

Niger: Primary education

Ex post evaluation report

OECD sector	11220 – Primary education	
BMZ project ID	1994 65 857	
Project executing agency	Ministère de l'Education de Base (MEBA)	
Consultant	GOPA (fixed asset investment), Lippsmeier & Partner (maintenance concept)	
Year of ex post evaluation	2006	
	Project appraisal (planned)	Ex post evaluation (actual)
Start of implementation	Q1 1996	Q1 2006
Period of implementation	60 months	68 months
Investment costs	EUR 9.65 million	EUR 8.84 million
Counterpart contribution	EUR 0.45 million	EUR 0.11 million
Financing, of which Financial Cooperation (FC) funds	EUR 9.20 million	EUR 8.73 million
Other institutions/donors involved	World Bank, etc	World Bank, etc.
Performance rating	3	
• Significance/relevance	2	
• Effectiveness	3	
• Efficiency	3	

Brief description, overall objective and project objectives with indicators

The project "primary education" has been designed as part of the "Projet Sectoriel d'Enseignement Fondamental" (PROSEF), which is co-financed by the World Bank. The overall objective of the FC project is to improve primary education for a larger number of pupils. The construction of 850 new primary schools is intended to make it easier to access primary school establishments (project objective). The following indicators were formulated during the project appraisal:

Indicators to measure the achievement of the overall objective

Repeat rate (reduction from 42% to 30% in CM2 by 2000); drop-out rate (reduction from 40% drop-out rate to 35% by 2000).

Indicators relating to the project objective

Number and extent of use of new classrooms (770 classrooms with an average of 42 pupils in 2000).

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

As part of the FC project, 1,048 classrooms with classroom furniture and 672 latrines were erected throughout Niger. The efficient implementation and supervision of the construction measures were such that some 23% more classrooms were built than planned.

There was only limited evidence of the contribution by the parents associations or village communities envisaged during the planning stage of the project – roughly 10% of the construction costs for the development of the school site (fences, latrines, tree-planting, etc). The parents are already kept very busy by the need – in some places every year – to build makeshift buildings of wood/straw (“pailloles”) and are hardly in a position to assume further tasks. The counterpart contributions actually made are therefore evaluated at EUR 0.11 million (1.3% of the construction costs), as at the final review.

Key results of the impact analysis and performance rating

The project objective indicators were largely met in the target year 2000, although the last classrooms financed through the project were not finished until the end of 2001. The total number of classrooms financed – 1,048 – is 36% above the target figure of 770 (level stipulated during the project appraisal). In 2000 the average number of pupils per classroom was 44, just above the target figure of 42. The current figure is 46 pupils (2004/05 school year). The number of girl pupils has almost tripled since the project appraisal. However, their share of all pupils has only increased from 36% to 41%. Overall, the indicators confirm that the project objective has been clearly achieved.

Repeat and drop-out rates (overall objective indicator) have also improved further since the project appraisal but in 2001 they were still well below the target figures. Currently, the target figures have been achieved but this must be qualified by pointing out that the repeat rate has only fallen because, owing to new educational findings, not so many children need to repeat. The completion rate (successful completion of the sixth class), which is used as an additional indicator, has risen from around 30% to 60% of the pupils (boys and girls taken together) since the project appraisal.

On average, pupils need around eight (instead of six) years to complete their primary education. The low internal efficiency is partly due to the fact that lessons are taught in French, a foreign language for the primary school pupils, and to the “blank years” when there were no regular lessons because of drought (famine) or teacher strikes.

The main target group comprises children of primary school age. The indirect target group comprises members of the communities or parents associations at the location of the newly built schools. Because the schools are located throughout the country, the particular target group of children in the poorer, rural regions of Niger is being reached (78% of the population live from subsistence farming in rural areas).

The developmental significance of the project in the primary education sector was indicated both during the project appraisal and today as affecting the whole country. In the rural regions, in particular, it was made considerably easier or possible for the first time to access primary education.

