (c) the action plan implementation phase; and finally, (d) the follow up to, and the performance assessment of, the action plan implementation.

¹⁷ IDB's Evaluation Recommendation Tracking System (ReTS) Protocol for Implementation (GN-27-07-2). Par. 3.5

33. *For the most part, the steps articulated in the protocol are consistent with the good practice guidelines elaborated by the Evaluation Cooperation Group.* To provide context for the assessment of the steps in the protocol and the content of the ReTS it is useful to recall some of the good practice principles established by the Evaluation Cooperation Group with regard to the issuing and follow-up of recommendations. Those guidelines are intended to assure the full and independent reporting by the evaluation department to the governing Board without interference by Management. At the same time, the guidelines seek to encourage the learning from evaluations, including through their disclosure, and spell out the responsibilities for follow-up to recommendations by the governing Board, Management, and the evaluation department.

Box 3: Relevant ECG Good Practice Guidelines

- The Central Evaluation Department (CED) transmits evaluation products to the governing Board, normally after review and comment by Management, but without any Management clearance or Management-imposed restrictions on the scope and content of the products (Section 5.1);
- The CED also serves a wide range of internal and external stakeholders. Major internal stakeholders may include, but are not limited to: - IFI Management, which is responsible for acting on and following up evaluations, and for how evaluation findings might influence the IFI's future directions; - operations staff concerned with the feedback of evaluation lessons and findings, and how those might affect future operations; and - other IFI staff concerned with knowledge management, dissemination of evaluation findings, lessons and recommendations, and evaluation capacity development (Section 5.3);
- Management has responsibility for implementing CED recommendations. However, the CED is responsible for a system to monitor and report to the governing Board Management's record of adoption of and response to recommendations, including its success in remedying any problems found in evaluations (Section 5.4);
- Disclosure of evaluation findings is an important component of IFI accountability to stakeholders, and of behavioral independence on the part of the CED. Therefore, written reports and other evaluation products are disclosed in accordance with the CED's Board-approved disclosure policy. Such a policy should be explicit, consistent with the IFI's general disclosure policy, and cover all evaluation products (Section 5.5).

a. Formulation and Endorsement of Recommendations

34. ***The protocol, though clearly stating that it covers the process from issuance of recommendations, does not envisage any particular mechanism for the formulation of recommendations.*** Yet, committee meetings are mainly focused on the tripartite dialogue around the recommendations. OVE introduces the evaluation and recommendations, management elaborates on their response and status of agreement to the recommendations, and Executive Directors express their understanding of and level of support for the recommendations and management response – often with important nuances. The Committee Chairperson finally summarizes the discussion with the support of the committee secretariat, with a clear statement of the decision to recommend to the Board of Executive directors which recommendations to implement. The final approval for implementation of the recommendation rests with the Committee of the Whole.

35. ***Board members have sufficient information to decide on recommendations, but are concerned about the loss of nuances.*** When asked during the interview stage whether Executive Directors felt they had sufficient information coming from the OVE evaluation and the management response to arrive at a clear understanding and position regarding the implementation of the recommendation, they generally agreed that sufficient information was available. In their response, many pointed not only to the formal documents, but also to the ability to have additional bilateral meetings to shape their understanding and position. At the same time, all Executive Directors who were consulted during the review expressed the concern that their nuances in agreeing or disagreeing with the endorsement of OVE's recommendations get lost once a decision has been taken by the Board.

36. Directors from both borrowing and non-borrowing countries represented at the Committees, expressed the view that in a significant number of cases (though not the majority) they find themselves able to agree with some portion of the recommendations or responses, while disagreeing with others. In those cases, Executive Directors then formulate a summary assessment on whether to agree or disagree with a recommendation in the hope that their nuanced comments are adequately considered during the implementation.

37. It is nevertheless understandable that Executive Directors are concerned about the loss of the nuances expressed in the committee discussion. In a significant number of cases, management's responses to the evaluation recommendations express ambivalence about specific aspects of some of the recommendations. At times, this is expressed with a clear disagreement, or partial agreement. Nevertheless, as illustrated in Box 4, even in cases where management ultimately agrees with the recommendation, a series of caveats are attached to the agreement that could easily be understood as, at least, partial disagreement. The example in Box 4 introduces a further wrinkle in that management responds to suggestions as if they are part of the recommendation, where OVE indicates merely areas for consideration without including them explicitly as part of the recommendation.

Box 4: Agree or Disagree?

In the evaluation of the Results of the Realignment (RE-451), OVE recommended (in part):

“To enhance country focus, further strengthen the country program management function in Country Offices”. To that end, the Bank should consider, among other options:

- decentralizing the country management function by (i) increasing the number of country managers (to facilitate their deeper engagement in individual countries), (ii) locating them in Country Offices (to bring authority closer to the client), and (iii) maintaining country representatives only in countries without a manager (to reduce managerial layers);”

Although the options (i) through (iii) included in the OVE recommendation were not intended to be considered as recommendations, but merely options to be considered, responding to this particular section Management responded to each of them in a way that treated each virtually as if they were indeed part of the formal OVE recommendation. Management wrote:

“Management agrees with the benefits of further strengthening the country program management function and recognizes that there is merit in exploring not only delegating greater decision-making authority to the field, but also streamlining decision-making throughout the project cycle. However, Management believes that the evaluation does not provide sufficient information as to the benefits and costs associated with the specific options proposed by OVE.”

Referring specifically to part (i) of the OVE recommendation, management continues:

“However, as stated earlier, Management has reservations about this recommendation as the evaluation fails to offer evidence of the benefits associated with either expanding the number of country departments or relocating Country Managers, based on concrete experiences either at the IDB16 or in any other MDBs. Management has adopted a flexible approach vis-à-vis the location of its Country Managers.”

The Report of the Chairperson, while acknowledging the discussion around the utility of a cost-benefit analysis to support the OVE recommendation eventually concluded with the Committee supporting the implementation of the Recommendation.

The Action Plan for this recommendation eventually recorded management’s agreement and the Board’s approval. However, the Action Plan itself expressed a clear unease with the options laid out in the OVE recommendation and instead referred to a Management commissioned study. To date, none of the specific actions are part of the Action Plan.

Furthermore, interviews with staff and management illustrate quite clearly that there was strong disagreement with the options put forth by OVE from the beginning, and subsequent studies were largely aimed at finding ways to strengthen country program management functions quite apart from any specifics suggested by OVE.

38. It is therefore not surprising that Executive Directors place such emphasis on capturing the nuances of their comments and not boiling down a substantive dialogue into a yes or no decision, as is eventually required for the Board endorsement of recommendations for implementation. At the same time, it is understandable for management to indicate a general sense of agreement with OVE’s recommendations and only disagree in exceptional cases.

39. ***The number of ‘partial agreements’ by Management seems to be increasing in recent evaluations, as a result of this dynamic.*** In a significant number of interviews it was seen that a response of ‘partial agreement’ is in fact the best management option when the views of the

Board in response to a ‘disagreement’ could not easily be anticipated. By indicating areas of agreement, as interpreted by management, a decision by the Committee and the Board to endorse the recommendation could then be focused in the Action Plan on the areas where management indicated its agreement. At the same time, by expressing its unease with the recommendation, management opens the door for Executive Directors to voice their disagreement if they are so inclined.

40. ***Ambiguous recommendations and management responses complicate the endorsement process.*** Of course, this dynamic is not uniformly applicable to both committees and to all evaluations. Neither is it unique to the IDB (see Box 5). Interestingly, there has been no instance where a partial agreement by management has led to the non-endorsement of a recommendation for implementation by the respective Committee. Nevertheless, as a general foundation for the subsequent steps in formulating Action Plans that are clear in their aim to respond to the Board endorsed implementation of OVE recommendations, it opens up the door to significant ambiguity, concern by Board members over the content of the Action Plans, and concern by management over the view OVE will eventually take with regard to the assessment of the implementation of the endorsed recommendations.

Box 5: “Yes, but...” at the Asian Development Bank (ADB)

The Independent Evaluation Department (IED) of the ADB reported in its most recent Annual Report (Asian Development Bank, 2015) on the breakdown between recommendations that were unconditionally accepted by management, and those that were accepted with significant caveats. It found that during the period 2011-14, over half of the recommendations were accepted with qualifications. The tracking system is allowing a ‘partially agreed’ response by management going forward with the clear unease expressed by the IED that this may lower the rate of acceptance further.

