

INTERMEDIATE EVALUATION

MLI/022

Training and Professional Integration

PROJECT SUMMARY DATA

Country	Mali
Long project title	Training and Professional Integration
Short project title	Training and Professional Integration
LuxDev Code	MLI/022
Version of the Report	September 2018

RATING OF THE PROJECT BY THE EVALUATION MISSION

Global rating (Effectiveness)	3 + (between 2 and 3) On a scale of 1 (excellent results, significantly better than expected) to 6 (the project was unsuccessful, or the situation has deteriorated on balance)
Rating using other evaluation criteria	Relevance: 3 Efficiency: 3 Sustainability: 4

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The intermediate evaluation of the Republic of Mali and Grand Duchy of Luxembourg's Indicative Cooperation Programme (*Programme Indicatif de Coopération* - PIC III, 2015-2019) has evaluated the MLI/022 – Training and Professional Integration. In March 2018, the total budget for MLI/022 thus increased from € 10 514 700 (6 896 million CFA Francs) to € 11 475 000 (7 526 million CFA Francs).

The intermediate evaluation was conducted by the ACK International / COWI A/S Consortium from 18.06 to 06.07.2018 in Mali¹. The experts covering the southern area were: JM. Coulibaly, evaluator of MLI/022; M. Doumbia, environment and climate change expert; B. Nimaga, gender expert; and O. Diarra, administration and finance expert. Quality assurance was provided by Caroline Dulau / Claude Mauret.

The aim of the actual technical evaluation was to assess the progress made by the bilateral programmes against the objectives set out in the technical and financial documents.

The overall objective of the MLI/022 programme is to "support job creation, particularly for women and young people, and income-generating activities".

The specific objective is to ensure that "the professional skills of women and men in rural communities are sustainably developed".

The results achieved by the project are outlined below:

Result 1 – The vocational training sector is better structured and meets rural communities' (quantitative and qualitative) basic training needs: The legislative framework reforms are ongoing following the adoption of the vocational training act and related implementing decree in July 2017 (provisions for applying this decree are currently being prepared). The sector's regulatory framework should be in place before the end of the project implementation period.

All of the schemes developed by MLI/022 to provide training, integration, employment and self-employment support have been launched for their target beneficiaries. There is a range of organisations and bodies working in the regions and local authorities under the responsibility of the Regional Councils within the focus area to coordinate and manage these schemes. The necessary regional legislation has been passed and the framework documents for developing strategic capacities and enabling Ségou Regional Council to implement vocational training have been approved. Capacity-building to improve sector monitoring and evaluation and a number of sector assessment studies have also been carried out. Conditions are in place for the regional coordination of vocational training and employment; however, there is still a need for these to be consolidated to improve their effectiveness.

The project targets for the increase in the number of technical and vocational training graduates in the focus area (indicator 3), the increase in non-graduate basic training (indicator 4) and the adoption of the vocational training law (indicator 7), have been achieved and exceeded. The targets for initial skills training (indicator 11), apprenticeships (indicator 10) and the introduction of training programmes (indicator 12) all have levels of achievement of at least 55%. Initial skills training has been delivered to almost 1 600 trainees, 26% of whom were girls. Nearly 4 000 apprentices, 21% of whom were girls, have received apprenticeship-based training. Lastly, at least 30% of the project targets for the remaining indicators have been achieved (indicators 5, 6, 8, and 9).

The overall level of achievement for this result at the mid-term point is assessed as being 50%.

¹ The main stages of this evaluation were: (i) official launch on 19.06.2018 in Bamako; (ii) meetings with stakeholders and information collection in Bamako and in the southern focus area from 20.06 to 03.07.2018; (iii) immediate presentation of findings on 4.07.2018 in Bamako. The evaluation of MLI/023 was deferred to end on 17.07.2018 and the gender expertise ended on 16.08.2018

Result 2 – Rural communities’ ongoing training needs are met: The Vocational Training and Apprenticeship Support Fund has innovated by introducing ongoing training on agriculture, forestry and livestock farming. Training has particularly targeted the MLI/021 priority value chains (fonio, rice, sesame) and market gardening. Nearly 8 000 people have been trained, mostly on production; however, most of the women (44% of all people trained) were trained on food processing techniques. The training is followed up by a network of advisors-liaisons put in place and supervised by the Regional Agricultural Chamber in conjunction with the Ségou Regional Council. The MLI/021 and MLI/022 projects have formalised their collaboration within an official framework and involved key regional stakeholders. Further consideration still needs to be given to defining the synergies to be put in place between the farm advisory and ongoing training within the agriculture, forestry and livestock sector and to developing sustainable funding mechanisms. The project targets for four of the six indicators for this result have been achieved and exceeded (indicators 15, 16, 17 and 18), recording levels of between 105% and 258%.