In the municipalities the parent-teacher associations (“COGES”) are increasingly to take over responsibly for the teaching activities and for the management and equipping of the schools. The associations have been being set up progressively throughout the country since 2005. Of the schools visited, 70% already had a COGES and the others had a parents’ council (“APE”) – previously the usual body – which decides with the teachers how the school is run. Discussions with the representatives of the new COGES revealed that the tasks and areas of responsibility were not yet sufficiently well known. The elected COGES functionaries (Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer) mainly complained about the lack of instructions or training for these functions and about the lack of funds to maintain the buildings. The allocation of a sufficient budget for this purpose is still expected. As part of the sector programme “PDDE” (Programme Décennal de

Développement de l'Education au Niger, 2002 – 2012), funds were actually scheduled for maintenance measures, thus justifying these hopes. The good building substance and the overall good condition of the school buildings has reduced the need for maintenance work.

The fact that responsibility for maintenance has been conferred on the target group is in line with a recommendation made in a maintenance study financed with FC funds as part of the project. The introduction of COGES throughout the country makes it clear that the MEBA is taking account of this recommendation by and that decentralisation of the tasks in the primary education sector is being furthered. This will provide relief for the central educational administration and can help the village communities to identify more closely with their schools. Initially, however, the appropriate management and absorption ability needs to be ensured at the local level.

Overall, the schools appear to be running effectively in the medium term. Further improvements with regard to the maintenance and development of the infrastructure as well as with regard to quality (new teacher training syllabuses, provision of new learning materials, further capacities for advanced teacher training) can be expected as part of the PDDE.

From the microeconomic perspective, the classrooms that have been built have considerable advantages for the parents or the COGES and the management, these two groups being jointly responsible for running the schools. The cost of maintenance and repairs is less than for traditional "pailotes", with a considerably higher quality being achieved. Even the cost of rehabilitating dilapidated false ceilings at some locations is affordable compared with the annual repair of the "pailotes".

Education is a key element in the struggle to eliminate poverty and for social development. In a country like Niger, which has few natural resources, professional qualifications are a vital precondition for economic growth and the creation of a competitive economy. The far broader access to primary education achieved since the project appraisal is therefore of benefit to the entire country and, despite the still very weak internal efficiency of the primary education sector, contributes to achieving Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2 (universal primary education). In providing 1,048 classrooms for currently around 48,000 children per school year, the project has had a noteworthy share (approximately 16% of all new buildings in the implementation period) in the extension of access to primary education and in the improvement of the situation described above.

In Niger, girls have so far been at a disadvantage in terms of access to educational establishments, primarily for socio-cultural reasons. Unprotected routes to school are dangerous for girls and traditional views prevent many girls from being enrolled at school. By global comparison Niger is a country with an extremely low enrolment rate. The fact that there are now more schools means shorter journeys to school throughout the country and, in particular, therefore makes it easier for girls to attend school. The project thus contributes to achieving MDG3 (promoting gender equality) and establishes important preconditions for achieving gender equality in society. School education is also expected to have positive effects with regard to the reduction of the high birth rate and maternal and infant mortality. Given the high share of poor people in the target group (over 50%) and the good working relations between teachers, parents and village communities, primarily through the setting up of COGES, the project is making a contribution to self-help oriented poverty reduction.

Overall, from the current perspective the risk situation for the sustainable achievement of the objectives appears rather more favourable than during the project appraisal. Owing to the fact that COGES have not yet been established everywhere and have so far been inadequately financed, the sustainability of the project is still at risk. Funds will continue to be in short supply for a foreseeable period, in particular owing to the incorrect use of funds noted in the current PDDE sector programme at the start of 2006. This programme will accordingly provide far fewer funds for the Ministry for Basic Education and Literacy (MEBA) in the short term.

A summarised evaluation of project success is carried out using the key criteria of effectiveness, efficiency, significance and relevance.

