



1. Project Data

Project ID

P126902

Project Name

MR-Basic Educ Sect Sup Proj (BESSP)

Country

Mauritania

Practice Area(Lead)

Education

L/C/TF Number(s)

TF-16390

Closing Date (Original)

01-May-2017

Total Project Cost (USD)

12,000,986.75

Bank Approval Date

06-Feb-2014

Closing Date (Actual)

30-Nov-2018

IBRD/IDA (USD)
Grants (USD)

Original Commitment

12,400,000.00

12,400,000.00

Revised Commitment

12,400,000.00

12,400,000.00

Actual

12,243,001.47

12,000,986.75

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2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

The Project Development Objective (PDO) as stated in the Grant Agreement (p. 5) was: "to improve quality of pre-service teacher training in primary education and to promote equitable access to lower secondary education." The Project Appraisal Document (PAD, p. 7) provided an identical formulation. The PDO remained unchanged throughout the life of the project.



Note on primary and secondary education: Basic education comprises six grades (grades 1 through 6). Secondary education comprises six years and is divided into lower secondary education (Grades 7 through 10) and upper secondary education (Grades 11 and 12) (PAD, p. 2).

Note on revision of outcome targets: The second restructuring (August 2017) revised baselines and targets for outcome indicators to reflect the availability of more accurate data and to make them consistent with the project's expanded scope and ambition. The restructuring did not change the PDO, and the targets were maintained at the same level or revised upwards. For this reason, a split rating is deemed unnecessary for this review.

Note on targeting: According to the PAD (p.7), the project targeted six densely populated wilayas (Tagant, Hodh Charghy, Hodh Gharby, Assaba, Gorgol, and Guidimagha) where school mapping data showed a high proportion of rural population and low transition rates among girls from primary to lower secondary school (PAD).

b. Were the project objectives/key associated outcome targets revised during implementation?

Yes

Did the Board approve the revised objectives/key associated outcome targets?

Yes

Date of Board Approval

01-Aug-2017

c. Will a split evaluation be undertaken?

No

d. Components

Component 1: Improving the quality of teaching in primary education (appraisal cost US\$4 million; actual cost US\$3.82 million). This component aimed at improving the quality of pre-service teacher training in the country's two primary school teacher training institutes (*Ecole Normale des Instituteurs - ENIs*) located in Nouakchott and Aioun (Subcomponent 1.1) and improving the learning environment in primary and lower secondary schools (Subcomponent 1.2).

- **Sub-component 1.1.** To improve the quality of pre-service teacher training, this sub-component was to finance: (i) the re-design of pre-service training programs by emphasizing language skills development and more practical teaching prior to certification; (ii) the restructuring of the pre-service training to better balance its content and pedagogical curriculums; (iii) the provision of training for ENI administrative staff on overall management of the institutes; (iv) the introduction of an external entry examination to assess the students' level when entering the ENIs; (v) an external examination



to assess second- and third-year students of ENI training during the first year of the project in order to design remedial pedagogical actions; (vi) the provision of language laboratory equipment to facilitate bilingual education and classroom inputs (e.g. desks, chairs, library books) based on ENIs' needs; and (vii) the provision of computer networking between the two ENIs.

- **Sub-component 1.2.** To improve the learning environment in primary and lower secondary schools, this sub-component was to support the purchase and distribution of pedagogical kits for all students in the targeted wilayas. The kits comprised school supplies (e.g. backpacks, textbooks, pens, charts, maps, geometrical figures, etc.) that were expected to be used by students and teachers to improve the learning environment.

Component 2: Promoting equitable access to lower secondary education (appraisal cost US\$4.7 million; actual cost US\$4.28 million). Since girls' participation rates in lower secondary school were considerably lower than those found among boys, this component aimed at expanding girls' access to lower secondary education through supply-side (Sub-component 2.1) and demand-side (Sub-component 2.2) interventions.

- **Sub-component 2.1.** This sub-component tackled supply-side barriers to access through support for the construction and equipment of 13 lower secondary schools (*colleges de proximite*) in 13 communities located in the targeted wilayas that lacked a secondary school. For each school, the project supported the construction of two blocks of two classrooms, totaling four classrooms, an administrative block, latrines, and water points. The total number of classrooms to be constructed was 52. The cost of each school was estimated at US\$ 200,000 (PAD, p. 36).
- **Sub-component 2.2.** This sub-component tackled demand-side barriers to access in six targeted wilayas through: (i) awareness raising and sensitization campaigns to promote girls' schooling; (ii) incentivizing girls through graduation ceremonies and non-monetary awards provided by the government; (iii) awareness-raising training for teachers, inspectors, and school directors in rural lower secondary schools on girls' rights to education; and (iv) the distribution of pedagogical kits to girls enrolled in lower secondary schools built by the project to lessen the financial burden of sending girls to school for parents.

