IDEV conducts different types of evaluations to achieve its strategic objectives.
Executive Summary

Introduction

The evaluation of the strategies and programs (or assistance) of the African Development Bank (AfDB or "the Bank") in Mali over the period 2005-2019 is intended to help the Bank improve its development effectiveness through the lessons learned, and to brief the Board of Directors. More specifically, the findings, conclusions and recommendations of this evaluation will inform the Board’s decision during the review of the Country Strategy Paper (CSP) proposed for the period 2020-2024.

This evaluation was confronted with two constraints: incomplete data and the impossibility of cross-checking the reliability of certain secondary data. There is no monitoring-evaluation system for measuring development outcomes at the beneficiary level. Owing to insecurity and travel restrictions, the evaluation team did not have access to project sites to collect primary data from beneficiaries, and therefore relied on secondary data sources to strengthen the evaluation database. Uncertain or inconsistent data were ignored.

Country Context and Development Challenges

Mali is in the center of West Africa. It accesses the sea through five neighboring countries1 and is connected by paved roads to all its neighbors except Algeria. In 2019, the country had a population of 19.6 million inhabitants, 49.7% of whom were women and 57.6% lived in rural areas (2018). Furthermore, 47.3% of Mali's population is under 15 years of age. After two decades of political stability, Mali experienced a coup d’état in March 2012 followed by recurrent outbreaks of violence, revealing the depth of the country's fragility and vulnerability.

The real economic growth rate deteriorated overall over the period (from 6.5% in 2005 to 5% in 2019), but the Malian economy has remained resilient and its performance is better than the average for the sub-region (3.7%) and Africa (3.4%) in 2019. The social indicators are below the sub-regional average. The country faces several major challenges: an insufficiently diversified economy that is vulnerable to fluctuations in commodity prices and climate change; an agro-industrial and manufacturing sector that is struggling to develop; a vast and landlocked country that lacks infrastructure to link its regions to each other and connect itself with its neighbors; high population growth; weak State agencies; high levels of corruption; and inequalities in terms of income, access to land, employment, health, education, life expectancy, etc., between women and men, between urban and rural areas and between Northern and Southern regions.

Country’s National Development Policies

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP 2002-2006) aimed to reduce the incidence of poverty from 63.8% in 2001 to 47.5% in 2006 and to create 10,000 jobs annually in the non-agricultural formal sector. The second generation PRSP (2007-2011) adopted in November 2006 also known as the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (GPRSP I) aimed to promote redistributive growth and poverty reduction by boosting productive sectors and consolidating public sector reforms. The GPRSP II (2012-2017) had two focal points: “Strengthening peace and security” and “Consolidating the stability of the macro-economic framework,” and proposed three lines of action: (1) promoting accelerated, sustainable, pro-poor growth that would create jobs and generate income; (2) strengthening the long-term foundations for development and equitable access
to quality social services; and (3) improving institutional development and governance. After the 2012 coup d’état, the 2013-2014 Sustainable Recovery Plan (PRED) was prepared. The 2013-2018 Government Action Program (GAP) was proposed by the new authorities that emerged from the 2013 election, in line with the 2012-2017 GPRSP. The 2016-2018 Strategic Framework for Economic Recovery and Sustainable Development (CREDD) was aimed at achieving Sustainable Development Objectives (SDOs) by 2030, based on the potential and resilience capacities of the State and the population. The 2019-2023 CREDD was validated in 2019.

**Bank Assistance to Mali (2005-2019)**

The priority of the Bank’s assistance was to build the capacity of the State and communities, as well as to develop basic socio-economic infrastructure (hydro-agricultural developments, energy, roads, schools, water and sanitation facilities, etc.), to support inclusive growth that would address the country’s persistent fragilities. The Bank allocated UA 241 million, UA 220 million and UA 268 million respectively to the 2005-2009/2011 Results-Based Country Strategy Paper (RBCSP), the 2013-2014/2015 Transition Management Support Strategy (TMSS) and the 2015-2019 Country Strategy Paper (CSP). Agricultural and multi-sector operations (which concurrently provide several basic services) absorbed an average of 58.7% of the above amounts. The remainder was shared among three to five other sectors considered as a priority by the Government. Non-lending operations accounted for about 15% of the portfolio during the period, with 11 economic and sector-based studies planned and an average implementation rate of 27%.

**Evaluation Methodology**

This evaluation, which covers the period 2005-2019, focuses on the use of the results and the evaluation process itself to inform decisions and improve performance. It has reviewed: (a) 64 operations approved between 2005 and 2019 and not cancelled; and (b) 45 operations approved before 2005 and completed or closed between 2005 and 2019.

