

Morocco

Rural Development Project in the Mountain Zones of Al-Haouz Province

Project Completion Report Digest

Morocco - Rural Development Project in the Mountain Zones of Al-Haouz Province

Item	Assessment Remarks	Rating
Country & Project Name	Morocco - Rural Development Project in the Mountain Zones of Al-Haouz Province	
Loan No.:	556-MA	
Project Id.	1178	
Board Date	07 December 2000	
Effectiveness Date	22 January 2002	
Original Closing Date	30 September 2008	
Final Closing Date	31 March 2011	
Total Project Cost USD(M)	30.24	
IFAD loan US\$(M)	18.03	
Cofinanciers (if any)	UNDP: US\$0.13, To be determined: US\$0.4, Domestic total financing: US\$12.05	
Implementing Agency	Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Marine Fisheries	
Principal Components	The project will be implemented over a period of six years, with activities grouped under four main components: (i) capacity-building and promotion of local development; (ii) implementation of local development programmes; (iii) support to rural financial services and to microenterprise development; and (iv) institutional support and project coordination and management.	
Project Performance		
Relevance	The project was in line with IFAD's strategic objectives for the country and with Government's poverty reduction and rural development policies and strategies as set forth in the <i>Plan Maroc Vert</i> . The latter is based on beneficiary participation and the regionalization, decentralization and integration of rural development interventions. Project interventions were focused on 17 rural communities covering some of the most disadvantaged populations in the country. Its objectives were to improve the management and the development capacities of the target populations with the aim to increase their incomes and improve their food security while preserving the natural resource base. The project was considered relevant in terms of its objectives, approaches and strategies. Integration of rural poverty alleviation and environmental conservation were found crucial for the development of the mountain areas. The approach whereby douars (settlements) with similar natural resources are grouped within the same Douar Development Plan (DDP) has proven very efficient as it allowed the project to address the needs of the beneficiaries in a comprehensive way while creating important synergies. This approach was innovative and taken as a model for the design of future interventions. Project design was flexible enough to incorporate needed changes in the course of implementation. In line with the <i>Plan Maroc Vert</i> , the project integrated the value-chain approach, not part of its original concept. It has also reacted to the higher than expected demand for irrigated land by increasing the surface developed by 17%. Finally, since 2003, the project has benefited from important political support with the adoption by the Government of Morocco (GoM) of strategic directions fully in line with those already implemented by the project.	6
Effectiveness	The project can be considered effective. It has largely met its development objectives and most physical achievement rates could be surpassed. The project has reached out to 370 douars and a total of 217 DDP were developed. This corresponds to 103% of the initial target. The project was highly effective in training and capacity strengthening. The strengthening of local capacities reached 103% for associations, 120% for animal husbandry and 433% for marketing and small business. Access to microfinance was given to an estimated 22 300 beneficiaries and has enabled 69% of the beneficiaries to benefit from microenterprises/IGAs. Microenterprise and IGA development reached 790% (79 established against an initial target of 10). Irrigation development reached an achievement rate of 120% , access to drinking water 130%, and rehabilitation and construction of rural roads 112%. The project achieved further important results in the area of SWC, land development and fruit tree plantation. The yields of all major tree crops could be increased by 16%-27%. Important efforts were also done in the area of livestock development with the introduction of new races, improved fodder, testing of fattening techniques, vaccination and deworming campaigns etc. Results with respect to sylvopastoral development were less impressive, though still positive. The project was quite effective in the creation of grassroots associations but only 50% were fully operational at completion. Representation of women and the youth is satisfactory. Factors which have positively impacted on project effectiveness include: (i) early and adequate staffing of the PMU which has enabled the project to have a quick and positive start; (ii) effective collaboration with FONDEP to promote microfinance and with UNDP for timely and adequate support to the preparation of DDPs, and (iii) a well-functioning M&E system. On the negative side, project effectiveness was hampered by heavy staff turnover at mid-term, which temporarily slowed down implementation.	5
Efficiency	The project is considered partly efficient. The total disbursement rate at completion was 95%, but the completion date was extended by 2 years to make up for important delays occurred at mid-term. While the project has had a quick and efficient start, it slowed down midway, due to staff constraints	4

