

Ex post evaluation – Benin

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Sector: Education (CRS code: 1122000)
Project: Basic Education III Basket Funding (BMZ no. 2010 66 927)*
Implementing agency: Ministry of Early Childhood and Primary Education (MEMP), Ministry of Secondary Education and Technical and Vocational Training (MESFTP RIJ), Ministry of Culture, Literacy, Crafts and Tourism (MCAAT)



Ex post evaluation report: 2019

All figures in EUR million	Project A (Planned)	Project A (Actual)
Investment costs (total)**	149.3	149.3
Counterpart contribution**	13.3	13.3
Funding	136.0	136.0
of which budget funds (BMZ)	5.0 (and 16.0 from phases I and II)	5.0 (and 16.0 from phases I and II)
Co-financing**	115.0	115.0

*Random sample 2018

** Co-financing, counterpart contributions and total investment costs apply for the phase I–III period.

Summary: In Benin’s primary education sector, great progress has been made in school enrolment over the last decade, but the quality of teaching has remained inadequate despite considerable efforts to improve it. The FC project, with a financing volume of EUR 5 million, built on the previous phases (BMZ no. 2006 66 529 and 2008 65634) and helped to finance the updated sector development plan by participating in basket funding (PDDSE: Plan Décennal de Développement du Secteur de l’Education), which is aligned with the goals of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). The measures financed by the basket were grouped into three components: 1) improving the quality of basic education, 2) improving access to education, retention rates and educational equity, and 3) improving administration and governance in the education sector. The focus of the basket’s programme activities was on improving access to education, particularly by building nursery, primary and secondary schools, as well as literacy centres.

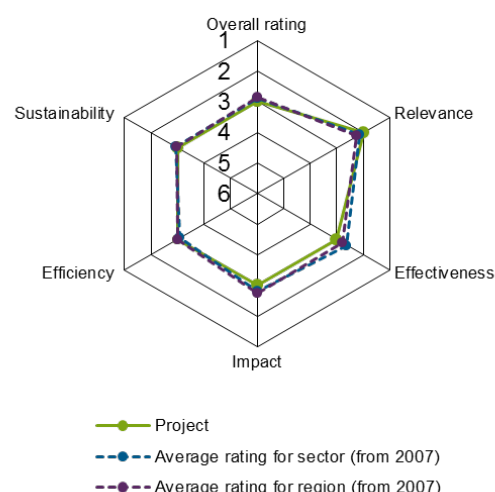
Objectives: The overarching development objective (impact) was the contribution to improve basic education in both quantitative and qualitative terms. The module objective (outcome) aimed to improve teaching and learning conditions in primary schools, secondary schools and literacy centres.

Target group: All school-age children (6–15 years), teachers, administrative staff, illiterate young people and adults throughout the country.

Overall rating: 3

Rationale: The infrastructure measures implemented made a significant contribution to achieving the overall objective. However, providing sufficient, good quality teaching staff has been and remains dependent on government efforts. The basket activities were highly relevant for the education sector in Benin, which is regarded by all parties involved as very important for the further development of the country. This is also reflected in high budget allocations (approximately 20% of the national budget). The longevity of the infrastructure measures is somewhat shortened due to low-value building materials or poor execution and maintenance, but is still acceptable in the national context.

Highlights: Building maintenance and repair are not institutionalised, but are visibly dependent on the varying levels of commitment by the people responsible. The school meals co-financed as part of the basket funding have resulted in an increased number of children attending school on a regular basis and have helped reduce dropout rates.



Rating according to DAC criteria

Overall rating: 3

Ratings:

Relevance	2
Effectiveness	3
Efficiency	3
Impact	3
Sustainability	3

General conditions and classification of the project

Since 2008, Benin's basic education sector has fallen within the scope of German Development Cooperation (DC) support. The FC project assessed as part of the ex post evaluation (EPE) builds on the previous phases and by participating in the basket funding, it contributes to financing the sector development plan valid at the time of appraisal (PDDSE: Plan Décennal de Développement du Secteur Educatif), which was drawn up in line with the international Education for All (EfA) initiative. In addition to FC, AFD and DANIDA were also involved in the basket funding at the time of the project appraisal (PA), while the World Bank added activities financed by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) during the project term.

The measures financed by the basket were grouped into three components: 1) improving the quality of basic education, 2) improving access to education, retention rates and educational equity, and 3) improving administration and governance in the education sector. The basket's programme activities focused on improving access to education, particularly by building nursery, primary and secondary schools, as well as literacy centres. The implementation of the measures was coordinated by an administrative unit in the Ministry of Education (UATS). The funds were disbursed through the government structures for the education budget.

