

# *exPost* **ExPost**

## Evaluating 15 Years of Support for Development of Rural Territories in Sub-Saharan Africa

### Summary of the final report

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## Preface

I had the pleasure of chairing the Reference Group, which provided oversight for this evaluation. The members were Martine Antona (a researcher of note from CIRAD) and colleagues from AFD. It is admirable that AFD had an evaluation process so open to outside observers, especially given the lengthy and complex nature of this evaluation. I certainly learnt a great deal during the evaluation process. I am also aware that the work demanded considerable patience both from colleagues at AFD and from the consortium of consultants responsible for the work (IRAM-CIEDEL-South Research), but such patience has been amply rewarded with a very satisfactory result. The lengthy timeframe for this evaluation (more than two years) provided the opportunity to comprehend the depth and complexity of the different project settings examined by the evaluators. It also meant **that each and every meeting of the Reference Group involved an ever-changing group of people from AFD. While this drew a larger number of AFD colleagues into the process than might have been the case for a shorter timeframe, it also led to a certain loss of continuity.** Nevertheless, it was very fulfilling to take part in the workshop held in January 2018 to co-design the set of recommendations, which brought together a range of AFD staff and enabled key lessons to be identified on matters of both substance and organisation.

There are many findings from the evaluation that resonate with my own research activities in central Mali, where I have been documenting socio-economic and environmental change over 38 years, from 1980 to the present. Amongst the common findings, first, it is clear that villagers have retained a remarkable ability to organise themselves, whether at household, community or landscape level. This institutional or social capital represents a considerable asset for any local development programme and should be recognised and built upon. Second, large-scale land

acquisitions are generating a new class of landless farmers, who must often migrate a considerable distance to gain access to cultivable land. Third, all rural inhabitants are seeking ways to secure their access to land rights, whether herders, agro-pastoralists, or farmers. However, this desire to settle and firm up their rights is creating an increasingly chaotic and unplanned landscape, as well as generating a sense of land scarcity. In the absence of an effective State presence to encourage a participatory process of landscape management, neither local government nor village/herder councils are able to shape the outcome. The former system, which combined customary practice and various ad hoc arrangements, seems less and less able to cope with the many conflicting interests and pressures apparent today. **Unfortunately, in many places there is a vacuum in terms of a public authority that is present and able to arbitrate between different groups and help them negotiate how best to use their shared territory. Given this vacuum, there are increasing risks that growing conflict and resentments between communities will too easily be manipulated to fan the sparks of conflict.** Neither local nor regional government seems to have a handle on ways to draw the population into a participatory planning process, from which a negotiated outcome could emerge.

**The timing of this evaluation is very fortunate, and highly relevant to the design of future actions by AFD, given the recent heightening of its commitment to supporting sustainable development in the Sahel.** Whether it be a decentralised approach, support to nested systems of governance, investment in institutions, or building local capacity and skills, all of these elements are bound to be central in any future work aimed at ensuring both effective governance of land and natural resources, and increased security for people and their livelihoods in the Sahel.

A new commitment to invest in the Sahel's extensive landscapes and diverse peoples requires a clear understanding of the likely impacts of climate change, and ways to build more resilient systems. Fortunately, AFD has committed to ensuring all of its projects will be 100% compatible with the Paris Climate Accord of 2015. A landscape approach to rural development opens up a range of options for mitigation measures and for a range of actions aimed at adaptation of rural systems and reducing their vulnerability to climate shocks. The 4p1000 initiative, which seeks to increase carbon sequestration in soils and vegetation, could certainly play a useful role in securing investment in Sahelian landscapes; one example is grazing lands, which are managed through common property institutions.

**Since the first flush of enthusiasm for decentralisation in the 1990s, support from governments and donor agencies for the devolution of power and decision-making to local levels has been falling off. Nevertheless, the significance of decentralisation as an approach to developing local democratic processes remains intact.** This evaluation report could be very useful in providing a springboard for renewed engagement between AFD and several African partner governments regarding the salience of effective decentralisation, given that there is really no alternative if the well-being of rural dwellers is

to be achieved. Despite the large number of political constraints in many countries, a long-term commitment to such an approach needs to be maintained. Having well-rooted, strong and effective local governance systems can offer a degree of stability, regardless of swings in political fortunes at the national level.

Might it be possible to ensure that local government enjoys a degree of autonomy over its resources and service provision, allowing it to function without close control from central government machinery? The work that IIED has been supporting in northern Kenya has convinced us that investment in strengthening local institutions (at times ignored because they are intangible and invisible) brings a hefty return to the local economy, to society and to relations within and between different communities<sup>1</sup>.

**I strongly hope that the results from this remarkable set of investments made by AFD can be shared with the governments and researchers of many of the countries where they were carried out, and with other donor agencies operating in this field.** Alongside making best use of urbanisation, market development, and clever technologies, we all need to learn how best to support greater resilience to the many shocks – in climatic, political and security terms – to which all of our countries are increasingly subjected.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://anglejournal.com/article/2015-06-investing-in-institutional-software-to-build-climate-resilience/>



This document is a summary of the final report of the external evaluation of 15 years of AFD and FFEM<sup>2</sup> interventions related to “the development of rural territories or landscapes”<sup>3</sup> in sub-Saharan Africa. This evaluation was commissioned by AFD and conducted between June 2016 and December 2017 by the consortium formed by IRAM, CIEDEL and South Research.

## 1. Objectives and method of the study

Support for the development of rural landscapes in sub-Saharan Africa has been a priority area for AFD intervention. For more than 15 years, AFD has been supporting the implementation of a series of projects contributing to decentralization, local development and governance of rural areas

The evaluation of “15 years of development of rural territories in sub-Saharan Africa” had two objectives: 1) accountability, by reporting on what has been achieved by the projects and under what conditions, through a quantitative and qualitative assessment, and 2) learning, by identifying lessons “from the field”, in areas of different landscapes and rural contexts.

