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Dominican Republic: Primary School Construction Programme I

Ex-post evaluation

OECD sector	11220 / Primary education	
BMZ project ID	1) 1996 65 191 (investment in fixed assets) 2) 1996 70 175 (complementary measure)	
Project-executing agency	Ministry of Education (SEE)	
Consultant	GITEC, Düsseldorf	
Year of ex-post evaluation	**2005**	
	Project appraisal (planned)	**Ex-post evaluation (actual)**
Start of implementation	(1) Q4 1996 (2) Q4 1996	Q1 1999 Q2 1999
Period of implementation	(1) 42 months (2) 36 months	(1) 54 months (2) 48 months
Investment costs	(1) EUR 10.0 million (2) EUR 0.61 million	(1) EUR 9.71 million (2) EUR 0.61 million
Counterpart contribution	(1) EUR 2.43 million (2) -	(1) EUR 2.14 million (2) -
Financing, of which Financial Cooperation (FC) funds	(1) EUR 7.57 million (2) EUR 0.61 million	(1) EUR 7.57 million (2) EUR 0.61 million
Other institutions/donors involved	-	
Performance rating	3	
• Significance / relevance	2	
• Effectiveness	3	
• Efficiency	2	

Brief description, overall objectives and project objectives with indicators

The programme aims to improve school education in the rural areas of Azua and Barahona, two economically and educationally backward regions. In addition, it is to promote self-help oriented school maintenance through the participation of parents and communities. In this way, the programme is intended to contribute to improving primary education in the Dominican Republic (overall objective). The target group of the programme are primary schoolchildren in the above-mentioned programme regions with limited access to school infrastructure.

The measures comprised the construction, expansion, rehabilitation and the equipment of primary schools as well as the establishment of a fund for the temporary co-financing of the schools' running expenses. Furthermore, the programme-executing agency was supported in the review, adjustment and harmonisation of national construction and building design standards for school buildings, ancillary rooms and school furniture as well as in the promotion of parental participation. The programme-executing agency for the primary school construction programme is the Ministry of Education.

Indicators for the achievement of the programme objective were:

- Three years after completion, the classrooms financed from programme funds are utilised by at least 35 pupils per classroom. At the time of programme appraisal, an average class size of 35 pupils had been assumed. However, because the Ministry of Education requires classes to be divided if the class size exceeds 35 pupils, the indicator was reduced to 25 pupils per classroom.
- Maintenance work under the new maintenance concept will have been carried out on at least one third of the classrooms in Azua and Barahona at least once during the programme period.

Indicators for the achievement of the overall programme objective were:

- By 2000, the school enrolment rate in Azua and Barahona will have risen from currently 73% to 80%.
- The net school enrolment rate in the Dominican Republic will have risen to 90%.

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

In total, 149 classrooms in 45 schools were constructed or extended and 457 classrooms in 95 schools were rehabilitated. Thus, the target of 470 classrooms was exceeded by 29%. Apart from the classrooms, the measures included the creation of school administration buildings, sanitary facilities, libraries, kitchens for the provision of the school breakfast, enclosures and connections to the electricity supply system.

The programme measures have led to an improvement of the school infrastructure in the rural and urban marginal areas in both regions. Most of the sanitary facilities, however, are inoperative, either due to the lack of water and/or electricity and/or their only sporadical availability, or because the facilities were defective. In nearly all the schools the kitchens built under the programme were either vacant or utilised as storage spaces. A warm meal was cooked for the pupils in only a few isolated schools. In most of the schools visited during the ex-post evaluation, the pupils were provided with milk and a few biscuits for lunch.

A main programme component was the introduction of a maintenance concept for the schools. This was to be implemented with parental participation in all of the 20 districts in the two regions. Committees have been founded at district level and at the level of individual schools. The FC programme contributed to a reduction in the cost of the construction measures, to a review of the construction standards and to the preparation of the manual for decentralised maintenance of the school buildings. The creation of an independent implementation unit for the FC programme has had a positive impact with regard to programme success because decisions could be made rapidly and in small teams.

No major changes were made to the original programme design. The review of the funds disbursed in full did not reveal any indications of improper use of funds.