Unlike at the IDB, the ADB does not have a formal Board approval process for recommendations and management is only committing to the implementation of recommendations to which management agrees, or the parts of the recommendations to which management agrees.

41. ***The full institutional response to OVE’s evaluations is not reflected in the disclosed materials.*** Outside observers of the Bank are generally interested in the findings of the evaluation as well as the position taken by the Board in response to the evaluation and the actions management intends to undertake to implement them.¹⁸ At present, while the protocol calls for the disclosure of the OVE evaluation together with the management response, the practice varies and it is often difficult for an outside observer to locate all pertinent documents.¹⁹

¹⁸ This step refers of course to the initial stage when the Evaluation is discussed and not yet to the implementation phase.

¹⁹ AM-140-1 “Procedures for Management’s Consultations with, and review of reports prepared by the Office of Evaluation and Oversight” explicitly covers the disclosure of documents in Section 27. It states that OVE “...discloses the evaluation, together with the management response and other summaries and dissemination documents...”

Some management responses are updated to bring them in line with the outcome of the Committee deliberations, while others are not. No consistent picture or pattern with respect to the joint disclosure is discernable at the moment. Similarly, OVE does not have its own disclosure policy and is therefore subject to all aspects of the IDB's access to information policy.

42. More importantly, while for internal users it is possible through the SEC portal to access the relevant document necessary to identify which recommendations have been endorsed by the Board for implementation and which have not, this is an exceedingly cumbersome process. To further complicate matters, by having 'partially agree' responses from management, given the Yes or No nature of the protocol, the outside reader is left in the dark as to the eventual actions that management intends to undertake in response to the evaluation. A reasonably conclusive answer can often only be found when the Minutes of the Board meeting during which the Report of the Committee Chairperson has been considered, have been made available to the public.

43. ***OVE's evaluations are seen to have on-going value beyond the specific recommendations by fostering important institutional dialogues.*** A number of times, interviewees pointed out the value of OVE's evaluation in triggering or informing an institutional dialogue on difficult issues. While Board members and Management may not come to agreement with OVE on the specifics of a particular recommendation, both sides see continued value in retaining the foundation provided by OVE to sustain the dialogue far beyond the Committee or Board discussion of the OVE report itself.

44. ***Summary of Findings and Suggestions:*** At the stage when evaluation recommendations and responses are formulated and discussed by the respective Committees, neither management, OVE, or member of the Board have expressed confidence that the Committee discussions and guidance will subsequently be reflected in the implementation of the recommendations. It can only be in the interest of the Board, Management, and OVE to have as much clarity as possible on the expectations for implementation. In that spirit, below are several suggestions to achieve this objective.

- ***Ensuring the clarity of OVE's recommendations and corresponding response from Management.*** Without infringing on OVE's independence, this review would suggest an additional required step during which OVE and Management have a discussion exclusively on the formulation of the recommendation.

The aim of the discussion would be to (i) avoid wording that is inconsequential to the intent of the recommendations, yet problematic for management, (ii) separate out areas of agreement from disagreement and avoid to the largest extent possible 'partially agreed' management responses (Executive Directors should in all cases know exactly where the disagreement arises), and (iii) review in all cases the materiality of the recommendations in light of previous recommendations and on-going management initiatives at the time of formulation.

- ***Avoid corner solutions.*** Committee Chairs, based on an assessment of views by Committee members, should in exceptional cases conclude with the recommendation to approve the implementation of the recommendation, but set a timeframe for management to elaborate a more detailed Action Plan based on the committee discussion and submit it to the committee for information. Committee members can request further discussions with management if needed.

Box 6: Respond or not respond – that is the question

In January of 2011, the IMF's Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) presented an evaluation of the IMF's preparedness in the lead-up to the economic and financial crisis that erupted in 2008 (International Monetary Fund, 2011) to the Board of Executive Directors. The Board broadly endorsed its recommendations for follow-up and asked management to prepare an Implementation Plan. The initial management Implementation Plan was presented to the IMF Board of Executive Directors together with an assessment of the Plan by the IEO. The IEO was critical of the Implementation Plan and did not consider it an adequate response to the Evaluation and the Board endorsed recommendations.

In response, the Board asked IMF management to prepare a revised Implementation Plan, which was presented about 12 months after the initial Implementation Plan. It was discussed by the Board in May of 2012, some 16 months after the initial Board discussion of the evaluation. The new Implementation Plan was significantly strengthened and is now considered, informally (the IEO staff had no formal voice during this phase), by IEO staff to have led largely to an implementation of the IEO's recommendations.

In response to some frustration among Executive Directors over the delays in elaborating Action Plans and reporting on their implementation, the IMF Board designated the Internal Audit Department to provide an Annual Report on the implementation of recommendations from evaluations.

Lessons: Developing an appropriate Action Plan for the implementation of a recommendation, or a set of recommendations may require a significant amount of time. It is preferable, in exceptional cases, for the Board to grant management additional time while also seeking the input from the Evaluation Office. Particularly in institutional reforms that involve significant change.

Source: IMF Evaluation and Internal Audit Staff.

- ***Complying with simultaneous disclosure of key evaluation documents.*** For internal and external clarity and accountability, and in line with both the protocol and the IDB's access to information policy,²⁰ the final Evaluation, and the final Management Response should be disclosed simultaneously within 5 days of Board approval of the recommendations contained in the Committee Chair Report. Revisions to the final Management Response may be required to reflect the Committees deliberations. Furthermore, the relevant portions of the Report of the Chairperson of the PC or the PEC should be disclosed together with the Evaluation and the Management Response. The Report by the Chairperson is a publically

²⁰ The Procedures for Management's Consultation with and Review of Reports Prepared by the Office of Evaluation and Oversight (AM-140-1) specifies in paragraph 27 that OVE "discloses the evaluation, together with the Management Response and other summaries and dissemination documents, on OVE's website in accordance with the Bank's public disclosure policy".

available document and provides a much richer summary of the deliberations than the Minutes of the Board Meeting. Finally, as the elapsed time between Committee discussion and Board discussion generally falls within 20 working days (with some notable exceptions), setting a limited timeframe for the disclosure of OVE's reports, such as 20 working days after the Committee discussion, seems reasonable even if the accompanying documents are not yet available.²¹

b. Process to identify roles, assign responsibility and develop action plans in the ReTS

45. According to the ReTS protocol, the Lead Department²² assigns a team leader to develop the action plans to be implemented in response to Board-endorsed recommendations. The protocol also states that team leaders should finalize the action plans in the ReTS system within 90 days following the evaluation's disclosure. With very few exceptions, team leaders are chosen among senior staff who have been involved with the preparation of Management's response to the evaluation, were present at the Committee meetings and are well positioned to elaborate the action plans. The permanency of roles in the ReTS seems further complicated with staff turnover and/or prolonged vacancies as the written record of the rationale for specific action items is typically weak and rarely found within the documents contained in the ReTS.

46. However, the subsequent process for assigning roles and responsibilities differs substantially across different types of evaluations. Specifically, incentives to take on responsibility for implementing portions of the Action Plans vary with the immediate interest to ensure – and at times demonstrate to senior staff – the success of the program that was evaluated. In country programs, the incentives are strong as there is not only interest by country management within the IDB, but of course also the need to demonstrate effectiveness to country clients. These incentives are more diffuse for sectoral/thematic and corporate evaluations. This section therefore covers each evaluation type in turn.

Country Program Evaluations (CPEs)

47. ***For Country Program Evaluations, there is a high degree of interaction between the Action Plan Leader and all of the individuals who are responsible for implementing specific Action Items.*** Furthermore, the Action Items are typically pertinent to the country program and in that sense are well embedded in the existing country program. While some of the items are of questionable value added, there is a generally good understanding among all staff concerned why those items have been included.

48. Furthermore, reviewing the records of the deliberations in the Programming Committee, there is a high degree of consistency between the Action Plans and the recommendations

²¹ Such an arrangement is contained in the access to information policy that governs the disclosure of evaluation reports by the World Bank's IEG.

²² The Lead Department is typically the department that serves as OVE's main interlocutor during the review process and that is represented at the corresponding Committee meeting. According to the current procedures (AM-140-1), the Lead Department is designated by Senior Management, as a result of a consultation initiated by SPD in the early stages of the process.

endorsed by the Board for implementation. Nevertheless, it is typically a senior staff with complete knowledge of the country program²³ who has the full overview of the implementation as they are in all cases the team leader for all recommendations that have been endorsed. The same cannot be said for the Action Item designees who are handling often a single item pertaining to one of several endorsed recommendations.