The evaluation was steered by AFD’s Assessment and Knowledge capitalisation Department (EVA), with the support of the Agriculture, Rural Development and Biodiversity Division (ARB). A reference group, chaired by an independent person, was set up to monitor and evaluate the work carried out. This group brought together representatives of the different AFD divisions concerned, of FFEM, of the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE) and of the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD).

In order to discuss the recommendations of the study contained in the draft report, a half-day workshop was held on 12 January 2018 with fifteen participants from the ARB division, the EVA department and the Sub-Saharan Africa department (AFR) of AFD. The discussions allowed participants to formulate operational recommendations that were then incorporated into the final report.

The evaluation covers a panel of 23 projects involving 13 countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Madagascar, which had received funding during the 2000–2014 period by AFD and FFEM and had been implemented by both governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It was carried out from June 2016 to February 2018.

The methodology used for the evaluation included: (i) a desk review, including existing project evaluation reports; (ii) interviews in France with AFD project managers; and (iii) field visits to six countries (Mali, Senegal, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Madagascar).

In addition to the evaluation of the projects according to the criteria of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), attention was focused on several key issues for which AFD wanted more in-depth analysis and on recommendations of strategic and operational importance. These issues included economic development,

<sup>2</sup> The AFD host the FFEM secretariat.

<sup>3</sup> There is no simple translation into English of *développement des territoires ruraux*. The term combines a focus on decentralised local development and governance of rural space. In this English summary, “territories” and “landscapes” are used interchangeably.

management of land and natural resources, interactions between urban and rural areas, management of “commons”, and interventions in crisis and conflict situations.

The main limits of this evaluation stemmed from the diverse nature of the projects reviewed. Indeed, some projects were too unrepresentative for full integration into the crosscutting analysis. On the other hand, the analyses are particularly interesting for long-term projects and for projects implemented in the same country for a long period and in different areas. In addition, the panel did not include any project supporting agricultural value chains, an omission which should ideally have been rectified, given their

potential contribution to economic development of rural areas. Finally, we were able to visit only a small number of the projects selected for review. It should also be noted that it was difficult to find the beneficiaries of projects completed some years previously, and that this limited analysis of the longer-term sustainability and impact of the projects, particularly with regards to “capacity building”. Further, the accessibility of certain data was made more difficult for some projects completed a long time ago, because of the short time for field missions, the projects’ diversity and especially since the evaluation aimed to focus on analysis axes that were not always initial points of attention of the various projects studied.

## 2. The panel of projects studied

The 23 projects reviewed were spread across 13 countries, with 16 located in West Africa, 5 in Central Africa and 2 in Madagascar. The Sahel region was widely represented, with 13 projects. Thirteen projects were located in AFD's traditional intervention zones: cotton growing areas in Mali, Burkina Faso and Benin; rice growing and market gardening areas in the Senegal River Valley; and agro-pastoral zones in Cameroon, Niger, Chad and Mali. Four projects, located in Guinea and Cameroon, were national in scope. Twelve of the 23 projects studied were funded by a grant;

6 projects combined a grant and a loan; and 5 projects used the Debt Reduction-Development Contract (C2D) instrument. In 15 cases, projects were managed by private sector bodies, while the C2D projects or projects co-funded with the World Bank were managed by public sector entities.

Five projects were starting up at the time of the evaluation, 8 were in progress, and 10 projects had been completed. This spectrum was to allow to appreciate the learning between projects or project phases.



Table 1. Progress and implementation period of projects

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Burkina Faso																				
Senegal																				
Mali																				
Benin																				
Niger																				
Cameroon																				
Chad																				
Guinea																				
Mauritania																				
Central African Republic																				
Burkina, Togo, Benin, Ghana, Niger																				
Madagascar																				

Source: authors.

The specific objectives of the projects in the sample cover support for five main themes: 1) decentralization, 2) local development (and construction of socio-economic

infrastructures/equipment), 3) economic development, 4) sustainable management of natural resources (including biodiversity conservation), and 5) land tenure security.

**Table 2. Main themes by project**

Country	Project	Dates	Principal Themes				
			Support for decentralisation	Support for local development	Support for economic development	Land tenure security	Management of natural resources
Burkina Faso	PACOF	2011-2018	✓	✓		✓	
Burkina Faso	PSAE	2015-2020			✓	✓	
Senegal	ADDEL	2002-2012	✓	✓			
Senegal	PACR	2007-2014	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Senegal	ASAAM	2013-2018			✓	✓	
Senegal	AIDE PODOR	2014-2020			✓	✓	
Senegal	APEFAM	2015-2020			✓	✓	✓
Mali	PACDM	2006-2014	✓	✓			
Mali	PADER	2015-2021			✓		
Benin	PADAC	2015-2021			✓		✓
Niger	PGBV	2009-2017			✓	✓	✓
Cameroon	PNDP1	2007-2011	✓	✓			
Cameroon	PNDP2	2012-2016	✓	✓	✓		
Cameroon	ASGIRAP	2014-2018			✓		✓
Chad	PROADEL	2004-2010	✓	✓			
Guinea	PACV2	2012-2015	✓	✓			
Guinea	PACV3	2015-2019	✓		✓		
Mauritania	VAINCRE2	2012-2018	✓	✓			
Mauritania	VAINCRE2bis	2010-2018	✓	✓			
Central African Republic	PDRSO	2016-2020			✓		✓
Multi-country	TCEAO	2011-2015					✓
Madagascar	PHCF	2013-2017			✓		✓
Madagascar	ARSF	2016-2019				✓	

Source: authors.

### 3. Background of AFD interventions supporting development of rural territories

The evolution of programs supporting the development of rural territories in sub-Saharan Africa is a combination of political reforms, the capitalization of project's experiences and the strategic positioning of the Agency.

The 1980s were marked by major droughts in the Sahel, which raised issues related to sustainable natural resource management and resilience<sup>4</sup> of production systems and rural populations. Governments faced strong difficulties in sustainably improving rural and urban living conditions, equitably managing natural resources, and fighting poverty.