Nineteen (19) evaluation questions were formulated based on: (a) 44 individual and group semi-structured interviews (SSIs) with stakeholders, 16% of whom were women; and (b) commitment of the Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) to the modalities of the Country Strategy and Program Evaluations (CSPE). The 19 questions concern relevance (1), effectiveness (3), sustainability (3), efficiency (2), impact (2), institutional performance of the Government of Mali (3), and the Bank (5). Five other questions related to ongoing thematic evaluations at IDEV were added: (a) Independent evaluation of the Bank Group’s Strategy for Addressing Fragility and Building Resilience in Africa. 2014-2019 (2), and (b) Evaluation of the Bank's Self-Evaluation Systems and Processes (3).

The evaluation combined a few primary data with a large amount of secondary data. In addition to the above-mentioned interviews, 68 supplementary interviews were conducted. The data analysis was guided by the evaluation matrix and the reconstructed theories of change. Indicators defined for each evaluation question and criterion were assessed and scores assigned depending on the frequency and the sum or average obtained in each of the six key sectors of Bank assistance to Mali, as per the rating scale. The final score is the simple arithmetic mean, rounded down on the scale of 1 to 4. An outcome-harvesting or outcome-mapping approach was used for impact-related questions.
Evaluation Results

Relevance: Satisfactory. The Bank’s assistance is tailored to the needs of the people and the Government’s expectations, both at the CSP and operational levels. However, the involvement of civil society and the private sector could provide additional strategic leverage to stimulate inclusive growth. Dysfunctions in government services and project implementation units led to the cancellation of 8 operations or 11% of the portfolio.

Effectiveness: Unsatisfactory. The Bank has fallen short of its potential. Margins could be gained in the achievement of CSP objectives and the delivery of operational outputs through portfolio performance improvement plans designed and implemented in a results-based manner.

Implementation difficulties identified include: (i) delays; (ii) lack of capacity, expertise and/or staff; (iii) inadequate involvement of devolved State services (delegated project owner); (iv) poor quality of operations at entry; (v) frequent change of project officers at the Bank (high staff turnover rate); (vi) inadequacy of the resources (financial and human) available for assistance to Mali; (vii) sluggishness of procedures at the Bank level and/or poor mastery of disbursement procedures by service providers (non-governmental organizations – NGOs) and companies, especially the supporting documentation requirements; (viii) lack of a credible system for measuring development outcomes; and (ix) inappropriate national and/or local context, due to political conflicts and resistance to reforms. Governance sector operations were specifically affected by the uncertainty surrounding the use of the funds left over at the end of the project and the limited amount of budget support.

Sustainability: Satisfactory. From the design stage to the implementation of the operations, the Bank involved the beneficiaries, built local capacity, introduced various mechanisms aimed at ensuring the sustainability of the gains of the operations (apart from mobilizing local resources for the upkeep and maintenance of the works) and providing post-completion services. The Bank satisfactorily ensured compliance with the requisite environmental and social safeguard measures, despite two petitions regarding land grabbing and unfair compensation of displaced persons.

Efficiency: Satisfactory. The increasing demand from the authorities and project officers for multi-sectoral operations offering several basic services to the target population segments is indicative of the efficiency of the services. However, significant efforts still need to be made in terms of on-budget performance and compliance with implementation schedules, including the timeframes for obtaining the Bank’s no-objection notices. Disbursement rates are low due to the difficult national context and the inadequate staffing of the Country Office.

Impact: Unsatisfactory. Fifteen years of the Bank’s capacity-building efforts have certainly prevented the collapse of the State but failed to deliver inclusive growth. The private sector, especially SMEs in high-potential sectors such as agribusiness and energy, could play a greater strategic role alongside the State in achieving greater development outcomes.

Factoring of crosscutting aspects: Satisfactory. In the CSPs and operations, the Bank has explicit objectives related to the environment, resilience, gender mainstreaming and youth employment. However, CSP and project preparation teams do not always have the necessary make-up to properly address these issues.
The Bank’s institutional performance was rated unsatisfactory. The Bank faced recurrent problems related to portfolio management (as mentioned above), although it allocated its resources and helped the Government to mobilize resources from other sources for the country’s priorities. While the Bank succeeded in involving communities in the design and implementation of operations in most sectors, it failed to include non-state actors in the policy dialogue held during the preparation of CSPs. The Bank’s communication with civil society in Mali is not commensurate with the recognition it enjoys in the eyes of the public and the authorities.