49. ***Cohesion of action plans does not necessarily trickle upward to form an institutional picture.*** At the country level, which is the clearest and most coherent translation of recommendations and deliberations into an Action Plan, there exists a process for assigning the Action Items to individuals, and none of the individuals interviewed expressed any surprise or unease over being given the assignment. This cohesion, however, does not necessarily trickle upward to the offices of Senior Management where staff review the action plans for recommendations stemming from CPEs and Action items that may be reasonable within a particular country portfolio, but would be ill-advised as a response to the recommendation if adopted more generally.

50. ***Important institutional insights can get lost.*** Yet, this relatively smooth process points to another area where information is getting lost in translating the recommendations into Action Plans. More frequently than in any other area, recommendations are either not endorsed for implementation, or where management agreed partially, a significant number of Committee members expressed sympathy for management's views and unease with the extent to which OVE recommendations should be implemented in particular country programs.

51. According to OVE staff (validated by a review of the recommendations and the relevant Committee Minutes), recommendations included in the country program evaluations almost always have institutional implications. This is well recognized by Executive Directors. However, in the context of the Programming Committee, Directors tend to avoid endorsing recommendations for implementation that are of a nature that far exceeds the specific context of the country under consideration.²⁴

52. Although the views of Committee members tend to be split on recommendations that extend beyond a particular country, once the proposal not to endorse a particular recommendation for implementation is sent to the Board, it has never been overturned.²⁵ This

²³ Country Representatives, Chief of Operations, Country Coordinators, Country Economists, Country Departments' Advisors, etc.

²⁴ The IDB is unique among the multilateral development banks in that the evaluation department reports to two different committees on a regular basis – the Programming Committee for Country Program Evaluations and the Committee on Policy and Development Effectiveness on all other evaluations.

²⁵ In fact, during the pilot phase, the Board approved in all cases the recommendations endorsed by the Committees and brought to its consideration in the reports of the chairs of the two committees. The only exception, though of a different nature, related to the mid-term evaluation of the commitments under IDB-9, which generally left the final decisions to the Board and governors with the committee providing extensive summaries of their deliberations. This is not exactly the case as there was no formal requirement that the committee endorse or not recommendations at that time.

tension has become increasingly prevalent during several country program evaluations that were discussed at the programming committee after the cut-off date for this review.²⁶

Sector/Thematic Evaluations

53. *The coherence between evaluation recommendations and the development of Action Plans and the assignment of roles is also relatively unproblematic for sectoral or thematic evaluations.* However, whereas in the case of country program evaluations there is a counterpart with all the requisite authority to coordinate actions as needed, this is not necessarily the case with thematic evaluations. Evaluations such as those related to Climate Change and Citizen Security have clearly institution-wide importance. The lead departments are well placed to draw together such an institutional response, yet even here the incentives by departments other than the lead-department go in the direction of remaining outside the ReTS. With accountability squarely assigned to the lead department, the majority of milestones are then defined in such a way that they can be achieved largely by the lead department itself.

54. *The Action Plan leaders largely assign Action Item designees who are within the lead-Department, which means in many cases that action items are included within the Plan that can be executed fully within the authority of the lead-Department.* In both sector/thematic evaluations that fell within the pilot phase, the specific actions, even if fully implemented, would by no means ensure any actual change in the operations of the IDB. While pragmatic, whether this leads to an institution-wide response to the OVE recommendations depends on the extent to which the lead-Department is empowered, or can draw on, the support of Senior Management to effect change. This, however, rarely happens.

55. The assignment of roles is further complicated when there is significant staff turnover or prolonged vacancies, as the written record of the rationale for specific actions is typically weak and rarely found within the documents contained in the ReTS. Pragmatism is therefore often the most reasonable way to assign roles.

Corporate Evaluations

56. *Assigning roles and responsibilities is even more difficult for corporate evaluation recommendations.* Corporate evaluations receive significant attention from Executive Directors and Senior Management, and staff in the offices of senior management are typically closely involved in the monitoring process. However, they too only observe small fractions of the picture and are not well situated to ensure seamless cross-boundary cohesion of Action Items and Action Plans.

²⁶ Namely the CPEs for Honduras, Jamaica, Costa Rica, and El Salvador. Of the combined 17 recommendations, Management partially agreed with slightly more than half (9) though all of them have been eventually endorsed for implementation. Their action plans, to the extent that they are available in the ReTS system, have not been covered by this review.

57. This view is particularly reflected among the Action Item assignees who have indicated with great frequency that they are neither fully aware of why they have been tasked with the implementation of a particular item, nor what satisfactory implementation would look like. This is by no means an indication of a lack of effort on behalf of staff, but rather a lack of a visible coordinating function that can effectively transcend boundaries to resolve any implementation constraints.

58. Even among Senior Management staff, it is virtually impossible to identify from the updates in the ReTS whether the desired cross-unit collaboration is in fact taking place, or whether the Action Item designees are able to draw on the support from the best placed staff. The view that, at least in theory, implementation issues can be elevated to the necessary level of senior management for resolution is in practice not happening. Seen from below, the hope is expressed quite frequently that someone higher-up has an overview of the implementation of Action Items and Action Plans.

59. On paper, the IDB has an institutional body that was conceived in the early 1990s to provide Management with that kind of support. Indeed, the Audit and Evaluation Committee, chaired by the Executive Vice President (EVP) was meant to provide Senior Management with systematic follow-up on evaluation recommendations along with the necessary support to, among other duties, ensure compliance with and effective implementation of the recommendations stemming from evaluations. Unfortunately, the Committee has lost its influence following the Realignment (2007) and its last official intervention goes back to 2008. More recently, Senior Management started a process to formally eliminate the Committee, but the process came to a halt and the decision is currently being reconsidered.

Summary of Findings and Suggestions

60. *The ReTS system has become the driving force for the process.* In effect, with the nuances that separate different categories of evaluation (country, sector/thematic, and corporate), after the deliberations of the Committees and the approval for implementation of the recommendations by the Board has taken place, the system runs the process. Rather than delegating a very significant part of overseeing the implementation of the Action Plans, widespread and opportunistic dispersion has taken place.

61. Taken together, the evaluation tracking process when it enters the ReTS IT system is fraught with complexity and inefficiencies. The incentives and parameters for effective implementation are set at this stage, which is perhaps the most critical in the process.

62. SPD does an admirable job at providing assistance and support, but is hopelessly overburdened with system implementation support and some quality supervision. In some instances, the Lead Departments try to bypass SPD in the preparation of the final response, even though the protocol explicitly refers to SPD's role in ensuring the quality and consistency of both Management's response and action plans.

63. **Suggestions:** The following suggestions are therefore offered:

- ***Simplifying the ReTS process and system:*** One remedy would be to vastly simplify the ReTS by eliminating the role of Action Item designee and delegate. Those roles can continue to exist for managerial purposes, but should be eliminated for accountability purposes and not be reported on, beyond the Action Plan Leader and the Lead Department. For the purpose of institutional accountability, the responsibility needs to rest clearly with the Lead Department that must be represented at the respective Committee or Board meetings.
- ***Clarifying and strengthening management oversight:*** Senior Management must re-emerge as the champion for the institutional follow-up to recommendations. This would be an important role for the Evaluation and Audit Committee, with the support of a designated focal point located in the offices of senior management.
- ***Ensuring continuity of roles:*** Once an Action Plan is assigned to a Lead Department, it should remain there, irrespective of staffing changes. Any changes need to be approved by Senior Management and, as foreseen in the protocol, such modifications of the Action Plans need to be communicated to the respective Committee Chair.

c. Tracking Implementation

64. At this point in the pilot phase, it is difficult to say much more about the status of implementation than has already been said in the Annual Report by OVE. Nevertheless, there are several striking characteristics of the tracking process that this review finds worthy of attention:

65. First, although the protocol envisages a continuous updating of the ReTS (at least twice a year), this is not happening. Virtually all individuals who have been interviewed report that they respond to email notifications sent twice a year by SPD reminding them of the need to do so.²⁷ Furthermore, with many action items not indicating any specific action until a future date, the practice of updating each item is often questioned by staff and results frequently in an assessment of no progress on a particular item.

