

Mauritania: Municipal Development and Decentralisation I

Ex post evaluation report

OECD sector	43030 Urban development and administration	
BMZ project ID	1998 66 179	
Project executing agency	Developmental agency: Direction Générale des Collectivités Locales (DGCL), Construction agency: AMEXTIPE (Agence Mauritanienne d'Exécution des Travaux d'Intérêt Public pour l'Emploi)	
Consultant	GKW/Poeyry	
Year of ex post evaluation report	2009	
	Project appraisal (planned)	Ex post evaluation (actual)
Start of implementation	June 1999	December 2000
Period of implementation	36 months	78 months
Investment costs	EUR 1.41 million (FC programme only)	EUR 1.41 million (FC programme only)
Counterpart contribution	EUR 0.13 million	EUR 0.13 million
Financing, of which Financial Cooperation (FC) funds	EUR 1.28 million	EUR 1.28 million
Other institutions/donors acting in parallel	World Bank: USD 22 million	World Bank: USD 22 million
Performance rating	4	
• Relevance	4	
• Effectiveness	3	
• Efficiency	4	
• Overarching developmental impact	4	
• Sustainability	3	

The FC (Financial Cooperation) programme 'Mauritania: Municipal Development and Decentralisation I' (1998 66 179) was selected for ex post evaluation as part of the 2009 random sample. Like the projects evaluated in 2008, 'Mauritania: Labour-intensive Infrastructure Programmes I and II' (1994 66 673; 1996 65 571; report dated 24 April 2008), this FC programme was integrated into corresponding World Bank programmes, most notably the 'Projet d'Appui à la Décentralisation des Infrastructures Urbaines' (DIU). Funds were allocated according to standardised criteria. As with the previous programmes, AMEXTIPE (Agence Mauritanienne d'Exécution des Travaux d'Intérêt Public pour l'Emploi), was the execution agency responsible for implementation.

Since DC (development cooperation) with Mauritania was frozen following the 2008 coup and another, comprehensive ex post evaluation was not expected to yield any significant new findings beyond last year's evaluation, we have foregone an extensive on-site mission and confined ourselves to compiling a complete record of building condition, operational status and utilisation. This was prepared on site in October 2009 with the help of a qualified local specialist. That report, together with knowledge gained to date, forms the basis of the abbreviated ex post evaluation report presented here.

Brief description, overall objective and project objectives with indicators

The 'Municipal Development and Decentralisation I' programme (MDDP I) was designed as a broad-based programme which concentrated on the renovation of various infrastructure facilities in Mauritania's regional capitals, with the aim of opening up a more effective system of municipal financing. Individual projects were particularly designed to be completed by small and medium-sized local companies using labour-intensive working practices, and to open a door toward a more effective system of municipal financing.

The overall objective was to promote municipal self-administration and to support balanced commercial development, in order to improve the economic and social situation of the urban population. No indicator was set at the overall objective level. Attainment of programme objectives would be taken to represent a reasonable contribution toward the overall objective, based explicitly and solely on achievements made in the area of balanced commercial development. The project's programme objective was the provision of sustainable social and commercial infrastructure in selected regional capitals¹. The specified indicator required a minimum of 75% of the individual projects to be still in working order after three years in operation.

The completed FC programme comprised eleven projects in eight towns, ie, the new build of two schools, a bus station, two health stations, three livestock facilities, a market and a women's centre and the rehabilitation of a reservoir dam. Projects were carried out in the following regional capitals: Akjoujt, Atar, Kiffa, Nema, Rosso, Selibaby, Tidjikja and Zoueratt.

The target group were the inhabitants of the above regional capitals, which had a total population of 190,000 (based on the 2001 census). The provision of basic health and education infrastructure would directly benefit the poorer sections of the population in particular (40% in the regional capitals), in that the infrastructure projects would be implemented predominantly in under-resourced areas, which are home to a higher than average proportion of the impoverished population. Social and educational facilities were constructed in those areas of the towns which lack resources, and which therefore tend to be the poorer neighbourhoods. However, more precise details on the beneficiary group (number, poverty level, etc) are not available. The remaining projects (markets, etc) were for the benefit of the general population in the regional cities.