AFD has been supporting “**land management**” projects in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger in particular. The “land management” approach focuses on the long-term planning of land and natural capital, as well as intensification of production systems. To deal with concerns that previous, more sector-based projects had failed to address, this approach has put emphasis on sustainably developing natural assets, encouraging ownership of resources by local communities, and promoting farmers' organizations and small businesses.

The “land management” approach is based on the concept of “*terroir*”, which designates a geographical space of variable size that brings together all the lands controlled by a community. The *terroir* is supposed to constitute a reference point (to justify rights of ownership and exclusive access to resources) and a guarantee of cultural and social coherence. The main initiatives financed by these projects have been the long-term planning and management of land and natural capital, the intensification of production systems, and the construction of infrastructure in rural areas (warehouses, wells, agricultural input stores, etc.).

The approach puts communities at the centre of the decision-making process. However, some critics say too much time is spent on diagnostic and facilitation work, without immediate outcomes and concrete actions. Rural populations tend to lose interest if there are no obvious benefits coming their way.

In the early 1990s, projects evolved towards a broader territorial approach and the financing of rural infrastructure. These “**decentralization and local development**” support

**projects** took shape in many countries undergoing decentralisation of government and decision-making. The projects were committed to supporting local initiatives defined by local people themselves, with the setting up financial and technical tools for social and community investments (and marginally sustainable management of natural resources) on the basis of participatory planning. They sought to build project management skills within communities and newly established communes and municipalities in a context of state disengagement.

<sup>4</sup> The term “resilience” became widely used only much later.

Decentralization processes (including such aspects as agreeing on boundaries of municipalities, defining the scope of their authority, and setting up technical and financial means to function effectively) were slow in coming about. During this period, AFD adapted its approach to

fit progress being made in decentralisation reforms in different countries. This led to differentiated objectives and approaches in supporting local development, depending on context.

AFD's 2004 Strategy Paper "Supporting Local Development and Decentralization" defines support for local development as support for participatory development in a single or combination of rural territories. The projects known as "support for local development" make up a fairly homogeneous body of work. They usually include: (i) support for local planning; (ii) the setting up of equipment and infrastructure, such as schools, clinics, wells and boreholes, natural resource management, rural roads; and (iii) the setting up of a financial mechanism such as a local investment fund (with various denominations : local investment funds – LIF –, local development funds – LDF, etc.). The main tools developed by AFD projects in this field have been local development plans (LDPs) and funding guidelines for local development funds.

In the 2000s, local development projects put particular emphasis on social services. But by the 2010s, following the food crisis of 2007-08, agricultural development and job creation in rural areas were made the centre of concerns. The AFD then went on to support a new generation of projects known as **"support for the economic development of rural areas"** that sought to interweave different

objectives within the framework of "territorial governance". The aim has been to consolidate the technical and financial capacities of local institutions and strengthen public action to promote economic development. Those projects combine different areas of work in an innovative way: agriculture, land tenure security, value chain promotion, local taxation and support to private businesses and municipalities.

AFD's 2010-2012 and 2012-2016 sectoral intervention frameworks (CIS in French) no longer use the term "local development". The 2010-2012 CIS makes support for the economic development of rural areas a specific objective of its Goal no. 3 "Supporting the integration of rural areas into the national economy". It aims to support social and economic development of rural areas by strengthening the capacities of local communities or municipalities in planning, implementation and management of investments. The 2012-2016 CIS makes the development of rural territories and the preservation of their natural capital one of its main goals, and the governance of rural territories a specific objective contributing to this goal.



In short, since 2004, all the projects have provided support for the planning, financing and management of local investments, as well as building the skills of local actors. The key difference between these projects is the type of actors involved (local civil society organizations, municipal or commune councils), the type of investments targeted, and capacity building goals. Finding the best means to strengthen the capacity of local actors in project management has remained a major concern throughout the years. By contrast, focus on strengthening systems of local taxation seems to have decreased from the late 2000s onwards.

Thus, over time, these projects have evolved to provide a broader range of activities which “support the governance of rural areas”, including elements such as:

- Land tenure management, for not only “private” plots but also protection of common resources such as forests, water bodies and rangelands, and management of protected areas in relation with the government on the public state land;
- Management of natural capital within a given municipality, through the adoption of management plans and rules for how natural resources will be allocated amongst different uses and users;
- Experimenting with financial mechanisms and public-private partnerships for maintenance of infrastructure and equipment;
- Training of local authorities in investment management;
- Supporting municipal and commune councils to establish incentives for local enterprises, notably through local taxation and the allocation of local investment funds to targeted activities;
- Promoting a range of services to private sector activities, through development of consulting, management and training centres.

## 4. Evaluative analysis

The project panel of this study has included projects that span two last generations of AFD intervention, but the evolution of individual projects is rarely linear and is not a perfect match for the evolution of broader AFD strategy.

Consequently, depending on the specific political contexts and national issues, several generations of projects are included in the AFD portfolio at the same time.

### 4.1. Project typology

Three types of projects were identified for analysis purposes.

**Type 1: Local development support projects**, focused on building the capacity of local stakeholders and setting up social infrastructure (6 projects)

These projects are primarily intended to address the weaknesses of local municipal government in the learning phase. They are based on the following assumptions: the lack of investment resources of local municipalities or communes (or communities if the previous ones do not yet exist), the weakness of their capacities (administrative, planning, investment management...) and those of local actors in general, lead to a lack of equipment with negative consequences for the living conditions of the population. Thus, projects of this type are based on the assumption that, by giving local authorities the technical and financial means to exercise the competences conferred on them by the decentralization process, access to social services should improve and therefore so should living conditions for local populations.

**Type 2: Projects supporting territorial economic development**, focused on strengthening local actors and setting up socio-economic infrastructure (11 projects)

In these projects, greater focus is given to economic development (markets, roads), and to better management of natural resources and land. The assumption is that supporting municipalities financially and technically (including in the application of the new prerogatives conferred on them by the land reforms when they exist) will help them create a more favourable economic environment for people to improve their incomes, thereby reducing poverty. In addition, it is hoped that local businesses will be more inclined to meet their tax obligations when they can see their benefits, and this will ultimately enable municipalities to improve or even expand the range of social services offered to their citizens. The construction of social infrastructure is much less important in these projects.

