

Eritrea: Primary Education Programme

Ex post evaluation report

OECD sector	11 22 0 / Primary education	
BMZ project ID	1995 66 522	
Project executing agency	Ministry of Education (MoE)	
Consultant	Hydroplan Ingenieur – Gesellschaft mbH, Worms	
Year of ex post evaluation report	2007	
	Project appraisal (planned)	Ex post evaluation report (actual)
Start of implementation	Q2 1996	Q3 1996
Period of implementation	30 months	77 months
Investment cost	EUR 2.84 million	EUR 2.67 million
Counterpart contribution	EUR 0.28 million	EUR 0.24 million
Financing, of which FC funds	EUR 2.56 million	EUR 2.43 million
Other institutions / donors involved	-	-
Performance rating	2	
Relevance	2	
Effectiveness	2	
• Efficiency	3	
• Overarching developmental impact	2	
• Sustainability	2	

Brief description, overall objective and project objectives with indicators

The project entitled “Primary Education Programme” aimed at making a contribution to improving primary education in three former provinces in Eritrea (Barka, Gash-Setit and Senhit) (overall objective). The programme objectives pursued consisted of increasing access to public primary schools and improving the learning conditions in the programme region. The target group were children of school age and overaged schoolchildren. The programme comprised the new construction or expansion of 19 primary schools and one secondary school including accommodation for teachers, furniture, advisory services and the provision of equipment for school mapping as well as consulting services.

Indicators for measuring the achievement of the overall objective were not defined. The programme objectives were considered as achieved if within a period of five years after the start of the programme the net enrolment rate had increased in the programme region by around 15% to roughly 35% and the drop-out rate had fallen over the same period from 45% (nationally) to around 35% (in the programme region).

From today's perspective the following comments have to be made with regard to the originally defined objectives and indicators:

- Enrolment and dropout rates rather have to be assigned to the overall objective. However, it seems doubtful whether the programme had a decisive impact on dropout rates. Given the emphasis on infrastructure improvement, the improved access is clearly given priority over quality improvements.
- The indicators did not differentiate according to gender, which is customary in the education sector.
- In individual cases the source data was not very logical. This goes in particular for the dropout rate of 45%.

Thus, the assessment of the achievement of the overall objective was based on the gross and net enrolment rates at the primary school level. In addition, promotion and completion rates were taken into account. The assessment of the achievement of the programme objective was based on the utilisation of classrooms.

Project design / major deviations from the original project planning and their main causes

The education system in Eritrea was and still is supported by several bilateral and multilateral donors. The project was the first commitment under German Financial Cooperation in this sector. A project planned under German Technical Cooperation at the same time and aimed at supporting the curricula development as well as teacher training and advanced training was not implemented.

Due the fact that during the project implementation an administrative reform took place, the delimitation of the programme region has changed under the new structure and is not entirely comparable to the original region. This means that the original programme region, which comprised the Barka, Gash-Setit and Senhit provinces, is composed today of the Gash Barka and Anseba regions. In the Debub region, too, which was severely affected by destruction following a border conflict with Ethiopia, which broke out in 1998, measures were financed at four schools.

The open programme focused on improving the school infrastructure in the programme region. The period of implementation until the last schools were finally put into operation was considerably delayed - also due to the armed conflict - and took 77 months instead of the originally expected 30 months.

Due to cost increases and a changing need for advisory services the scope of the programme had to be reduced. According to the original planning altogether 33 primary schools were to be newly constructed or rehabilitated and furniture provided. Instead, 19 primary and one secondary school were constructed or extended (including teacher accommodation, sanitary facilities, water supply, electrical installations) and equipped with furniture. EDP equipment was provided for school mapping and training and advice on how to use the equipment was given to the staff of the programme executing agency. The planned development of a maintenance concept and the provision of equipment for the maintenance of the buildings was finally not implemented because the programme executing agency wanted to wait until the results of a maintenance concept developed with Danish support had been presented.

The programme approach chosen proved to be largely appropriate. Overall, the technical design of the construction and equipment measures is adequate and meets the needs. From today's perspective, a critical aspect to be mentioned, however, is the lack of external (boundary?) walls. Moreover, expectations placed in the local protagonists were too high. In consequence, the consulting services to support the programme executing agency in the construction planning and supervision had to be extended substantially. As a result of this, one planned component (supply of vehicles, equipment and tools for the supervision of construction works) was not implemented. As far as possible, the school communities and teacher-parent

committees make noticeable contributions to improving the school environment and school operation. However, the envisaged counterpart contribution of 10% to be rendered by the target group could not be achieved.