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	(high turnover, retirements) resulting in weak management and budgetary constraints. Some unit costs were higher than originally estimated. This concerns: (i) rural roads (82% higher), and (ii) the rehabilitation of small and medium irrigation schemes (between 45% and 94% higher). The main reasons mentioned are the rising costs of salaries and construction material. However, some estimates were lower than the unit costs used by other development agencies, such as the World Bank. Other costs were in line with appraisal estimates: SWC, land development and fruit seedlings. On the positive side, it has been noted that the costs by beneficiary for water supply were almost half (660 dh/inhabitant) compared to similar projects. The calculated ERR is of 13.4% which is slightly lower than the appraisal estimate (15%). If one disregards community investments with no economic return (such as rural roads, water supply), the ERR amounts to 20.3%.	
Project Performance		5
Partner Performance		
IFAD	IFAD performance was altogether satisfactory. IFAD ensured that all operational conditions were in place when the project became effective, which enabled a quick start and the adoption of a positive dynamic right from the beginning. The support provided by IFAD in the course of implementation was satisfactory. Since 2007, the project was directly supervised. IFAD supervision performance is not assessed in the PCR. It was however pointed out that the IFAD supervision missions were able to address issues more effectively than UNOPS, since they looked at the project as a whole and not only at loan administration (see UNOPS). WAs and DPs were handled satisfactorily. IFAD can however be made responsible for the underestimation of unit costs at appraisal.	5
Cooperating Institution	The project was supervised by UNOPS until 2007. Though its performance is considered satisfactory, it is criticized for having focused on loan administration and fiduciary aspects, and less on technical issues.	4
Government	The Provincial Agricultural Department in Marrakech was responsible for project implementation through the PCU. Its performance was satisfactory. The National Steering Committee, the local agricultural development commission and the provincial technical committee have fully performed their respective role in terms of supervision and guidance. Performance of the PCU was very good at the beginning of project implementation, less satisfactory at mid-term (staff shortage), but returned to its initial performance level at the end of the project. The PCU has been highly instrumental in effectively implementing the participatory approach, addressing gender aspects, developing operational grassroots organizations and providing appropriate capacity building at all levels. It has also played an important role in establishing effective partnerships. The absence of financial incentives has however been mentioned as a weakness of the PCU. Collaboration with most technical departments was very positive and has contributed to the attainment of the project's objectives.	5
NGO/Other	The project has established important partnerships with international and national institutions and organizations (UNDP, Foundation for Local Development and Partnership (FONDEP), the National Research Institute (INRA), the Social Development Agency (ADS) and other national research centers and universities). These partners have been highly instrumental in the implementation of project activities and have played a key role in the attainment of the development objectives.	6
Cofinancier(s)	The collaboration with UNDP for the financing and implementation of sensitization activities was highly efficient and has enabled the project to get the beneficiaries "on board" at a very early stage.	5
Combined Partner Performance	Given the results achieved, it can be assumed that collaboration between partners was excellent.	
Rural Poverty Impact		
Household Income and Net Assets	Household incomes could be increased and diversified through a higher and more diversified agricultural and livestock production, and the expansion of micro-enterprises / IGAs beyond the targets set at appraisal (79 instead of 10). In the latter case, the PCR states that contributing factors include the high potential of the project area, good collaboration between partners and the dynamism of existing and newly created grassroots associations. - Access to household assets such as production inputs, equipment, technology, land and water could be improved across the project area: (i) the development of irrigated schemes has helped farmers to better use scarce water resources, and to increase and diversify their agricultural production; (ii) the construction of rural roads has reduced transportation costs and time, and has made input and outlet markets more accessible, contributing markedly to farmer's incomes; (iii) the access to drinking water in 92 douars (against a target of 71) could be lifted from 50% of the households at mid-term to 87% at completion (RIMS survey) and has helped improving household hygiene, reduce diseases, and save women's time; (iv) SWC activities and rangeland development have helped improve access to land; (v) the distribution of means of production such as beehives, fruits tree seedlings, small equipment and processing material has helped members of cooperatives and associations increase their production and hence their incomes. The RIMS survey further indicates that: (i) housing conditions have generally improved; (ii) the use of	5