Key results of the impact analysis and performance rating

School enrolment rates have developed positively (due to the delay of the start of operations, 2003 is taken as the reference year). According to information provided by the Ministry of Education, in 2005 the net enrolment rate in both programme regions was 88% and at the national level it was 93%. Accordingly, the indicator was achieved at the national level. In the programme region, though, it was not quite reached. However, compared to the beginning of the programme (60-65% in both regions), the situation has improved considerably. In 2005 the gross enrolment rates were 108.7% in Barahona and 106.7% in Azua. The enrolment indicator was thus surpassed.

The constructed/rehabilitated classrooms satisfy the needs and, after 2 to 4 years of use, are still in a good condition. In nearly all of the schools, the classrooms are regularly used in two teaching shifts (in the morning and in the afternoon) and by an adequate number of pupils. In total, 243 schools benefited from the fund, which financed 2,340 maintenance measures in 1,135 classrooms. On average, each school received maintenance funds under the maintenance concept approximately twice a year. The government of the Dominican Republic has assumed the costs of teachers, school meals and teaching materials and will also be able to assume them in the future. The quantitative programme objective, the improvement of school education, has been reached. Nevertheless there are still qualitative bottlenecks, such as the low number of lessons and the low quality of teaching, which continue to hinder a substantial improvement of primary education in the Dominican Republic.

The FC programme has contributed decisively to a broad coverage of school infrastructure in the rural and urban marginal areas in the two regions. Approximately 30,000 pupils benefited from the construction, rehabilitation and expansion measures. The two hurricane-ridden regions now have hurricane-safe shelters – a great benefit in the eyes of the local population.

In comparison with 1996, the increase in the school completion rate and the decrease in the number of pupils who drop out of school or repeat a grade lead to macroeconomic savings. Due to the review and provisional final version of the national

construction standards and the constant adjustment of the building design standards and their testing in use, cost reductions and capacity-building effects could be achieved, for instance under the follow-up FC programmes (phases 2 and 3).

The programme aimed to ensure active participation by the school and community in the maintenance of the schools and was based on a maintenance concept originally developed by the World Bank. During the programme period, however, effective participation by the target group did not achieve to desired dimension, because no provision had been made for funds to be decentralised down to school level. The maintenance concept does not allow for sufficient participation and co-decision-making by the communities. Moreover, the maintenance of the schools can only rely to a limited extent on community-related self-help, as most of the repairs need to be carried out by paid skilled workers. Although the Ministry of Education has committed itself to transfer financial resources to the districts for maintenance purposes (counterpart contribution), it is fairly improbable that this obligation will continue to exist once the FC programme has ended. The School Building Maintenance Directorate at the Ministry of Education has only enough funds to permit a limited number of the necessary maintenance measures to be carried out. This constitutes a major risk to sustainable maintenance.

More girls than boys go to school. When they are enrolled at a school, the number of boys and girls is fairly evenly balanced. However, from the 2nd grade onwards, the picture is different: boys drop out of school more frequently, especially from the 4th grade onwards. For this reason, 40% of the 14 to 17-year-old girls, but only 29% of the boys go to school. Also the dropout and repeating rate is lower among girls than among boys. For this reason, girls benefit more from the FC programme. Mainly mothers participate in the parents' committees and in Azua and Barahona, 70% of the teachers are women. The new school buildings and those that have been rehabilitated provide a better working environment. The class sizes are smaller and well-kept schools create a better learning atmosphere. The sanitary facilities were also built to cater for the different needs of girls and boys.

The schools built or rehabilitated/expanded are located in the rural and urban marginal areas of the least developed regions of the Dominican Republic. Owing to this focus, the programme gave people from the poor sections of the population better access to schooling (77% of the region's population is poor).

The programme design did not take account of environmental aspects. It focussed on the population's participation in the maintenance of the schools. A manual was developed for the administrative handling of this participation. The participation of the parents and communities in school maintenance, one of the programme objectives, could not be achieved to the extent desired during the programme period, because no provision had been made for funds to be decentralised to the level of the individual schools. However, maintenance committees were founded at the individual school level and the parents were involved in applying for measures to be carried out.

