



1. Project Data:		Date Posted : 03/30/2004	
PROJ ID: P001857		Appraisal	Actual
Project Name: General Education V	Project Costs (US\$M)	42.60	44.50
Country: Mauritania	Loan/Credit (US\$M)	35.00	32.00
Sector(s): Board: SP - Primary education (53%), Central government administration (19%), Secondary education (17%), Tertiary education (10%), General education sector (1%)	Cofinancing (US\$M)		
L/C Number: C2706; CP873			
	Board Approval (FY)		95
Partners involved :	Closing Date	06/30/2001	03/31/2003

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2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

The development objective was to assist the Government of Mauritania to implement its education sector development program for 1995-2000. The project objectives were to: (a) expand access to primary education, particularly for rural children and girls; (b) expand access to and improve the quality of secondary education; (c) improve the quality and management of higher education; and (d) strengthen sector planning, management and resource use.

b. Components

There were five main components:

1. Expand access to and improve the quality of primary education (US\$25.4 million): through (a) community-based classroom construction program; (b) special measures to boost girls' participation; (c) development/distribution of textbooks and teachers' guides; and (d) curriculum development and teacher training.
2. Expand access to and improve the quality of secondary education (US\$7.3 million): through (a) expand access to lower-secondary education, and (b) improve instruction in core subjects;
3. Improve the quality and management of higher education (US\$1.8 million);
4. Promote private-sector provision of education (US\$0.3 million);
5. Strengthen sector planning, management, and resource use (US\$6.9 million).

c. Comments on Project Cost, Financing and Dates

At completion, 100% of IDA funds had been disbursed (the dollar amount was below planned, presumably due to currency devaluation). The Government and community contribution was 25% above the amount originally committed. The project closing date was extended by 21 months, as the implementation of the civil works component was delayed.

3. Achievement of Relevant Objectives:

a) Expand access to primary education, particularly for rural children and girls : The original target was to increase enrollment to 440,000 by 1999/2000. This was expected to represent a gross enrollment rate (GER) of 100%. The final figure was 433,840 students (99% of goal) . Initial population growth projections were off, so GER reached only about 92% by 2002/2003, compared to the original target of 100% by 1999/2000. Whereas repetition and dropout targets were 3% and 2%, respectively, by project end repetition rates had declined from 16 to 13.4 percent in grades 1 to 5 and from 34 to 25.2 percent in grade 6, far short of targets. The dropout rate (constructed from reported retention rates) fell only slightly from 45 to 43.1 percent.

Output targets for classroom construction/rehabilitation, textbook provision, and teacher recruitment /training were mostly met or exceeded. However, the ICR does not mention whether a planned pilot in-service teacher training program was ever implemented, and it is not clear whether the project created adequate capacity within the Government to develop/revise curricula in the future. In addition, although the project succeeded in providing over

three times the targeted number of textbooks, plans to use textbook sale revenues to replenish book stocks did not materialize.

b) Expand access to and improve the quality of secondary education : The original enrollment targets were to increase the increase the number of entrants into lower secondary to 18,000 by 1999/2000 and to stabilize admission into upper secondary at 5,000. Student intake into lower-secondary education (college) rose from 9,367 students in 1994/95 to 19,232 students in 2002/2003 and 9,918 students were admitted into upper secondary at the end of the project.

Output targets to construct middle-school classrooms and to provide science textbooks and teachers guides, science kits and training for teachers in their use, and construction /stocking of school libraries were for the most part exceeded. However, the ICR makes no mention of a planned cost-effectiveness evaluation of science teaching .

c) Improve the quality and management of higher education : The project aimed to strengthen institutional and management functions, upgrade physical and communication infrastructure, improve the quality and relevance of teaching at the University of Nouakchott, and prepare a master plan for higher education to guide the system's development. All of these activities were completed. The project supported studies, technical assistance, study tours, and consultant services to develop a long-term development strategy and a short-term plan of action for reform of the sub-sector.

d) Promote private sector provision of education . This component required changes to the legal framework to permit private schools to have some of the benefits accorded public schools, including access to teacher training and public lands, and exoneration from customs duties on imported educational materials . These were put in place through a consultative process meant to garner stakeholder acceptance . The Government also provided an office in the Ministry of Education to oversee private school issues . The project financed the construction and furnishing of a private education resource center . Number of private classrooms increased from 60 to 400, and the share of private enrollment increased from 1.4% to 8%, as a result of activities undertaken during the project .

