

Burundi – Primary School Construction in the Provinces of Ngozi and Muyinga

Ex post evaluation

OECD sector	11220 / Primary education	
BMZ project ID	1991 65 630	
Project-executing agency	Ministère de l'Education et de la Culture	
Consultant	-	
Year of ex post evaluation	2006	
	Project appraisal (planned)	Ex post evaluation (actual)
Start of implementation	Q4 1992	Q4 1992
Period of implementation	43 months	58 months
Investment costs	EUR 2.4 million	EUR 2.076 million
Counterpart contribution	EUR 0.36 million	EUR 0.031 million
Financing, of which Financial Cooperation (FC) funds	EUR 2.045 million	EUR 2.045 million
Other institutions/donors involved	-	-
Performance rating	3	
• Significance / relevance	3	
• Effectiveness	2	
• Efficiency	4	

Brief description, overall objective and project objectives with indicators

The programme comprises the construction and equipping of new primary schools and additional classrooms at existing primary schools in the educationally backward provinces of Ngozi and Muyinga in north-eastern Burundi. The group targeted in the programme consists of primary schoolchildren in the above-mentioned provinces with limited access to educational facilities. Owing to the outbreak of civil war and the associated suspension of development cooperation by the German government, the programme had to be stopped shortly before the completion date.

The programme objective was to provide more primary school buildings in the above-mentioned provinces. This was intended to contribute to improving primary school education in order to give boys and girls from the poor sections of the population the same opportunities to achieve a better standard of living (overall objective).

Indicators of the success of the programme in the provinces were:

- a) the same or better provision of classrooms per 10,000 inhabitants
- b) at least no change in the number of pupils per classroom
- c) at least no change in the number of pupils per teacher
- d) the same or a higher net enrolment rate in the first class as in the project appraisal.

Indicators of the achievement of the overall objective in the two provinces were:

- a) an increase in the percentage of primary schoolchildren in the age group (net enrolment rate) in relation to the total population
- b) an increase in the percentage of the children who have completed their primary school education.

Programme design / major deviations from the original programme planning and their main causes

This was planned as an open programme for the two provinces of Ngozi and Muyinga. It covers the construction and extension of primary schools and equipping them with furniture and schoolbooks. The outcome was intended to be 25 new schools with 6 classes (150 classrooms) and 100 additional classrooms at a further 25 primary schools to enable the full range of primary school education to be provided. Overall, 250 new classrooms were to be built and equipped as part of the programme. In addition, 50 schools that had previously been built as parental initiatives were to be refurbished and equipped.

Owing to the crisis developing since 1993 and the civil war which began in 1995, only 24 new schools (144 classrooms) and 85 new classrooms in 17 schools were built. The 229 classrooms represent 92% of the originally planned construction measures. Only 20 of the planned 50 schools that were constructed in parental initiatives were included. Funds were provided for a limited number of schoolbooks. The growing crisis meant that only a very small portion of the planned counterpart contributions by the local people could be activated.

The unrest disrupted work, and especially in the programme region close to the Tanzanian border, which was particularly at risk from rebels, only limited progress could be made with construction. Later, the building sites in that area had to be abandoned completely. The programme was carried out without a consultant under the BPE, a sub-division of the Ministry of Education. The implementation concept proved appropriate even during the crisis period, as the BPE reacted flexibly to problems that occurred in certain places and at certain times and the security situation was taken into account when measures were carried out.

The schools built under the programme comply with building specifications and good materials were used; they are overall in a good state of repair. The latrine blocks have been built approximately 20 metres away as dry toilets. The result is sound, standardised schoolrooms with sturdy furniture. Because of the building materials selected and well-adapted details in the original draft, the cost of replacing damaged equipment will be only minor and so far hardly any maintenance work has been needed. None of the schools is connected to the water or electricity supply. The school benches are mostly still fit for use; after approximately nine years, hardly any schoolbooks are left, which is to be expected.

The Ministry of Education and its regional sub-divisions are currently responsible for maintaining and running the schools; the Ministry has to date made no contribution to maintaining the schools. However, the quality of the buildings is so good that, with a few exceptions, hardly any repairs need to be made. The local people are too poor to do more than replace broken panes of glass or repair a school bench.

As a result of the unrest, as many as 50% of the schoolchildren in some regions are orphans. Many children who attend school are hungry; normally they are given one meal a day, in the evening. High absentee rates are the result of children suffering from malnutrition being too weak to travel the distance to the school, which can be up to 10 km away. This is the reason why approximately 5% of boys and girls in the two provinces do not attend school.