The remaining funds of around EUR 0.13 million are to be used for a follow-up project (construction and equipment of secondary schools – BMZ ID 2001 66 207).

Key results of the impact analysis and performance rating

By providing schools and teacher accommodation equipped in accordance with actual needs the programme helped to improve the physical access to schools and the overall schooling environment. Access to schooling is provided for around 9,000 children every year and another around 9,000 children benefit from an improved learning environment. In this way the programme helps to create the conditions to open up better income opportunities, an improved self-determination potential and more social participation for these children. However, these measures can only reach their full effect if the relevance and quality of school education are further improved as well. The Eritrean government, with support from several other donors, has already made considerable efforts in this respect. These efforts are to be continued in the context of the Education Sector Development Programme, a 5-year plan aimed at further developing the education system.

The number of school-age children in Eritrea who do not go to school continues to be high. These are mainly children from disadvantaged population groups, which do not have access to schooling. Given the high poverty rate of over 60% of the population and the partly very remote programme locations it can be assumed that the programme still has a direct impact on poverty.

At the time of the programme planning no gender-specific differences existed with regard to school enrolment rates, however, differences did exist with regard to repeat (repetition?) and drop-out rates. The programme was not specifically targeted at promoting the participation of girls in education. Nevertheless, it did take account of gender-specific needs (e.g. by providing separate latrines for boys and girls). The programme has the potential to improve gender impacts. By increasing the density of the school network the project made a contribution to improving school enrolment and attendance of girls. In fact, however, there is an increasing gap between enrolment rates of boys and girls.

The concept of the project was not geared towards protecting the environment or natural resources. The measures did not have any noticeable negative impact on the environment. Minor impacts like soil sealing are acceptable and do not require any specific environmental protection measures.

Due to the envisaged contributions to be made, parents and school communities were involved in the project implementation and, through parent-teacher committees, exerted an influence on everyday life at school. Nevertheless, the targeted promotion of the self-help potential and decentralised administrative structures was not a specific focus of the programme concept.

On the basis of the following five sub-criteria we rate the developmental effectiveness of the project as follows:

Relevance: Rating 2

By providing school infrastructure the project aimed at tackling a specific bottleneck that was and still is of major importance for the target group and for the partner government. The project was directly geared to improving basic needs and reducing poverty. By improving the access to primary education the project made a contribution to implementing the right to education and in particular achieving the aim of universal basic education pursued by the international community of states. The programme measures were part of comprehensive efforts and an overall reasonable sector policy to develop the primary education system. In combination with the

activities of the Eritrean government and other donors to improve the quality and relevance of education, the project was relevant in development policy terms.

Effectiveness: Rating 2

From today's perspective, the programme objectives are relevant and adequate. However, the indicators to measure the programme impacts were suited only to a limited extent. All schools are used in line with the intended purpose; most schools are operated in two shifts and additional literacy programmes are implemented. The average size of classes is 55 pupils. Altogether, around 17,900 children attended the programme schools in the 2005/2006 school year.

Efficiency: Rating 3

Due to considerable cost increases, the originally planned measures could not be fully implemented. However, taking into account special factors related to the armed conflict in Eritrea and the fact that some of the school locations are very difficult to access, the overall cost/benefit ratio is still acceptable and given the impacts achieved, the expenses are justified. Though repeat (repetition?) rates continue to be at a high level of around 20%, the internal efficiency improved overall due the decline in drop-out rates. While in 2001/2002 it took on average 8.2 years to go through the 5-year primary school cycle, only 7.1 years were required in 2003/2004.

Overarching developmental impact: Rating 2

An improvement in the educational level and in particular in basic education is an important element of development and poverty reduction strategies. From today's perspective, too, the overall objective of improving primary education in the programme region is relevant and adequate. However, the indicators to measure the programme impacts were suited only to a limited extent. Eritrea shows considerable increases in pupil numbers and school enrolment rates, both countrywide and in the programme region, thus the originally planned target values were clearly overachieved.

