

INTERMEDIATE EVALUATION

MLI/023

Decentralisation and Good Governance

PROJECT SUMMARY DATA

Country	Mali
Long project title	Decentralisation and Good Governance
Short project title	Decentralisation and Good Governance
LuxDev Code	MLI/023
Version of the Report	September 2018

RATING OF THE PROJECT BY THE EVALUATION MISSION

Global rating (Effectiveness)	3 – (between 3 and 4) 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 – (between 3 and 4) Efficiency: 3 – (between 3 and 4) Sustainability: 3

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 reviewed the programme MLI/023 – Decentralisation and Good Governance, implemented in-house by LuxDev. In March 2018, the total budget for MLI/023 increased from € 10 662 900 (7 371 million CFA Francs) to € 12 262 900 (8 049 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: S. Doumbia, evaluator of MLI/023; L. Dicko, infrastructure expert; 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.

Objectives of the Decentralisation and Good Governance Programme (MLI/023):

The overall programme objective of ensuring that "the conditions for regional socio-economic development are met in accordance with good governance principles" is aligned to the objectives of the National Decentralisation Policy Framework Document 2015-2024.

The specific objective is to ensure that: "public sector performance is improved and the sector assumes its responsibilities for rural communities".

The results achieved by the project are outlined below:

Result 1: Conditions conducive to socio-economic development (including access to land and water) are promoted, along with their sustainable management: The programme has identified 18 local authorities and 54 villages to be targeted by efforts to reclaim and develop degraded land in order to allocate this land to 250 vulnerable people, prioritising households, women and young people. 18 land commissions have been provided with support to conduct an inventory of habits and customs and document basic land use texts. 15 of the 18 local authorities identified received support with developing their Economic, Social and Cultural Development Programmes, which contained innovative themes relating to Climate Change, Food and Nutrition Security, and Gender. The lesson-learning exercise conducted on the Economic, Social and Cultural Development Programmes process should help inform the work currently being undertaken to review the methodological guide on developing Economic, Social and Cultural Development Programmes, led by the general directorate of local authorities, the General Directorate of Territorial Communities. The second phase of the project to develop 20 other Economic, Social and Cultural Development Programmes has begun. In synergy with MLI/021, the programme is financing infrastructure construction (Seed Analysis Laboratory) and the sites of five hydro-agricultural schemes have already been identified for rehabilitation.

The overall level of achievement for Result 1 is assessed as being 30%.

Result 2: Local authorities are performing their contracting authority role for the activity and fulfilling the responsibilities transferred to them: Through the local authority training centre (Training Centre for Local Communities), the MLI/023 programme has built the capacities of various local development stakeholders in the focus area (elected officials and local authority staff, staff from the supervisory agency and the devolved technical agency (Decentralized Technical Service), the Regional Development Agency, the Agriculture Deconcentration-Decentralisation Support Unit, and Training Centre for Local Communities). This capacity-building process involved delivering training (career development pathway) and providing tools, designing and reproducing supporting materials and kits for stock records to aid local authority equipment and infrastructure management, and providing IT and solar equipment to 50 local authorities and 25 Arrondissements, etc. Innovative approaches, such as the 'Moddle Box' of theme-based e-learning training modules, were introduced by the Training Centre for Local Communities with the support of the programme.

The overall level of achievement for Result 2 is assessed as being 53%

¹ The evaluation of MLI/023 was deferred to end on 17.07.2018 and the gender expertise ended on 16.08.2018.

Result 3: There is improved democracy and governance within local authorities and the state's devolved agencies: The fund delegation agreement, in conjunction with members of the *Cercle de Réflexion et d'Information pour la Consolidation de la Démocratie au Mali - 2002* (Cri 2002) and Enda, have helped ensure the following main outcomes:

- working methods have been harmonised;
- a capacity-building plan has been designed;
- support has been provided to the various types of stakeholder involved (non-state stakeholders, local authorities, service providers, Decentralized Technical Service and supervisory stakeholders) by providing them with equipment.

It is also worth noting the following activities that have been carried out:

- information / awareness-raising and communication, training and coaching, presentations and public debates;
- support with organising information and discussion events, local commitment days, public commitment days, the four annual administrative account public reporting events in four pilot local authorities, six one-day events on community involvement in local public management taking the environment and gender into account; developing a guide on empowerment and good governance criteria;
- creating local and regional directories of village / faction and neighbourhood leaders and assisting them to issue nomination decisions; supporting the creation of three legal assistance and grassroots action centres;
- conducting a review in 73 local authorities in the focus area;
- conducting awareness-raising and participation campaigns on public monitoring, accountability, campaigning, advocacy and driving change in local government, etc.

The overall level of achievement for Result 3 is assessed as being 41%.