e) Strengthen sector planning, management and resource use . The project aimed to improve personnel management and remove excess staff; conduct an audit of the MEN's structure, prepare and implement a reorganization program; support ongoing management decentralization efforts to the regional and departmental levels; and computerize education statistics and train staff in data collection . All of these objectives were met. Staff were redeployed, and secondary teacher utilization rates rose from 84% to 87%. A new *organigramme* of the MEN was prepared and adopted by the Government in 1999, and is currently under implementation . Offices for the 7 regional inspectorates and 10 departmental inspectorates were constructed and equipped, and working conditions dramatically improved. Staff were trained in planning, program management, research and evaluation . As a result, all sectoral studies planned under the project were carried out . Finally, the project financed specialist services to computerize education statistics and train staff in using the system . An annual statistical yearbook containing education data is being produced and a school mapping system has been established for education planning .

The project also undertook activities to improve the efficiency of resource mobilization and use in the sector : The proportion of public expenditure devoted to education as a percentage of Government went up from 21% in 1995 to 28% in 2003. The primary level proportion of current expenditures increased from 42% to 56% and the proportion of funds allocated to secondary education increased from 32% to 33% during the period of project implementation . These increases reflected allocation shifts away from the higher and vocational education sub-sectors.

4. Significant Outcomes/Impacts:

- Universal primary enrollment was nearly achieved, without sacrificing school quality . Though data on learning outcomes are limited, both school inputs (infrastructure, curriculum, textbook supply, teacher training, etc .) and outputs (retention rates, completion rates, and continuation rates) improved during this period of rapid primary expansion.
- The project created capacity measuring students' learning achievements, and established baseline data for the future.
- Significant capacity for education planning, management, monitoring and evaluation was developed .
- Necessary legal changes have been made to facilitate private provision of education, resulting in a significant increase in private enrollment.
- Internet access at high school and university levels .
- A number of sector studies and evaluations point to areas where policy change and investment could have a major impact on education outcomes . For example, a study undertaken in 1999 suggested that there was a correlation between dropout rate and the supply of schools with a complete primary cycle . After the study, a major effort to complete the pedagogical cycle of incomplete schools was initiated and is expected to greatly improve primary completion rates.
- A long term development plan for higher education was developed and is being implemented

5. Significant Shortcomings (including non-compliance with safeguard policies):

- The original appraisal report was ambiguous about many of the output targets, making a straightforward assessment of the ICR's outcome claims difficult.

- Even though the project aspired to improve the quality of education at all levels, the ultimate measure of educational quality, student learning outcomes, were not part of the project design nor included in performance indicators. Thus, we do not know if the project improved student learning .
- New legislation introduced during the period of project implementation instituted major changes in the language of instruction, which required a much greater supply of bilingual teachers . Although the change was supported by all major donors, including IDA, the project did not address new needs which would be created by the reform . The resulting shortage of bilingual teachers impeded the project's ability to reach its repetition and dropout target rates.
- Population projections provided by the *Office National de la Statistique* were seriously off, making planning for adequate school spaces impossible . The data came from the 1965 census, and were revised after the mid-term review using data from the 1977 census, but even this was seriously out of date .

6. Ratings :	ICR	OED Review	Reason for Disagreement /Comments
Outcome :	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	
Institutional Dev .:	Modest	Modest	
Sustainability :	Likely	Likely	
Bank Performance :	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	
Borrower Perf .:	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	
Quality of ICR :		Satisfactory	

NOTE: ICR rating values flagged with '*' don't comply with OP/BP 13.55, but are listed for completeness.

7. Lessons of Broad Applicability:

- Stakeholder acceptance was critical to the success of this project . The government and communities contributed even more than was originally committed to classroom construction, even in the face of significant delays and problems with the implementing agency .
- Though the project design was complex, targeting the entire sector at once allowed planners to accommodate the effects of changes in one sub-sector on other sub-sectors
- Research throughout the course of implementation helped guide adjustments in the project . For example, the creation of double-shift classrooms was slowed after it was discovered that it had a negative impact on student learning outcomes.

8. Assessment Recommended? Yes No

9. Comments on Quality of ICR:

The ICR was well-written and clear.