66. SPD's Division of Strategic Monitoring (SPD/SMO) continues to play a disproportionate role in being responsible both for the implementation of Action Plans and Action Items, as well as supporting and quality checking the entries by other departments into the ReTS system. The time demands on SPD/SMO's staff are very significant, while the ownership of the content in the system by the responsible departments is limited.

67. Second, the internal review process for the updating of the implementation status suffers from the same shortcomings as the process for reviewing the quality and the articulation of the initial Action Plan. Numerous staff responsible for the review process in senior management offices commented on the inability to assess, based on the information provided, whether the implementation does correspond to the substance of the recommendation and the views expressed by Executive Directors.

²⁷ The protocol also states in paragraph 3.7 that "SPD will ensure that the system is updated at least twice a year (i.e. by June 30 and December 31)".

68. This pattern of ‘not seeing the forest for the trees’, or put differently, the desire to focus on the bigger picture in the implementation phase has emerged as a critical element for any future revisions to the ReTS. This should not be misinterpreted as suggesting that for internal management purposes, lead departments should not establish specific actions and timelines, but those become only meaningful to staff, managers, and others outside the lead department when put into the overall context of the response to the evaluation recommendations and the committee members’ views.

69. Third, the system-generated reports available from the ReTS are highly geared toward the compliance with timetables and the identification of individuals assigned to the respective roles in the ReTS. While the astute user can find very specific information on the substantive status of implementation, this requires a thorough knowledge of the originating recommendation, in order to locate a specific action item. Gaining a substantive overview of the status of implementation is currently not possible. For the most part, the twice-a-year updates remain a heavily compliance and date-driven activity, rather than a thoughtful reporting on the substantive progress in responding to the Board-endorsed recommendations.

70. Finally, only few action plans have been fully implemented (over 60 percent of the recommendations covered here have action plans with a due date of December 31, 2015 and beyond). As a result, the envisaged process for retiring recommendations is untested and is not assessed in this review.

71. **Summary of Findings and Suggestions:** The core issue during the implementation phase is a continuation of the process for developing the Action Plans and the assignment of roles. The ReTS brings a high-level recommendation and Committee deliberation down to a set of Actions and implementation steps that are far removed from the intent of the recommendation. This gap cannot be bridged with the system as currently designed.

72. The following suggestions all aim at ‘raising’ the content and utility of the reporting on the implementation through the ReTS:

- ***Providing Space for Management-only.*** Retain Action Items and item specific timetable, as well as individuals assigned to these items for the purpose of internal management – and internal management only.
- ***Ensuring ownership of system updates by Lead-Departments.*** The implementation of endorsed recommendations should continue to be updated at least twice a year, and perhaps more frequently as events may warrant. However, rather than relying on updating when target-dates are coming due for action items, the Lead-Department is responsible for providing a management view on the implementation status of the recommendation.
- ***Focusing more on substantive self-assessment:*** Lead-Departments should continue to provide an overall self-assessment of the implementation status, based on the substantive

narrative (not due dates of action items). The question should not be whether a majority of the action items have been implemented, but rather whether the institution has substantively responded to the Board-endorsed implementation of the recommendation along the lines envisaged in the Action Plan.

- ***Retirement of Recommendations.*** Many recommendations require complex institutional reforms that have a time frame over several years and whose implementation is fraught with uncertainty. While an outer date, such as four years, may be useful to limit the growth of the recommendations under implementation, the retirement of recommendations should otherwise be driven by the successful implementation of the Action Plan as assessed by OVE, or by a joint recognition between OVE and management that Action Plans have been overtaken by events and should therefore be retired.

d. Follow-up and Assessment

73. The weaknesses identified earlier in this review make it difficult to assess the follow-up and assessment of implementation of the Board-endorsed recommendations. This sub-section therefore attempts to reflect the general sentiment that emerged from the interviews, as well as the state of discussion within the evaluation departments of multilateral development agencies. Unlike the preceding sub-sections, this one does not contain specific suggestions as the follow-up and assessment process is highly contingent on agreed changes made in response to the suggestions that related to the earlier stages of the protocol.

74. The assessment of the implementation of the Action Plans is articulated in the protocol as being initially an on-going self-assessment by management according to four categories: (i) completed if the action is considered to be fully implemented; (ii) partially completed if the action is considered to be only partially implemented; (iii) not completed if the action has not been implemented; and (iv) in progress if the action is being implemented before the due date.

75. Based on a review of the documentation in the ReTS to support the self-assessment, OVE staff are then tasked with an independent assessment of the implementation status and report their findings in the Annual Report. This practice is standard across most MDBs. For instance, the Asian Development Bank's Independent Evaluation Department (Asian Development Bank, 2015) reports on the status of the implementation of the recommendations in a similar fashion in its Annual Evaluation Review. The World Bank Group (The World Bank, 2015) is reporting on the implementation in the context of the Annual Results and Performance Report, as well as on a separate publically available website.²⁸

76. Beyond reporting on the status of implementation, the evaluation departments of the MDBs tend to have a limited role. It is also common that the criteria for assessing the status of implementation remain unclear and can consume a considerable amount of time. In that sense,

²⁸ See <http://ieg.worldbank.org/managementactionrecord>.

the attempts by OVE to establish criteria during this pilot phase are fully in line with MDB practices. In fact, there is significant potential to build on this preliminary effort with a view toward enhancing the actual impact of evaluations.

77. *Strengthening Accountability for Quality of Substantive Implementation and Updates.*

The present system does not provide Executive Directors with a clear picture of the extent to which management is in fact implementing the Board endorsed recommendations within the context of the discussions that took place at the respective committees. While the data provided in the OVE Annual Report give important information that can be derived from the ReTS system and its content, it does not provide an overview of the substantive progress in implementing OVE's recommendations. Even where information is available, given the shortcomings in the management of the process and updates that are entered into the ReTS, it is questionable whether the quality is currently adequate to properly assess the progress made by management.

78. Furthermore, in discussions with several Board Counselors and Directors themselves, they found it difficult to interpret the data provided in the OVE Annual Report as the relative importance of what has, and what has not, been implemented is difficult to discern. Several asked for more substantive measures of progress, rather than a quantitative analysis of the information provided by management through the ReTS.

79. No other evaluation department within the MDBs has been able to develop a successful model for providing such information, although several attempts have been made. For instance, the World Bank attempted to categorize recommendations along a set of categories, such as those contained in the corporate risk framework.²⁹ However, none of the attempts were deemed to be robust enough to draw conclusions. The most recent Results and Performance Report does point to weaknesses in the areas of Monitoring and Evaluation within projects, but is not able to pinpoint specific interventions that could yield significant improvements (The World Bank, 2015).

80. Nevertheless, with respect to the ReTS, a number of dimensions and suggestions stemmed from the interviews with IDB staff and consultations with staff from the independent evaluation departments of other institutions. Despite the fact that no best practice exists in this area, a general sense of direction is emerging, which would center around:

- Focusing the assessment of the implementation of recommendations on the substantive issues and leaving quantitative analysis as a secondary tool for assessment;
- Reporting on the substantive progress at the same level at which the content of the evaluation was written and the recommendations were discussed at the committee stage. In other words, avoid addressing implementation at the Action Item level;
- Recognizing that anticipated timetables for implementation are a best estimate, but can easily be overtaken by events. The progress should be tracked over a sufficiently long period –

²⁹ While the Corporate Risk reports of the World Bank are confidential, the Independent Evaluation Group began an effort in 2012 to make greater use of the risk framework to convey its findings. See http://ieg.worldbank.org/Data/reports/risk_management.pdf for an illustration.

even extending beyond completion dates entered in the ReTS if considered necessary, and focus on the qualitative progress made by the IDB in addressing the areas identified in the evaluations.

IV. The Learning Objective of the ReTS

81. The protocol is very explicit about the expectation for the ReTS to serve both an accountability and a learning function. While the accountability function is spelled out in specific steps, the learning function is less clearly articulated. As the interviews and experience from other organizations show, this may have been well advised.

82. ***No individual interviewed considers the current ReTS as a tool for institutional learning.*** In fact, of all the sources available to staff, the ReTS is one where many would deliberately not look for relevant information about policy implementation, evaluation findings, or Board guidance. The most frequently cited reason was related to the perception of the compliance nature of the ReTS, and therefore the valid concern about content that reflects the minimum necessary to comply with the requirements, but lacks the richness required for application in on-going projects or project design.