Result 4: Local authorities' financing mechanisms are enhanced: The activities for this result are being jointly carried out by the MLI/023 team, the local authorities and the operator of RECODE (software for devolved local authority tax collection). Five pilot local authorities have been supported through commitment agreements. This has made it possible to support the development of Economic, Social and Cultural Development Programmes in conjunction with raising funding, install the RECODE software and IT kits, identify 15 other local authorities in order to extend the support provided, receive confirmation of the Ministry of Local Authorities' decision to expand use of the RECODE software to 120 local authorities through the National Local Authorities Investment Agency. MLI/023 has provided support in the form of motorbikes to the Circles' tax offices that cover the five pilot local authorities. In Ségou Regional Council, the RECODE software has been installed for supplementary budgets in order to improve the region's vocational training centres' management arrangements.

The overall level of achievement for Result 4 is assessed as being 11%.

Relevance is assessed as being 3 – (between 3 and 4)

The main strengths: The MLI/023 programme is aligned to national procedures (policies and strategies (the Constitution of 25 February 1992, the Local Authorities Act, and National Decentralisation Policy Framework Document), institutional and technical arrangements (National Local Authorities Investment Agency, Regional Development Agency, Training Centre for Local Communities) and financial mechanisms (National Local Authorities Investment Agency, Treasury). It builds on national, regional and local skills and expertise. There is civil dialogue throughout with local people, technical and political discussions with the government, development partners and Civil Society Organisations (use of devolved services, national and regional private operators, central agencies, the government's customised agencies). The activities developed are in line with forecast national and sector policy, including the Strategic Framework for Economic Recovery and Sustainable Development. The MLI/023 programme has developed a strategy to provide back-up support, technical capacity-building, and support to its various implementing partners (Cri 2002, Enda, Renewable Energies, Environment and Solidarity Group / Mali folkecenter / Army Medical Department of the United States, Training Centre for Local Communities, Regional Development Agency). As advocated in the technical and financial documents, the pursuit of greater synergy and dovetailing between MLI/021, MLI022 and MLI/023 has been obtained.

Main weaknesses: Despite this greater synergy, a consistent strategy and approach is still required to enhance this process and ensure programmes complement each other more closely in order to make further improvements. This weakness is compounded by insufficient consultation and coordination. In particular, there is a lack of horizontal coordination between central bodies. Furthermore, the issue of cooperation between local governments is not addressed as a priority in the technical and financial documents yet the MLI/023 programme is working with 104 local governments, including those at all three levels (region, circle and local). All of these local government bodies are suffering from a lack of financial / investment resources.

Effectiveness is assessed as being 3 – (between 3 and 4)

The estimated level of achievement of results 1, 2, 3 and 4 is 30%, 53%, 41% and 11% respectively, which means that considerable efforts still need to be made, particularly with regard to local authorities' socio-economic and financial development. Based on achievements in terms of activity tasks completed, results have not yet been attained and all of the indicator scores are below 50%. Only six out of 22 tasks have a completion rate of over 50%.

Main strengths: The development of a guide on good governance criteria; efforts to strengthen and train Civil Society Organisations; work to effectively involve local and regional stakeholders in local authority management; the development of (regional and local) directories of the heads of villages and neighbourhoods; and the drafting of 50 publicly available simplified budgets for 50 local authorities. A range of innovations have been introduced as part of the programme approach to improve the effectiveness of activity management. All of these innovations need time to become embedded, and also for the stakeholders involved to become familiar with and take ownership of the approaches introduced.

Main weaknesses: We noted there were delays in the equipment procurement process and in the activities to rehabilitate the five hydro-agricultural schemes identified by National Local Authorities Investment Agency. These delays are no doubt linked to a poor understanding of the complexity of this type of procurement, of the steps involved in selecting the service providers, and of the time required to effectively complete the activities. In addition, the process of setting up a partnership / delegation agreement with fund delegation agreement / Renewable Energies, Environment and Solidarity Group has fallen behind schedule. This was initially due to the delayed start of the land use management activities. Furthermore, the programme should review the indicators used in its career development pathway training approach. The monitoring & evaluation mechanism is based on a set of indicators, the information for some of which is collected on an annual basis. Thus, it was not possible for the intermediate evaluation to determine their actual level of achievement. Although data is available to inform the indicators, the mechanism appears cumbersome and there are still questions about its feasibility as the main stakeholder is the Regional Directorate of Planning, Statistics, Informatics, Land Use Planning and Population, which is struggling to meet all of its monitoring obligations in the region due to a lack of human resource capacity.

Efficiency is assessed as being 3 – (between 3 and 4)

Main strengths: With regard to budget implementation, the MLI/023 programme has disbursed 50.74% of its budget (normal for the mid-term point) over 57.5% of the budget implementation period. Seven delegation agreements have been signed for a total of € 5 610 355.89, of which € 3 762 612.47 or 67.07% has been disbursed.