	1994/95				2003/04			
	Eritrea	Barka	Gash-Setit	Senhit	Eritrea	Anseba	Debu	Gash-Barka
Gross enrolment rate (%)								
Total	54.1 ¹	19.6	40.2	34.8	71.7	72.8	100.5	64.7
Girls	51.1				65.2			
Boys	56.7				77.9			
Net enrolment rate (%)								
Total	29.5 ²	9.3	14.7	21.5	51.5	51.5	73.0	44.8
Girls	29.7				48.3			
Boys	29.2				54.5			

The project has made a contribution to these objectives. Currently school enrolment, which is the result of the newly created capacities provided under the FC programme, accounts for about 1.8% of the total number of pupils attending primary and middle school in Eritrea and 2.7% of the respective (?) number of pupils in the programme region. A critical aspect to be mentioned is the increasing gap of the participation of girls and boys in education, which also finds expression at the programme schools in the fact that girls account for 43% of the total number of pupils. Thus, girls do not benefit to the same extent as boys from the programme. The

¹According to project appraisal report: 47.4% in 1994

²According to project appraisal report: 25.9% in 1994

participants in the literacy programmes conducted at the schools are mostly women. Comparative studies on the assessment of the development of learning results are not yet available. Alternative assessment criteria such as completion or rather promotion rates have shown a positive development in recent years:

Completion / promotion rates (in %)	Eritrea		
	1994/95	2001/02	2003/04
Total	55	70.9	78.0
Girls		69.8	77.5
Boys		71.7	78.3

No negative programme impacts can be observed.

Sustainability: Rating 2

Unless schools are destroyed in the event that the armed conflict flares up again, their long-term utilisation seems to be ensured. The schools have now been in operation for several years and are still in a good to acceptable condition. However the long-term use of the building substance is in danger because maintenance budgets are lacking. The current school maintenance system is largely based on contributions rendered by parents and school communities. Given the widespread poverty, many people are frequently not in the position to render the expected contributions. Nevertheless, we do not expect that due to insufficient school maintenance the developmental efficacy will deteriorate to such an extent that no sufficient developmental impacts are achieved. The government of Eritrea evidently gives high priority to improving the level of education of the population and, overall, pursues a reasonable sector policy. It can be assumed that these efforts will be continued in the future.

In consideration of the sub-criteria mentioned above, we rate the developmental effectiveness of the projects as sufficient overall (rating 2).

General conclusions and recommendations

- The inclusion of locations into a programme should not be linked to the fulfilment of rigid targets concerning the contributions to be made by the population. A flexible adjustment of these targets should be possible on the basis of the capability of the individual school communities to render contributions and with a view to (prevailing living ?) conditions that may change during the project implementation period. In the sense of a comprehensive understanding of participation, also non-monetary contributions made by the population should be recognized as an important element. In order to ensure the proper financing of school operating costs including more comprehensive repair and maintenance measures, the schools need regular allocations from the budget in addition to the contributions made by the school communities.
- To ensure a proper and sustainable operation of the schools it is frequently not sufficient simply to request evidence that funds have been allocated in the budget to cover operating costs such as teachers' salaries and maintenance costs because it is not ensured that the funds will actually be made available. Moreover, the financial aspects are only part of a frequently more complex problem. It is often not possible to fill posts at locations that are considered unattractive. Limiting requirements to programme facilities or to individual categories of expenses holds the danger that isolated solutions are found that put other locations or system components at a disadvantage. The leverage effect of an individual project is frequently too limited to achieve sector-wide reforms. In such cases it is recommended jointly with other donors to deal with priority reform subjects in the framework of a coordinated sector dialogue with the partner government and to make the implementation of the project or further support for the sector dependent on the implementation of these reforms.

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

Projects are evaluated on a six-point scale, the criteria being relevance, effectiveness, “overarching developmental impact” and efficiency. 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 shortcoming
- 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

A rating of 1 to 3 is a positive assessment and indicates a successful project while a rating of 4 to 6 is a negative assessment and indicates an unsuccessful project.

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 an improvement is very unlikely. 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. A rating of 1 to 3 indicates a “successful” project while a rating of 4 to 6 indicates an “unsuccessful” project. In using (with a project-specific weighting) the five key factors to form an overall rating, it should be noted that a project can generally only be considered developmentally “successful” if the achievement of the project objective (“effectiveness”), the impact on the overall objective (“overarching developmental impact”) and the sustainability are considered at least “satisfactory” (rating 3).