At the start of the school year in Burundi in autumn 2005, compulsory school fees were removed, which released a flood of interest in the primary schools. There was a very sharp increase in the net enrolment rate, which had been between 42% and 81% in previous years, because older pupils were also enrolled. The number of pupils went up within a short period from 0.98 million in 2004 to 1.35 million in 2006, i.e. by approximately 38%. In Ngozi province, the new situation led to an average of 156 children per classroom in the first year of schooling and 96 children in other classes. The situation is similar in Muyinga province, where there are 94 children per classroom in the first year of schooling and 97 children in the subsequent classes. Before the removal of school fees was announced, there were only around 50 children per classroom.

Parents are busy with day-to-day survival and have little time to take an interest in the educational success of their children. Parents' committees therefore rarely hold meetings. Cooperation between parents and teachers is limited to dealing with educational problems.

The programme was planned and implemented as a pure infrastructure project and therefore formed a conceptual whole. From the current perspective, a similar programme – possibly in cooperation with other donor initiatives – would take account of direct learning aspects or include components of teacher training, support parents' initiatives and support the decentralisation process.

Key results of the impact analysis and performance rating

The programme made a decisive contribution to improving the school infrastructure in two particularly disadvantaged provinces and thus to improving the primary school education of the target group, the children of the particularly poor rural population. This improves their opportunities to find ways of earning a living other than in the subsistence economy, where very out-of-date methods are used, e.g. in the new small businesses on the market places and in the small provincial towns.

The schools are attended by an average of around 1,000 children. A very high level of use is made of the buildings and of the classrooms and is mainly the result of the high net enrolment rate in the school year 2005/6. The children are packed in to the rooms, with as many as five pupils sharing a bench that is approximately 1.20 m long.

However, despite high usage, the programme schools are typically very well looked after and are cleaned once a week. However, the latrine blocks are very overused; as many as 1,200 children have to share six toilets. A major concern for the public health system is that no school is connected to the water supply as if pupils washed their hands regularly, this would limit the spread of most cases of diarrhoea. Only two schools have a system for using rainwater.

Almost all the schools work a double shift system with the result that only 80% of the planned lessons can be given. The teaching staff have usually completed a teacher training course and only a very few assistant teachers for the overcrowded first classes are less well qualified. Although teachers' salaries in rural areas are not high by comparison with the cost of living and given the large size of primary school classes, they are above the national average.

A major problem is the shortage of educational materials; there are major deficits here. In the first classes, between three and five children share a schoolbook in Kurundi, the national language. No more textbooks are available for classes 3 and 4. In classes 5 and 6 as many as 10 children share a book. There are virtually no mathematics books in the schools visited. None of the schools is connected to the electricity supply, which means that photocopies cannot be made.

Consequently, the standard teaching methods are “chalk and talk”, caning and rote learning, even in the slightly smaller upper classes. Because of the shortage of school materials, the lessons are written on the board and the pupils copy them into their exercise books, if they have any.

Given these adverse circumstances, the large number of pupils repeating the school year or failing to complete their studies does not come as a surprise. According to information from the regional education authorities (“Directions Provinciales de l'Enseignement”), an average of 22.6% of the children in Ngozi and 12.3% in Muyinga repeat a class. The unsatisfactory present situation should be seen as temporary, although it will only improve in the medium term. Currently, the teachers have to make a tremendous effort to provide well-structured lessons of an acceptable quality in the primary schools. To alleviate the situation, emergency classrooms are built of branches and plastic sheeting. However, improvements will be made when the PARSEB Programme (“Programme à la reconstruction du système éducatif burundais”) supported by donors begins to take effect. The programme also takes account of the fact that over a period of approximately six years it will be possible to overcome the huge numbers of pupils in primary school education (backlog due to the removal of school fees) and that the educational provision will then return to normality.

The FC-financed schools will still be needed; owing to the good construction quality, the classrooms will also be available over the long term. Given the low education budget in Burundi, however, it is unlikely that there will be sufficient funds available for repairs to school buildings in the near future. Sustainability is promoted by the fact that the selected building standard and the sturdy furniture only require a limited amount of maintenance and that fairly high investment costs will therefore reduce operational costs in the long term.

Financial burdens caused by maintaining the schools cannot be borne by the population at present. The low rate of pupils completing their primary school education can be taken as an indicator of poverty and child labour. The removal of school fees mainly means relief for poor families in regions that are characterised by a subsistence economy because they find it particularly difficult to acquire cash.

Education for girls is favoured by the location selected for the FC-financed schools as these have been built to enable boys and girls to attend them without engendering socio-cultural problems and to ensure that the routes to school are not risky for girls. Nearly 70% of the girls can now read and write, whereas in 1991 only 26% of their mothers were literate. It is to be expected that the particularly high population growth that was evident in Burundi at the start of the war will also decline. This was one of the causes of the war because too little agricultural land was available to feed the rapidly growing population. Many studies show that there is a connection between girls' education and a reduction in population growth, with the result that an alleviating effect can be expected in this area in the long term. The programme therefore has gender equality potential, which was exploited.