Component 3: Strengthening management of the education sector (appraisal cost US\$3.7 million; actual cost US\$4.02 million). This component aimed at strengthening the Ministry of Education's (MEE) capacity for monitoring and evaluation (Sub-component 3.1) and at supporting the coordination of the education sector program (Sub-component 3.2).

- **Subcomponent 3.1.** To strengthen capacity for monitoring and evaluation, this sub-component sought to fully integrate the Education Management Information System (EMIS) by networking all MEE departments. In addition, this sub-component was to finance: (i) the training of Regional Directorate of Education (DREN) staff located in the regions (local offices) in data collection and analysis; (ii) the evaluation of policies aimed at improving teaching and learning; (iii) the



implementation of an Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA); (iv) participation in the Program for the Analysis of Education System of the Conference of Ministers of Education of French-Speaking Countries (CONFEMEN – PASEC) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS); (v) an independent review of sector performance to identify areas of slow progress; and (vi) technical support for the national assessment unit (*Cellule Nationale d'Évaluation – CNE*) to carry out student assessments analyses.

- **Subcomponent 3.2.** To support the coordination of the education sector program, this-subcomponent was to finance some of the operating costs of the project's implementing agency (*Direction des Projets Education et Formation – DPEF*), such as salaries for non-civil servant staff working on the project, costs associated with regular M&E and supervision, audits, and safeguards training.

e. Comments on Project Cost, Financing, Borrower Contribution, and Dates

Cost

The total project cost was US\$12.25 million (ICR, p. 2) as compared to an original commitment of US\$12.4 million. The difference between the planned and actual cost was due to lower-than-anticipated costs for some activities, though those activities were fully implemented as planned.

Financing

The project was financed through a Global Partnership for Education Fund II (GPE) grant worth US\$12.4 million. As per World Bank team information, the total disbursement was US\$12.25 million. The US\$0.15 million undisbursed amount at the time of closing was returned to the GPE. The planned project financing did not include a counterpart contribution.

Dates

The project was approved on February 6, 2014, and the GPE grant became effective on May 19, 2014 (ICR, p. 2). A Mid-Term Review was carried out on May 23, 2016. The project closed on November 30, 2018. The original closing date was May 1, 2017. The project underwent two restructurings (April 2017 and August 2017).

Restructurings

The first restructuring (April 2017) included: (i) an extension of the project closing date by four months from May 1, 2017 to August 31, 2017; and (ii) adjustments to the end-of-project target dates for each indicator in



the project's results framework (RF) to ensure consistency between the revised closing date and the end-of-project target dates.

The second restructuring (August 2017) requested an extension of the closing date by fifteen months, from August 31, 2017 to November 30, 2018, to ensure completion of ongoing activities and the addition of a limited number of small activities to support the achievement and sustainability of the PDO.

- With respect to the first objective (“improve quality of pre-service teacher training in primary education”), the additional time was planned for enabling the delivery of complementary equipment to the ENIs, providing technical assistance to accompany ENI trainers in the use of student assessment results, assessing math competencies of current teachers (to inform in-service training), and enhancing the ENI entrance exam.
- With respect to the second objective (“promote equitable access to lower secondary education”), the additional time was planned for the project to complete the provision and delivery of complementary equipment to the newly built lower secondary schools in rural areas (*colleges de proximite*), address issues of access to water for some schools and the absence of trees in and around schools detected by the safeguards team, and add two new activities to the incentive package to retain adolescent girls (hygiene kits and sport activities).
- The additional time was also requested to complete essential activities needed for strengthening sector governance and management, such as the networking of all MEE departments, a dimension that was deemed to contribute achieving both objectives. In terms of the RF, the second restructuring clarified some indicators and adjusted some indicators' annual and end-of-project targets. Finally, the second restructuring also formalized the government's choice of the six targeted wilayas and replaced Assaba and Hodh Gharbi with Adrar and Brakna.

Change in Components

The second restructuring (August 2017) introduced the following changes to the project's components:

- **Component 1.** The provision of equipment initially planned for two ENIs (Nouakchott and Aioun) was extended to two additional ENIs established after effectiveness as part of the decentralization process (Akjoujt and Kaedi). The activity to establish interconnectivity across the ENIs was changed for a technical assistance to train ENI staff in the use of information and communication technologies.
- **Component 2.** To promote adolescent girls' schooling and retention in targeted wilayas, the component complemented the pedagogical kits with the provision of hygiene kits for girls. In addition, the component supported the functioning of six newly constructed sport facilities (one in each wilaya) to encourage girls' participation in sports and exercise.
- **Component 3.** The restructuring downsized the EMIS by limiting its scope to the development of two modules (students and teachers) with a focus on capacity building and supporting the establishment of basic functions including the collection, management, and analysis of data on students and teachers to improve policy formulation and implementation. In addition, instead of covering all regions as was originally planned, the restructuring planned for implementation at the central level with only one or two pilot regions. Finally, the restructuring also added the following



activities to the component (ICR, p. 15): (i) implementation of a Service Delivery Indicator (SDI) survey that included a sample-based testing in Arabic, French, and Math for grade 4 students in lieu of the originally envisaged EGRA; (ii) consolidation of the school map to optimize resource allocation and use; (iii) support to the CNE to improve and upgrade the ENI entrance examinations; (iv) an assessment of teachers in mathematics in the targeted wilayas; (v) technical assistance to support a teacher management and professional development strategy; (vi) evaluation of national exams to ensure that their design was of high quality and that they were administered properly; and (vii) technical assistance to support the establishment of a school grants program by the government to improve the school environment.

3. Relevance of Objectives

Rationale

The PDOs were responsive to key education challenges in the country, namely a lack of qualified teachers and low girls enrollment in lower secondary education, especially in rural and poor areas. Against this backdrop, the project supported (i) improvements in the quality of pre-service teacher training for primary education and (ii) measures to promote equitable access to lower secondary education.

At the time of appraisal, the PDOs were aligned with the government priorities as expressed in the Education Sector Development Plan II (ESDP II), which sought to improve the quality of teaching-learning processes and promote greater access as well as regional and gender equity, especially at the primary and secondary levels. Likewise, the PDOs were aligned with the World Bank's Country Partnership Strategy (FY13-FY16), whose Pillar 2 (Economic Governance and Service Delivery) included an outcome on "improved quality and equity of basic education."

At the time of project closing (November 2018), the PDOs remained relevant to government priorities as laid out in the Second Education Sector Development Plan 2011-2020 (PNDSE II). The ICR reported that the plan identified the need to ensure universal quality basic education as one of its priorities. Finally, at closing, the PDOs were aligned with Focus Area 2 ("Build Human Capital for Inclusive Growth") of the World Bank Country Partnership Framework (FY18-FY23). This focus area had, as one of its objectives, to increase access to and quality of general education.

Rating

High

4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)



OBJECTIVE 1

Objective

Improve quality of pre-service teacher training in primary education

Rationale

The theory of change underlying this objective postulated that the quality of pre-service teacher training in primary education could be enhanced by: (i) the re-design of pre-service training programs to emphasize language skills development (French and Arabic) and include practical teaching prior to certification; (ii) providing ENI faculty with content and pedagogical training to improve the quality of teaching; (iii) training ENI administrative staff on overall management; (iv) introducing at entry and ongoing external competency exams to assess students; (v) using the results of the external assessments to design remedial pedagogical actions; (vi) providing learning materials and infrastructure such as library books and language laboratories equipment to ENIs; and (vii) providing computer networking between the two ENIs. This theory of change was plausible and well supported by evidence generated through an ENI assessment carried out in 2011 (PAD, p. 8).

Outputs

- 366,338 individuals directly benefited from the project. Original and revised target: 76,500 (exceeded) and 360,000 (achieved). See ICR (paragraph 27) for a detailed list of beneficiaries.
- The number of ENI administrative staff trained in language reached 41 (November 2018). Original and revised target: 70 (partially achieved) and 41 (achieved). The original target was revised downwards to account for the total number of administrative staff working in the ENIs at the time of the second restructuring (August 2017).
- The number of ENI faculty trained on the new standardized curriculum and the competency-based approach to instruction reached 101 (November 2018). Original and revised target: 120 (almost achieved) and 101 (achieved). The original target was revised downwards to account for the total number of ENI faculty at the time of the second restructuring (August 2017).
- Four ENIs were equipped with classroom and office equipment, library books, and computer and language labs (November 2018). Target: Yes (achieved).
- 1,019 bilingual teachers were certified by the Language Research Center (CREL) with project support. Original and revised target: 500 (exceeded) and 1,019 (achieved). The original target was revised upwards to respond to the increasing demand for certified bilingual teachers at the second restructuring (August 2017).

Outcomes

- The CNE undertook five independent assessments (2014-2018) of ENI's first (first year – 2014 cohort, first year – 2015 cohort, first year – 2016 cohort) and last year students (last year cohort 2016/2017 and last year cohort 2017/2018) to evaluate their proficiency in Arabic, French, and Mathematics. The first-year assessment results were used to inform remedial programs targeting the students in need of improvement. Last-year assessments allowed measurement of the knowledge acquired by ENI



students after a three-year pre-service program. Compared to baseline, the students improved their competencies in Arabic, French, and Mathematics (though the latter remained overall low). The assessments also showed that, between 2016 and 2017, the proportion of students who at entry had the prerequisites for teaching improved.