83. This finding is not surprising given the general staff attitude toward engaging with the ReTS and the resulting quality and timeliness of the content of the ReTS. The difficulties in maneuvering the ReTS IT system do not help, but are by no means the binding constraint.

Box 7: Findings from the User Survey – Learning from the ReTS

On a scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 6 (strongly disagree), staff who indicated in the survey that they had used the ReTS IT system, the question whether they used the ReTS to obtain information on the status of implementation of recommendations received varied, with generally poor marks, particularly those under the VP for Sectors:

- Staff under the VP Countries reported an average score of 3.7 (19 observations)
- Staff under the VP Sectors reported an average score of 4.3 (16 observations)
- Staff under EXE reported an average score of 3.6 (21 observations)

84. Turning a tool that is designed to track the compliance with evaluation recommendations endorsed by the Board for implementation into a learning tool is a challenge under the best of circumstances. Indeed, whether it is the MARS at the ADB, or the MAR at the World Bank, neither *system* has accomplished the goal of serving as a learning tool.

85. However, the *process* when repeated over a number of years, can indeed lead to improved organizational learning and closer engagement between the evaluation departments and the operational staff and management. The critical component in this mechanism, which recognizes the on-going nature of operational work and strategic adjustments, is the quality of self-assessment and the validation of this assessment based on shared criteria.

86. To encourage the honest and quality updating of information, the assessment criteria, which need to be harmonized between OVE and Management, should of course provide an assessment of progress. At the same time, they should also acknowledge, and reward, documented institutional learning. While OVE recommendations and the Committee deliberations can provide entry points and guidance from the institutional oversight body, it is ultimately the operational and strategic complex of the IDB where learning takes place.

Figure 3: Organizational Learning Wheels.



87. Use of OVE's Annual Report. The annual report by OVE provides an opportunity to step back from individual evaluations and assess the broader impact of OVE, as well as provide the Board members with an assessment of the implementation of recommendations. It is in particular an opportunity to distill lessons that may not have emerged from an individual evaluation, but have been persistent across evaluations or over a prolonged period of time. In that sense, while the Annual Report typically limits itself to OVE's work during a given fiscal year, when it comes to contributing to the learning gears, OVE should not be constrained in reaching across multiple years if doing so serves to illuminate operational and organizational strengths and weaknesses.

V. Conclusion and Recommendations

88. *The emphasis on the accountability and learning dimensions in the follow-up to recommendations is a relatively poorly developed area of evaluation and management practices.* The academic literature is thin and largely describes practices as they exist in the MDBs. Despite their long history, entities such as the US Government Accountability Office are not tasked with the role of reporting on the implementation of their recommendations from evaluations. This function has a longer tradition in the Audit functions, which may explain why

the IMF's internal audit department has been tasked with assessing the implementation of recommendations from evaluations – a unique arrangement among International Financial Institutions and in itself fraught with difficulties.

89. ***The IDB should therefore be commended on the progress that has been made since the 2011 External Review.*** Much has been done right. And the protocol that details the process for the tracking of recommendations stemming from evaluations provides a very solid foundation. A pilot-phase, by definition, serves to assess the initial design and assumptions, and provide for an opportunity to take corrective actions where warranted.

90. ***Implementing the suggestion in each of the phases of the protocol articulated in the previous section would lead to some degree of improvement.*** Many of the suggestions can be implemented as free-standing actions and many do not require any formal change in the approved protocol. This is particularly true when it comes to areas of simplification and clarity of the recommendations and management responses.

91. ***However, taken together, a stronger ownership by senior management, combined with a clearer accountability structure are required to maximize the likelihood of successful and productive follow-up to evaluation recommendations.*** Concerns around cross-unit collaboration, institutional learning, quality of implementation progress updates, and a coherent oversight that could lead to efficient institutional learning, are not likely to occur without a stronger governance structure to oversee the ReTS. Recommendations that required changes in the protocol are underlined.

92. The specific recommendations emerging from the analysis in this review are:

- ***Strengthening accountability of the Lead Department in the follow-up to OVE recommendations;***
 - By asking the Management's Evaluation and Audit Committee to identify lead departments for engaging with OVE already at the stage when OVE's work program is discussed and approved. Lead departments are assigned on the basis of the evaluation as a whole.
 - Anchoring the preparation of the response and draft action plan with the assigned lead department. The lead department is responsible for providing an institutional response and can therefore seek the input from other departments as needed. Lead departments remain at the evaluation level and are not sub-divided by individual recommendations. Final approval of action plans rests with a representative of senior management, such as a counselor in the office of the Executive Vice President.
 - Similarly, only action plans and implementation reports approved by the lead department will be posted in the ReTS system and accessible across the institution, including Board members.

- ***Ensuring greater clarity around the intent of the Board in endorsing (or not) the recommendations and approving their implementation;***
 - OVE and Management – specifically the designated lead department and a permanent designated contact point for OVE in management (which can be SPD), discuss recommendations at the draft stage to eliminate ambiguities and separate as needed areas of agreement from areas of disagreement. The category of ‘partially agree’ should in practice be eliminated.
 - Committee Chairs, based on an assessment of views by Committee members, can approve the implementation of the recommendation, but set a timeframe for management to elaborate a more detailed Action Plan based on the committee discussion and submit it to the committee for information. The timeframe for the elaboration of the Action Plan may in those cases extend beyond the regular 90 days. Committee members can request further discussions with management if needed.
 - Management finalizes the management response to the evaluation reflecting the outcomes of the committee discussion, particularly ensuring that the chairperson’s recommendations regarding the implementation of OVE recommendations are consistent with the final management response. The final management response³⁰ should be made available to the committee Chair and OVE by the time the Committee of the Whole discussion of the evaluation and the Chairperson’s report is scheduled.
 - OVE discloses its evaluations as soon as the committee chairperson’s report is available and the Committee of the Whole has discussed the recommendations. OVE discloses the evaluation report either together with the chairperson’s report and the final management response, or ensures that those documents are linked to the disclosed report. In any case, OVE should have the freedom to disclose its evaluation following a 20 working day period after the committee discussion of the evaluation report.
- ***Strengthening the connection with the institutional learning cycle;***
 - Agreement between OVE and Management on the criteria for assessing implementation progress, which may include a category for evidence of institutional learning and adaptability in response to emerging evidence. This should be an opportunity for management to keep the implementation focused on meaningful change in line with evolving country and other external circumstances.

³⁰ The final response should be consistent with management oral representation at the Committee. It should acknowledge the acceptance of the Chairperson’s recommendations regarding the implementation of recommendations to the extent that they differ from the initial management response.

- Focusing the implementation updates on the institutional response in the form of a narrative with substantiating evidence, based on agreed assessment criteria with OVE.
- Use OVE's Annual Report and the institutional strategic planning cycle to retain and use evidence in the ReTS system on recurrent issues that have emerged from OVE evaluations. This should allow OVE to contribute evaluative evidence to important longer-term institutional issues.

93. Revamping the ReTS process and system requires of course the support from the IDB's Board as it is an essential tool for institutional oversight. Moreover, it requires a high-level champion within Management and OVE to work out many of the details that can only be derived from a mutual understanding. This review, while highlighting the issues and making recommendations, can in those areas only offer some guiding principles that should be part of any agreement and roll-out of an updated process. In that sense, the author would strongly urge to allow for sufficient time to conclude a meaningful dialogue and roll-out process. The current cycle, i.e., the updating of the ReTS in the fall and OVE's Annual Report in early 2016 should therefore be seen as a transition period and not attempt to make an assessment, based on current data in the ReTS system, of the implementation of evaluation recommendations.

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Annex A – Terms of References

Background

The Evaluation Recommendation Tracking System (ReTS) is a new system launched in 2013 by the Bank to facilitate the monitoring of recommendations stemming from the evaluation work of the Office of Evaluation and Oversight (OVE). The ReTS tracks only the formal recommendations made by OVE that the Board of Executive Directors instructs Management to implement. Less formal suggestions contained in some of OVE's evaluation reports are not being monitored in the ReTS.

The piloting of the ReTS system officially started in August 2013, following the approval by the Board of the ReTS protocol. The protocol called for a pilot phase that would extend from mid-2013 to mid-2014, at the end of which an assessment of the performance of the system would be conducted and its results discussed with the Board.