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	cooking gas has increased from 55% at mid-term to 70% at completion; (iii) access to electricity has increase from 75% to 94% and the number of households with a television set has increased from 74% to 91% within the same period of time. The gross annual incomes increase for the period 2002-10 is estimated at 1604 DH/household. In addition, around 22 300 beneficiaries were given access to credits. Reimbursement rates were good.	
Food Security	The project's support to agricultural and livestock production (intensification and diversification) has largely contributed to improving food security. At the end of the project, 93% of the beneficiaries mention not having experienced any food shortage during the last 12 months. It is not clear, however, how many did so before the project. Increased vegetable production and meat production have undoubtedly contributed to improving household diets. The percentage of children suffering from chronic malnutrition could be reduced from 51% before the project to 25% at completion. This impressive improvement is the combined result of: (i) development of irrigated agriculture; (ii) agricultural and livestock intensification and diversification, and (iii) the development of local products and resources through micro-enterprises and IGAs.	5
Ag. Productivity	The project has had a significant impact on agricultural production, productivity and yields, and the development of irrigated agriculture has greatly contributed to agricultural diversification. The surfaces used for the production of local fruits trees (olive, almond, apple, nut) could be increased by more than 10% on the average thanks to the distribution of fruit tree seedlings. Also, improved techniques have allowed yields to be increased by 18% on irrigated land and by 27% on dry land. Between 2009 and 2011, vegetable production on irrigated land could be increased from 13% of the total surface to 22% and yields could be increased by 23%. Important efforts were done to improve livestock production with the introduction of new races, improved fodder, fattening trials, deworming (262% for sheep and 130% for goats), vaccination campaigns, beehive treatment (192%) and support to the creation of herder's groups through a partnership with the national herder's association. The combination of all of these efforts has led to a marked increase in meat production and consumption. The quality of red meat could be improved too. The PCR points out, however, that the impact could have been higher if activities had started right at the beginning of project implementation. Other activities which have had a positive impact on agricultural land include the planting of fodder shrubs over 720 ha (72% of target) and of <i>medicago arborea</i> over 100 ha (33% of target). They have helped improve the vegetation cover of rangelands. By contrast, efforts with regard to sylvopastoral development have had no significant impact since the planned agro-pastoral study could not be completed. Lastly, land development and SWC techniques have contributed to the preservation and development of the agricultural potential of the project area. Also, direct interventions of the project together with improved access to inputs have helped beneficiaries improve their cropping techniques, improve the quality of their produce and hence increase their incomes from agriculture.	5
Agricultural Productivity and Food Security		5
Natural Resources and Environment	The project has had a significant impact in the area of NRM and erosion control. The planting of local fruit trees (olive, almond and carob tree) has allowed 2100 ha of land to be developed and protected. In addition, more than half a million fruit tree seedlings were distributed (100.5% achieved). A further 1730 ha were developed by controlling the expansion of the jujube plant. This is however less than the initial target of 3000 ha. The project area has further benefited from important infrastructure and land development activities (SWC and rangeland development). The rehabilitation and strengthening of irrigation channels with concrete has allowed water losses to be reduced. Access to drinking water has reduced the uncontrolled digging of wells and has contributed to improving household hygiene. A number of other activities have contributed to soil and water conservation (erosion control) and have led to the rehabilitation of degraded soils and to the collection of runoff water. Finally, agro-pastoral development has contributed to reforestation, rehabilitation of degraded soils and increased fodder availability. Rangeland development has not only reduced land degradation. It has also contributed to biodiversity conservation through the regeneration of endogenous plant species. Human capacities in the area of NRM could be developed too. Environmental sensitization and training has improved the environmental awareness among local associations and services providers. It has also facilitated the emergence and promotion of good NRM practices at local level.	5
Human, Social Capital and Empowerment	Capacity strengthening was at the center of all interventions and a major contributing factor to the project's results and impact. It has greatly contributed to ensuring sustainability of the activities initiated and of the infrastructure provided. Most achievement rates could be surpassed: 103% for associations, 120% for animal husbandry and 433% for marketing and small business. Attainment levels were lower for crop production (59%) and sensitization on natural resource conservation (47%). A total of 4878 women were given literacy training, 20 women's associations were created and 62000 agricultural training days were organized. Of these training days, 53% benefited farmers, women and	6

