

**Mali: Rehabilitation and Extension of Studio Facilities
at Mali's National Radio Broadcaster**

Ex-post evaluation report

OECD sector	22030/Radio/television/print media	
BMZ Project number	1995 66 498	
Project executing agency	Office of Radio and Television of Mali - ORTM	
Consultant	Weidelplan	
Year of ex-post evaluation	2006	
	Project appraisal (planned)	Ex-post evaluation (actual)
Start of implementation	1st quarter 1996	3rd quarter 1996
Period of implementation	27 months	48 months
Investment costs	EUR 4.4 million	EUR 4.4 million
Counterpart contribution	EUR 0.2 million	EUR 0.2 million
Finance, of which FC funds	EUR 4.2 million	EUR 4.2 million*
Other institutions/donors involved	GTZ	GTZ
Performance rating	3	
• Significance/Relevance	2	
• Effectiveness	3	
• Efficiency	3	

* Residual funds amounting to EUR 39.600 will be used for the project, Kati Kita Road II, BMZ no. 2001 65 563I

Brief Description, Overall Objective and Project Objectives with Indicators

The cooperation project comprised the rehabilitation and expansion of the studio and production facilities of the public Malian ORTM radio station, which were in such a precarious condition that the broadcaster was having serious difficulties with transmission operations. Under Financial Cooperation, the existing programme buildings were refurbished, a studio building and a programme building constructed and fitted out with radio broadcasting studios. In parallel, measures were carried out in Technical Cooperation to improve the organisation, management, and business efficiency of the Malian radio broadcaster and the target-group relevance of its programmes.

The overall project objective was to make a contribution to improving the access of the whole population to information and communication and thus also to disseminating basic social policy goals.

The project objective was to enable the Malian broadcasting company (ORTM) to maintain and improve the quality of radio operations on its medium-wave and short-wave national channel specially geared to the needs of rural areas. This objective complemented the objectives of the TC cooperation project for strengthening the business operations of the executing institution, improving target-group relevance of the ORTM programmes and supporting local radio.

Indicators: No indicator was defined for the overall objective. The indicators for project objective achievement were:

- Preproduced broadcasts by the national programme amounting to at least 30% of total broadcasting time
- Increase in the production factor (production time/broadcasting time) to 3.5
- Utilization of the two fully-equipped production studios for a total of at least 130 hours per week
- Equipment downtimes in broadcasting operations of the national channel not exceeding 0.5% of total air time and 1.0% of total production time

Programme Design/Major Deviations from Original Programme Planning and Main Causes

Apart from minor changes in design, the FC measures were mainly carried out as planned. These were:

- Rehabilitation and construction measures (refurbishment of the existing programme building, construction of a second programme building, construction of a technical building for 4 studios) and installation of emergency power supply for these buildings
- Studio equipment (instruments and systems for 1 broadcasting studio, 2 production studios for voice recordings and 1 production studio fitted out for music productions, measuring and testing instruments, workshop facilities and spare parts for technical studio facilities) and instruction and training of operatives on specific equipment
- Consultancy services for advice and support of the executing agency in preparing and implementing the project

The floorspace for the new studio and programme building was extended in detailed planning to meet requirements. The consultant assignment turned out to be much more extensive (planned: 36 expert-months; actual: 56 expert-months) due to delays. As against the original plan of partial equipment, the studio was fully redesigned and newly equipped as a studio for music productions to enable the national production of music broadcasts/recordings. No changes were made to the technical specifications.

Substantial deviations occurred in the implementation timetable, which was prolonged from the planned 27 months to 48 months. The reasons for this were lengthier tendering procedures and contractual negotiations with the building contractor as well as delays in construction works, for which the company and the executing institution were both partly to blame. As a result, ORTM has adequate floorspace and extended production capacities, which are expected to meet requirements for the next 10 years. Altogether, we assess the implementation plan as adequate. It was not responsible for the delays that occurred. A sample audit of the application of funds found no indications of any misallocations.

The project under review was implemented in cooperation with GTZ. The TC measures aimed at extending and improving the services of the national radio network ORTM by strengthening technical and non-technical capacities and rationalizing operations. Due to the delays in executing the construction works and the 30% cut in the TC budget, the transition between the term of the TC project and the operating phase of the new or refurbished buildings and facilities turned out to be considerably shorter than planned. The advisory services rendered by GTZ focused on the organizational and operational structure, financial reporting and the informatization of the ORTM administration. Not enough attention was paid to non-technical issues, such as cooperation with local radios and improving the target-group relevance of the radio programme. Even though training in these areas would have been of benefit, the TC measure has enabled the executing institution to run the station in a technically and administratively efficient way and with improved transparency.