- **Effectiveness:** The quantitative indicators of the project objective have been clearly exceeded. The programme has ensured that there is a denser network of schools throughout the country. The classrooms are currently (2005) being used by an average of 46 pupils. Solidly built and well-equipped classrooms were thus provided for an additional 48,000 children (5% of all primary schoolchildren). Compared with the "paillotes" otherwise used, learning conditions in the project schools (even in the classrooms in need of renovation) were well above average. The current condition of the classrooms is good but in the long term the required maintenance is still not satisfactory for appropriate operation. An approach to secure appropriate operation has been made by the COGES structure. Examples for future activities in the sector comprise the simplified school building model without a false ceiling already implemented in the follow-up project (Phase II) and participation by the communities or the parents associations in constructing and maintaining the classrooms. Both draw on the experience gained in Phase I or is a result of the maintenance study in Phase I. On this basis, we evaluate the **effectiveness** of this project as **sufficient (sub-rating 3)**.
- **Efficiency:** Given the favourable construction costs (around EUR 8,500 per school class including construction and ancillary construction costs), the production efficiency of the project is very good in comparison with projects in neighbouring countries (Mali: comparative figure EUR 12,300). In addition, there were hardly any unforeseen expenses or price increases, which made possible the large number of additional buildings. The capacity utilisation of the classrooms is appropriate. The country-wide dispersal of the 812 locations can be criticised as this has made it very difficult to monitor construction. In the situation at the time, however, the value of independent decisions by the partner country at various locations was estimated higher than implementation aspects. For this reason the costs of construction supervision (staff, travel expenses) were high (as expected) and it is to be feared that, owing to reduced supervision possibilities at remote locations, the quality of the construction work is worse than at easily accessible locations. Viewed objectively, the internal efficiency of the primary education sector, measured in terms of the repeat and drop-out rates, is still low but it has made a considerable improvement since the project appraisal. Overall, we classify the project's **efficiency** as **sufficient (sub-rating 3)**.
- **Significance and relevance:** The positive developments in the primary education sector observed during the project appraisal point to success in the sector reforms financed in parallel (in cooperation with other donors, in particular the World Bank and Norway). With hindsight, it appears justified for the FC project to have concentrated on a pure school construction programme. The poorer sections of the population, in particular, were reached through the project. The higher enrolment rates targeted through the overall objective and the better quality of the teaching was achieved, even if it could not be attributed solely to the availability of classrooms. The absolute number of girls enrolled at school has increased considerably; however, in relative terms, more boys were enrolled. Although there was a distinct improvement in the completion rate, it is still not satisfactory by international comparison. The quantitative and qualitative components of the overall objective were not fully achieved in the target year 2000 but were far exceeded in the more recent period (2005/05). All in all, we consider the overall objective to have been achieved. The linking of practical aspects of the projects with measures conducted by the World Bank and other donors in promoting the primary education sector (teacher training, sector reforms) has proved effective. Thus we consider the **significance/relevance** of the project to be **satisfactory (sub-rating 2)**.

Overall, the project was thus successful and had only a few weaknesses. As the "core issue of sustainability" – the long-term, reliable organisation and financing of the building maintenance – has not yet been resolved satisfactorily, the **final assessment of the developmental effectiveness of the project** is that it is **sufficient (rating 3)**

General conclusions and recommendations

A study on the better organisation of the maintenance of school buildings prepared at the end of the implementation phase recommends greater sensitisation and involvement of the parents and village communities. The competent Ministry should provide sufficient funds for larger construction measures only. Although agreements were reached on maintenance work at the

time of the project appraisal and the new proposals made in the study were documented and communicated to the Ministry, at the time of the ex post evaluation there were still problems with providing funds at the local level. This leads to the recommendation that, as far as possible, agreements (e.g. on the provision of funds for maintenance programmes) should be formulated in such a way that in the case of non-fulfilment there should be possibilities for action to be taken or sanctions to be applied.

The fact that the locations in the school construction programme are spread across the whole country makes it difficult to implement and monitor the measures and to document the achievement of the objective. As a general conclusion, a stronger regional concentration of the measures is to be recommended, e.g. on individual provinces or districts.

Assessment criteria

Developmentally successful: Ratings 1 to 3	
Rating 1:	Very high or high degree of developmental effectiveness
Rating 2:	Satisfactory degree of developmental efficacy
Rating 3:	Overall sufficient degree of developmental effectiveness
Developmental failures: Ratings 4 to 6	
Rating 4:	Overall sufficient degree of developmental effectiveness
Rating 5:	Clearly insufficient developmental effectiveness
Rating 6:	The project is a total failure.

Performance evaluation criteria

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