As specified in the ReTS protocol, Management and OVE have agreed to conduct a review of the pilot phase of implementation of the system from August 2013 to end of 2014. The review will seek to assess whether or not the ReTS is an effective mechanism for ensuring OVE's recommendations are implemented and to what extent the system and the Board-endorsed protocol, as they stand, are effectively promoting greater Management accountability and encouraging the application of lessons learned in planning future Bank activities.

The review will also try to identify potential adjustments and enhancements to both the system and the protocol that can ensure that the ReTS indeed represents an important step towards strengthening the evaluation function at the IDB

To achieve these objectives, the review will cover the functioning of the ReTS from mid-2013 to December 2014, with special attention to the functionality of the system, end-user satisfaction, and stakeholders' engagement with the process.

Management will inform the Board of any adjustments to the system and to the Protocol that may result from the review.

Consultancy objective(s)

The contractual is expected to support the Department of Strategic Planning and Development Effectiveness (SPD), which represents Management, and the Office of Evaluation and Oversight (OVE), in conducting an arms-length review of the piloting of the Bank's Evaluation Recommendation Tracking System (ReTS). The contractual will particularly support

the ReTS Review Working Group,³¹ in taking a fresh look from an outside perspective to the functioning of the system and the process.

Main activities

In close collaboration with the ReTS Review Working Group, the contractual's scope of work will include the following:

- a. Review of all relevant documentation on the rationale behind IDB's evaluation recommendation tracking system (ReTS) and the actual functioning of the system.
- b. Data collection through meetings/interviews/focus groups with key stakeholders within the Bank on the introduction and the functioning of the new ReTS system.
- c. Assessment of the different components of the recommendation tracking process and the steps involved in completing the process (formulation of evaluation recommendations by OVE, Management's response/agreement, Board discussion and endorsement, Management's preparation and uploading of action plan, Management' updating of action plan implementation status, OVE's review of implementation status and progress; OVE's annual reporting to the Board on the status of implementation of the recommendations)
- d. Assessment of similarities and differences between the ReTS and the systems of comparators such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank Group (WBG).
- e. Identification of useful lessons learned from comparators that can help in framing recommendations and suggestions for enhancements to the ReTS.
- f. Elaboration of a summary of observations, conclusions and recommendations to make the ReTS more effective.
- g. Presentation and discussion of findings with key stakeholders.
- h. Incorporation of stakeholders inputs into the final version of report.
- i. Completion of the final report.

³¹ SPD and OVE will form a ReTS Review Working Group, comprised of two staff members from each of the two Offices to carry out the exercise.

Annex B – Methodological Approach

This Annex provides additional detail regarding the methodological approach used to conduct The Review of the Recommendation Tracking System of the Inter-American Development Bank. It goes into some depth both for the purpose of clarifying the approach, its strengths and weaknesses, as well as to serve as a contribution to similar efforts that may be conducted by other organizations in the future.

Review Purpose

Similar to an evaluation, the methodology selected was driven by the purpose of the review, taking into account time and budget considerations. Grounded in the approval by the Board of the ReTS protocol, management and OVE agreed to conduct a review of the pilot phase of the system. The purpose of this review, and as articulated in the Terms of References, the objective was to:

- seek to assess whether or not the ReTS is an effective mechanism for ensuring OVE's recommendations are implemented and to what extent the system and the Board-endorsed protocol, as they stand, are effectively promoting greater Management accountability and encouraging the application of lessons learned in planning future Bank activities; and
- try to identify potential adjustments and enhancements to both the system and the protocol that can ensure that the ReTS indeed represents an important step towards strengthening the evaluation function at the IDB

Special attention was to be given to “the functionality of the system, end-user satisfaction, and stakeholders’ engagement with the process.”

Identification of the Timeframe and Universe of Evaluations

The protocol envisaged the pilot phase to last from mid-2013 through mid-2014. In order to achieve the purpose of the review, which included the full cycle of the protocol up to the assessment by OVE of the implementation of the Action Plans articulated by management, the review covered all evaluation with recommendations between June 2013 and December 2014. This timeframe, and the Evaluations it covered, also coincided with the evaluations on which OVE reported as part of the Annual Report (insert Report #). Specifically, the review included the following Evaluations:

- Overview: Mid-term Evaluation of IDB-9 Commitments
- How is IDB Serving Higher-Middle-Income Countries? Borrowers’ Perspectives
- Fifth Independent Evaluation of SCF’s Expanded Project Supervision Report Exercise
- Evaluability Review of Bank Projects 2012
- Review of IDB Support to Secondary Education: Improving Access, Quality and Institutions 1995-2012

- Country Program Evaluation: Dominican Republic 2009-2013
- Country Program Evaluation: Paraguay 2009-2013
- Evaluation of the Results of the Realignment
- IDB's Response to Key Challenges in Citizen Security, 1998-2012
- Country Program Evaluation: Barbados 2010-2013
- Country Program Evaluation: Chile 2011-2013
- Climate Change and the IDB: Building Resilience and Reducing Emissions
- Country Program Evaluation: Honduras 2011-2014
- Country Program Evaluation: Jamaica 2009-2014
- Evaluation of Special Programs Financed by Ordinary Capital

Development of a Review Matrix

Together with the joint working group, a Review Matrix was developed (Annex D) to identify multiple sources and instruments that would allow for triangulations of the findings. The challenge in doing so was to, on the one hand, assess the protocol and system, as they stand, while at the same time seeing to identify enhancements to both that could strengthen the evaluation function at the IDB.

The first task would have involved a very structured fact-finding review and assessment, whereas the second required retaining an open mind to the perceptions and realities of users and stakeholders; and complement these with expert input and comparison with other institutions to identify areas for improvement that might not have emerged from a narrow tracing of each step alone.

The Review Matrix therefore identified review areas, questions, and sources that would collectively allow for both questions to be answered. The review matrix was developed after an initial literature review, specifically documents related to the development of the protocol, including Board records related to its approval, as well as an initial familiarization with the ReTS in its organizational structure, workflow, guidelines, and content.

No analytic work, or interviews with members outside the working group were conducted prior to the development of the review matrix.

System and Content Analysis

The first review area, Information Availability within the ReTS was conducted at the initial stages of the review on the full set of evaluations completed during the review period. It included a desk review of evaluation documents, Board material, both disclosed and undisclosed, and a review of the content of the ReTS. In doing so, care was taken to assess the utility of the information for the purpose of meeting the objectives of the ReTS, rather than making an evaluative judgment of the likely contribution to the development effectiveness of the evaluations, their recommendations, the action plans and action items, and the updates on their

implementation. Those were the subject of the review by OVE in its Annual Report and fell outside of the scope of this review.

The criteria for review, as expressed in the review matrix, was a determination as to the extent to which the information contained in the ReTS allowed for a meaningful flow in the process by providing sufficient and relevant information percolating from the evaluation recommendations endorsed by the Board of the IDB to the implementation of Action Plans and the Action Items contained within them, and finally the assessment of their implementation against the original recommendations endorsed for implementation.

Purposeful-Selection of Evaluations for in-depth review

To address the remaining review areas, the working group agreed jointly to address the review questions in depth based on a subset of the evaluations. The selection of evaluations for in-depth review followed a stratified approach where within each strata priority was given to evaluations that were considered to have been of distinctly different character, while also covering a significant part of the overall recommendations being tracked in the ReTS. The strata used for this selection were (i) corporate, (ii) Thematic or Sectoral, (iii) Country Program, and (iv) Project-related evaluations. From each strata, two evaluations were selected in consultation with the joint OVE/SPD working group. With the defining unit for review being the individual recommendations, this method did yield a significant and diverse coverage of evaluation recommendations. The Evaluations selected through this process were:

Corporate:

- Mid-Term Evaluation of the IDB-9 Commitments
- Evaluation of the Results of the Realignment

Country Program:

- Country Program Evaluation: Paraguay (2009-2013)
- Country Program Evaluation: Dominican Republic (2009-2013)

Thematic/Sectoral:

- IDB's Response to Key Challenges in Citizen Security, 1998 – 2012
- Climate Change at the IDB: Building Resilience and Reducing Emissions

Project-related:³²

- Evaluability Review of Bank Projects 2012

³² Since Project validations and evaluations do not enter the ReTS system as they do not contain recommendations for tracking, yet they constitute a significant building block of evaluations and the IDB's self-evaluation system, the periodic project-related OVE reports were included in the sample.