The panel includes a large number of projects in this category, which can be sub-divided into two sub-groups according to their main activities:

- The first project sub-type is based on the establishment of a local development fund (like an “investment support desk”) derived from the generation of local development projects (cf. type 1), of which they are often a later phase.

- The second project sub-type, in addition to setting up a development fund like the previous one, includes a number of additional objectives. These include methods and capacity-building actions for land management, and spatial planning, as well as technical support for local businesses. The projects implemented in the Senegal River Valley are emblematic of this approach, as they combine a wide range of activities such as capacity building for municipal bodies to help them manage investments; support for communities in land management; development or reclamation of irrigated land, water basins and roads; and capacity building for water-user associations and producer organizations.

### **Type 3: Projects supporting the decentralized management of natural resources (5 projects)**

These projects focus on the conservation and management of natural resources, particularly forests. All of them involve local municipalities, given their responsibilities (for natural resources and land management, and management of timber royalties in certain cases) in their jurisdiction.

The three types of projects outlined above often implement similar types of action: (i) training, advisory services and capacity building; (ii) the development of tools, in particular for local planning and local fund management to increase investment; (iii) institutional strengthening and support for public policies. The differences between them lie in both the type of actors supported – even if municipalities are, for the majority of the projects, the main actors – and the type of investments (in social or economic infrastructure or in natural resource management).

## **4.2. Relevance**

The relevance of the projects to the needs of the targeted territories is satisfactory for all the projects in the sample. The objectives for all the projects targeted the needs of the intervention areas, as basic needs are enormous. Feasibility studies usually left open much of the detail of territorial diagnoses, in order to allow communities themselves to identify, through participatory processes, their own priority actions to be financed. Even projects implemented through a somewhat top-down process (PACV in Guinea and PNDP in Cameroon, which are both national in scope) sought to take into account the specificities of people and place revealed during the participatory diagnosis. This approach of associating the populations with the territorial diagnoses and the identification of the actions to be financed seems very relevant.

Feasibility studies for project types 2 and 3 attempted to define a more precise baseline of the opportunities and constraints associated with the given territory. In some cases, the feasibility study initiated consultation with the major actors concerned (examples: PADER in Mali, PGBV in Niger and PACOF in Burkina Faso) to pre identify the most relevant types of actions to support. During project implementation, the main actors could then re-examine the options more precisely and determine their most appropriate location. A significant change in the most recent economic development projects lay, for some of them, in the implementation of structuring investments whose prior technical appraisal is thorough, and whose expected environmental and economic impacts were precisely assessed (examples: ASAAM, AIDE PODOR and APEFAM in Senegal).

### 4.3. External coherence

All the projects clearly related to ongoing public reform processes, whether already carried out or in preparation and to anticipate changes in the institutional framework. In addition, most projects sought to use national mechanisms for the transfer and management of funds by communities, for example by using established central to local government funding channels.

All Type 1 and 2 projects (representing more than 80% of the panel) worked closely with government services and sought coherence with State policies and administration. This is less true for Type 3 projects, for which coherence with government services is less explicit (though they seek alignment with the policies governing the sector).

The projects were less consistent in terms of alignment with the interventions of other donors, and the analysis showed satisfactory linkage between donor approaches in only 6 out of 13 countries reviewed. However, the blame cannot be put exclusively on AFD, especially since it has often been very active in donor coordination mechanisms, where they exist.

For the majority of projects (20 out of 23 projects), consistency with other AFD interventions was poor. Indeed, despite AFD's significant know-how, particularly in agricultural and pastoral development, synergy seemed very weak between sector-based projects in agricultural and pastoral development on the one hand and the three types of projects assessed by this evaluation on the other.

### 4.4. Internal coherence

**All projects in the sample relied on explicit “theories of change”.** However, these theories of change were clearly reflected in the logical framework in only two-thirds of all the projects. The reasoning behind a given intervention is not always clear (for example, several specific objectives pursued without clear correlation with the project components). In projects supporting economic development in particular, the components referred to the institutional framework of the project and to the financial agreements that had to be established with the various stakeholders, but without referring to the theory of change. **In many cases, the logical framework of the projects was presented in a quite unconventional form, compared to the method of the same name** and despite the fact that the AFD has defined its own standard. There is obviously little implementation of this method at the projects design stage..

The setting up of projects did little to foster political and institutional backing to the needed decentralization, given that it is often difficult to obtain acceptance of devolved decision-making from “powerful” sectoral ministries (Education, Health or Agriculture). Only 19% of the projects were under the authority of ministries in charge of territorial reform; in contrast 81% were the responsibility of sectoral ministries. **According to AFD's procedures, financing requests must come from the State, so one central State institution has to be the contracting authority. Local authorities or municipalities therefore remained positioned as beneficiaries, not as drivers of the project, despite the initial aim of many projects being to promote local stakeholders as decision-makers. This constitutes a fundamental weakness in the coherence of these projects.**



In those projects supporting local development (Type 1), the average amount of funding available for investments averaged 2.5 euros per capita, a sum which is nowhere near enough to significantly upgrade community infrastructure and equipment. Nevertheless, even such small sums per person can represent 10 times the level of local tax actually collected by municipalities. The sums provided by projects, despite their small size, can go some way in initiating priority investments and strengthen the management capacities of the communities concerned.

Projects supporting economic development (Type 2) had significantly larger resources to invest (on average 30 euros per capita). The highest levels of investment (on average 54 euros per capita) are found in projects providing for major structural investment (such as irrigated schemes). It should be noted that these projects were mainly financed by soft loans. Projects set up to support local development funds for local businesses averaged 11 euros per capita, which can be considered sufficient as a starting point. For these support funds, it was not so much the amounts provided for as the forms of mobilization that might have not matched local economic actors' initiatives.