Total programme costs amounted to EUR 1.41 million, of which EUR 1.28 million was financed through a programme grant. A further EUR 200k was invested in project completion works. This was financed out of funds from the two follow-on phases of the Municipal Development and Decentralisation programme.

Project design / major deviations from original planning, their main causes and results

The 'Municipal Development and Decentralisation' programme was designed as a

¹ The programme objective is deemed to have been formulated only at the level of results (ie, output); in contrast, the indicator assigned is geared to a more appropriate level, namely capacity utilisation (ie, outcome). The evaluation which follows is based on utilisation.

broad-based programme and was implemented as part of the 'Projet d'Appui à la Décentralisation des Infrastructures Urbaines (DIU)' project, which was funded by the World Bank. The DIU project aimed to repair, expand, and improve the operation of public infrastructure in the twelve Mauritanian regional capitals and the national capital, Nouakchott, and comprised the following components: a) funding for institutions in the participating municipalities, b) a consultancy programme for technical staff at the developmental agency (Direction (Générale) des Collectivités Locales, D(G)CL) and for the Mayors' association (Association des Maires), c) financing of studies, and d) rehabilitation and expansion of urban infrastructure.

The completed FC programme comprised eleven individual projects, as summarised below:

Ref	Region	Regional capital	Activity	Outcome/utilisation
1	Inchiri	Akjoujt	Rehabilitation of a reservoir dam	Adequate; operated by a central organisation
2	Adrar	Atar	New build of a market	Undistinguished, privately operated
3	Assaba	Kiffa (also in II and III)	New build of a livestock market	Good; privately operated
4	Hodh Ech Chargui	Nema (also in II + III)	New build of a livestock loading facility	Not used to date
5		Nema (also in II + III)	New build of a livestock market	Not used to date
6	Trarza	Rosso	New build of a primary school	Adequate; operated by a central organisation
7	Guidimaka	Selibaby (also in II + III)	New build of a bus station	Good; privately operated
8	Tagant	Tidjikja	New build of a women's centre	Undistinguished; operated by a central organisation
9		Tidjikja	New build of a health station	Not used to date
10		Tidjikja	New build of a primary school	Adequate; operated by a central organisation
11	Tiris Zemmour	Zoueratt	New build of a health station	Undistinguished; operated by a central organisation

The FC programme was linked to a programme of labour-intensive infrastructure works previously carried out by AMEXTIPE (BMZ 1994 66 673 and 1996 65 571), but differed in its project selection process. Projects were identified and agreed with the municipal administrative authorities on the basis of a long-term municipal development plan. The selection and prioritisation of infrastructure projects for financing were thus predefined by the municipal councils and submitted to the Planning Ministry and to the DCL or DGCL for approval. Projects therefore had to satisfy DIU criteria. Prior to this a municipal audit was conducted to assess the technical, administrative and financial

capabilities of the local authorities, following which the municipalities concluded 'municipal contracts' (Contrats Municipaux) with the DGCL. These contained agreed performance targets, which included, among other things, the provision of annual funding for maintenance.

However, significant shortcomings were evident in the implementation of the programme:

- less than rigorous prioritisation by local authorities;
- doubts whether municipal councils were appropriately involved;
- inadequate consideration of the municipalities' financial capabilities with regard to furnishing the counterpart contribution and follow-on costs;
- flawed technical planning;
- absence of maintenance planning.

The need to remedy failings such as these, together with general difficulties in our collaboration with Mauritanian partners, led to major delays in implementation. Hence instead of the three years estimated, seven years were required to complete all the projects.

Due to its lengthy implementation period, MDDP I became linked to its own follow-on FC programmes (MDDP II+III) in three of the eight regional capitals where projects were completed, namely Kiffa, Nema and Selibaby. Since 2004 the programmes have been implemented in parallel.