The overall level of achievement for this result at the mid-term point is assessed as being 75%.

Result 3 – Professional integration support mechanisms for young people in rural areas are enhanced: The second generation of the regional employment and vocational training strategy has been approved², and there is effective consultation between all sector stakeholders. With the technical support for the youth employment promotion agency, nearly 800 young people have received business skills training (the International Labour Organisation’s entrepreneurship training adapted by the programme), 41% of whom were girls. Support provided to the self-employed has led to the creation of around 300 small businesses, 39% of which have been set up by women and girls. This support is provided through local decentralised funding systems under terms very similar to usual lending conditions.

The overall level of achievement for this result at the mid-term point is assessed as being 55%.

Relevance is assessed as being 3

Main strengths: The programme is closely aligned to Mali’s national policy and strategies, and particularly to the Economic Recovery and Sustainable Development Strategic Framework 2016-2018³, and the National Gender Policy. At sector level, the four specific objectives of the ten-year Vocational Training and Employment Development Programme’ 2015-2017 triannual programme are taken into account. The Training → Integration → Employment/ Self-Employment results chain approach, and the capacity-building systematically provided to implementing partners and stakeholders are both strengths of the implementation approach.

Main weaknesses: There is a lack of consistency between the project’s aims, resources and implementation period. The in-house implementation methods are poorly aligned and the MLI/022 has its own logical framework instead of a budgeted results framework that is based on the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training’s results framework. Even though the political and security environment at the time of the programme’s formulation perhaps had a bearing on the options chosen for MLI/022, this situation, the lack of a mechanism for informing national-level sector monitoring and the failure to include the Luxembourg development cooperation’s financial contribution in Mali’s Finance Act all reveal a lack of alignment. The implementation and fund delegation agreement procedures⁴, which require the implementing partner to open a bank account for fund management purposes, contradict national and West African Economic and Monetary Union’s legislation that calls for the creation of a single treasury account for public and assimilated bodies. Lastly, the relevance of MLI/022 is being limited by the lack of consistency between results 1 and 2, coupled with the low budget allocated to the professional integration component and failure to prioritise granting loans to the trainees supported by the project.

² Ségou Regional Master Plan of Technical and Vocational Training for Employment (2017-2021).

³ MLI/022 is specifically aligned to priority areas 4 and 7 of strategic focus area 1, to priority area 8 of strategic focus area 2, and to priority area 12 of strategic focus area 3 of the Economic Recovery and Sustainable Development Strategic Framework.

⁴ Assessed as being relevant overall.

Effectiveness is assessed as being 3+ (between 2 and 3), subject to quality assurance of the results presented

Main strengths: With a completion rate of 50% for a financial disbursement rate⁵ of 51% at 30 April 2018, the operational results are satisfactory from an implementation / quantitative perspective. They have been completed with real coordination between all stakeholders and partners through the local authorities within the focus area. Although not all the impacts are yet being felt, the capacity-building provided to partners during activity implementation is motivating them and helping them fulfil their roles and responsibilities.

Main weaknesses: The project stakeholders do not have all the capacities required to conduct the wide range of activities, which are not being properly managed leading to uncertainties over their quality. There is still a lack of capacities for supporting the integration and employment/self-employment of all the young people trained, particularly the young girls.

Efficiency is assessed as being 3

Main strengths: As at 30 April 2018, after 24 months (53% of the project period), the disbursement rate stands at 51%. The initially estimated operating cost to investment ratio (16%, technical and financial document, version B) as assessed as being 14%⁶ based on the budget implemented as at 30.04.2018. This is in line with development programme and project management practices. The cost of the training is in line with the usual costs charged by partner organisations without partner support and with those of other development partners.