- The proportion of ENI graduates who mastered the minimum required competencies (PDO Indicator #1) reached 35.6 percent by November 2018. Original and revised target: 15 percent (exceeded) and 42 percent (partially achieved). At the mid-term review (May 2016), 32 percent of ENI graduates had mastered the minimum required competencies. Considering this progress, the World Bank revised the original target upwards. The ICR noted that the shortcoming in meeting the target was related to students not completing the originally envisaged three-year training program (ICR, p. 20). During project implementation, Mauritania suffered a nationwide shortage in the availability of primary education teachers. Under these circumstances, the government decided to have third-year ENI students (who would usually conduct a 2-3-month practical internship in the classroom in their third year) stay in the classroom and teach instead of having them back in the ENIs to complete their courses (Source: World Bank team). Because of this government decision, the 2017 and 2018 (and part of the 2016) student cohorts did not finish the originally envisaged three years of training and, thus, their level of competency suffered.
- As per a CNE assessment, the ICR (p. 21) reported that 21 percent, 62 percent, and 94 percent of the ENI cohort that graduated in 2018 were deemed unfit to teach Arabic, French, and Mathematics, respectively. This data reported is at odds with the data reported for PDO Indicator #1 and, for this reason, casts doubt on the indicator as constructed and results as reported.

Rating
Modest

OBJECTIVE 2

Objective

Promote equitable access to lower secondary education

Rationale

The theory of change underlying this objective assumed that supply-side challenges such as the lack of lower secondary schools reduce girls' access to education, since parents are reluctant to send girls to schools that are distant from their homes. Based on this assumption, the project supported the construction of lower secondary schools (*colleges de proximite*) in areas with the highest rural population and with the lowest girls' participation rates. The assumption was well supported by evidence: a 2011 UNICEF study found that 79 percent of parents identified distance as major obstacle for sending girls to lower secondary schools. Additionally, the theory of change assumed that girls' unequal access to education is also driven by demand-side challenges such as traditional gender roles and the lack of financial means to bear the burden of schooling. To address these demand-side challenges, the project financed awareness-raising campaigns, non-monetary awards, and sports activities to promote girls' schooling and, to lessen the financial burden of girls' schooling on parents, the provision of pedagogical (textbooks, pen, pencils, etc.) and hygiene kits. Overall, the theory of change was plausible and supported by evidence.



Outputs

- The project constructed 52 classrooms in 13 lower secondary schools located in targeted wilayas (November 2018), thus providing additional space for nearly 3,000 students. Target: 52 (achieved). The schools were equipped with reading rooms and books, desks, science labs, and access to water and solar electricity. The government staffed these schools with qualified civil servant teachers, as originally agreed.
- The number of girls in lower secondary school receiving non-monetary awards reached 574 in targeted wilayas (November 2018). Target: 480 (exceeded).
- The number of awareness-raising campaigns carried out with non-governmental organizations to promote girls' education in each of the targeted wilayas reached 12 (November 2018). Target: 9 (exceeded).
- The number of teachers, school inspectors, and directors who attended awareness-raising training sessions reached 450 (November 2018). Original and revised target: 690 (partially achieved) and 250 (exceeded). The original target was revised downwards to account for the total number of teachers, inspectors, and school directors in the targeted wilayas at the time of the second restructuring (August 2017).
- The number of girls provided with pedagogical kits in the targeted wilayas reached 18,879 (November 2018). Original and revised target: 72,407 (not achieved) and 18,879 (achieved). The original target was revised downwards to account for the total number of girls in lower secondary schools in the targeted wilayas at the time of the second restructuring (August 2017).
- The number of pedagogical kits distributed in the targeted wilayas reached 445,437 (November 2018). Target: 403,283 (exceeded). The total number of pedagogical kits distributed covered the total number (100 percent) of primary and lower secondary students in the targeted wilayas.

Outcomes

- The transition rate from primary to lower secondary education for girls in the six targeted wilayas (PDO Indicator #2) increased from 41.3 percent (February 2014) to 49.3 percent (November 2018). Original and revised target: 50 percent (almost achieved) and 47 percent (exceeded). The original target was revised downwards at the second restructuring (August 2017) to account for inaccurate baseline data introduced at the design stage (original baseline at design stage was 45 percent).
- The number of girls enrolled in lower secondary education in the targeted wilayas (PDO Indicator #3) increased from 15,466 (February 2014) to 26,610 (November 2018). Original and revised target: 8,736 (exceeded) and 22,653 (exceeded). At the second restructuring (August 2017), the target was revised upwards from 8,736 to 22,653 to account for a revised baseline value of 15,466 female students. Additionally, the ICR reported that the Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) for girls increased from 25.5 percent in 2011 to 37.1 percent in 2016. During the same period, the GER for boys increased from 29.1 percent to 37 percent, thus showing that gender parity was achieved. Although this achievement may not be entirely attributable to the project, it is reasonable to conclude that the project contributed to this progress.