With the exception of a two-month consultancy project covering implementation issues, the FC programme exclusively funded investment projects in social and commercial infrastructure. However, institutional aspects (the developmental, administrative and financial dimensions of decentralisation) were not incorporated in the programme, as they were considered to be adequately covered by DIU, the parallel World Bank project. There is no evidence that the World Bank concept was examined. However, since the DIU project had ended by 2001, before the actual implementation of this programme, a de facto connection existed with the World Bank follow-on programme, 'Programme de Développement Urbain' (PDU), whose impact on governance and decentralisation, according to the World Bank's own assessment (Country Assistance Strategy, 2007), was very modest.

The quality and construction of the buildings is less than satisfactory, which is in keeping with our experiences from both previous AMEXTIPE programmes. This can be attributed in part to the limited qualifications of the agents operating in the public building sector (the building firms, AMEXTIPE the executing agency, but also the municipalities as clients), and also to their lack of understanding of the need to adhere to contractually agreed commitments. All projects were subject to DCL's approval procedures; however, in terms of scrutiny and support, DCL only fulfilled their obligations to the local authorities to an unsatisfactory degree.

Key results of the impact analysis and performance rating

Relevance: rating 4

According to the defined overall objective, the programme's effect logic aimed to a) strengthen municipal self-administration and b) improve economic development.

In both regards, the programme is in keeping with the priorities of the Mauritanian Government and with the development objectives of the BMZ (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development; priority areas democracy and public administration/decentralisation/ agriculture).

However, the programme concept did not do similar justice to the overall objective:

With regard to part b), supporting balanced commercial development in order to improve the economic and social situation of Mauritania's urban population, the

programme concept—rehabilitation or new build of social and commercial infrastructure in the regional capitals, operated by regional, deconcentrated bodies in the appropriate sector—is considered satisfactory in terms of its relevance.

In contrast, however, the actual relevance of the programme with regard to the suitability of the programme concept (both in principal and in detail) and the assumed chain of effects is viewed very differently where part a) is concerned. At the very least, a lack of funding allocation for municipal self-administration is clearly evident. The programme appraisal dated 8 December 1998 gave such little consideration to this causal link that it omitted to include an appropriate indicator. Furthermore, the appraisal report saw the core problem primarily in material terms, that is to say in the inadequate commercial and social infrastructure, the limited financial resources of the municipalities, which were insufficient to enable them to complete their own investment projects, and the limited educational standard of the new (municipal) officials.

However, Mauritanian society finds itself in a state of upheaval; consequently this has repercussions for a system of (municipal) administration that has only recently come into being². Due to the limited tradition of local administration, there is a need to build up municipal administrative structures from scratch, and to breathe life into a rudimentary system of local political representation. In view of the significance of these conditions for the current programme, measures are in place which encompass the provision of funding (for investments) using the top-down concept of a social investment fund (AMEXTIPE); but this is clearly not enough. Against this background, the problem analysis and the programme design based thereon are both from today's developmental perspective, less than convincing.

The programme approach distanced the target group from project implementation and showed little regard for the ability of the municipalities to operate the facilities properly. Essentially, this perpetuates the conceptual design used in the two preceding projects. In this respect it does not accord with 'state of the art' social funding projects, let alone initiatives to promote decentralisation. Because of these conceptual weaknesses, the programme's relevance, seen from the perspective of the developmental focus identified in part a) of the overall objective as 'the furtherance of decentralisation', is considered unsatisfactory.

The concept was to upgrade infrastructure through the services of AMEXTIPE, who would ensure its sustainable operation either through deconcentrated public bodies or by involving the private sector. From a developmental viewpoint, and under the circumstances prevailing in Mauritania, the overall relevance of this concept is rated as satisfactory. However, this evaluation is no longer valid if the programme should have opened the door to the process of municipal development and/or decentralisation, as took place in the follow-on phases. From a developmental viewpoint, the programme's longer-term relevance lay in its decentralisation aspect. Considering the progress made in this regard, the programme's relevance must be assessed as unsatisfactory (rating 4), despite recognisable positive effects.