Key Results of Impact Analysis and Performance Rating

The radio landscape in Mali has changed drastically in the last 10 years since project appraisal. Due to the expansion of transmission to rural areas the number of radio sets in the country has increased from about 1 million to 2.5 million and the number of radio listeners has tripled from 2 million to 6 million. Another clear change is the emergence of private broadcasters, which have increased from 12 (1995) to 200 (2005). Added to this are 58 new local public stations that broadcast about 10 hours a day on ultrashort wave. The number of international broadcasters (including RFI, BBC, Deutsche Welle, Radio Beijing) has also risen from 3 to 6. So altogether, there has been an enormous increase in access to information and communication for the Malian population and diversity of opinion in the country. In a list on the state of press freedom worldwide issued by Reporters Without Borders in 2005, Mali came 37th out of 167 countries assessed, with only 5 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa recording a better ranking.

Besides its existing nationwide medium-wave transmissions, the national channel (ORTM First Channel) has now increased its regional short-wave stations from 3 to 5. The regional transmitters have an outreach of 60 to 100 km and are on the air about 120 hours a week. Their programme is partly broadcast by the national channel and generally geared more to educational and rural themes. Women/child/health topics make up as much as about 7% of the programme. Special importance was attached at project appraisal to promoting rural broadcasting. On the one hand, owing to its thematic focus, rural radio is especially suitable for reaching the rural, poorer population, also in remote areas; on the other, it had evidently been repeatedly neglected due to 'urgent' reporting from Bamako and general preferential treatment for television in ORTM resource allocation. Today, various indicators point to a distinct improvement: The rural radio programme has been upgraded to the status of a separate division in the ORTM organization and this division has sufficient floorspace and production capacities to produce its programmes since the buildings rehabilitated and constructed in the project became operational.

As to the executing institution and its financial position, converting the state-owned enterprise with its civil-servant staff into a public-law broadcasting company proved to be difficult and encountered much in-house opposition. Reforms have made slow progress only. The introduction of a TV and radio licence fee as planned at appraisal is still pending and in our assessment will not happen in the foreseeable future, either. Furthermore, ORTM has been increasingly dependent on government funds in recent years, since its own income (advertising, sale of broadcasting time) has not kept up with rising costs. Still amounting to 36% of total revenue in 2003, own income in 2006 is estimated at about 30% in 2006. Despite rising state subsidies, ORTM has been making losses since 2000, depleting its original state-funded capital base of about FCFA 5,170 million (EUR 7.88 million) to about half in 2004. Added to this, 38% of fixed assets had already been written off in 2004 so that reinvestments will need to be made. According to the executing institution, finances have not impaired regular operations (till now). The unsustainable finance policy or permanent underfinancing can be expected to cause technical disruptions in the medium to long term. An initial sign of unsustainability is that although the maintenance personnel of the executing agency can remedy most technical failures and downtimes in due time it will prove difficult if outside maintenance services have to be purchased. This is the case for the digital sound mixer in the music studio, for example, which has been faulty for quite some time and can neither be repaired in-house nor by specialist firms for evident lack of funds. The resultant downtimes are currently compensated for by the manual mixing unit (backup). There are other sustainability risks due to a lack of preventive maintenance but owing to their construction the digital components of the studio equipment require much less servicing than the analog units previously used. The sustainability risks are also lower because the project measures procured an extensive stock of spare parts.

Overall objective: The project has made a contribution to improving access to information and communication in the country. This is evidenced by the expansion of ORTM's regional programme and the stability of the national channel's broadcasting operations on air for over 126 hours a week. The

ratio of programmes broadcast in French has diminished since project appraisal from 57% to 50% with a corresponding increase in local-language transmissions. This has brought the broadcaster closer to the target group nationwide. The share of rural radio/culture/education/religion on the national channel has also risen from 22% to 31%, although this has been at the expense of current affairs information and debates, which fell from 36% to 27%. The programme's public-benefit role is stipulated in media legislation. In the decree of 23 October 1996, the tasks of the Office of Radio and Television of Mali (ORTM) were defined and adopted by the Malian government in the form of functional specifications. Even though this document does not prohibit government influence on ORTM or limit its scope in the best way, it does specify ORTM's duty to produce a politically and socially balanced programme along pluralistic lines. As mandated, ORTM contributes to democratization, decentralization and the advancement of national unity. Freedom of the press in Mali is rated as good by regional standards. A study by the Freedom House Foundation confirms that ORTM is also critical of the government in its reporting.