Rating



High

OVERALL EFFICACY

Rationale

Efficacy for objective #1 is rated modest whereas efficacy for objective #2 is rated high. Given these ratings, overall efficacy is rated **Substantial**.

Overall Efficacy Rating

Substantial

5. Efficiency

Appraisal

At appraisal, the project did not conduct a cost benefit analysis (CBA). Instead, the Bank team conducted a simple qualitative assessment of benefits covering the three components of the project (100% of project funds). The analysis lacked a discussion of costs and did not assign a dollar value to the identified benefits. For this reason, the analysis at appraisal lacked traditional efficiency measures such as net present value (NPV), economic rate of return (ERR), or internal rate of return (IRR).

- For component 1 (32 percent of resources at project appraisal), the analysis identified the following benefits: (i) 22,000 desks to accommodate 44,000 students (9 percent of the public primary school students); (ii) 25 percent of primary school children with pedagogical kits; (iii) 900 teachers trained between 2013-2015 (representing 8.6 percent of the total number of teachers in primary schools); and (iv) ENIs producing 300 trained teachers a year (representing half of the 600 new teachers needed yearly by the Mauritanian public primary education system). The analysis also compared the unit cost of providing pre-service training vis-à-vis in-service training and found that the unit cost for pre-service was lower than for in-service training (2,215 MRO vs. 3,800 MRO). Moreover, the analysis found that in-service training would have been ineffective, given its one-size-fits-all approach that does not respond to the individual needs of teachers.
- For component 2 (38 percent of resources at project appraisal), the analysis identified the following benefits in the targeted wilayas: (i) increased net enrollment in lower secondary education by 12%; (ii) increased primary to lower secondary education transition rate for girls from 45% to 50%; (iii) increased girls' participation in lower secondary education in targeted wilayas from 42% to 45%.
- The analysis identified more efficient functioning of the education sector as the main benefit of component 3 (30 percent of resources at project appraisal), which aimed at strengthening the managerial capacity of the education sector.



Closing

At closing, the project conducted a CBA and a cost effectiveness analysis (CEA).

- The CBA estimated the net benefits of the project for each component. The benefits quantified included improved quality of education and increased access to education. Using several tenable assumptions (ICR, p. 76), the analysis estimated an NPV of benefits at US\$11.91 million, an IRR of 25.8 percent, and a cost-benefit ratio of US\$3.4 to US\$1. These findings indicate that the benefits of the project outweighed its cost, and thus that the investment was warranted. The CBA did not carry out a sensitivity analysis.
- The CEA analyzed the unit cost of providing pedagogical kits and pre-service training. Two main findings emerged from the analysis. First, the analysis found that the per beneficiary cost of pedagogical kits (US\$4.67) was lower than the budgeted cost (US\$7.03) owing to efficient procurement practices that resulted in an estimated total cost savings of US\$746,663. The analysis also found that the per beneficiary cost of pedagogical kits was lower than the cost of similar kits distributed in Ghana and Mali, where the cost ranged from US\$7.03 to US\$50. Second, the analysis found that the unit cost per student for a day of pre-service teacher training was lower (MRO 2,215) than the unit cost for in-service training (MRO 3,097).

Implementation efficiency

Implementation had important shortcomings, including delays and challenges related to: (i) the bankruptcy of the Bank (Maurisbank) where the designated account was held; (ii) the tender process and construction firms' capacity for delivering the 13 planned schools; and (iii) the execution of activities under Component 3 (for instance, the technical assistance to the CNE was not completed). These implementation issues meant that the project had to request a 19-month extension in its closing date from May 2017 to November 2018. The main rationale for the 19-month extension was to complete all original activities. Although with delays (discussions about restructuring started after the MTR, and the restructuring only materialized 15 months later), the World Bank team worked effectively to address many of these challenges through project restructurings. The issues experienced nevertheless diminished the efficiency of use of project resources. Efficiency is therefore rated **modest**.

Efficiency Rating

Modest

a. If available, enter the Economic Rate of Return (ERR) and/or Financial Rate of Return (FRR) at appraisal and the re-estimated value at evaluation:



	Rate Available?	Point value (%)	*Coverage/Scope (%)
Appraisal		0	0 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
ICR Estimate	✓	25.80	100.00 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable

* Refers to percent of total project cost for which ERR/FRR was calculated.