A total of approximately EUR 148 million was provided between the basket's creation in 2008 and the end of phase III in 2015. With a total contribution of EUR 21 million over all three phases, the German FC co-financing amounts to approximately 14% of the basket volume. Phase III involves an FC contribution of EUR 5 million.

Relevance

Since school fees for basic education were eliminated, Benin has seen a sharp rise in demand for school places and school enrolment rates have risen. At the time of the project appraisal, this trend stood in contrast to the quality of teaching, the qualifications of the teaching staff and the support and oversight of nursery, primary and secondary schools by administrative authorities. Due to the lack of teachers and/or classrooms at some locations several grade levels had to be taught together in very large classes. This led to high rates of pupils needing to repeat their year, which put significant strain on the system. High drop-out rates, especially among girls who married early or were taken out of school to work, were also part of the core problem at the time of the project appraisal. Overall, the planning of measures in the basic education sector needed to be improved at national, departmental and municipal level.

Improving the quality and quantity of basic education was therefore one of the primary challenges in the education sector at the time of the appraisal and is still one of the main challenges today. It should be addressed through basket funding, Fonds Commun Budgétaire (FOB) – a basket funded by donors and the Beninese government to finance measures that aim to improve the basic education sector in Benin. The financing concept was designed to achieve the following outcomes: improve access to basic education (component 1), increase the percentage of children completing primary school (component 2) and improve planning, administration and government in the education sector (component 3). The focus of the measures was thus on improving access to education (outcome), particularly by building nursery, primary and secondary schools, as well as literacy centres (output). According to the project appraisal, these

measures were intended to improve the quantity and quality of education (impact). However, the concept did not make sufficient provision for improving the quality of education to have an impact on quantity and quality, e.g. by expanding and improving teacher training, redesigning teaching programmes, and through studies and evaluations. The extent to which TC was active in this area still needs to be clarified. The achievement of the objective assessed in the ex post evaluation at outcome level – “improved teaching and learning conditions in primary and secondary schools and literacy centres” – is influenced to a large extent by the individual basket-funded measures. However, the achievement of the objective also depends on other factors outside the influence of the basket. These are mainly the number of teachers at the schools, the quality of teaching and the quality of the curriculum. The impact assumptions are plausible with these limitations from today’s perspective.

At the time of the project appraisal, Benin’s educational goals were aligned with those of the Partenariat Mondial pour l’Éducation (PME)/Global Partnership for Education (GPE), which strives to provide higher-quality basic education for all. The PME formed the basis for the Benin education strategy valid until 2015, the 10-year PDDSE plan (Plan Décennal de Développement du Secteur Educatif). As an integral part of the PDDSE, German DC contributes to the quantitative and qualitative improvement of basic education. Therefore, the FC and TC measures are coordinated without forming a joint DC programme.

The basket structure led to donor harmonisation, even beyond the basket, as donors not involved in the basket also participated in sector consultations. However, the activities of the education basket were not coordinated closely enough with those of the FADeC decentralisation fund, in which FC was also involved. Infrastructure measures were carried out by the Ministry with funds from the education basket simultaneously to infrastructure measures by the municipalities with funds from the FADeC (in some cases at the same schools). The project appraisal should have taken into account better coordination of the activities and a review of the implementation structures of the basket (possible relocation of implementation to suitable municipalities).

Overall, we can just about classify the relevance of phase III basket funding for basic education as good.

Relevance rating: 2

Effectiveness

The assessment of the indicators with respect to target achievement at outcome level can be summarised as follows:

Indicator	Status PA, Target PA	Ex post evaluation (2017)
(1) Gross enrolment rate (total girls)	Status PA: 111.5% 107.8% Target value: 109.7% 109.3%	113% 109%
(2) Net school enrolment rate (total girls)	PA: 73%	90.4% 87.5%
(3) Percentage of total budget allocated to education (including basket funding)	23.3% Target value: 24.5%	17%
(4) Pupil/teacher ratio	2011: 47.9 Target value: 46.3 (target)	43.6
(5) Pupil/classroom ratio	2011: 48 (PASEC)	49.6

According to the logic behind the basket, there are no plans to allocate the financed measures to a single donor. However, with more than 70% of the funds spent, the focus of the basket measures was clearly on component 2 (measures to improve access to education, retention rates and educational equity). Most of the funds for component 2 were spent on building and equipping nursery, primary and secondary schools,

school offices and literacy centres, as well as supporting school canteens. During phase III of the basket funding from 2013 to 2016, 199 classrooms, 73 latrine blocks and 46 school offices were built.

The indicator most closely related to these infrastructure activities is the ratio of pupils to classrooms. Due to the efforts of the basket and other activities, this ratio was kept at the same level despite the steadily increasing number of children. However, in view of population growth and the integration of school-age children who have not been enrolled in school, further major capacity-building efforts are needed to maintain or improve this level.