Main weaknesses: There is a mismatch between the level of budget implementation, the elapsed budget implementation period and the achievement of results. For certain results, the level of achievement is relatively low. The discrepancy between the amounts disbursed and amounts spent is being monitored by the MLI/023 programme. However, the significant advance payment made, particularly at National Local Authorities Investment Agency, needs to be better assessed in the future. The level of disbursement as at 30.04.2018 was 50.74%. This falls to 25.12% when only the amounts justified at delegation agreement level are taken into account. The MLI/023 programme's operation to investment ratio, initially set at 14.74% (according to the technical and financial documents), is assessed as being 11.82%² on the basis of the budget disbursed as at 30.04.2018. This is therefore in line with budget forecasts. When the amounts actually spent (justified) are taken into account, this ratio comes to 27.14%, twice the initial forecast.

² The operation to investment ratio was assessed based on the budget disbursed as at 30.04.2018 (source: LuxDev, updated financial monitoring): total disbursed on row T0 : total disbursed on rows T1 to T4.

Sustainability is assessed as being 3

Main strengths: The institutional embedding of the MLI/023 programme and its ability to adapt to changes to the country's political and institutional environment bode well for its sustainability. This position is underpinned by the capacity-building being provided to the various stakeholders involved in programme implementation, especially the capacity-building for local governments that is enabling them to fulfil their contracting authority role and progressively take ownership of the programme. One of the strengths of this capacity-building is the cross-cutting and innovative theme-based training that promotes decentralisation using Economic, Social and Cultural Development Programmes approaches (environment, climate change, employment, food and nutrition security), as well as the training courses developed (theme-based career development pathway, Moddle Box).

Main weaknesses: The programme's implementation period is relatively short for the type of activities being carried out. The remainder of the phase (18 months) will provide just enough time to complete the main activities planned, but not to ensure the required level of stakeholder ownership or properly monitor the results (outcomes and impacts). At this stage of programme implementation, there are still improvements to be made to the way beneficiaries use and take ownership of some of the tools. Even if all the planned MLI/023 programme activities are completed before the end of the phase, without ongoing support, their sustainability cannot be assured.

Gender equality

Main strengths: At the programme planning stage, gender awareness was included in indicator for the specific objective 2; although, the corresponding indicator was not broken down into targeted results indicators in the MLI/023 monitoring mechanism.

Main weaknesses: Although aligned with National Gender Policy-Mali, the programme has not included provisions to ensure its operational consolidation, notably within the ministry responsible for decentralisation, one of the key stakeholders of this policy. With regard to social gender inequalities, the MLI/023 programme has no strategic gender action plan and there is no institutional provision or staff member responsible for gender.

At the mid-term point, the recommendations produced are as follows³:

Programme opportunities		
1.	Hold further discussions on the option of extending the phase based on the findings of the political-strategic component of the intermediate evaluation.	Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs – Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
Intervention strategies		
2.	Enhance the strategic and operational cooperation between the three programmes in order to develop the required synergy and complementary approaches.	Coordination LuxDev - MLI021, MLI022, MLI/023
3.	Continue to build on good practices in order to develop tools and / or propose political strategies to inform discussions on the National Decentralisation Policy Framework Document, and local authority and rural development financing policies.	MLI/023
Land use management		
4.	Refine / verify the methodology used to allocate degraded land for rehabilitation and increase information-sharing on the good land use practices used by the various parties and land commissions, particularly in the Sikasso and Ségou regions.	MLI/023 Renewable Energies, Environment and Solidarity Group / Mali folkecenter / Army Medical Department of the United States
Planning / scheduling		
5.	Build the local authorities' thematic capacities (including cross-cutting themes ⁴) to make full use and ensure effective ownership of all planning and contracting authority instruments and strategies.	MLI/023
Democracy and good governance		
6.	Establish appropriate care and maintenance arrangements for the equipment and infrastructure installed or to be constructed.	MLI/023
Funding		
7.	Improve the RECODE software (introduce stock records), extend use of the software beyond the 15 local authorities planned for phase 2, which has already begun, and continue to support the stakeholders after training.	MLI/023
8.	Improve the involvement of traditional authorities to raise funding ⁵ .	MLI/023
Management and coordination		
9.	Initiate consultation with the central agencies involved in implementing the programme.	MLI/023
10.	Under the auspices of the Governor, promote a consultation framework (Regional Committee for Orientation, Coordination and Monitoring of Development Actions) and technical discussions between projects / programmes supporting decentralisation and governance in the Ségou and Sikasso regions.	MLI/023

³ The recommendations are grouped by key theme, not in order of importance or priority – given the planned end date of MLI/021 in December 2019, they are to be implemented over the short-term unless otherwise specified.

⁴ Environment, climate change, food and nutrition security, and gender.

⁵ See law N° 06-023 – 20.06.2006 and statement N° 2018/2279/MATD-SG – 05.04.2018.