6. Outcome

The PDO was highly relevant to country conditions and to government priorities, and highly aligned with World Bank strategies at appraisal and closing. Efficacy was rated substantial, whereas efficiency was rated modest. These rating indicate moderate shortcomings in the project's preparation and implementation, and the overall outcome is therefore rated **Moderately Satisfactory**.

a. Outcome Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

7. Risk to Development Outcome

This IEG validation identifies two risks to the development outcome (based on information presented in the ICR):

- **Sustainability of government financial support to the education sector.** The government is fully committed to continued support for the education sector as evidenced by the existence of a 10-year education sector plan (ESDP II 2011–2020). The ESDP II includes specific provisions to ensure financial sustainability (ICR, pp. 40–41). Overall, this risk is considered low.
- **Sustainability of institutional capacity gains.** Institutional arrangements to ensure the sustainability of capacity gains are in place, and it is likely that capacity will be sustained and augmented through an investment lending World Bank Project (Mauritania Education Sector Support Project - P163143) and a development policy programmatic series (2018–2022). Overall, this risk is also considered low.

8. Assessment of Bank Performance

a. Quality-at-Entry



The PDOs were aligned with country priorities and World Bank strategies at appraisal (see Section 3). In addition, the World Bank developed an adequate evidence-based project design that incorporated lessons from previous World Bank engagements in Mauritania such as the Education Sector Development Program (P071308), similar World Bank projects in other countries, and analytical work on the Mauritanian education sector carried out by the World Bank. Several examples illustrate the quality of project design. First, the World Bank team intentionally kept design simple, drawing on the experience of the Education Sector Development Program, whose overly ambitious and complex design led to implementation difficulties. Second, the targeting of beneficiary groups was based on a mapping of the population of lower secondary school enrollment across the country. Third, project design benefited from a participatory and consultative approach with the government and other development partners to ensure complementarity and coordination between project activities and those activities of other development partners. Finally, the project design included an adequate identification of risks and mitigation measures.

By and large, the results chain was plausible, with proposed activities commensurate with and logically linked to project objectives. However, some minor inconsistencies between the formulated objective and the scope of proposed activities can be noted. For instance, the first objective, “improving quality of pre-service teacher training in primary education,” was supported by Component 1, which included outputs and activities to improve the learning environment in primary and lower secondary schools (e.g. distribution of school pedagogical kits). However, “improving the learning environment” was not included as an objective in the PDO formulation. Likewise, the formulation of the objective did not capture the intended outcome for component 3 (“strengthening management of the education sector”).

Quality-at-Entry Rating Satisfactory

b. Quality of supervision

The World Bank systematically and adequately supervised the project through standard procedures such as supervision missions, aides-memoire, a mid-term review, and implementation and supervision reports. Several examples illustrate this adequate supervision. First, together with the government, the World Bank team was able to successfully address slow disbursement rates at the beginning of project implementation caused by the bankruptcy of the Bank where the project designated account was held. By the end of the project, the disbursement rate was almost 100 percent. Second, successful supervision led to a high execution rate of planned activities (98 percent). Third, the construction of the 13 schools suffered from delays driven by challenges in the conception of the tender process as well as the low capacity of the construction firm. To address this issue, the World Bank team and the government improved monitoring of contracts and their implementation to ensure full execution of agreed procurement plans. Finally, the World Bank adequately monitored safeguards and fixed problems when needed (see Section 10a) and adequately coordinated with other development partners throughout implementation (e.g. coordinated with UNICEF in the design and distribution of hygiene kits).



The World Bank team also carried out two project restructurings to better measure results (through the adjustment of PDO-level indicators to reflect the availability of more accurate data) and maximize development impact by (i) including support for the two ENIs created after effectiveness (Akjoujt and Kaedi); (ii) complementing pedagogical kits with the provision of hygiene kits and sports facilities and activities for girls to promote their lower secondary enrollment and retention in the targeted wilayas; and (iii) narrowing the scope of the EMIS to ensure effective implementation of at least two key modules. Although the restructurings were adequate and needed, they occurred with a long delay after they had been recommended at the mid-term review. This long delay diminished the efficiency of the use of project resources.

Quality of Supervision Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

Overall Bank Performance Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization

a. M&E Design

The overall M&E design was adequate for measuring the stated PDOs (“improve quality of pre-service teacher training” and “increase equitable access to lower secondary education”). The M&E design was also adequate for measuring another objective of the project that was not included in the PDO formulation, namely “strengthened management of the education sector.” The M&E design made the General Directorate of Strategy, Planning, and Cooperation (DGSPC) responsible for coordinating, overseeing, and implementing project monitoring and evaluation activities at the national, regional, departmental, and school levels. Specifically, the DGSPC was made responsible for consolidating and analyzing data and producing detailed annual M&E reports based on inputs received from the Regional Directorates of Education (DRENs). To ensure the adequacy of monitoring and evaluation activities, the project provided support through sub-component 3.1, which supported data monitoring and evaluation at both the central and decentralized levels. At the central level, the project supported learning assessment and improvements to the EMIS. At the decentralized level, the project supported training for DREN staff on data collection and analysis that was deemed critical for ensuring adequate data collection.