- Fifth Independent Evaluation of SCF's Expanded Project Supervision Report Exercise

The working group rejected a randomized approach to the selection of Evaluations to be reviewed in-depth on the grounds that a representative sample would have require inclusion of all evaluations, given the need for stratification and the small numbers in several of the categories.

Selection and validation of coverage of recommendations, roles, and stakeholders

During the pilot phase, the IDB Board considered a total of 69 recommendations stemming from the 15 Evaluations completed during the pilot phase, and endorsed for implementation 61 of those. Given the guidelines in the protocol which states that only Board endorsed recommendations are tracked, those 61 constituted that totality of recommendations that were subject to the ReTS protocol. Applying the purposeful selection of the evaluations mentioned above, resulted in a total of 40 recommendations made by OVE. From those, any that were not endorsed by the Board were automatically excluded. In addition, to retain an even distribution of recommendations reviewed across the evaluation categories, an additional cut was made by selection only 3 of the 9 Board-endorsed recommendations under IDB-9. The final tally is captured in Table 1.

Table A1: Coverage of Recommendation through Sample Evaluations

Evaluation	Total Recommendations	Excluded	Reviewed Recommendations
IDB-9	10	7	3
Realignment	5	1	4
Paraguay	5	0	5
Dominican Republic	4	2	2
Citizen Security	4	4	4
Climate Change	4	0	4
Evaluability	5	0	5
XPSR exercise	3	0	3
Total	40	14	26

With the multiplicity of roles envisaged in the protocol, a further criteria for selection of individuals for interviews was the achievement of a balanced and representative coverage of OVE and Management Focal Points, Action Plan Leaders and/or Delegate, as well as Action Item Designee and/or Delegate.

In total, in-depth interviews were conducted with 24 individuals who had a direct role assigned within the ReTS. While the interviews had as their primary focus the evaluations and recommendations selected for this review, many interviewees had additional roles assigned to them within the ReTS and could therefore provide a broader picture (see below on the specifics

of the interview structure). As a result, the following overall picture emerged for the coverage of the ReTS system:

Table A2: Coverage of the Tracking System through Interviews

Individual Users Interviewed ³³ (share of total)	Total Individual Users	Action Plans covered by Interviewees ³⁴ (share of total)	Total Action Plans in ReTS	Action Items covered by Interviewees ³⁵ (share of total)	Total Action Items in ReTS
24 (32%)	76	50 (82%)	61	82 (48%)	170

The high coverage ratio for the Action Plans and the Action Items is explained by a significant concentration of items among a relatively small number of users.

Interview Structure

In order to gain insights into both the ReTS as a tool, as well as the user experience with the tool and the process outlined in the protocol, semi-structured interviews were conducted. In practice, this meant each interview covered the areas outlined in the Review Matrix adjusted for the role of the interviewee. The question format was open-ended to allow the interviewees to describe their experience with the system and the process, while also expressing views they considered important to convey. For that purpose, interviewees were assured that no statement was going to be attributed to an individual or cast in a way that the individual could be identified.

Furthermore, given the limited number of evaluations and the stratification, any issues that did not contribute to illuminating a pattern relevant to the purpose of this review are excluded from the findings in this review. Only findings that reflected in the responses from a majority of the individuals interviewed in each strata (with a minimum of three individuals supporting the finding), are included.

Interviews were conducted both in person, as well as by phone and Skype. They included calls to country offices as well as to Washington-based Staff. In a number of cases, follow-up interviews were scheduled both to reach further clarity on issues, as well as on request by the initial interviewee.

³³ Users is here defined as having an assigned role – as Action Plan Leader, Action Plan Delegate, Action Item Designee, or Action Item Delegate – within the ReTS.

³⁴ This includes coverage either through the role of the Action Plan Leader or the Action Plan Delegate.

³⁵ This includes coverage either through the role of the Action Item Designee, or the Action Item Delegate.

The majority of cases were conducted on a one-on-one basis – neither SPD nor OVE were present for any of the interviews, although the interviewee was in all cases provided in advance with the terms of references for this review, including relevant background.

Beyond the individuals associated directly with the ReTS system, interviews were held with important stakeholder groups, including selected Executive Directors, VPs and their staff, members of the Corporate Secretariat, as well as individuals who had worked on the ReTS during its initial phase, but are no longer responsible for any ReTS related item.

Triangulation to reach Findings

While the stakeholder interviews were an important input into the review, the system review, as well as comparison with other organizations and review of the corresponding literature contributed to shaping the overall findings.

Similar to the nature of a formative evaluation, the identification of the status quo formed the baseline for the analysis. This included deriving a theory of change that was implied in the elaboration of the protocol and the detailed minutes of Board considerations of the protocol.

The areas of strengths and weaknesses of the system and the process were subsequently validated through cross checking with the data from the system, as well as through targeted interviews with experts in the respective area (such as IT). This was supplemented with the results from a survey among staff who are (or were) directly associated with the ReTS or have oversight functions.

Comparison with other multilateral institutions, as well as their perception of the effectiveness of alternative approaches, together with alternative theories of change were used to derive eventual findings contained in the review. Where the triangulation resulted in a clear mismatch between the sources, the area was either probed further to achieve robust findings, dropped, or where the empirical evidence clearly demonstrated a mis-perception that existed among stakeholders, such a finding would be included in the report.

Annex C –User Survey Questionnaire

Dear Colleague:

Following up on the communication that you recently received from the Manager of the Office of Strategic Planning and Development Effectiveness (SPD), we are pleased to share with you the attached survey on the IDB's Evaluation Recommendation Tracking System (ReTS).

Launched by the Bank in 2013, the ReTS is meant to facilitate the monitoring of Board-endorsed recommendations stemming from the evaluation work of the Office of Evaluation and Oversight (OVE). By requiring Management to develop concrete action plans to implement these recommendations and track their progress, the system seeks to enhance the Bank's accountability as well as its ability to more systematically apply lessons learned to its future activities

The pilot phase of the new system formally started in August 2013, with the approval by the Board of Directors of the ReTS protocol (GN-2707-2), covering the period ending mid-2014. The protocol called for an assessment of the performance of the system during this phase. To comply with this requirement Management and OVE, with the assistance of an outside expert, are currently conducting a stock-taking review of the ReTS, the results of which will be shared with the Board.

As part of this effort, the ReTS Team is inviting you to take this short survey to help us gauge the level of awareness of the system and get your opinion on how it is working in practice. Your input will help us identify necessary adjustments and enhancements that can ensure that the ReTS system indeed represents an important part of the efforts to further strengthen the Bank's business processes and enhance its development effectiveness.

The responses to the survey are strictly confidential and only aggregate survey results will be reported. The survey questionnaire can be completed in less than 10 minutes.

Our team will be available to assist you with any questions or concerns. Do not hesitate to contact us at rets@iadb.org or via Sylvia Boulos (x 3603) and Jaime de los Santos (x1970).

Follow this link to the Survey:

[Take the Survey](#)

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

https://iadb.co1.qualtrics.com/SE?Q_DL=3OyWfeNx3OOjq9T_1GGO5wcNPKUqShL_CGC_cNjR8ggvUG5e8cJ&Q_CHL=email

The deadline to complete this online survey is **Wednesday, June 17th, 2015 COB.**

Many thanks in advance for your collaboration.

Kind Regards,

The ReTS Team

SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS.

Question 1: Where are you based?

Country Office	Headquarters
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Question 2: How many years have you been at the IDB?

Please input your number. Leave it blank if you don't know or you don't want to answer.

Question 3: I work largely on matters related to (*check all that apply*)

Specific countries	Specific sectors and/or thematic areas	Corporate areas	Don't know
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Question 4: In the past 18 months, approximately how many times have you been involved in the following activities:

Please input your number. Leave it blank if you don't know or you don't want to answer.

- Attending Board Committee meetings in which OVE's evaluations and recommendations are discussed
- Preparing comments in response to OVE's evaluations and recommendations
- Preparing an action plan to address a Board-endorsed recommendation stemming from an OVE evaluation
- Tracking the implementation of an action plan that addresses a Board-endorsed recommendation stemming from an OVE evaluation
- Implementing an action item that contributes to addressing a recommendation stemming from an OVE evaluation

SECTION 2: YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH THE EVALUATION RECOMMENDATION TRACKING SYSTEM (RETS)

A-1. The System

Question 5: I am aware that Management is required to track the implementation of the Board-endorsed recommendations stemming from OVE's evaluations.

Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

Question 6: I am aware that an Evaluation Recommendation Tracking System (ReTS) has been introduced at the Bank to track the implementation of OVE's recommendations that are endorsed by the Board.

Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

Question 7: Approximately, how many times have you used the ReTS?

Please input your number. Leave it blank if you don't know or you don't want to answer.

Question 8: I find the ReTS easy to use.

Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

Question 9: I find the ReTS easy to locate on the Intranet.

Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

Question 10: I find that the information contained in the ReTS regarding OVE's recommendations and the progress in implementing Management's action plans is helpful.

Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

Question 11: I use the ReTS to obtain information about the status of implementation of recommendations that are of interest (or that are relevant for my work)

Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Question 12: Which of the following applies to you (check all that apply)

I have no assigned role in the ReTS	I have at least one Action Plan assigned to me	I have at least one Action Item assigned to me	I used to have an assigned role in the ReTS for which I am no longer responsible	I have taken over an assigned role in the ReTS from someone else	Don't know
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Question 13: I know what is expected of me in fulfilling the responsibility(ies)/role(s) assigned to me in the ReTS

Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Question 14: I have access to the necessary information to effectively carry out the responsibility(ies)/role(s) assigned to me in the ReTS.

Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Question 15: I receive sufficient guidance from SPD to perform my assigned responsibility(ies)/role(s) effectively

Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Question 16: Describe the most important change that you would like to see to improve the usefulness of the ReTS.

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A-2. The Protocol

Question 17: I am aware of the Board-endorsed Protocol (GN-2707-2) that governs the process for tracking recommendations stemming from OVE's evaluations.

Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>		<input checked="" type="radio"/>

Question 18: I find that the current business rules established in the ReTS Protocol are helpful to prepare Management's responses to OVE's evaluations

Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

Question 19: I find that the current business rules established in the ReTS Protocol are helpful to prepare Management's action plans to implement Board-endorsed recommendations stemming/resulting from OVE's evaluations

Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

Question 20: Describe the most important change in the current business rules that you would like to see to improve the usefulness of the ReTS.

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Annex D – Review Matrix

Overall Review Question: Does the ReTS achieve its objectives of enhancing accountability and learning in its form, content, and use?

Review Area	Review Questions	Data Sources
1. Information Availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does each step in ReTS provide sufficient information for an appropriate action to follow at the subsequent step? • How could the process be improved to ensure sufficient information at each step of the process? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Evaluations ○ Board Records ○ ReTS Protocol and system records ○ Disclosed Documents
2. Understanding of Individual Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the individuals responsible for each step have an adequate understanding of their role within the overall evaluation context? • Are these the right roles? • Do key units have the right level of authority to exercise their roles effectively? • Is sufficient training and guidance being provided throughout the tracking system? • How could the process be improved to ensure a full understanding of roles & responsibilities and ensure key units have enough authority to exercise them? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Evaluators ○ Board Members ○ Management ○ Staff • Survey of ReTS users
3. Compliance with Protocol Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the current process optimal to ensure effective tracking of meaningful change? • Are the steps envisaged in the protocol captured in the ReTS and followed? • How can the process be improved? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of ReTS content • Interviews with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Evaluation Leaders ○ Action Plan Teams ○ Management ○ Evaluators
4. Incentives & Rewards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do staff and managers have the necessary incentives to generate value-added for the organization? • How can the process be improved to provide appropriate incentives & rewards? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-Depth Review and Interviews of selected case evaluations/recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Country Evaluations ○ Sector/Thematic Evaluations ○ Corporate Evaluations ○ Project-level

Annex E – Review of internal document related to the ReTS for sample evaluations³⁶

Documents Reviewed for ReTS Study				
Evaluation	Realignment	IDB-9	Evaluability	XPSR
Approach Paper	RE-451	RE-411; RE-411-1; RE-411-3	RE-448	N/A
Management Response to Approach Paper*	RE-451-1	RE-411-2	N/A	N/A
PEC Minutes of Approach Paper*	PEA/13/24		N/A	N/A
Evaluation Report	RE-451-2	RE-425	RE-448-1	RE-332-8
Management Comments on Evaluation Report	RE-451-3	RE-425-1	RE-448-2	RE-332-7 ; RE-332-9
Revised Versions				
Report of the Chairperson of the PEC	RE-451-4	RE-425-2; RE-425-3; RE-425-4	RE-448-3	RE-332-10
Draft Action Plan (if separate from comments)	RE-451-5			
PEC/PC Minutes	PEA/14/03	PEA/13/05		
Final Action Plan (s)	ReTS	ReTS	ReTS	ReTS
Last Management Implementation Update	ReTS	ReTS	ReTS	ReTS
Last OVE Review of Management Implementation	Annual Report	Annual Report	Annual Report	Annual Report

³⁶ In keeping with the IDB's Access to Information Policy, most documents were reviewed in their original internal version, although the large majority of the documents are subject to disclosure according to the criteria spelled out in the policy.

Review of internal document related to the ReTS for sample evaluations (cont'd)

Documents Reviewed for ReTS Study				
Evaluation	Paraguay	Dominican Republic	Citizen Security	Climate Change
Approach Paper	RE-452	RE-453	RE-455	RE-459
Management Response to Approach Paper*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
PEC Minutes of Approach Paper*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Evaluation Report	RE-452-1	RE-453-1	RE-455-1	RE-459-1
Management Comments on Evaluation Report	RE-452-2	RE-453-2	RE-455-2	RE-459-2
Revised Versions	RE-452-3			
Report of the Chairperson of the PEC	RE-452-4	RE-453-3	RE-455-3	RE-459-3
Draft Action Plan (if separate from comments)				
PEC/PC Minutes	PGA/14/02	PGA/13/13	PEA/14/06	
Final Action Plan (s)	ReTS	ReTS	ReTS	ReTS
Last Management Implementation Update	ReTS	ReTS	ReTS	ReTS
Last OVE Review of Management Implementation	Annual Report	Annual Report	Annual Report	Annual Report

Annex F - Individuals Interviewed

Name	Area/Vice Presidency	Department
Acosta, Geovana	EXE	PRE
Afcha, Gonzalo	EXE	PRE
Almeida, Juliana Salles	VPC	VPC
Attademo-Hirt, Florenzia	VPS	IFD
Auger, Pedro	EXE	SEC
Basinger, Brad	VPF	ITE
Betts, Tracy	EXE	SPD
Brealey, Stephanie	VPS	ICF
Cantos, Victoria	VPF	ITE
Cerna Gomez, E. Marcelo	EXE	SEC
Charlot, Marie Clotilde	EXE	SPD
Chiliatto, Leite, Marcos	EXD	EXD
Cho, Eun Chung	VPS	INE
Cossens, Shakirah	EXE	SPD
Darville, Sandra	VPP	VPP
de los Santos Poveda, Jaime	EXE	SPD
de Obaldia Fierro, Ana Victoria	VPC	CID
Delodder, Kurt Rik	EXD	EXD
Gray, Cheryl	OVE	OVE
Herrera, Anai	EXD	EXD
Justo, Armando	EXE	SPD
Larrazabal, Luis Hernandez	EXD	EXD
Lima, Rafael	EXE	EVP
Linares, Ana Maria	OVE	OVE
Lopez, Adrien	EXE	SEC
Luis Came, Oscar	VPS	ESG
Marcano Vasquez, Luis Teodoro	EXE	SPD
Marmissolle Duccer, Diego	VPF	ITE
Marmolejos, Lina	VPS	IFD
Mateo-Berganza Diaz, Maria Mercedes	VPS	SCL
Meirovich, Hilén	VPS	INE
Merino Juarez, Maria Fernanda	EXE	EVP
Molina, Pablo	VPC	CSC
Moghtader, Leilee	EDS	EDS
Montenegro, Fernando M.	VPC	CSC
Nevarez, Gustavo	VPS	INT
Osorio, Diego	VPF	ITE
Pallares, Ulises	EXD	EXD
Pereira, Cira	VPF	ITE
Rossi, Mireya Eugenia	EXE	SPD
Rubino-Hallman, Silvana	EXE	SPD

Smeets, Johannes Paulus	EXD	EXD
Soldano, Miguel	OVE	OVE
Sorger, Tamara	EXD	EXD
Taboada Arango, Viviana	EXE	SPD
Toda, Ichiro	VPP	SCF
Torres Martinez, Karina	VPF	ITE
Zavala, Veronica	EXE	SPD