

Third Party Evaluator's Opinion on ODA Loan Projects Road Improvement Project

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To collect the data required for the assessment of the impact and sustainability criteria of this project, we conducted a meeting with Mr. Ahmed Ouaddani, Head of the Division of Planning within the DRCR in Rabat, as well as a visit at a project site and the discussion with Mr. Mohamed Najib Lakhssassi, Regional Director Responsible for Roads (DRR) in Benslimane.

Criteria-1 Impacts

The extension, modernization and maintenance of the provincial and regional road network, implemented and completed within the framework of this project, undoubtedly contributed to the social and economic development at local and regional level. They allowed to boost the economy and to improve the living conditions of the population in the regions concerned. Several factors collected during the discussions with institutions and the on site observations confirmed this reality. First of all, the strengthening and extension of the regional road network facilitated the access to equipment, utilities and efficient services and products markets. They even contributed to an improvement in quality. The road network also facilitated the supply in consumer products as well as products to intensify agricultural outputs (fertilizers, seeds...). Moreover, the improved roads offered more job opportunities, in particular in the trade and service industries, which increased the income of the people in these areas. Likewise, the improved provincial roads spurred significantly the implementation of the national education program insofar as it allowed an increase in school enrollment rates and a shortening of the time spent by these students to go to school. Besides, the improved regional roads, allowing a greater visibility of traffic lanes and comfort for drivers, contributed to reduce road accidents. The Integrated Road Safety Emergency Plan (PIUSR), implemented simultaneously, contributed also a lot to this reduction (awareness raising campaign and control). Last but not least, these roads increase the operating rate of vehicles (longer lifetime).

Criteria-2 Sustainability

This project contributed to build institutional capacities as regards the maintenance and management of the provincial and regional road network. Budgets provided for by the "Fonds Spécial Routier" (1995) and, more recently by the "Caisse de Financement Routier" (2005) whose resources are provided by road taxes and taxes levied on the axles of heavy vehicles, are systematically allocated to the management and extension of the regional road network. These budgets are now decentralized. They are allocated annually to the DRR Services, which periodically carry out inspections on the state of roads. They annually implement road repair and rehabilitation works. As for the Benslimane DRR, for example, in 2005, the annual maintenance budget reached DHS 69 million for 125 km of road and DHS 12 million for the maintenance of the three existing highway structures in the province. This budget is used to maintain the improved roads by cleaning once a year the longitudinal sections of roads (ditches) and by surfacing the roadways, if necessary. In Benslimane, the inspection of the DRR in the field of maintenance is particularly focused on the provincial road 3331 (PKD 0.00 to PKF 16.00). This road is regularly damaged due to overloaded trucks transporting building materials from the nine careers located in the rural commune of "Laâyoune". Consequently, we can observe on half of the lane between this locality and Benslimane a distorted roadway with some sweated sections (bitumen rising and potholes).