b. M&E Implementation

By and large, the project successfully implemented the M&E system and systematically collected data for the indicators included in the RF throughout the life of the project. Throughout implementation, the World Bank revised baselines and targets for these indicators based on updated data. At the central level, several achievements can be noted. First, the project strengthened the capacity of the CNE, which undertook several independent assessments of ENI students and three large-scale national learning assessment for children in grades 3, 5, and 9 in 2014 and 2015. Second, the project supported the implementation of a Service Delivery Indicator Survey (SDI). Third, the project contributed to improving M&E through: (a) four annual school censuses; (b) a technical assistance for the 2015 Education Country



Status Report, evaluation of the three-year national education plan (2016-18), and updating of the national education sector plan; and (c) fifteen education sector group meetings to coordinate and harmonize education monitoring. Finally, the project fell short of its original plan of implementing EMIS at the central level (within DSPC) and in all regions. At the second restructuring (August 2017), this original plan was downsized to a pilot EMIS focusing on three modules (human resources, students, and schools) in the region of Nouakchott. As part of this effort, 65 EMIS administrators and users (against a 285 target) were identified and trained.

At the decentralized level, the planned interconnectivity between the central level and the regions did not materialize, but the project trained DREN staff on data collection and analysis on the EMIS application tool and equipped DREN staff with computers and connectivity to the central EMIS to ensure timely transmittal of data.

c. M&E Utilization

The ICR presented evidence and examples indicating that the World Bank and the government routinely used M&E data to inform project implementation and the design of future projects. Several examples can be highlighted. First, data from the M&E system was used to update targets and baselines at the mid-term review. Second, the results of the ENI students assessment carried out by the CNE were used to re-design pre-service entry requirements as well as to design remedial programs targeting students in need of improvement. Moreover, this assessment also showed that the first-year ENI students had very low qualifications, highlighting the need to address the quality of the flow of teachers that entered into the system. The new Mauritania Education Sector Support Project (P163143) under preparation has incorporated this finding and will focus on improving the quality of both the flow as well as the stock of teachers (ICR, p. 41).

M&E Quality Rating

Substantial

10. Other Issues

a. Safeguards

The project was rated Category “B” as per OP/BP 4.01, as it involved small-scale construction activities that could be managed through minimum anticipatory mitigation measures. Additionally, the project triggered OP/BP 4.11 on Physical Cultural Resources and OP/BP 4.12 on Involuntary Resettlement. As part of the due diligence process associated with these safeguards, the project elaborated an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) and a Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF), which were disclosed in country on July 12, 2012 and at the InfoShop on July 16, 2012. The impacts and risks identified through these reports were: (i) land expropriation for the construction of facilities; (ii) temporary nuisances/pollution due to construction-generated wastes; (iii) involuntary destruction of undiscovered physical resources; and (iv) safety and security risks at construction sites. Although management rated compliance as satisfactory throughout implementation, safeguards implementation was not without



shortcomings. In 2017, safeguards supervision missions detected substantial environmental risks associated with inadequate access to water and sanitation in some of the 13 newly constructed lower secondary schools. These missions also recommended better documentation of social safeguards implementation related to the land used for building schools. The ICR reported that, by project closure, the project had adequately implemented corrective measures to address water and sanitation issues, and that the project coordination unit had provided adequate documentation demonstrating that school construction activities did not lead to displacement of any individuals (ICR, p. 38).

b. Fiduciary Compliance

Financial management

To determine whether the financial management system of the DPEF satisfied the Bank's minimum requirements under OP/BP10.01, the project carried out an assessment during the project preparation phase. The assessment concluded that, subject to reinforcement measures, the system was adequate to provide accurate and timely financial management information on the status of the project as required by the Bank. As per management assessments, financial management was rated satisfactory at the onset of the project until July 2016 (ISR Sequence 5), when it was downgraded to moderately unsatisfactory. The downgrade was driven by the bankruptcy of the primary national bank (Maurisbank) where the project's designated account was held. This issue delayed disbursements and the execution of activities and explains the extension of the grant closing date. The issue was resolved in March 2016, when funds were made available to the project by the government. Following the mid-term review (May 2016), the project took several actions to improve fiduciary management, including the designation of a secondary signatory at the DPEF (to ensure timely continuity of service in case of Director absence), up-to-date accounting, regular preparation of reconciliation statements, satisfactory quality and timely interim financial reports, regular internal audits, and full implementation of recommendations arising from external audits and supervision missions. Given these actions and associated improvements, Bank management upgraded its financial management rating to moderately satisfactory at the ISR Sequence 6 (April 2017) and later, at the ISR Sequence 7 (December 2017), to satisfactory for the remainder of the project. The ICR reported that external audits were undertaken on a regular basis and found no significant irregularities (ICR, p. 39).

