

## Ex Post-Evaluation Brief

### Dominican Republic: Primary School Building Programme, Phases II and III



<b>Programme/Client</b>	(1) Primary School Building Programme Phase II (2002 65 041) (2) Primary School Building Programme Phase III (2003 65 478)	
<b>Programme executing agency</b>	Secretaría de Estado de Educación (SEE) - since renamed: now the Ministerio de Educación de República Dominicana (MINERD)	
<b>Year of sample/ex post evaluation report:</b> 2011*/2011		
	Appraisal (planned)	Ex post-evaluation (actual)
<b>Investment costs (total)</b>	EUR 14,83 million	EUR – 0,93 million
<b>Counterpart contribution (company)</b>	EUR 4,22 million	EUR – 0,93 million
<b>Funding, of which budget funds (BMZ)</b>	EUR 10,61 million	EUR 10,61 million

\* random sample

**Project description:** Primary School Building Programmes II and III were implemented in the education districts of Azua, Barahona and San Juan (Phase III only), continuing the work of Phase I of the eponymous FC project. Each phase comprised a construction component and a maintenance component. A total of 200 new classrooms were built and a further 820 were rehabilitated. This was supplemented by the supply of equipment for around 140 classrooms and by ancillary construction projects (sitework, kitchens and sanitation facilities), which equated to building another 204 classrooms. In addition, decentralised funds were established for the purpose of school maintenance; these financed maintenance measures in a total of 538 schools.

**Objective:** The overall objective in each phase was to contribute to the improvement of primary education in the Dominican Republic. The programme objective was to improve the provision of school facilities in the predominantly rural areas of the programme regions, and to encourage their maintenance on a sustainable, decentralised basis. By current standards the indicators selected were not entirely appropriate. For the purposes of this evaluation, the indicators adopted for the overall objective were the drop-out rate and the regional net enrolment rate. The causal chain that was assumed was not complete in itself, but complemented interventions by other donors (the IADB and the World Bank). Indicators for the achievement of the programme objectives related to infrastructure utilisation and the establishment of competent maintenance committees.

**Target Group:** The target group for the project comprised children of primary school age, mostly from the poorer strata of the population, in the programme regions of Azua, Barahona and San Juan.

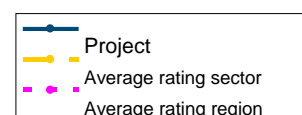
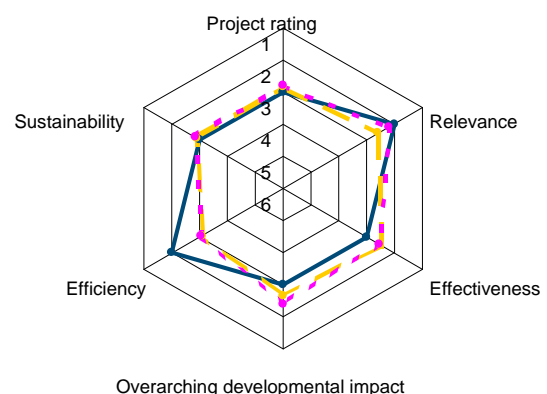
#### Overall rating: 3

The infrastructure components had strong developmental relevance, and were implemented efficiently and successfully. Issues regarding decentralised maintenance reduced the rating score.

#### Notes:

Compared with similar programmes by other donors in the Dominican Republic, the projects evaluated here stand out by virtue of combining new build and rehabilitation measures and achieving good cost levels per classroom.

#### Rating by DAC criteria



## EVALUATION SUMMARY

**Overall rating:** Based on an overall consideration of the programme's impact and risks, we have assessed the developmental efficacy of both these projects as satisfactory (rating 3). The overall rating comprises the following elements:

**Relevance:** The lack of primary school education and the shortage of the necessary school infrastructure were correctly identified as significant constraints on development. The need to improve qualitative elements such as school curricula, teaching materials and teacher training were also recognised. These issues were covered in projects which had complementary effects that were implemented by other donors (the World Bank and IADB). A basic understanding was reached with these donors. Overall, taking the donor programmes just described into account, the causal chain is reasonable. However, none of the donor programmes mentioned concerned themselves with the politically sensitive problem of ensuring that there is always a teacher present in the classroom – which is another key factor influencing attainment of the overall objective of improving primary school education. Hence the potential contribution to the overall objective from both the phases evaluated was not realised in full.

This programme integrated and strengthened existing structures, particularly district administrations. However, the implementation unit was somewhat isolated within the Ministry, and was unable to establish the advances achieved as best practice for other programmes.

Having undergone ex post evaluation, Phases II and III conform to the developmental priorities agreed with the Dominican Republic, the priorities of the partner country, and the developmental objectives of the Federal Government of Germany. Taken altogether, relevance has been assessed as good (rating: 2).

**Effectiveness:** After between four and seven years of use, both the newly built and the rehabilitated schools are in comparatively good condition, and are in constant use for teaching purposes. For the most part, the classrooms have adequate furniture and teaching materials.

The objective indicator set during programme planning stipulated a minimum average class size of 25 pupils. In view of guidelines which have since been introduced - that classes with more than 26 pupils should be sub-divided - this is no longer considered appropriate. This indicator was modified during ex post evaluation to an average of 90% of maximum allowable classroom occupancy in both teaching shifts (morning and afternoon) including a third (evening) shift if such was provided. Based on this revised indicator, the objective is considered to have been achieved in each phase. At 92%, this occupancy rate was exceeded in both phases, even without taking evening tuition into account. Moreover, since at present around 20% of classrooms are actually used for three teaching shifts, a significantly higher number of pupils are benefiting from these facilities.