According to the statistical office of the MEMP, the data for school enrolment rates is not reliable. The last census conducted by the national statistics agency was in 2013, but the data collected was incomplete. Projections of a 2.7% p.a. growth rate have been made on the basis of this data. However, sample surveys have shown that around 30% of children between 6 and 11 years of age do not go to school and that the available data on gross enrolment rates must therefore be incorrect. Surveys are currently being conducted to update the database with the support of UNICEF.

All school buildings started operation after handover and are in use. The 72 school administration buildings constructed over the three phases (46 in phase III) also have been all handed over. However, only 57 were used at the time of the final review, and some were only used for storing documents. The buildings, some of which have been vacant for 2–3 years, show signs of visible decay and, in a few cases, heavy termite infestation. Some of the furniture is also unusable. The primary and secondary schools visited as part of the ex post evaluation were overcrowded, meaning that makeshift structures (shelters) had to be used before the new classrooms were built. As the number of pupils continues to grow, especially in primary and secondary schools, demand remains high.

The amount of expenditure on education in the overall budget remains comparatively high. In this context, the pupil/teacher ratio could be further improved. The percentage allocated for education in the national budget is higher than all other sector budgets.

We can assume that the further development of the education strategy in its present form was supported by the regular donor dialogue within the scope of the basket. The donors' overall assessment of the content of the strategy is therefore very positive and it is conceivable that donors will continue to support the government's efforts on this basis.

Effectiveness rating: 3

Efficiency

During implementation of the infrastructure measures as part of the basket activities, the construction costs were low compared to other countries because the award of construction contracts focused heavily on minimising costs. The construction costs for the school buildings financed by the basket between 2008 and 2016 are generally considered reasonable at an average of EUR 13,000 per classroom and EUR 133 per square metre (production efficiency). Construction costs remained constant over the period and even declined slightly in some cases. We can venture to suppose that the usual increase in construction costs was partly offset by lower-value materials. This has led in part to a reduction in the quality of buildings, which in turn affects their lifetime. However, during the ex post evaluation, it became clear that the condition of the buildings and the expectations regarding their lifetime are roughly in line with local standards and are therefore acceptable in the overall context. The production efficiency is thus also acceptable.

The locations for the infrastructure measures were chosen by a selection committee from the Ministry according to need, based on statistical data. However, according to the information provided, political criteria were also considered into the selection of locations. This was not always readily apparent to the donors, and therefore it could not be averted. In individual cases, the locations selected for the infrastructure measures were not ideal. Not all infrastructure measures were carried out where demand was highest and in certain cases, locations were selected where parts of the buildings could not be used, e.g. due to flooding. We can infer from this that allocation efficiency was limited.

The basket structure itself improved donor harmonisation and led to a well-coordinated sector dialogue. In contrast, coordination within the basket between the donors was sometimes very labour-intensive. A fixed division of tasks only existed to the extent that the World Bank was responsible for tenders. All other is-

sues were agreed collectively. The basket was implemented in partnership with various implementation units (the coordination unit of the UATS ministry, the two semi-state construction agencies – AGETUR and AGETIP – and 22 municipalities), which sometimes led to delays, according to the information provided. Aggravating the situation, there are three different ministries responsible for education.

The partner systems were used to implement the basket activities and disburse the funds. The fiduciary risks were analysed during the appraisal, and annual audits of the basket were conducted. This led to complaints about the lack of records for the financing of school meals. More detailed appraisals resulted in partial reimbursement of funds by schools where no evidence of the use of the funds could be provided.

Efficiency rating: 3

Impact

The objective at impact level – to “contribute to quantitative and qualitative improvement in basic education” – was achieved in part through basket funding. The infrastructure measures implemented as part of the basket activities are particularly capable of contributing to the quantitative improvement of basic education. A qualitative improvement can only be achieved if sufficient, high-quality teaching staff are provided at the same time.

Indicator	Status PA, Target PA	Ex post evaluation (2017)
(1) Percentage of pupils with the minimum skills required (40/100) (Mathematics and French) at CP (= 2 nd year of school) and CM1 (= 5 th year of school) levels (state schools)	28% (CP) and 22% (CM1) Target value: 40%	PASEC 2014: 9.6% CP French 33.5% CP Mathematics 51.7% CM1 French 39.8% CM1 Mathematics (more up-to-date figures not available)
(2) Primary school graduation rate (total girls)	64.3% 57.5% Target value: 82.9% 79%	60% 57%
(3) Primary to secondary school transition rate	2011: 83.1% Target value: 81.2%	94% (of pupils who passed the final examination)
(4) Drop-out rate from primary school	2011: 49.4% Target value: 38%	12.3%
(5) Primary school year repetition rate	2011: 16% Target value: 10%	14.4%

