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| 1. Project Data: | | Date Posted : 02/09/2004 | |
| PROJ ID: P001875 | | Appraisal | Actual |
| Project Name: Mauritania: Rainfed Nat Res Mgt | Project Costs (US\$M) | 25.8 | 22.8 |
| Country: Mauritania | Loan/Credit (US\$M) | 17.6 | 17.1 |
| Sector(s): Board: RDV - General agriculture fishing and forestry sector (45%), General public administration sector (23%), Water supply (15%), Agricultural extension and research (13%), Roads and highways (4%) | Cofinancing (US\$M) | | |
| L/C Number: C2965; CP948 | | | |
| | Board Approval (FY) | | 97 |
| Partners involved : | Closing Date | 03/31/2003 | 03/21/2003 |
| Prepared by : | Reviewed by : | Group Manager : | Group: |
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2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

In the absence of a coherent development objectives statement, it was necessary to construct one from the following elements.

The staff appraisal report refers to an *"overall objective"* ("to control and, hopefully, reduce, the spiral of poverty so well illustrated in this part of the world by the confluence of population growth, environmental degradation and reduced agricultural production") which is too vague to be readily evaluable. It also identifies an *"expected impact"* "the project is expected to improve the basic ecological functions (water and mineral cycles, ecological succession) through resource management, thus bringing about sustainable yield increases (in crops and livestock) and increased incomes for participating communities". The *"expected outcome"* entails "(i) empowerment of rural communities, i.e., the provision of skills to organize, to manage common resources and obtain access to financing; and (ii) an improved institutional environment in the rural sector, including secure access to natural resources".

Based on this, three objectives may be distinguished :

- (i) Improve the management of natural resources in order to achieve sustainable increases in crop and livestock yields;
- (ii) Increase incomes for participating communities; and
- (iii) Promote stronger, more decentralized, rural institutions.

b. Components

- (i) **Village investments**, to be selected by communities in a demand-driven manner, comprising land and water conservation works, infrastructure, and micro-enterprises (expected cost US\$17.4 million, actual cost US\$14.1 million);
- (ii) **Institutional strengthening**, including support to communities to identify, implement and monitor natural resource management plans and enforcement of secure access to common property resources (expected cost US\$4.1 million, actual cost US\$5.6 million); and
- (iii) **Skills development**, comprising technical assistance and research, training and awareness raising, and

Improvement of the rural statistical database (expected cost US\$1.6 million, actual cost US\$3.1 million).

c. Comments on Project Cost, Financing and Dates

According to the staff appraisal report (p. 11), "the project would be the first five-year time slice of a long-term (20-year) natural resource management program that would cover the whole rainfed zone of Mauritania". Project beneficiaries made a substantial contribution to the cost of village investment subprojects : expected US\$7.8 million, actual US\$5.4 million. Between them components (i) and (ii) cost 40 percent more than expected at appraisal . This increase reflects the substantial technical support needed by village subprojects; the ICR explains (p. 12) that a decision was made to provide more technical support per subproject rather than pushing to fund as many subprojects as possible . A follow-on community-based rural development project is being prepared .

3. Achievement of Relevant Objectives:

(i) *Achieved.* Investments in soil and water conservation (e.g. aerial tree seeding, rehabilitation and protection of retention dams) visibly improved the regrowth of natural vegetation and soil fertility . Measures of reforestation and protection of common forest land achieved benefits over an area of 3,470 ha. Fencing of cropped areas against animal intrusion cut production losses by 30 percent. Yields of sorghum--the primary rainfed crop--were 800 kg/ha "with project", compared to 100 kg/ha "without project".

(ii) *Achieved.* The number of communities covered by the project (295) and the number of beneficiaries (120,000) exceeded the appraisal targets (respectively, 250 and 75,000). Over 1,500 village subprojects were designed and implemented using a participatory approach . The economic return on each category of village subproject (small dams, water harvesting bunds, gum arabic reforestation, and village gardens) exceeded 20 percent, based on a (non-random) sample of these subprojects . Increased opportunities for the sustainable harvesting of gum arabic has stopped male outmigration in some villages . Women have benefited from the closer access to water afforded by some subprojects and the cash income from managing village gardens and stores .

(iii) *Achieved.* Community development associations (ADCs) were significantly strengthened in each of the 295 villages covered by the project, increasing villagers' capacity to manage common property resources . A total of 14,750 members of the ADCs were trained in participatory planning, including investment selection, procurement, and operation and maintenance of the village subprojects . The ADCs are recognized legal entities and have become important participants in village-level planning and development initiatives . There are fewer conflicts within and between villages.

4. Significant Outcomes/Impacts:

In the case of small dams, reforestation, firebreaks, grain mills and village stores, beneficiary input (primarily labor and materials) contributed on average more than 40 percent to total project costs, the resulting buy-in making it more likely that the works will be adequately maintained . Operation and maintenance fees are being collected by ADCs and are sufficient to ensure that subprojects continue to function . The ADCs are now considered a keystone in the government's decentralization strategy . The project strengthened the decentralized regional units of the Ministry of Rural Development and Environment.

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

Although in some cases, ADC leaders are also members of municipal councils, the project operated largely independently of local government, thus potentially failing to head off one of the biggest problems of community-driven development: the creation of parallel planning mechanisms that may not be sustainable in the long-term. "Although the municipal council is supposed to be the institutional intermediary between the ADCs and the departmental and regional political and administrative authorities, it was hardly involved in the execution of the project. The mayors did co-sign the village investment plans, but because of their frequent absence, lack of finance and qualified staff, their role was limited" (p. 10).

The monitoring and evaluation system was weak and no provision was made during preparation for a baseline survey. Monitoring of key performance indicators was uneven . Some indicators were specified but not measured : for example, the appraisal set a target of cutting soil erosion by 50 cm/year but loss reduction rates were not systematically assessed, reliance being placed on visual inspection .

| 6. Ratings: | ICR | OED Review | Reason for Disagreement /Comments |
|-------------|-----|------------|-----------------------------------|
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|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------|--|
| Outcome : | Satisfactory | Satisfactory | |
| Institutional Dev .: | Substantial | Substantial | |
| 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:

- Community-driven development projects need to tread a fine line between minimizing interference by municipal authorities (which may favor elite capture of benefits) and strengthening the capacity of those same authorities to administer more participatory approaches to local-level planning.
- Transparent and well-publicized procedures in community-driven projects serve to reduce political interference and attempts by the community's elite to capture project benefits .
- Expressions of satisfaction by beneficiaries are not an adequate measure of project outcome : baseline data should be collected and a workable system of monitoring and evaluation installed .
- Awareness-raising campaigns are essential for promoting participation in community -driven development projects: full use should be made of television and radio programs and mobile phones .

8. Assessment Recommended? Yes No

Why?

This is an undervalued country/region. The project is one of a growing number of community-driven development projects in Africa: the justification for this trend warrants closer investigation . Also, the failings of monitoring and evaluation in this project suggest that it would be advisable to take a second look at the claims made by the ICR .

9. Comments on Quality of ICR:

The economic analysis (Annex 3) would be more compelling if there were more detail on subproject costs and revenues and an explicit treatment of "without project" returns. The ICR does not explain why a non-random sample of projects was used in the economic analysis . This raises the possibility that the analysis focused on the best-performing subprojects, ones that were not necessarily representative of the whole population .