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	youth and 46% public service staff (technical and administrative). At the end of the project, the literacy rates for both women and men had increased by respectively 17 and 19 percentage points compared to the situation at mid-term (from 21% to 39% for women). Capacity strengthening has improved beneficiaries' knowledge and practices, and has given them the means to improve their living conditions and incomes. The participatory process of DDP definition and implementation was a highly instrumental in helping beneficiaries to gain a better understanding of their development needs, to find solutions to their problems and implement appropriate measures. It has improved their sense of responsibility and has boosted their self-confidence. Through its participatory approach, the project has improved social cohesion and organization. It has provided support the creation of 156 grassroots associations and strengthened the capacities of 52 existing ones. However, only 50% were fully operational at the end of the project compared to a target of 80%. On the positive side, all of the associations have formalized their structures while this was expected only for 20% of them. The project has also enabled the emergence of a large number of dynamic leaders who now represent important human assets at local level. They play an important role in committees and associations.	
Inst. & Policies	The project did not have any direct impact on institutions and policies. Nevertheless, it can be stated that it indirectly strengthened the capacities of public services providers who, through their involvement in an innovative and stimulating project, have improved their knowledge and skills. They now better understand and are better prepared to service the rural poor.	5
Markets	The project's impact on markets has been significant. Altogether, access to 82 douars could be opened up compared to an initial target of 78 (112% achieved). Roads constructions (rehabilitation of existing ones and construction of new ones) have reduced transportation costs and time, improved access to markets and inputs, and accelerated the transaction speed at the local level. In addition, the project has had an important impact on the marketing of agricultural products by helping beneficiaries to improve the quality of their produce and to add value to transformation and processing. All of these activities have contributed to increasing their incomes.	5
Project Impact	The project has had an important impact in the sense that it went beyond increasing agricultural production and incomes. It induced behavioural changes at different levels which will have a long-lasting impact on the populations in the region, together with the physical investments made under the project.	5
Overarching Factors		
Innovation	The project can be considered a "workshop" which has brought about several technical, social and institutional innovations. The approach itself based on the full participation of the beneficiaries in all phases of project implementation is the project's most important innovation. Others include: (i) financial autonomy of grass-roots organization through IGAs; (ii) micro-enterprises and IGAs led by women's associations; (iii) agricultural production improvements (development of tree pruning expertise, nut products, creation of herder's associations); (iv) private sector partnership; (v) innovations induced by IGAs and micro-enterprise development.	5
Replicability and Scaling-up	The Douar development approach, initiated by the project, was later replicated by other national projects. Also, the existence and positive performance of this project has motivated some Government structures to expand their support to the mountain areas of the country, so far rather neglected.	5
Innovation, Replicability and Scaling-up		5
Sustainability and Ownership	The PCR concludes that some of the positive achievements of the project need further consolidation to ensure long-term sustainability. This concerns in particular NRM measures, support to microenterprises & IGA development, and technical support. Some of the beneficiary organizations will need further support too, as only half of them were considered fully operational and autonomous at the end of the project. Consolidation of the achievements is therefore a key objective of the follow-up project, centred on the development of specific value-chains. On the positive side, it has to be noted that the project's impact on the social capital has been very important and is expected to positively reflect on the sustainability of physical assets. Institutional sustainability is considered satisfactory. By contrast, economic and financial sustainability are considered fragile. The collection of fees to ensure the maintenance of irrigation and other water infrastructure is an issue. Also, the maintenance of road and SWC facilities is yet to be assessed and planned.	4
Targeting	Targeting is not explicitly assessed in the PCR. The project targeted the mountain zones of Morocco, where poverty incidence is high. The entire population of the project area can therefore be considered poor. The douars selected belong to the poorest in the country: at appraisal 6 had a poverty incidence higher than 30%, 6 between 20% and 30% and the rest a poverty incidence close to 20%. 70% of the douars targeted were considered very poor. Targeting was further fine-tuned by grouping douars with similar agro-ecological conditions under a same DDP. In addition to taking advantage of synergies, this	5

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	allowed a larger number of douars to be targeted. Targeting can be considered effective since the entire population of the douar takes part in the planning and implementation process of the douar development plan.	
Gender	Women were directly targeted with the creation of 70 literacy training classes which have allowed 4878 women to become literate. This represents, however, only 33% of the target set. The absolute number needed to be reduced due to the absence of trainers and of training facilities at douar level. In addition, 244 women have benefited from specialized training to run their IGAs and 1077 have participated in sensitization sessions on health and family planning. The project also provided support to the implementation of 20 women's associations. At the end of the project 15 associations were operational as well as 40 groups. Women are represented in 43% of the grassroots associations created or strengthened by the project, which is in line with the targets set. Their socio-economic situation within the society could be improved. Their participation in the decision-making processes is however still low, except for women's associations which they fully lead. The youth are part of the decision-making bodies across the associations and organizations created under the project.	5
Overall Performance	The project has brought about important long-lasting changes. Its main achievements include: (i) creation of sustainable and well-functioning beneficiaries' organizations; (ii) internalization of a participatory approach adapted to the socio-cultural specificities of the region; (iii) provision of key socio-economic infrastructure; (iv) integration of women and the youth into the local economic system; (v) access to microfinance.	<u>5</u>
Estimated number of beneficiaries		
PCR Quality		
Scope	The guidelines have been fully respected and all annexes included.	6
Quality	The report is well written and very analytical. Causes and effects are well analysed.	6
Lessons	A series of important lessons have been drawn which will help implementation of the follow-up project.	6
Candour	The report reflects an honest and objective assessment of project performance and impact,	6