The second programme objective, promoting sustainable school maintenance on a decentralised basis, proved too ambitious. This maintenance concept certainly won praise from all those involved, but it was not possible - neither through the measures which this approach envisaged at the district and regional level, nor through the activities of other donors - to anchor this concept within the country's highly centralised school system. In general, the infrastructure maintenance committees required by the indicator do officially exist; however, due to lack of resources, they no longer have any real function. Although the central administration has shown no appetite for reform to date, there are, according to the Ministry, the beginnings of a drive towards decentralisation under the new Minister (who took office in March 2011). However, since we are looking at a lengthy process here and the Minister is likely to have only a short time left in office before the 2012 elections, no significant progress is expected in the near future. The involvement of parent representatives in decision-making processes has had a positive impact on the schools as long as these possess only a minimum of self-generated financial resources for cleaning and maintenance.

This ex post evaluation considers the programme objective of improving school infrastructure as having been achieved in full. In contrast, the decentralised school maintenance initiative failed to meet expectations. Overall, effectiveness has been assessed as satisfactory (rating: 3).

**Efficiency:** Investment costs per classroom were substantially below those of other multilateral donors. In addition, better construction plans enabled costs per classroom to be driven down even further over the course of the programme. The practice of combining the new build of classrooms with the comprehensive rehabilitation of existing classrooms - which was used under both phases of the programme - served to increase efficiency. The temporary cost increases encountered in Phase III, and the resultant reduction in the number of classrooms being built or refurbished, were the consequence of the nationwide rising cost of construction. As this has been identified as an external factor, it has not been viewed adversely.

However, lack of maintenance and inappropriate use (especially of toilet facilities) proved to be frequent constraints on efficiency, and gave rise to implementation delays in each phase. This had a negative impact on efficiency in both cases. Due to the inability to guarantee continuous teacher presence both phases could not realise their potential contribution to improving primary school education in full.

Since the decentralised concept of maintenance is now only being implemented to a limited extent, the use of resources to establish this system is seen in hindsight as having reduced efficiency. On the other hand, the obligation to avoid exchange of personnel at the central implementation unit has enabled this department to operate with much greater efficiency than others in the Ministry, and this has served to increase efficiency.

The Ministry is continuing (even after programme completion) to equip the schools with adequate teaching staff, furniture and teaching materials, demonstrating a suitable level of overall allocative efficiency in the selection of school locations. In summary, efficiency has been assessed as good (rating: 2).

**Overarching developmental impact:** Both programme phases substantially improved school infrastructure in the programme regions. As at today, on average an estimated 49,000 primary schoolchildren are benefiting each year from the classrooms which have been constructed or rehabilitated. The drop-out rate in the programme region was previously above average and has now been reduced to the national average. Regional net enrolment rates also look positive and provide grounds to suspect that, in numerical terms, access to education in these regions has risen above the national average.

However, as well as access to education, qualitative aspects play an important role in reaching the objective of “improving primary school education”. Assessment studies have shown that, compared with other parts of Latin America, the quality of Dominican education (based on a national average) has declined between the mid-1990s and 2007. A major problem here has been the low number of effective teaching hours in the school year, which fall well below the workload envisaged. Furthermore, there are significant shortcomings in the quality of teaching. Complementary programmes run by other donors, which focused on these qualitative aspects, show scarcely any measurable impact to date.<sup>1</sup> In view of the programme’s substantial quantitative effects, and also considering the qualitative shortcomings which continue to exist at a sectoral level, overarching developmental impact is considered satisfactory (rating: 3).

**Sustainability:** The risks to the programme identified during appraisal did not transpire. From today’s perspective, the following risks jeopardise the programme’s sustained success: (i) inadequate funding is being provided to maintain the existing school infrastructure and (ii) urgently needed improvements in teaching quality have not materialised.

There is a small migratory trend towards urban districts from the rural areas of the programme regions, and this looks set to rise. Since the programme focuses on rural districts, it is anticipated that, in some of the schools covered by this programme, class sizes - and therefore project effectiveness - will slowly decline. However, despite their limited maintenance, the majority of these classrooms will continue to be used in future. There is no doubt that the Ministry of Education – as in the past – is continuing to provide sufficient teaching staff, school furniture and teaching materials for the schools to operate in the classes that have been built and renovated. However, it is reasonable to assume that use of toilet facilities (and, to some extent, kitchens as well) will still be severely limited in future due to lack of maintenance. This lack of maintenance is a structural problem within the Dominican education sector. Despite its success during the course of the programme, it

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<sup>1</sup> Partially due to the length of time required for the success of certain measures to become visible (curriculum development, teacher training etc).

was not possible to establish the decentralised concept of maintenance as standard practice. As at the time of this evaluation, it is not envisaged that the Ministry of Education will pursue this maintenance concept in the near future.

In terms of primary school education quality, no significant improvements are expected in the next few years.

Because the majority of the school infrastructure will be usable over the long term, sustainability – despite the anticipated decline in terms of developmental effectiveness, due to increasing migration – has been assessed as having just reached a satisfactory standard (rating: 3).

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

Projects (and programmes) 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:

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

Ratings 1-3 denote a positive or successful assessment while ratings 4-6 denote a not positive or unsuccessful 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. Ratings 1-3 of the overall rating denote a "successful" project while ratings 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" (rating 3).