4. Effectiveness: rating 3

² According to the ex post evaluation of the two preceding projects (para 2.04) "Mauritania's socio-cultural and demographic structure has undergone radical change in the last 25 years. In 1960, at the time of Independence, only 5% lived in 'urban' settlements; now it is over 60%. Since the 1980s in particular, massive sedentarisation and urbanisation has taken place among the previously nomadic population, processes which may well have intensified even further in the last ten years (statistical data for this is not available). Nouakchott, whose population is estimated at around a third of the total population, has been particularly affected. However, other regional towns are also experiencing a rapid influx."

In evaluating achievements against the programme objective indicators (“still in working order after three years’ operation”), the following was established during the September 2009 audit:

1.) Three of the five commercial infrastructure facilities (livestock sales, market and bus station) are used extensively. The municipalities are responsible for their operation, but have leased the facilities to the private sector; rental payments are made to the authorities on a reliable basis. The division of maintenance and repair responsibilities is not clearly defined, but works on the principle that the municipalities take charge of larger repairs and long-term maintenance, whereas the leaseholders are responsible for minor repairs and for the proper operation of the facilities. Experience to date suggests that the leaseholders show only limited enthusiasm for their responsibility to safeguard operations. From the municipalities’ side, no repairs or long-term maintenance programmes have yet been completed. Nevertheless, it is fair to assume that, in these instances, the level of utilisation is reasonable by Mauritanian standards. The other two related facilities in Nema are yet to enter service, 3 ½ years after completion.

2.) Five of the remaining six installations are in use; one of the health centres (Tidjikja) has still not been commissioned, three years after completion. Operation of the five facilities which are in use (education, health, flood protection) is devolved by the relevant Ministries to deconcentrated bodies, and conforms to Mauritanian standards of normal operation. The municipalities have little influence on their operation.

This represents active utilisation of eight out of the eleven individual facilities; overall, their operation is judged to be just satisfactory. The proportion of facilities operating successfully after three years stands at 73% and is therefore in the vicinity of the 75% success threshold.

Of the eleven projects, only the three which generate lease revenue for the municipalities are seen as making a direct contribution to municipal development. There has been no discernible improvement in the performance of the municipalities with regard to politically inclusive participation, or in the areas of administration or finance. Taken altogether, the effectiveness of the programme is (still) ranked as satisfactory (rating 3).

5. Efficiency: rating 4

The major delays experienced constitute, on the one hand, a source of additional costs for building and consultancy services and, on the other, evidence of the poor performance of our Mauritanian partners. The proportion of the counterpart contribution from the municipalities toward commercial infrastructure projects had to be reduced from 25% to 15%, and was financed from centrally allocated funds through ‘municipal contracts’. Projects were selected after a less than rigorous prioritisation process, and followed doubts over the municipalities’ self-interest. Furthermore, these failings were not eradicated in the reviews carried out by DCL. The programme’s efficiency is still hindered today by flawed technical planning and inadequate schemes of maintenance. Actual costs are in line with previous experience and are considered acceptable.

With the exception of the three facilities which are not in use, the level of utilisation is deemed thoroughly satisfactory or better. Standards of operation, particularly preventative maintenance, certainly leave much to be desired. A satisfactory attitude to this subject (or even an approximation of one) has not yet evolved in Mauritania, despite the efforts of development projects. Whether the rental income from the leased commercial facilities covers costs can not be ascertained; earlier investigations into this topic raised significant doubts in this regard.

Based on the serious delays which extended the implementation period from three to seven years, the resultant additional costs, the less than satisfactory quality of the buildings, the reduction in the municipalities’ counterpart contribution, the doubts over

the suitability of the project selection process and the inadequacy of maintenance, the overall efficiency of the programme is considered unsatisfactory (rating 4).

6. Overarching developmental impact: rating 4

Due to the lack of data and the absence of any indicator for the overall objective, developmental efficacy can only be estimated from a qualitative perspective. In general, Mauritania's governmental and administrative systems still demonstrate political, administrative and financial weaknesses. Considering these, and drawing on the experiences gained in this programme and in programmes carried out in this funding area by other donors, no significant beneficial effects for governance at the municipal level can be detected. The main reason for this is that the Mauritanian Government lacks the political will needed for effective decentralisation. It is not without significance that, following the latest coup in August 2008, the recently founded Ministry for Decentralisation was disbanded, and its duties redistributed to other ministries.