Altogether, the project objective of enabling ORTM to maintain and improve the quality of broadcasting on its national channel can be deemed to have been met. Before project start, the condition of the technical equipment at the executing agency was extremely precarious, jeopardizing broadcasting operations. The project has laid the infrastructural and technical foundation for proper operation for at least the next ten years. The information from the executing institution on downtimes in broadcasting operations of approx. 0.5% due to power failures, which are, however, compensated very quickly by the emergency generating sets, confirm the basic soundness of the technical facilities. No information is available on downtimes in production operations, but they ought to have caused few problems so far, as studio operations allow sufficient idle time to offset interruptions.

The equipment is far from fully utilized and only a part of the project's quality indicators have been met: According to the executing agency the share of preproduced broadcasts has risen to about 60% of broadcasting time (indicator at least 30%), but this figure contradicts the others on utilization of the production studios. The studios are run in one-shift operation and are evidently not always in parallel use. The indicator of 130 hours utilization for both new production studios would entail using them for at least 9 hours a day, seven days a week, which is unlikely, and at just under 2, the production factor falls well short of the target indicator of 3.5. More substantive training and explanatory work should have been done at the executing institution, which was not (no longer) carried out for lack of funds in the TC project.

The project did not aim at any environmental improvements and no major environmental pollution was caused, either. The project afforded scope for improving gender equality, which was in part made use of, since the programme includes quite a few programmes on the status of women and health and family issues. The project did not aim explicitly at improving governance. However, improving information in the population is an essential prerequisite for this. The project has no direct impacts on reducing income poverty, but informational programmes on health that educate the audience about health hazards and protective measures, for example, make an indirect contribution to poverty reduction.

Altogether, we assess the developmental efficacy of the project as sufficient (Rating 3), based on the following subratings:

The project objective has been achieved in sufficient measure, as the technical and organizational conditions for proper broadcasting operations have been met without which the executing agency would no longer have been able to perform its tasks. This must be qualified by the relatively low utilization of the production studios, though. The actual production factor attained (i.e. the ratio of studio time to broadcasting time) fell well short of the target (actual: 2; planned: 3.5). The almost complete lack of a preventive maintenance and insufficient finance pose sustainability risks in the medium to long term. These are, however, mitigated by the ability of ORTM personnel to carry out many repairs themselves and the adequate stock of spare parts for this financed from project funds.

Added to this, the partial use of digital technology reduces the maintenance requirements for studio equipment. Altogether, we judge the effectiveness to be sufficient (Subrating 3).

The rationale that improving equipment in the national public-law broadcasting company whose programmes are received by large parts of the population could make a contribution to improving the population's access to information is plausible (relevance). As to significance, the first channel of ORTM is currently the only one in the Malian media landscape (with the exception of some foreign broadcasters) that can assure the continuous communication of important cultural, health, political and administrative information throughout the whole of the national territory. Fifty per cent of the programme is transmitted in the various national languages, so that it provides a uniform source of information and communication for the whole population. Democratization, decentralization and the promotion of national unity are part of the national channel's broadcasting mandate. It differs in this respect from the independent broadcasters, which devote a much higher percentage of air time to music and games (significance). The project has made a crucial contribution to maintaining this service. The conditionalities as part of the project have also speeded up the implementation of the government agreement with ORTM and its reorganisation as an institution under public law, which has had a beneficial effect on the quality of information by lessening direct (party) political influence on it. The distinct increase in the number of radio sets (approx. 1 million at project appraisal to approx. 2.5 million in 2005), which cannot be directly attributed to the programme measures, has considerably enlarged the role of radio as an information medium for the population. We assess the significance/relevance as satisfactory (Subrating 2).

The higher consultancy costs (+35%) due to delays in contract placement and construction works were detrimental to the project's production efficiency. The allocative efficiency of the project can rate as good since radio still serves as the main source of information for the population, particularly in rural regions, despite the spread of television. Radio licence fees are not charged but given the administrative capabilities in Mali this would hardly be feasible. Altogether, we judge the efficiency of the project to be sufficient (Subrating 3).

General Conclusions

An adequate provision of spare parts to the executing institution for studio equipment also makes sense because these are often difficult to procure later due to technological progress and the executing institution frequently lacks sufficient funds to pay for a whole set of new equipment.

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 project is a total failure

Criteria for Evaluating Project Success

The evaluation of the developmental efficacy 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:

- 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.