Main weaknesses: Only 22% of the budget for the eight operational partnership agreements signed under MLI/022, which amount to 54% of the programme budget and 62% of the Luxembourg development cooperation contribution, has been implemented⁷. The least efficient results are: Result 2 (75% achieved for a budget implementation of 63%) as no teaching materials and equipment have been procured for training organisations; Result 3 (55% achieved for a budget implementation of 52%) due to the lack of a pool of graduates to whom to grant loans, which has also led to no “Start and improve your business programme” training being implemented. The lack of systematic pre-defined targets for women and girls, where relevant, has adversely affected the quality of the project results and budget analyses. The lack of synergies between stakeholders⁸ at the sector level within the project focus area is hampering project efficiency.

Sustainability is assessed as being 4

Main strengths: The training has indisputably helped to create a pool of skilled workers available to the labour market. However, doubts remain over their integration, especially those who have received the basic training, as the image of vocational training in general is poor. Providing young people supported by MLI/022 with access to credit should be further developed in the future regardless of the outcome of this initial pilot. The positioning of vocational training sector institutional stakeholders at the regional level breaks with the traditional project / programme approach and is helping to build sustainability. This positioning fosters their capacity-building. The transfer of government budget resources to cover vocational training centre / institute operating costs is an innovative approach that should be expanded as part of decentralisation. The use of national funds and mechanisms (the Vocational Training and Apprenticeship Support Fund, National Youth Employment Fund, the National Investment Agency for Local Authorities, etc.) is helping these organisations carry out their functions. The legislation produced or under development is creating a regulatory framework to strengthen these institutions' roles and responsibilities. Certain stakeholders are already aware of the changes introduced through MLI/022 support, particularly at Regional Council level and among the trainers.

⁵ Different to the actual implementation rate, which is the effective implementation of the resources disbursed under operational partnership agreements.

⁶ The operating cost to investment ratio was assessed based on the budget disbursed at 30.04.2018 (source: LuxDev, updated financial monitoring): total disbursed on line T0 / total disbursed on lines T1 to T3.

⁷ Justified amount / operational partnership agreement amount.

⁸ Assessed separately from synergies between Indicative Cooperation Programme's vocational training stakeholders.

Main weaknesses: Looking beyond the results achieved (immediate economic and social sustainability) and the processes initiated to structure the sector, further consideration needs to be given to ensuring the sustainability of the mechanisms introduced. It is particularly important to review the tax on vocational training and the youth employment tax used to finance ongoing training and integration as the subsidy-based approach is not sustainable. This activity should be accompanied by sector dialogue and use a results-based funding approach to encourage the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training to take the sustainability measures required. Sustainability is being hampered by the continuing low levels of human capital within the various implementing partners, despite the capacity-building that is being provided⁹. The progress made by MLI/022 remains fragile due both to the phase's end date of December 2019 and to the national / regional security situation, which is not conducive to maintaining or increasing the budgets allocated to the sector.

Gender equality

The aim set out in the technical and financial document of ensuring 50% of trainees were female has not been met. Nevertheless, by training 5 000 women, or 34% of the 15 000 people trained over the period (all training combined), the project is on track for achieving gender equality, as long as it also ensures the high quality of this training.

At the mid-term point, the recommendations are as follows ¹⁰:

General intervention strategy ¹¹	Lead
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hold further discussions on the option of extending the phase (ensure the sustainability and impacts of the activities undertaken by ensuring their ongoing implementation for a minimum of a further two training intakes for each training scheme). 2. Urgently mobilise Mali's matching funding to enhance the viability of the schemes and mechanisms developed and continue to put minimum conditions in place to ensure the operations of the constructed / rehabilitated public vocational training centre / institute, improve the level of tax on professional training and youth employment tax disbursed for the Vocational Training and Apprenticeship Support Fund and National Youth Employment Fund respectively. 3. Communicate Luxembourg's financial contribution for 2020 and programme performance framework to the Ministry of Agriculture's Planning and Statistics Unit and to the Finance Ministry's Planning Directorate and work with the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training's Finance and Equipment Directorate to set up a system to monitor the national matching funds for the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs – Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation / Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training / Ministry of Economy and Finance / LuxDev Coordination
Monitoring & evaluation	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Conduct a cost benefit analysis of the system used to monitor vocational training compared to the mechanism used by the Ministry of National Education – in the medium-term, examine possible synergies or at least determine the 'replicability' of this monitoring system within the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training – encourage the Ministry of National Education and Ministry of Youth, Employment and Citizen Construction sector planning units to work in closer synergy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Directorate of Vocational Training / National Observatory for Employment and Vocational Training / Ségou Regional Council MLI/022