Procurement

As part of the project's legal covenants, the recipient hired a procurement specialist for the project with terms of reference aligned with World Bank requirements. Until ISR Sequence 6 (April 2016), management rated procurement performance as satisfactory; at that point, procurement was downgraded to moderately satisfactory owing to procurement delays related to school construction and the EMIS intervention. To address these delays, the Bank team and the government improved monitoring of contracts and their



implementation to ensure full execution of agreed procurement plans. The procurement rating remained moderately satisfactory until project closing.

c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)

None reported.

d. Other

Although not explicitly included in the PDO formulation, the project provided support to strengthen sector governance and education management through Component 3. The following achievements can be noted:

- The project supported the establishment of a system for learning assessment. Target: Yes (achieved). As part of this effort, the project supported two national learning assessments and the implementation of a Service Delivery Indicators (SDI) Survey. The ICR reported that the findings of the SDI survey have been used to inform the new Mauritania Education Sector Support Project (P163143), a follow up World Bank project for the education sector.
- The project supported the CNE, which undertook five independent assessments of ENI students (three for first-year students and two for incoming second- and third-year students respectively) and three large-scale national learning assessments for children in grades 3, 5, and 9 in 2014 and 2015.
- The project supported the establishment of an EMIS with three functional modules (human resources, students, and schools) and deployed it on a pilot basis in the Nouakchott region (DREN Nouakchott Nord, DREN Nouakchott West, and DREN Nouakchott Sud). Although this fell short of the original objective, it was nonetheless a remarkable milestone that sets the basis for a fully integrated EMIS in the future. The ICR reported that the EMIS will receive additional support from the new Mauritania Education Sector Support Project (P163143).
- As of November 2018, the project had trained 70 DREN staff in data collection and analysis. Original and revised target: 120 (partially achieved) and 70 (achieved).
- The number of staffs trained on EMIS reached 65. Target: 285 (not achieved).
- The number of meetings of the education sector group reached 15 (November 2018). Original and revised target: 9 (exceeded) and 7 (exceeded).
- The project supported critical outputs for education sector planning, such as four annual school censuses and technical assistance to the Ministry of Education for undertaking studies and diagnostic work. Moreover, the project delivered technical assistance to strengthen government capacity at both the central and regional levels (ICR, p. 24).

11. Ratings

Ratings	ICR	IEG	Reason for Disagreements/Comment
Outcome	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	



Bank Performance	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory
Quality of M&E	Substantial	Substantial
Quality of ICR	---	Substantial

12. Lessons

The ICR lists six lessons (p. 41-43). Among these, IEG highlights and adapts the following:

- **Improving learning through pre-service training requires improving the pool of candidates entering teacher training institutes and ensuring that these candidates complete training for its entire duration.** These two challenges impacted the quality of the pre-service training delivered by the project. Because of a nationwide shortage of primary teachers, the ICR noted that the three-year training program had to be shortened to two years for some cohorts. Additionally, the ICR noted that ENI admitted students from a poor pool of candidates (ICR, p. 41). The combination of these two factors made the production of qualified teachers by ENIs highly challenging.
- **Project development objectives must be commensurate with project activities and, when including an equity objective, clearly identify the beneficiary groups for which improved equity is expected.** The formulation of the PDO did not capture the intended outcome of the activities under component 3, namely "strengthening management of the education sector." Likewise, the project included activities that could plausibly lead to improvement in the learning environment; however, this aspect was left out from the PDO formulation. Finally, the formulation also included an equity dimension that did not specify the inequities that the project was trying to remedy, namely gender and regional (rural vs. urban) inequities in access to lower secondary education.

13. Assessment Recommended?

No

14. Comments on Quality of ICR

The ICR provided a thorough description of the project with a narrative that broke down the PDO into two distinct objectives. Following guidelines, the ICR (p. 8) included a schematic figure describing the project result's chain that helped the reader quickly understand the intervention logic. It also included an adequate description of implementation challenges and how they were addressed. Additionally, the ICR included a detailed description of the changes introduced in the results framework throughout implementation (Annex 1) and a comprehensive description of important achievements not included in the PDO formulation. Two shortcomings can be noted. First, the ICR lacked a clear explanation of how PDO Indicator #1 was calculated.



Second, the ICR included some contradictory information (see Section 4, Objective #1). Notwithstanding these shortcomings, the overall quality of the ICR is rated **Substantial**.

a. Quality of ICR Rating
Substantial