The majority of Type 1 and 2 projects had resources for capacity building, usually through training and mobilizing expertise. Type 1 projects focused on local planning, ma-

naging investments (to local authorities), and conveying a clear understanding of what decentralization can offer (to citizens). However, **sufficient consideration was not always given to the management and maintenance of investments**, once constructed. Type 2 projects tended to encompass more varied topics (computerized systems of information on land use, value chain development, local taxation issues etc.).

The projects reviewed here were implemented over a period of 4 to 5 years. **Given the stated ambitions of all three types of project**, in both institutional and technical terms **this 5-year period is much too short**. Only the projects co-financed with the World Bank have been implemented over a 12-year period, which itself is usually divided into a series of phases.

Finally, **monitoring and evaluation systems in most of the cases were not readily applicable and operational**. Projects rarely take sufficient time to set up effective monitoring and evaluation systems at project inception; and significant confusion still exists between outcomes and output indicators. The design of those systems is not sufficiently taken into account at the project preparation stage to provide rigorous elements beyond the sole control of planned activities.

## 4.5. Achievement rate

**The achievements of ongoing or completed Type 1 projects was satisfactory** with regard to (i) the development and support for the implementation of local planning tools, (ii) the setting up of local development fund management procedures; and (iii) the implementation of investments included in the LDPs. Six out of the eight completed projects performed very well on these points. The investments prioritized in the LDPs were effectively implemented. **In total, these eight completed projects achieved some 6,500 investments (social, economic and community equipment and natural resource management) in just over 1,000 municipalities, costing a total 112 million euros (including all sources of financing, from AFD and from government partners).**

**More recent Type 2 projects incorrectly achieved to develop tools to support local planning, including economic activities and natural resource management.** Some of the tools used were those developed by previous local development projects, while other tools represented real innovations, especially in the management of common property resources and land. However, tools for land management are difficult to put into effect over the lifespan of a single project, since these tools usually require com-

plex social engineering and lengthy periods of negotiation, as well as consultation amongst communities to test them in the field. Apart from Land Use Plans and Land Information Systems in Senegal (which benefitted from the support of SAED), none of the planned tools had been implemented in the projects.

**All Type 2 projects achieved the establishment of financial procedures adapted to economic development support. For the moment, it is too early to judge the effectiveness of projects aimed at the implementation of economic investments,** as the projects were too recent, apart from the PACR project in Senegal. The effectiveness of this PACR project is considered only moderate.

**Sixty percent of the Type 3 projects were able to develop and implement natural resource management planning tools and were satisfactory in this respect.** At the time of evaluation, their achievement was good in the case of the PHCF project in Madagascar. It should be noted that three of these projects were still in their inception phase: our analysis thus deals with programming of their first year.

## 4.6. Effectiveness

In Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Niger, the development of an LDP has become a mandatory step at the local level, be it commune, community, or municipality. In other countries, even though this is not a regulatory requirement, local planning has become common practice. The methodologies used derive from the work of local development projects (some are part of the panel). The elected representatives are generally satisfied with "having a plan", even if in most cases the plans were of low quality due to: (i) limited participatory process; (ii) weak analysis of initial issues, particularly related to economic development and natural resource management; (iii) priority investments insufficiently adapted to the specific context (they are often identical from one location to another); (iv) little coherence of investment plans between contiguous territories; and (v) unrealistic financial planning. Some of the reasons lie in the limited skills of the facilitators and limited time allocated to the planning process (particularly the time needed for reflection and feedback amongst the various stakeholders). But the interests, perceptions and political will of elected officials and community leaders are equally crucial for the quality of these plans.

**Local development funds undoubtedly lead to improved capacities of municipalities in managing budget procedures, and the mobilization of funds induces better practice in procurement and budget management.**

Six Type 1 projects of the eight completed projects **were effective in setting up social and community investments, as prioritized in participatory development plans**. Nevertheless, there is no clear evidence that the investment made actually improved access to services. For example, the State might not appoint the required staff (especially for health or school facilities) despite their initial commitment. This kind of issue was previously raised in past AFD evaluations.

**The effectiveness of the projects as a whole was moderately satisfactory in terms of their implementation of economic and natural resource management investments.** In the three projects already completed or significantly advanced, the financial resources available to local funds were too scarce and the geographical level of operations too narrowly focused on the commune to allow for implementation of the most relevant and effective investments. In addition, the initial appraisal of the economic projects was insufficient, as was the know-how of staff intended to run the project and of the municipal authorities. Consequently, the technical and economic operations of these investments were often deficient.

In local development and economic development support projects (Types 1 and 2), investments whose objective was to contribute to better management of natural resources were eligible for local funds. In practice, however, very few requests were made. In addition, the applications made mainly concerned individual investments (manure pits, stone barriers, cover crops) rather than those on a collective scale. Experience shows that these types of small-scale investments do not have much of an effect because they are too scattered and limited in scale.

Projects supporting decentralized natural resource management (Type 3) for which there is sufficient hindsight (two out of five) were effective in implementing their planned investments. But they also often carried out fragmented individual investments, with disappointing effects on the environment and the natural resources, as already noted in previous studies (dating back to 1990).

**Contrary to expectations, there seems to be little cause-and-effect link between support for securing rural land rights and the implementation of actions aimed at managing natural resources, particularly common resources.** Here again, the territorial scale of local

development funds and of their governance bodies do not foster the effectiveness of such actions. However, the latter were considered of major interest by the communities and were highlighted in the tools of territorial planning (case of the Land Use Plans in Senegal in particular).

Improving local financial resources for the municipalities was rarely indicated as an objective in projects. However, a systematic capacity building effort was made in this direction in projects supporting local development. The activities carried out included training to help leveraging local resources and to mobilize local taxes and fees for the use of communal equipment or services. The evaluation mission was not able to document the effects of these actions on the resources of the municipalities concerned, which appeared in most cases still too weak to fulfil their legal

mandates (in particular for the management and maintenance of infrastructures and services). In terms of financial investment capacity, projects concentrated on the endowment of local development funds. It should be noted that completed projects consumed 100% of their available resources. These funds also helped strengthen national fund mechanisms directed toward Municipalities when they exist. They have an innovative role, through their adaptation to specific local contexts and because they experiment with new purposes (economic development for example). It should be noted that none of the projects reviewed by this evaluation supported central institutions in charge of national budget decentralization, this having been the prerogative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development (MAEDI) until 2016.