Fragility and resilience: Unsatisfactory. The Bank took fragility into account in the design and implementation of CSPs and operations, and has made significant progress in building the resilience capacity of the State and the population. However, these efforts have not been enough to sustainably address fragility and achieve inclusive growth.

The Bank’s Self-Evaluation System was also deemed unsatisfactory. Most of the required reports on the CSP and the operations are produced but are difficult to obtain independently; they focus more on the outputs delivered and less on the development outcomes achieved. Data are sometimes inconsistent from one report to another. From an operational perspective, the self-evaluation system is relevant and coherent, but its contribution to learning for the achievement of greater development impact in the country is not obvious.

Lessons from the Evaluation

1. Selectivity and flexibility can be combined in the configuration of Bank assistance.
2. The Bank can achieve substantial and tangible outcomes, even in difficult contexts, by (i) developing strategies and operations in a participatory manner with the Government and civil society; (ii) developing projects in synergy with other TFPs; (iii) establishing clear results frameworks on the basis of which results can be monitored and measured; (iv) adopting more flexible approaches in situations of fragility; and (v) more responsive to emergencies.
3. Effective collaboration between the Bank and other TFPs is essential in Mali, even without the leadership of the GoM.
4. Building the capacity of the State, which is seen as the sole actor, is not enough to contribute decisively to inclusive growth in Mali.
5. It is not enough to identify bottlenecks and formulate a plan to improve portfolio performance. Other elements are needed to achieve higher levels of performance.
**Recommendations**

**Greater Impact of the Bank on the Country’s Development**

1. Increase the private sector’s share in the portfolio, mostly in sectors of the real economy with high growth potential like agro-industry, transport and energy. This includes encouragement and support to expedite the study of projects initiated by private enterprises.

2. Increase the Bank’s contribution to knowledge by conducting more ESWs and build data collection capacity so that sector choices and operational designs should be based on cogent and credible factual data.

**Media Presence and Enhanced Field Office Engagement with Different Categories of Development Partners in Mali**

3. Develop and implement in the Country Office a communication and civil society involvement plan. The Office could develop products like a prospectus on the results of each operation (using the incident mapping or collection method).

**Better performance in the implementation of operations**

4. Review current PPIP design and implementation practices and, if possible, involve an independent facilitator; this facilitator will help the Office to determine why measures adopted every year in PPIPs since 2005 have not had any significant impact and find a holistic solution to portfolio management problems that hinder the achievement of the Bank’s development outcomes in the country.

5. Encourage project managers to take full advantage of the lessons of the operations academy to improve the quality-at-entry of operations: systematically articulate the results of each operation with the results of the pillar to which they contribute; create a coherent and feasible framework for measuring results, especially with clear links between outputs and outcomes (assessable); define mechanisms for beneficiary ownership and sustainability of project achievements; conduct financial evaluation; and examine critical aspects of project management (human resources, etc.). Project managers will organize the same type of training sessions for national implementation teams following procedures suited to the country context and available resources. These measures will strengthen results-based management and enhance operational effectiveness and efficiency.
About this Evaluation

This report summarizes the findings, lessons and recommendations from an evaluation of the African Development Bank’s assistance to Mali over the period 2005-2019. It presents the development outcomes achieved by the Bank; measures its performance in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact; and draws relevant lessons to guide the Bank’s future strategy.

Whilst the relevance, sustainability, efficiency and inclusion of cross-cutting aspects were all rated satisfactory, the evaluation found that effectiveness was unsatisfactory due to delays caused by lengthy legal procedures and administrative red tape; inadequate capacity in terms of expertise and staffing; poor quality at entry; frequent change of project officers at the Bank; low understanding of the Bank’s disbursement procedures by service providers; and difficult operating context characterized by fragility and insecurity. The evaluation drew key lessons related to: i) selectivity of Bank assistance; ii) participatory strategies and a clear results framework; iii) better collaboration with key partners; iv) a better capacity building approach; and v) improved portfolio performance management plans.

The evaluation made five recommendations, including: i) increase the private sector’s share in the portfolio; ii) increase the Bank’s contribution to knowledge by conducting more Economic and Sector Works and build data collection capacity; iii) develop and implement a communication and civil society involvement plan in the Country Office; iv) review current Portfolio Performance Improvement Plan design and implementation practices; and v) encourage project managers to take full advantage of the lessons of the operations academy to improve the quality-at-entry of operations.