Furthermore, there are no stable structures evident at the municipal level; changes in personnel are the daily norm, and financial resources are scarce. Fiscal revenues are allocated according to opaque political priorities (in the interests of the retention of political power at the central level), and community involvement and self-administration continue to play a completely subordinate role. The limited effectiveness of the World Bank programme in terms of improving the process of decentralisation in Mauritania and the absence of municipal development projects specific to this programme have not allowed initiatives to rise up from below (ie, from the decentralised level).

It can therefore be assumed that, because of the difficulties identified and the limited funds employed, the direct social and economic effects of the programme did not contribute significantly to the development of municipal self-administration or to the improvement of the economic situation. Nevertheless, the individual projects brought direct improvements to women, children and the poor, and to the development of the private sector.

Without exception, the factors identified in the project appraisal report as significant risks to success (stagnation of the decentralisation process, unsatisfactory capabilities of local officials, poor maintenance due to lack of financial resources, counterpart contribution) all came to light. Since infrastructure provision was considered only just satisfactory, and in view of the programme's unsatisfactory structural efficacy from the municipal development perspective, we have arrived at an overall evaluation of the overarching developmental efficacy as unsatisfactory (rating 4).

7. Sustainability: rating 3

It is safe to assume that the physical life of the infrastructure created under this programme, because of its simple and robust building design, is reasonable in a Mauritanian context. That said, because construction quality and facility utilisation are in some respects unsatisfactory, the rating must be downgraded. It is significant to the evaluation that central institutions (health, education and infrastructure) are responsible for the operation and maintenance of five of the individual facilities that show satisfactory utilisation levels. From an overarching developmental perspective, however, sustainable efficacy may not be assumed.

As part of the follow-on programmes MDDP II + III, further projects were completed in the towns of Kiffa, Nema and Selibaby. These investments included, among other things, completion works for Phase I installations in the amount of EUR 200k, and work in Tidjikja under the auspices of an AFD (Agence Française de Développement) programme. This may well lead to somewhat improved sustainability in the developmental efficacy of the project, but only for these three or four towns, hence sustainable utilisation is still allowed for just eight of the eleven facilities built. Overall, we consider sustainability to be satisfactory (rating 3).

In terms of its overall developmental evaluation we consider this programme to be a borderline case, because developmental efficacy may be judged differently according to the developmental objectives set. If, as here, efficacy is specifically geared to relevant developments in decentralisation, the programme design that was implemented no longer satisfies these more challenging developmental demands. If, on the other hand, it takes into account social and economic efficacy for the immediate target group, it would still be possible to confirm a generally satisfactory developmental outcome. Consequently we rank the programme's overall developmental efficacy as unsatisfactory (rating 4).

General conclusions and recommendations

In partner countries where there is little express commitment to decentralisation and advances in municipal development have been limited, a development concept that implements selected improvements in rural centres may be an entirely appropriate means of reaching an impoverished rural target group. However, objectives based upon progress made in decentralisation should then be omitted.

In a country such as Mauritania, with very poor starting conditions for municipal development, World Bank decentralisation programmes do not in themselves offer an opportunity to discard institutional development projects specific to German DC programmes, not least because of varying concepts of decentralisation. The more intensive institutional development implemented in the follow-on phases through ancillary FC measures, and in cooperation with TC (technical cooperation) projects, offers better prospects for strengthening arrangements at the municipal level.

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

Projects are evaluated on a six-point scale, the criteria being relevance, effectiveness (outcome), "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 rating that clearly exceeds expectations
- 2 Good rating fully in line with expectations and without any significant shortcomings
- 3 Satisfactory rating – project falls short of expectations but the positive results dominate
- 4 Unsatisfactory rating – significantly below expectations, with negative results dominating despite discernible positive results
- 5 Clearly inadequate rating – despite some positive partial results the negative results clearly dominate
- 6 The project has no positive results 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 a project which has no sufficiently positive results.

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).