Objective

This evaluation examines the Bank Group’s assistance to Cameroon over the 2004-2013 period as well as its contribution to the country’s development. The aim of the evaluation is to draw relevant lessons in order to improve the future strategy and operations. The main evaluation criteria used are relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. The evaluation of the results focuses on the priority pillars and sectors of the Country Strategy Papers (CSPs), in particular; transport, energy, water and sanitation and governance, which were the subject of sector evaluations.

Findings

Relevance

Relevance is considered satisfactory. The Country Strategy Papers (CSPs) are aligned with the national strategy: the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2003 PRSP) and the 2010-2020 Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP) which operationalizes the country’s Vision 2035. The strategic positioning on the governance and infrastructure pillars is relevant and consistent with the strategic priorities of the country and the Bank. However, the Bank’s operations lacked selectivity in the area of governance because the scope of its intervention was too wide and the number of direct beneficiaries too high.
Effectiveness

Overall, the effectiveness of the Bank’s interventions in Cameroon was considered to be moderately satisfactory, with varying degrees of success from one sector to another. Bank assistance achieved tangible results in infrastructure, and it has contributed to regional integration through road projects. The Bank has been less successful in the area of governance, where reforms did not attain their objectives due to a lack of influence and to fragmentation of the Bank’s resources across too many areas. The potential for collaboration with the private sector was well utilized through successful public-private partnerships in the energy sector.

Efficiency

According to the portfolio review reports, portfolio performance has improved with an overall score which rose from 1.8 in 2007 to 2.4 in 2014. The average project age, which was 5.4 years in 2007, fell to 3 years at end-2012 and 3.2 at end-2013. However, major problems bedeviled and delayed almost all the projects, especially regarding the provision of counterpart funds, compensation of displaced people in road projects, the award of contracts and weak capacities of some implementation units and service providers.

As a result of these delaying factors efficiency has been considered to be moderately unsatisfactory despite the efforts made to improve portfolio performance. For example, for road infrastructure, the average lapse of time between approval and the date of last disbursement is 90 months for a road project.

Sustainability

Sustainability is considered moderately probable. It is more likely for infrastructure, especially energy, but less for governance. With regard to governance, sustainability is affected by weak ownership, the compartmentalization of ministries and insufficient participation in the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies.

Until 2011, the Road Fund (RF) was replenished directly from the resources of the tax on petroleum products. Pursuant to the amendment to the 2011 Budget Act, the Government decided to pay back to the Public Treasury account the resources intended for the Fund, which undermines the autonomy of the RF. National capacity (programming capacity, financial resources and the SME network implementation capacity) remains insufficient for road maintenance.

The sustainability of projects financed in the energy sector is probable because they are economically viable and the structures are operated and maintained by professionals with the appropriate technical skills. With regard to the Water and Sanitation Sector and the Yaoundé Sanitation Project (PADY1), since the Yaoundé canal does not have a protective wall, people continue to throw solid waste into it, which could block it and reduce its discharge flow, with the risk of a return of flooding. In rural areas, the sustainability of the structures depends on government support and the management capacities of local councils.

Recommendations for New Strategy

Strengthen the strategic positioning by developing programmatic synergies. The focus on infrastructure remains highly relevant particularly with a view to increasing the volume of resources. Value added and results may also be further strengthened by increased programmatic integration:
Closer focus and greater synergy of governance-related operations, for example in the area of sector governance, in coordination with the other TFPs;

Programmatic integration of the private sector, drawing on the PPP experiences of the private sector; and

Parallel focus of policy dialogue and analytical work in the key areas of positioning, especially with regard to reforms.

Develop risk management and define conditions (identification, planning and monitoring of mitigation measures) in the design and monitoring of the CSP and projects to ensure their efficient and coordinated implementation as well as their full ownership by the stakeholders concerned. One option for implementation is the establishment of a risk management process for the entire portfolio, complemented by a focus on the governance portfolio relating to the capacities of government services and other reform-related risks.

Ensure the sustainability of transport infrastructure investments. Strengthening infrastructure management, especially in the transport sector, through an efficient road maintenance fund is necessary to ensure the sustainability of investments and effective public spending. In general, the Bank should help to improve sector governance by combining infrastructure financing with institutional support in order to create the appropriate conditions for optimal project implementation and achievement of the expected results.
Contribute to the strengthening of local enterprises. To that end, the Bank should fine-tune the sizing of lots for the development of the structures under the projects it finances in order to enable local enterprises to compete for them. Another useful option could be to prepare an updated directory of competent local companies.

Methodological Approach

The evaluation draws on international good practices, in particular, of the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG) and the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD/DAC). The evaluation strove to provide answers to the following evaluation questions:

- To what extent are the Bank’s interventions relevant in relation to the country’s development challenges and priorities?
- To what extent do the Bank’s interventions address the needs of the beneficiary target groups?
- To what extent are the interventions in the country aligned with the Bank’s operational priorities?
- What are the Bank’s results at country level in terms of the planned objectives of its operations?
- Which factors have contributed to/impeded the achievement of results?
- What is the probability that the Bank’s achievements will be maintained after the assistance has been provided?
- Has the Bank efficiently converted its inputs into results at country level?

About IDEV

Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) of the African Development Bank is an independent and autonomous unit. It carries out independent evaluations of Bank operations, policies and strategies, working across projects, sectors, themes, regions, and countries. By conducting independent evaluations and proactively sharing best practice, IDEV ensures that the Bank and its stakeholders learn from past experience and plan and deliver development activities to the highest possible standards.

Management Response

On the whole, management endorses the outcome of the evaluation which will inform future Bank operations in Cameroon. IDEV evaluation recommendations have already been taken into consideration in the Joint Completion Report on the 2010-2014 Country Strategy Paper (CSP) and Country Portfolio Performance (CPPR) along with the outline pillars of the 2015-2019 CSP. In addition, the Bank’s field office in Cameroon (CMFO) has taken into consideration the evaluation’s findings and recommendations in the revision of the 2015-2019 Cameroon CSP.