## 4.7. Efficiency

Project efficiency was difficult to measure because of the lack of available benchmarks. While carrying out the study, difficulties were encountered in obtaining relevant data, as monitoring and evaluation systems concentrated on activities and output and gave little quantified information on the projects' outcomes.

Nevertheless, **efficiency is considered satisfactory for the majority of projects. The projects incurred reasonable management costs (15% on average) and managed to implement their planned activities.** Although delays in implementation were noted, the time allowed has correctly been used by the majority of projects, and

the investments made have costs comparable to those included in other programmes.

The main limitations to efficiency were due to the poor quality of a number of the investments made, stemming from lack of capacity amongst local building contractors. Moreover, there was often a considerable time lag between feasibility studies for the investments and their execution, due to sluggish and sometimes disordered contracting procedures.



## 4.8. Impact and sustainability

The weakness of projects' results and impacts monitoring systems made it necessary to base the evaluation of these criteria on cross-referencing of information and actors' interviews (without any data from surveys and specific follow-up of these criteria).

In cases where municipalities previously had no means to carry out activities and did not benefit from any technical support system, **project activities offered them the possibility of initiating a local development process**, through:

- Building the skills of the municipalities in project management and in administrative and financial management procedures (notably procurement and monitoring of contractors);
- Acquiring tools for local planning which, even if they have certain weaknesses, can help identify priority investments and ensure transparency in the decision-making processes;
- Securing investment funds, hence providing these young communal institutions the opportunity of learning by doing.

However, the capacities targeted were mainly administrative and technical rather than "political" in the sense of promoting a forward-looking vision for development of the territory in question. In addition, the historical perspective shows that these effects are likely to be limited because of the communities' human resources weaknesses. **The analysis shows that support to the municipalities should be implemented on a long-term basis to enable them to continue to fulfil their role as "local developers"**. We note that some achievements are insecure, and the tools put in place can be quickly abandoned once a project has come to an end.

While LDPs enable young municipalities to learn and engage in a dialogue with their citizens, the evaluation of projects showed that diagnostic and planning tools need

further work on their conceptual design. The proposals resulting from LDPs were often too compartmentalized in their approach, technically irrelevant and financially unrealistic. Frequent confusion between the short term and the long term occurred. Lastly, the ways in which the local, regional and national scales are linked was rarely taken into account, even though this should be pivotal, notably in terms of value chain development.

Nevertheless, **social and economic investments do allow the municipality to gain some legitimacy because they address priority needs of the population. The establishment of public services, such as land tenure management, was greatly appreciated because it shows the commune is capable of dealing with key issues within the territory, and the investments made in all three types of projects add real value in terms of the infrastructure within the territory.**

Yet the quality of the infrastructures and equipment and the recurring difficulties in their management and maintenance often undermined their sustainability. Maintenance Committees were supposed to be set up, but they rarely had any technical or financial support from the municipality. Their mandates were often unclear, the modalities for maintenance poorly defined and the rules of access to the services rarely collectively negotiated. As a result, few committees functioned well, and users were very reluctant to contribute to their budget. Hence, equipment was rarely well-maintained and often stopped working.

The evaluation showed that the operating procedures of a local investment fund cannot substitute for a real local economic development strategy. Without a clear-cut investment policy, the individual investments funded have no coherent and binding link. **Such investment funds seem thus more suited to financing standard sectoral actions (building schools, health centres, wells, etc.) that do not need much adaptation to the local context**

and can generate local dialogue and transparency in decision-making. They may be adapted to social and community investments, but they do not address broader economic development issues, which cannot be limited to the sum of a series of micro-projects and to the administrative boundaries of the Municipalities. More ambitious economic development projects would require greater technical support than is available, since financial “efficiency” concerns have often led to cuts in technical advice. **Projects thus face two challenges that may seem contradictory: (i) responding to long-term issues that require significant consultation and maturation time to generate a more productive local economy, and (ii) operating with a financial investment tool to disburse over a very short period of time.** These two challenges are clearly at odds with each other.

**Planning tools for managing common resources have had positive impacts, through establishing multi-stakeholder dialogues to address conflict prevention and management.** But there are many problems in putting planned actions into practice. In the only completed project that developed this type of tool, few of the planned investments were achieved, and the planning tool was abandoned by most communities at the end of the project, due to lack of resources available to continue the facilitation of dialogue within the territory concerned.

**This evaluation has shown that work to strengthen secure land rights has had encouraging impacts on conflict prevention and management, and citizens seem to have a positive perception of the role that municipalities can play in guaranteeing their rights.** But the evaluation also shows that strengthening secure land rights does not appear to bring the clear advantages anticipated, in terms of economic development (despite this being a central assumption for those projects). This finding demonstrates how difficult it is for projects to link a diverse set of activities: rural land tenure administration is a new public service, whose operations and results are necessarily slow to establish; natural resource management requires a spatial approach, designed and implemented on combined scales (from the farm-plot to the watershed), and with strong technical support. These activities cover different geographical scales and different timelines, and they relate to different governance structures. Finding ways for them to coexist within the same project is a real challenge. But, at the same time, juxtaposing them in different projects would jeopardize the coherence of planning within the wider territory and landscape. Perhaps planning for a succession of phases in such projects would be the best way to combine the various components needed for interventions at different levels and scales.

**Finally, some projects have had a positive impact on the evolution of the policy and regulatory framework, particularly in terms of decentralization, financing of economic development, concerted natural resource management planning and land policy.**

## 5. Recommendations

The findings of the evaluation and the related recommendations were discussed with an extended Evaluation Reference Group in December 2017. The recommendations were then reviewed by a half-day workshop held in January 2018 and supplemented by proposals from the participants about putting the findings into practice. The final recommendations are described below.