On the basis of the key criteria of efficiency, effectiveness, and significance/relevance we assess the programme's developmental efficacy as follows:

- During the course of the programme, the cost of constructing, expanding and rehabilitating the classrooms was reduced. The limited functionality of the toilets and the percentage of kitchens that is not being used have a negative impact. The production efficiency is generally satisfactory and an extra 29% of classrooms were built. The continuous review of the building design standards and their practical application in the construction of the schools led to cost reductions in the subsequent phases. The efficiency of the programme is rated as satisfactory (rating 2).
- After two to four years of use, the constructed/rehabilitated classrooms are still in a good condition. The indicator of use by at least 25 pupils per teaching shift has been achieved in most cases. Only in Barahona, and only during the morning shift, are there on average fewer than 25 pupils in a class, at least according to the surveys carried out during the on-site ex-post evaluation. However, as the classrooms are used nearly everywhere in two shifts (in the morning and in the afternoon), capacity utilisation is sufficient. There is a sufficient number of teachers. The quality of the lessons, though, could be improved; however, this holds true for the Dominican Republic as a whole. The maintenance concept is less participative than was originally assumed, as the communities cannot take their own decisions. For this reason and due to the fact that the Ministry will presumably not provide sufficient funds for future maintenance work, sustainable maintenance is not ensured. The programme objective has been achieved with regard to the improvement of the school infrastructure and also in formal terms, regarding the number of maintenance measures. Nevertheless, the concept to promote self-help school maintenance encountered difficulties. The programme's effectiveness is rated as barely sufficient (sub-rating 3).
- The school construction programme was developmentally relevant and made developmental sense. It contributed significantly to giving people in both regions better access to the rural and urban marginal infrastructure in the field of primary education. The national impact on the quality of primary education - the overall objective of the joint programme of the World Bank and the BID - tended to be positive, but reached the targeted values only in part. The advisory services provided under the complementary measure with regard to the review and provisional final version of the national construction standards and to the constant adjustment of the building design standards and their testing in use had structural effects leading to cost reductions. We classify the programme's relevance and significance as generally satisfactory (sub-rating 2).

Given the deficiencies in terms of effectiveness, we assign the programme an overall sufficient degree of developmental efficacy (rating 3).

General conclusions and recommendations

- Before the start of a self-help oriented FC school maintenance programme, the adequacy of the underlying concept has to be verified in detail. References to the experiences gained in another concurrent project without information about the sustainability of the approach are not sufficient.
- The decentralisation of funds down to the level of the individual schools is necessary to achieve real participation by the local population.
- As a general rule, the participation of the local population in school maintenance is a necessary condition for sustainable operation, but it is not sufficient on its own. Financial resources for operation and maintenance must also be provided from other sources (state, community).
- The assumption that the communities and/or the school committees are able to do all the maintenance work on their own is unrealistic, because technical skills, for example to repair the sanitary facilities, are needed and are not available in the communities or have to be paid for.

Key

Developmentally successful: Ratings 1 to 3	
Rating 1	Very high or high degree of developmental efficacy
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 programme is a total failure

Criteria for the evaluation of programme success

The evaluation of the "developmental efficacy" of a programme and its classification during the ex-post evaluation under one of the various levels of success described in more detail above concentrate on the following fundamental questions:

- Have the **programme objectives** been achieved to a sufficient degree (programme **effectiveness**)?
- Does the programme generate sufficient **significant developmental effects** (programme **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 programme is evaluated, as a separate evaluation category, but rather as an element common to all four fundamental questions on programme success. A programme is sustainable if the programme-executing agency and/or the target group are able to continue to use the programme 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.

Legend

Developmentally successful: Ratings 1 to 3	
Rating 1	Very high or high degree of developmental effectiveness
Rating 2	Satisfactory developmental effectiveness
Rating 3	Overall sufficient degree of developmental effectiveness
Developmental failures: Ratings 4 to 6	
Rating 4	Overall slightly insufficient degree of developmental effectiveness
Rating 5	Clearly insufficient degree of developmental effectiveness
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 above concentrate on the following fundamental questions:

- Are the project objectives reached to a sufficient degree (aspect of project effectiveness)?
- Does the project generate sufficient significant developmental effects (project relevance and significance measured by the achievement of the overall development-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 to reach the objectives appropriate and how can the project's microeconomic and macroeconomic impact be measured (aspect of efficiency of the project conception)?
- To the extent that undesired (side) effects occur, are these tolerable?

We do not treat **sustainability**, a key aspect to consider for project evaluation, as a separate category of evaluation but instead as a cross-cutting element of all four fundamental questions on project success. A project is sustainable if the project-executing agency and/or the target group are 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 on their own and generate positive results after the financial, organisational and/or technical support has come to an end.