The programme was not designed to take account of environmental aspects but all schools have been built in such a way as to avoid negative ecological effects. The latrine blocks operate without water flushes but they are so overused that many children avoid them. There is hardly any refuse because of the local people are poor and leave nothing and even reuse plastic bags several times.

To sum up, we assess the developmental impact of the programme on the basis of the criteria of efficiency, effectiveness and relevance/significance as follows.

- Efficiency: The investment costs per classroom (production efficiency) are, as a result of the price increase during the war, somewhat above the original estimate but are still

acceptable. The buildings that are still no more than the basic shells and those that cannot be clearly identified reduce the efficient use of funds. In addition, repeat and dropout rates reduce the allocation efficiency. Overall the project's efficiency is rated as slightly insufficient (sub-rating 4).

- Effectiveness: The utilisation rate for the classrooms, which has fluctuated because of the crisis and depending on the state of security, has been very high since the last school year 2005/06. Nearly all schools operate a double shift system and have a teacher-pupil ratio of 1:96 in the first school year and an average of 1:60 in the following years. This exceptional situation, which has arisen because of the removal of school fees, will last for a few years more. The schools in the programme make a very positive contribution in this respect. Extreme over-occupation, however, has an adverse effect on learning conditions, with the result that we find evidence of satisfactory effectiveness only (sub-rating 2)
- Relevance/significance: The programme is highly relevant as the schools are in constant demand, even immediately after the end of the civil war. The current very poor teaching and learning conditions are attributable to the above-mentioned exceptional situation. We expect the intensive financial and technical input by the donors to improving this situation to bring about a noticeable improvement in primary education within two to three years. We therefore assess the relevance and significance as generally sufficient (sub-rating 3).

The developmental effectiveness of the project to build primary schools in the provinces of Ngozi and Muyinga is assessed as sufficient overall (sub-rating 3).

Conclusions and recommendations

Before the educational system in a country with a high illiteracy rate is decentralised, it should be assessed whether the bodies at municipal and district level to which responsibility is to be devolved are qualified to assume this new task. Consequently, a suitably adapted training programme may need to be arranged.

The extent to which the local population can contribute self-help and participate in maintaining the schools needs to be evaluated in detail before the programme starts. Particularly in poverty-stricken areas it cannot automatically be assumed that parents have time or money to spare to organise the running and maintenance of a school because they are taken up with ensuring their daily survival.

When schools are built in poverty-stricken regions, it is advisable to choose a good building standard and sturdy furniture because the slightly higher investment costs means less maintenance in the first years and hence a reduction in operating costs, relieving the population in the medium term of burdens that they can hardly shoulder.

So that schools do not become breeding grounds for disease or a source of infection of transmissible diseases such as diarrhoea, cholera, dysentery, etc., dry latrines may be retained. However, the building designs should incorporate places where the pupils can wash their hands. If rural schools cannot be connected to a public water network, properly installed rainwater usage systems are an alternative.

Primary school infrastructure projects need to be supported by a variety of qualitative measures, possibly in cooperation with other donor initiatives. This includes, first and foremost, initial teacher training and further training, provision of learning materials, setting up parents' initiatives and, where appropriate, support for the decentralisation process.

Assessment criteria

Developmentally successful: Ratings 1 to 3	
Rating 1	Very high or high degree of developmental effectiveness
Rating 2	Satisfactory developmental efficacy
Rating 3	Overall sufficient degree of developmental efficacy
Developmental failures: Ratings 4 to 6	
Rating 4	Overall slightly insufficient degree of developmental efficacy
Rating 5	Clearly insufficient degree of developmental efficacy
Rating 6	The project is a total failure.

Criteria for the evaluation of project success

The evaluation of the "developmental effectiveness" of a project and its classification during the ex-post evaluation into one of the various levels of success described in more detail below concentrate on the following fundamental questions:

- Have the **project objectives** been achieved to a sufficient degree (project **effectiveness**)?
- Does the programme generate sufficient **significant developmental effects** (project **relevance** and **significance** measured in terms of the achievement of the overall developmental policy objective defined beforehand and its effects in political, institutional, socio-economic and socio-cultural as well as ecological terms)?
- Are the **funds/expenses** that were and are being employed/incurred **appropriate** with a view to achieving the objectives and how can the programme's microeconomic and macroeconomic impact be measured (efficiency of the programme design)?
- To the extent that undesired (**side**) **effects** occur, can these be tolerated?

We do not treat **sustainability**, a key aspect to consider when a project is evaluated, as a separate evaluation category, but rather as an element common to all four fundamental questions on project success. A project is sustainable if the project-executing agency and/or the target group are/is able to continue to use the project facilities that have been built for a period of time that is, overall, adequate in economic terms, or to carry on with the project activities independently and generate positive results after the financial, organisational and/or technical support has come to an end.