**1. Adopt a medium- to long-term programmatic approach (10-15 years) for Development of Rural Territories.** The duration of a given project is one of the determining condition for approaches and tools to achieve coherent and sustainable results. This is even more the case in ambitious projects that wish to both support territorial development and contribute to policy innovation at national level. A programmatic approach, besides adherence to a long time frame, would also make it possible to link a set of project activities operating on different timescales (short, medium or long term).

**2. Define the intervention logic underlying each project intervention, in consultation with local stakeholders, to make it more rooted in the local context.** This will mean that (i) AFD devotes sufficient time to work out its own approach to project planning, while remaining flexible and adaptable; (ii) project managers are more involved in the project design, so that they can grasp the institutional and technical constraints of the context and share AFD's expectations with regard to its own strategy and agreements with partners; and (iii) AFD holds project programming workshops with the various stakeholders to thoroughly discuss the strategy and the desired adaptations to local context.

**3. Improve the consistency between these projects and other AFD interventions.** Synergies amongst AFD projects in a same country must be more clearly established at project design, to mobilize the various tools, techniques and methods used for AFD's sectoral projects, in order to feed the economic development interventions of territories that are multidimensional by nature.

**4. Clarify project governance with partner States and promote local governance of the projects.** Responsibilities must be clearly defined for both decision-making and execution of various administrative procedures. In addition, it is essential for AFD to reflect on how best to ensure that regional authorities take on ownership of projects that concern them.

**5. Improve support for the management of public works, equipment and services, with a goal towards their longer-term sustainability.** Several avenues for addressing mismanagement and maintenance of investments could be discussed with States, such as (i) improving the transfer of resources from national to regional/local levels, not only for the construction of equipment but also for their maintenance and (ii) setting up maintenance funds, as part of the local investment fund. In addition, it is recommended that maintenance and management be integrated more assertively in project strategy and design. To do so, an analysis of the conditions needed for the sustainability of investments should be provided for in the feasibility studies, and technical support should be provided to municipalities on this matter.

**6. Support the financial resources and capacities of municipalities improvement.** Beyond the implementation of local development funds, AFD could support the development of policies and tools for allocating resources to municipal and communal bodies (this role had been previously a prerogative of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Improvement in financial capacity is all the more important today because significant funds are likely to be channelled towards the Sahel due to the current crisis. It is vital that a significant portion of these funds be directed towards improving the capacity of municipalities to identify and implement credible investments.

**7. Strengthen territorial governance systems, using new and innovative methods adapted to context.** In the overall background is States' reluctance to intensify decentralization reforms and their inclination to limit local autonomy. In addition, participatory approaches have tended to become more bureaucratic when given formal structure within the framework of decentralization reforms. Participatory approaches should be renewed and made more relevant, to ensure thorough consultation with and between the different social groups involved. This is particularly crucial in conflict zones where AFD intends to increase its support. Territorial governance approaches must be part of a reaffirmed, high-level strategy, which is firmly understood and promoted by local AFD agencies and project managers. Pilot projects, particularly on issues of citizen participation and control, could be set up in some places. It would also be interesting to draw lessons from innovative approaches to project activity led both by AFD and by other aid agencies (Swiss Cooperation, Danish Cooperation, Belgian Cooperation, French decentralized cooperation).

**8. Better combine the levels and scales of operations in natural resource management interventions.** AFD committed to have 100% of its projects compatible with the Paris Agreement. It is therefore important to manage knowledge stemming from AFD's long-standing experience in natural resource management and to promote the effectiveness and sustainability of its actions. Local development projects provide opportunities to experiment and innovate. Sufficient resources must be provided for this purpose right from the design phase of the projects, particularly by encouraging research institutes to work alongside project teams.

**9. Capacity building is a key factor for sustainability and impact.** It is essential to continue linking "investment" and "capacity-building" actions. This association is essential because it strengthens the legitimacy of local actors. During the preparation of feasibility studies and the diagnosis of landscapes and territory, it is necessary to carefully identify the capacities to be strengthened according to the roles and functions of each actor (e.g. locally elected representatives, or managers of producer organizations, etc.). Such capacity building may be technical (for agricultural technicians, municipal staff, etc.), administrative (for tax officers, accountant, etc.) or social (citizens, users of services, etc.). It will require a highly qualified and permanent team specialized in building territorial planning and development facilitation capacities. Finally, relevant indicators to monitor the results achieved in terms of capacity building should be identified, and the methods of collection and analysis of these indicators should be established.



**10. Strengthen the internal organization at AFD to learn from experience.** Due to a number of factors, lessons from project experience are often not sufficiently taken into account in the design of new projects. In operational terms, lessons from experience should be fully integrated into the project appraisal cycle by: (i) checking whether internal

knowledge has been effectively shared prior to the appraisal phase; (ii) raising awareness amongst project managers about the work by Innovations, Research and Knowledge Department (IRS); (iii) requesting country desk officers to share project documents with IRS; and (iv) requesting documentation and information from IRS.

