IFC: Upstream Opportunities in Infrastructure

As part of the World Bank Group, IFC has two overarching goals: ending extreme poverty by 2030 and promoting shared prosperity. Through direct investments and advisory services, IFC provides private sector solutions that lay the foundation for sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

With its six decades of experience working with private sector clients and governments, global footprint, and core competencies, IFC is well-placed to catalyze much-needed private investment. IFC’s new corporate strategy is focused on creating markets, mobilizing private capital, and providing support to countries where private capital flows are inadequate to address major development needs.

IFC’s upstream activities consist of pre-investment work that lays the foundation for future transactions, often in collaboration with the World Bank and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA). Efforts include technical assistance, capacity building for institutions and private companies, and support to clients and governments, among others. It complements our existing business and unlocks new investment opportunities.

Why Upstream

- Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals calls for a significant scale-up in private investment in emerging economies. However, bankable deals are in short supply, especially in the most challenging countries and frontier markets.
- In the poorest countries and in fragile and conflict-affected states, what’s needed is a more systematic look at overarching development challenges and how to solve them. Our upstream work encompasses this broader scope, in addition to identifying individual projects worthy of support.
- Our upstream efforts support the creation of tools to help de-risk projects and identify development gaps that can be addressed through private sector solutions.

Eligibility Criteria

Uncover development problems and/or market or investment gaps that could be addressed through investment projects and/or conducting regulatory/sectoral reforms

Have a clear line of sight to a potential private sector investment within five years

Demonstrate consistency with World Bank Group/IFC country strategy priorities

Deliver measurable development impact once the investment occurs

Our Approach

Transaction Upstream
Early-Stage Ventures & Project Development
Activities that enable a specific, identified transaction to take place

Creating Markets Upstream
Global Delivery Platforms
Scalable instruments or solutions that can be replicated across countries
Markets & Enabling Environment
Country specific initiatives to improve the market and enabling environment

About InfraVentures

InfraVentures is IFC’s pioneering $150 million project development facility that provides early-stage risk capital to greenfield infrastructure projects or pilot business models while actively participating in the development phase with the private sponsor to bring projects to financial close within a reasonable time frame (2-5 years).
Upstream Project Highlights

Energy Service Company (ESCO) Global Platform | Global delivery platform
The Upstream ESCO for Telecommunications Anchor Tenants platform launched in 2020 aims to help scaleup energy efficiency for telecom operators by investing in appropriate technologies and operational know-how so that they can expand the reach of their networks. This in turn will increase the number of people in remote and low-income villages that have access to telecom services, especially in Africa. The platform is focused on identifying key markets and emerging players so that IFC can channel private investment in this market segment.

Fourth-generation road PPP program in Colombia | Markets and enabling environment, global delivery platform
IFC’s upstream support enabled the procurement and financing of 29 road PPPs, spanning more than 8,000 kilometers and generating $15 billion in investment. Our involvement included structuring the program, standardizing documents, streamlining procurement, and supporting reforms to facilitate capital markets financing. IFC’s catalytic role extended to enhancing Colombia’s development finance structure, with investments in the national development bank—a key program financier—and a pioneering debt fund to mobilize financing from institutional investors. The program is expected to add up to 0.4 percent to GDP growth through 2022 and generate more than 800,000 jobs.

Green buses in Mariupol, Ukraine | Early stage project development
IFC’s first-ever municipal financing in Ukraine involved the procurement of a green bus fleet for the city of Mariupol. Our role included providing technical assistance for project preparation. We helped develop the business plan, service obligation contract, and key performance indicators to improve the public bus operator’s service delivery. IFC also provided a EUR 12.5 million loan with a 13-year tenor to finance the procurement of 64 new buses, along with infrastructure upgrades. A concessional EUR 6.3 million loan complemented the financing package.

Upper Trishuli Hydro, Nepal | Early stage project development
IFC developed Nepal’s 216 MW run-of-river hydropower project on the Upper Trishuli river as an IFC InfraVentures project. The investment is expected to increase Nepal’s current electricity generation by about 40% and is the largest foreign direct investment to date in the country. IFC’s early investment has been instrumental in ensuring international standard best practices in environmental and social safeguards, a major challenge in Nepal’s hydropower sector.

Tema port in Ghana | Early stage project development
IFC Upstream work including project structuring, technical advice and engagement in environmental and social safeguards enabled IFC’s largest port investment to date and, at the time of commitment, the largest debt mobilization committed in Sub-Saharan Africa. Given its strategic location in relation to Accra, Tema handles over 90% of the country’s container traffic and serves as an outlet for landlocked neighbors (Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali).

Yoma Micro Power in Myanmar | Early stage project development
The rural connectivity project in Myanmar supported the construction and operation of hybrid solar systems to supply power to 250 off-grid telecom towers, and where feasible, to an initial 25 rural communities and businesses. After 2 years of a successful pilot through IFC InfraVentures, the debt and equity financing is currently being raised for the next phase with the potential to scale up to 2,000+ sites in the country.