The achievement of the skills required in French and mathematics was only assessed in 2014 as part of the PASEC survey. It is currently not possible to measure the improvement achieved by phase 3 basket funding. The target graduation rates were not met, with around 40% of pupils dropping out of school before graduation, as children are needed as workers. In some cases, pupils go home for lunch and do not return to school in the afternoon. This effect was countered by offering lunch in the schools – financed by the basket. The introduction of school lunches successfully reduced drop-out rates. The distribution of school lunches by mothers in the schools’ local communities was expanded by the government – initially to schools in poorer regions, where there was a sharp increase in school attendance as a result of school meals. Of the pupils who passed the final examination after their sixth year in school, 94% still go to school, which is a satisfactory level. This means that the drop-out rate can be classified as a major constraint on educational success.

The expansion in quantity and the resulting improvement in the quality of the education made it possible to make a contribution to combating poverty and to social development in Benin. The discussions with school representatives and local authorities made it very clear that high value is attached to ensuring an

adequate level of educational quality and that its importance for the development of Benin is acknowledged. The basket funding supported and promoted this prioritisation.

Impact rating: 3

Sustainability

The infrastructure measures completed (above all the construction of schools) have various shortcomings in terms of construction quality, operation and use – due, among other things, to the low construction costs. The condition overall is acceptable, but budget shortfalls rule out the possibility of repairs, even though a standardised maintenance plan for primary schools has been in place since 2010 and there is awareness that repairs and maintenance must follow a standardised concept. However, sustainability is at risk because the building maintenance and repair is not institutionalised.

The sustainability of the basket structure itself depends on the continued commitment of the donors. Currently, all donors have withdrawn except for the World Bank. The new strategy in the education sector (2018–2030) was recently adopted by the government of Benin and focuses on improving the quality of teaching. In addition, the reform efforts of the current government are generally clear. Therefore, it can be assumed that there will be an increase in investments in the sector by the government itself, as well as an increase in fresh donor contributions to support the new strategy. Whether the basket structure will be used again for this purpose will also depend on the results of the basket's future evaluation by AFD.

The continuation of the basket by the World Bank – possibly with renewed participation by AFD in the future – should be viewed in a positive light, given the continuing need to strengthen the administration and governance of the education sector. As a result, we rate the basket's sustainability as only just satisfactory from today's perspective.

Sustainability rating: 3

Notes on the methods used to evaluate project success (project rating)

Projects are evaluated on a six-point scale, the criteria being **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency** and **overarching developmental impact**. The ratings are also used to arrive at a **final assessment** of a project's overall developmental efficacy. The scale is as follows:

Level 1	Very good result that clearly exceeds expectations
Level 2	Good result, fully in line with expectations and without any significant shortcomings
Level 3	Satisfactory result – project falls short of expectations but the positive results dominate
Level 4	Unsatisfactory result – significantly below expectations, with negative results dominating despite discernible positive results
Level 5	Clearly inadequate result – despite some positive partial results, the negative results clearly dominate
Level 6	The project has no impact or the situation has actually deteriorated

Rating levels 1-3 denote a positive assessment or successful project while rating levels 4-6 denote a negative assessment.

Sustainability is evaluated according to the following four-point scale:

Sustainability level 1 (very good sustainability): The developmental efficacy of the project (positive to date) is very likely to continue undiminished or even increase.

Sustainability level 2 (good sustainability): The developmental efficacy of the project (positive to date) is very likely to decline only minimally but remain positive overall. (This is what can normally be expected).

Sustainability level 3 (satisfactory sustainability): The developmental efficacy of the project (positive to date) is very likely to decline significantly but remain positive overall. This rating is also assigned if the sustainability of a project is considered inadequate up to the time of the ex post evaluation but is very likely to evolve positively so that the project will ultimately achieve positive developmental efficacy.

Sustainability level 4 (inadequate sustainability): The developmental efficacy of the project is inadequate up to the time of the ex post evaluation and is very unlikely to improve. This rating is also assigned if the sustainability that has been positively evaluated to date is very likely to deteriorate severely and no longer meet the level 3 criteria.

The **overall rating** on the six-point scale is compiled from a weighting of all five individual criteria as appropriate to the project in question. Rating levels 1-3 of the overall rating denote a "successful" project while rating levels 4-6 denote an "unsuccessful" project. It should be noted that a project can generally be considered developmentally "successful" only if the achievement of the project objective ("effectiveness"), the impact on the overall objective ("overarching developmental impact") and the sustainability are rated at least "satisfactory" (level 3).