⁹ The regional public administration has only just started to implement legal provisions and the trainers in public vocational training centre / institute are mostly contractors; there are also staffing shortages and sometimes significant delays in salary payments.

¹⁰ The recommendations are grouped by key theme, not in order of importance or priority – given the planned end date of MLI/022 in December 2019, they are to be implemented over the short-term unless otherwise specified.

¹¹ Some of the strategic recommendations apply to the entire Indicative Cooperation Programme and are thus the same as those found in the MLI/021 and MLI/023 evaluation reports.

Structuring of the vocational training and apprenticeship sector

5. Support the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training and Ministry of National Education to issue the orders required to implement decree 2017/046/P-RM of 12 July 2017 setting out the application conditions of law no. 2016-026 of 14 June 2016 on vocational training in order to integrate the approaches and mechanisms under development, the autonomy of centres, the pooling of resources and private sector participation into a harmonised regulatory framework.
6. Help stimulate the national education and training sector consultation framework and strengthen its technical education and vocational training aspect in order to continue efforts to coordinate technical education and vocational training sector interventions¹², facilitate its joint monitoring, harmonise and align interventions and streamline management bodies.
7. Expand discussions on the Regional Resource Centre concept and its sustainability to include the potential beneficiaries of its services, the FIER and ACEFOR projects and the Ministry of National Education. These discussions should define its status and service beneficiaries, means of access, and sustainable funding mechanisms for its activities and operations. Make continuing with its implementation dependent on the results of these discussions.

- Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training / Ministry of National Education / MLI/022 / Regional Agricultural Chamber / Regional Conference of Chambers of Crafts and Trades / Chambre de commerce et d'Industrie / National Directorate of Vocational Training, National Directorate of Technical and Vocational Education
- MLI/022 / Ségou Regional Council

Ongoing training for rural communities

8. Prioritise discussions with the government on significantly improving the re-transfer of funds collected / received by the Treasury from the tax on professional training to the Vocational Training and Apprenticeship Support Fund.
9. In preparation for a potential extension of the phase, consider the need to revise the policy of providing teaching equipment subsidies to training providers and instead fund the education projects of both public and private training institutions and master craftsmen through loans.

- Ministry of Economy and Finance / Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training / Vocational Training and Apprenticeship Support Fund / MLI/022

Professional integration of women and young people in rural areas

10. Refocus the loan beneficiaries target to cover only training beneficiaries (initial training graduates, apprentices) who have completed their training, prioritising applications from trainees supported by the project. Other target beneficiaries come under the National Youth Employment Fund, provided with the youth employment tax.
11. Build the support capacities of business plan promoters to develop more credible / reliable business plans, support partner microfinance institutions to conduct in-depth reviews of the business plans and systematically support the people issued loans ("Start and improve your business programme", FTA, financial education training, etc.).
12. Harmonise approaches and prioritise synergies between the different project interventions (PROCEJ, MLI/044 Lux-FAO, ACEFOR, etc.).

- Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs – Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training / Ségou Regional Council MLI/022

Gender equality

13. Appoint a permanent or ad hoc expert to coordinate, provide capacity-building, develop a strategy and monitor gender equality within MLI/022. Ideally, this expert would have a cross-cutting mandate for the three projects / programmes in the focus area.
14. Conduct gender-sensitive planning and budgeting and revise the monitoring & evaluation mechanism accordingly.

- MLI/022

Capacity-building

15. Develop / implement an operational strategy to integrate the various training courses and post-training support mechanisms / farm advisory.

- MLI/022 / MLI/021

¹² This point particularly relates to the ACEFOR, PROCEJ, FIER, FASAM, MLI/044-FAO projects that are also being implemented in the southern focus area, covering virtually the same target population and with the same partners.