What did IDEV evaluate?

The evaluation examines the African Development Bank’s assistance to Tunisia over the period 2004–2015. During this period, the Bank financed 58 projects in Tunisia amounting to about UA 2.38 billion (USD 3.4 billion). 22 operations, which represent about 61.9% of the net commitments in Tunisia over that period, have been completed or closed. This evaluation assessed 13 of the completed projects. The Bank intervened in 9 sectors, with particular emphasis on transport infrastructure and governance, which alone represented 72% of its net commitments in Tunisia. The resources used by the Bank mainly came from the ADB window (97.5% for 24 projects). Other resources came from the Middle-Income Countries Trust Fund and two Trust Funds created after the Arab Spring – the Transition Support Fund and the Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Middle East and North African Countries.

What did IDEV find?

Relevance is satisfactory. From both a strategic and operational standpoint, the Bank satisfactorily aligned its different interventions to meet Tunisia’s development needs and priorities while appropriately combining the instruments offered by the public and private sector windows in the different economic sectors. However, the relevance of project design varies according to sector and period (pre- and post-revolution).

The effectiveness of Bank operations in Tunisia is rated as moderately satisfactory. In the areas of governance, improvement of the macroeconomic framework and competitiveness, significant improvements had been made before 2011. The Bank’s contributions to the road transport sector, energy sector, infrastructure development, water and sanitation sector, and the agricultural sector before 2011 are also tangible. Expected results in the air transport sector were however not achieved. Inter-regional disparities remain in terms of quality of health services, access to water and sanitation, roads and energy.

Sustainability is moderately unsatisfactory. The sustainability of the outcomes of reforms implemented by the authorities is likely to be compromised by the lack of ownership observed since 2011. The country’s socio-political context and weak institutional capacity raise doubts about the sustainability of the results achieved in its macroeconomic framework and competitiveness. Budget allocations are not sufficient to ensure routine infrastructure maintenance.
Efficiency is deemed moderately satisfactory. Despite sound financial performance, as evaluated by the economic and financial rates of return, delays were noted in the implementation of most projects after 2011. The observed delays arose from the slow approval of works contracts, an over-restrictive regulatory framework and the general disorder after the revolution.

What did IDEV recommend for the new strategy?

The Bank should:

- Engage in dialogue with the Government in order to initiate a large-scale reform process that will affect all aspects of the economic recovery within the framework of an integrated national plan.
- Improve mainstreaming of inclusion aspects in the Bank’s strategies and operations through closer targeting of adequate measures aimed at ensuring sustainable outcomes. In order to pursue its commitment to inclusive and equitable growth, the Bank should continue to support the Government in its administrative regionalization and decentralization efforts, including mechanisms for the establishment of contractual relationships with the regions and regional communities.
- Prepare and implement a capacity building program for the central government, executing agencies and regional authorities.
- Support the Government in completing the reforms in the finance and insurance sectors in order to strengthen financial intermediation and inclusion in Tunisia.
- Conduct a comprehensive analysis of the Bank’s experience in the agricultural sector in Tunisia and draw lessons from the Bank’s experiences in other countries (for example, Nigeria and Morocco) with a view to exploring alternative approaches (for example, value chain approaches) in the context of AfDB’s new 2016–2025 agricultural transformation strategy.

What did Management respond?

Management agrees overall with the findings of the report. The various conclusions and recommendations will be taken into account in preparing the Bank’s new assistance strategy for Tunisia for the 2017–2021 period and in the various ensuing operations.