**Tableau 3. List and main characteristics of the projects evaluated**

	Country	Project	Dates	Status in March 2017	Financing instrument	Main themes
1	Burkina Faso	Support Project for Rural Communities of western Burkina Faso, on Land and Natural Resources Management (PACOF)	2011-2018	In progress	Grant	Land security + support to local development/ decentralization
2	Burkina Faso	Food Security and Agricultural Risk Management Project in Eastern Burkina Faso (PSAE)	2015-2020	Starting up	Grant + Very concessional loan	Support to economic development + Land security
3	Senegal	Support Project for Decentralization and Local Development (ADDEL)	2002-2012	Completed	Grant	support to local development/decentralization
4	Senegal	Support Project for Rural Communities in the Senegal River Valley to Foster Investment and Public-Private Partnership (PACR)	2007-2014	Completed	Grant	Land security + support to local development/ decentralisation + Support to economic development
5	Senegal	Food Security Improvement and Land Management Support Project in the Matam Region (ASAAM)	2013-2018	In progress	Grant + Very concessional loan	Support to economic development + Land security
6	Senegal	Irrigated Agriculture and Economic Development Project for the Rural Areas of Podor (AIDE PODOR)	2014-2020	Starting up	Grant + Very concessional loan	Support to economic development + Land security
7	Senegal	Support project for the promotion of family farming in the Matam region (APEFAM)	2015-2020	Starting up	Grant + Very concessional loan	Support to economic development + Land security + Natural resources management
8	Mali	Programme to Support the Consolidation of Decentralization in Mali (PACDM)	2006-2014	Completed	Grant	support to local development/decentralisation focussing on economic development
9	Mali	Project to support the economic development of the rural territories of the Ségou and Timbuktu Regions (PADER)	2015-2021	Starting up	Grant + Very concessional loan	Support to economic development
10	Benin	Agricultural Development Support Project in the Collines Department (PADAC)	2015-2021	Starting up	Grant + Very concessional loan	Support to economic development + Land security
11	Niger	Badaguichiri Watershed Management and Management Project (PGBV)	2009-2017	In progress	Grant	Natural resource management + Land security + Support to economic development

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	Country	Project	Dates	Status in March 2017	Financing instrument	Main themes
12	Cameroon	National Participatory Development Program (PNDP1 for the first phase of the Programme)	2007-2011	Completed	C2D	support to local development/ decentralisation
13	Cameroon	National Participatory Development Programme (PNDP2 for the second phase of the Programme)	2012-2016	Completed	C2D	support to local development/ decentralisation focussing on economic development
14	Cameroon	Project to support the security and integrated management of agro-pastoral resources (ASGIRAP)	2014-2018	In progress	Grant	Support to economic development + Natural resource management
15	Tchad	Local Development Support Programme (PROADEL)	2004-2010	Completed	Grant	support to local development/ decentralisation
16	Guinea	Village Community Support Programme (PACV2 for the second phase of the Programme)	2012-2015	In progress	Grant	support to local development/ decentralisation
17	Guinea	Village Community Support Programme (PACV3 for the third phase of the Programme)	2015-2019	Starting up	C2D	support to local development/ decentralisation focussing on economic development
18	Mauritania	Support programme for local development and decentralization in the regions of Assaba and Guidimakha (VAINCRE2)	2012-2018	Completed	C2D	support to local development/ decentralisation
19	Mauritania	Support programme for local development and decentralization in the regions of Assaba, Guidimakha and Gorgol (VAINCRE2bis)	2010-2018	Completed	C2D	support to local development/ decentralisation
20	Central African Rep.	South West Regional Development Programme (PDRSO)	2016-2020	Starting up	Grant AFD + Grant FFEM	Natural resources management + support to local development
21	Burkina Faso, Togo, Benin, Ghana and Niger	Management of Conservation Areas in West Africa (TCEAO)	2011-2015	In progress	Grant FFEM	Natural resources management (biodiversity, protected areas)
22	Madagascar	Holistic Forest Conservation Programme (PHCF)	2013-2017	In progress	Grant AFD + Grant FFEM	Natural resources management (biodiversity, protected areas) + agricultural development
23	Madagascar	Support to land reform and security (ARSF)	2016-2019	Starting up	Grant	Land security

Source: authors.

## Acronyms and abbreviations

ADDEL	Support Project for Decentralization and Local Development (Senegal)
AFD	<i>Agence Française de Développement</i>
AFR	Sub-Saharan Africa Department (AFD)
AIDE PODOR	Irrigated Agriculture and Economic Development Project for the Rural Areas of Podor (Senegal)
ANICT	National Investment Agency for Local Communities (Mali)
APEFAM	Support project for the promotion of family farming in the region of Matam (Senegal)
ARB	Agriculture, Rural Development and Biodiversity Division (AFD)
ARSF	Support to land reform and security (Madagascar)
ASAAM	Food Security Improvement and Land Management Support Project in the Matam Region (Senegal)
ASGIRAP	Project to support the security and integrated management of agro-pastoral resources (Cameroon)
C2D	Debt reduction and development contract
CIEDEL	International Center for Local Development Studies
CIRAD	French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development
CIS	Sector intervention framework (AFD)
CRD	Rural Development Community of Guinea
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
EU	European Union
EVA	Evaluation and Knowledge capitalisation Department (AFD)
FFEM	French Facility for Global Environment
FPDCT	Permanent Fund for Local Communities Development (Burkina Faso)

GIZ	<i>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German International Cooperation Agency for Development)</i>
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development (United Nations)
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
IRAM	Institute for Research and Applications of Development Methods
IRD	Research Institute for Development
IRS	Innovation, Research and Knowledge Department (AFD)
KfW	<i>Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau</i>
LC	Local community (ies)
LDF	Local Development Fund
LDP	Local development plan
MAEDI	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development
MEAE	Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSC	Civil Society Organizations Division (AFD)
PACDM	Programme to support the consolidation of decentralization in Mali
PACOF	Support Project for Rural Communities of western Burkina Faso, on Land and Natural Resources Management (Burkina Faso)
PACR	Support Project for Rural Communities in the Senegal River Valley (Senegal)
PACV	Support Programme for Village Communities (Guinea)
PADAC	Agricultural Development Support Project in the Collines Department (Benin)
PADER	Support project for economic development of the rural territories of Ségou and Timbuktu Regions (Mali)
PDRSO	Southwest Regional Development Project (Central African Republic)
PGBV	Badaguichiri Watershed Management and Management Project (Niger)



PHCF	Holistic Forest Conservation Programme (Madagascar)
PNDP	National Programme for Participatory Development (Cameroon)
PPP	Private-public partnership
PROADEL	Local Development Support Program (Chad)
PSAE	Food Security and Agricultural Risk Management Project in Eastern Burkina Faso
SAED	National Company for Development and Exploitation of the Delta Lands of the Senegal River and the valleys of the Senegal and Falémé Rivers
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises
TCEAO	Management of conservation territories in West Africa (multi-country project)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme





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