What did IDEV Evaluate?

The Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) conducted an impact evaluation of an integrated infrastructure project—the Fufufso-Sawla Road Project in Ghana. The overall thrust of the Fufufso-Sawla Road Project was to support the improvement of the investment environment through transport infrastructure development comprising the construction of a 147.5km road as well as the provision of ancillary works along the main road corridor including: (i) rehabilitation and expansion of the main District Hospital at Damongo; (ii) construction/rehabilitation of eight main health centers; (iii) education facilities; (iv) construction of Mognori Bridge to better provide all-weather access for transportation of agricultural inputs and produce; (v) construction of a water treatment plant and borehole and; (vi) construction of four main market centers. The project, worth USD 156 million, was approved in 2010 and completed in 2015.
The project stands out as a flagship one in terms of its inclusive and integrated design for providing a holistic response to the socio-economic needs of the beneficiary districts. The evaluation estimates the average combined impact of all components of the project on various development outcomes for project beneficiaries, comparing this to a control group which did not receive the intervention.

What did IDEV find?

The evaluation had 16 main findings. To highlight a few, the evaluation found positive impacts of the Fufulso-Sawla Road Project on: travel time and traffic density in beneficiary communities; market conditions and market integration; the development of new businesses; access to quality water and sanitation; household incomes; health and education outcomes; poverty reduction; and social cohesion among communities along the road. The intervention benefited women and girls specifically, albeit to a lesser degree than men. However, these positive development outcomes were highly unlikely to be sustained, due to deficiencies in design, capacity, maintenance, and community engagement and ownership.

What lessons did IDEV draw?

The following are the key lessons from this impact evaluation:

(i) Integrating community development interventions into road transport infrastructure brings an added value to, and fast tracks, the Bank’s poverty reduction, job creation, and inclusive development efforts.

(ii) Relational factors are key to the sustainability of integrated road interventions similar to the Fufulso-Sawla Road Project, as they can amplify or jeopardize a project’s impact.

(iii) Coupling road projects with community development interventions can increase the likelihood of benefits accruing to women and girls.

What did IDEV recommend?

The following recommendations were made to the Bank:

(i) Enhance the Bank’s integrated approach to its road investments to foster development impact in terms of poverty reduction.

(ii) Improve the quality of road projects’ design and results focus.

(iii) Strengthen the human and institutional capacity to sustain development gains.

What did Management respond?

Management welcomed the independent evaluation of the Fufulso-Sawla Road Project in Ghana, four years following the project’s completion. The report makes good recommendations and assessments that will enhance the Bank’s ongoing efforts to render its operations more inclusive and address development challenges more holistically, particularly in rural areas. Overall, Management agreed with the evaluation’s findings and recommendations, especially the need to deepen projects’ integrated approach, improve the quality of project design at the preparation stage, and develop institutional and human capacity to sustain the Bank’s investments. The independent evaluation generated knowledge that will improve the design and impacts of similar interventions in the future.

About IDEV

Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) at the African Development Bank 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 practices, IDEV ensures that the Bank and its stakeholders learn from experience and plan and deliver development activities to the highest possible standards.