

EVALUATION OF AUSTRIA'S DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE TO CEECS/NIS IN THE WATER SECTOR (WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION) SUMMARY

Report number: 2003/3

Geographic area: Cape Verde, Uganda, Guatemala, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Albania

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Collation: 109 pp; 4 annexes

Subject description:

Support to the Water and Sanitation Sector is one of the priority areas of intervention of the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC). The Water and Sanitation Sector Policy (WSSP) guides selection, planning, implementation, controlling and evaluation of projects and programmes. Its strategy with respect to the sustainable management of resources in water supply and sanitation is holistic in nature with a focus on all levels and all sectors, including natural resources, technical infrastructure and social economy, and also gives due consideration to cross-cutting issues such as poverty reduction, gender, sustainable livelihoods, relevance and impact.

The overall objective of the evaluation is to assess projects and programmes implemented under the framework of the WSSP in light of their overall organisation, relevance and sustainability of results. Specific outputs are insights into:

- The relevance of the WSSP to the overarching policy and strategy of the ADC,
- The degree of coherence of the WSSP with global learning/state of the art,
- Efficiency and effectiveness of the WSSP and its implementation within respective programme regions and working fields,
- The definition, application and effectiveness of sector-policy instruments, processes and capacities,
- The sustainability of the projects with special consideration given to decentralisation, regional development and gender aspects.

Evaluation methodology:

The following five countries were selected as case studies for the evaluation: Cape Verde, Uganda, Guatemala and Bosnia & Herzegovina and Albania. The evaluation was conducted in three distinct phases. Phase I involved a comprehensive desk study, an identification mission in Cape Verde, and the compilation of an Interim Report.

During Phase II and based of the findings of the Interim Report case study reviews were conducted in the remaining four countries. In Phase III the document was prepared and circulated. An interdisciplinary core team of international consultants, who were complemented by local or regional sector experts and supported by local assistants and translators wherever necessary, conducted the evaluation.

Major findings:

In general it can be said that most projects and programmes of the Austrian Development Cooperation, and to a lesser extent also those of Austria's Cooperation with Eastern Countries, are embedded into the WSSP, in particular with respect to management and

technologies, building of decentralized capacities and institutions at all levels, and cross-cutting themes of poverty alleviation, gender issues, and good governance.

It was found that a persistent gap in cooperation in programmatic and conceptual work exists between Austria's Development Cooperation and its Cooperation with Eastern Countries, which is illustrated by the absence of sector-specific programme strategies for interventions in Eastern Countries.

More specifically, the evaluation revealed the following:

- Socio-cultural and socio-economic aspects: Local needs and decision-making and communication cultures are usually taken into consideration in a significant way, and attention is paid to social and gender-specific questions. However, across projects significant variations were noted in approach and effectiveness in the treatment of socio-cultural challenges.
- Relevance and impact: In principle, programmes fit very well into the national environment, and are characterized by their innovative approaches. Partner organisations consider the institutions of the ADC as innovative and reliable. In most countries, however, familiarisation with the Austrian WSSD is limited or virtually non-existent, which is clearly an issue to be addressed. It is furthermore recommended to pursue a more programmatic approach, and to analyse and document in a more systematic way lessons learned and to integrate them into the national policy dialogue. It is also recommended that the programmes put more emphasis on active sector coordination among donors and responsible institutions, and to focus on fields with clear comparative advantage.
- Efficiency and effectiveness: Both in terms of quality and quantity water supply has improved significantly in all projects. The setting-up of reliable operation and maintenance systems, however, remains a challenge in some of the countries, and cost-recovery in all.
- Water resources management: According to the current state of knowledge and experience, projects that do not follow the river basin management approach will increasingly face conflicts in relation to access to safe resources. Positive experiences gained with the water resources management approach, such as for instance in Cap Verde, should be gradually fitted into the approaches of the other country programmes, and always be combined with other development measures that benefit the catchments.
- Technology and quality of work conducted: It was found that, in general, appropriate technologies are applied, but that the quality of work carried out is not always in line with the required standards. It is therefore recommended to introduce measures to improve the quality of work, including that of planning and monitoring, the selection of technology that takes into account the needs for operation and maintenance, the improvement of planning capacities and quality awareness of all concerned, and the utilisation of synergies within and between ADC projects and the projects of other donors.
- Capacity building and institutional development: The evaluation revealed that although capacity building and training measures for partner organisations are an integral part of most projects, both a strategy and a conceptual framework to regulate the implementation of these measures are lacking, and the management capacities of partner organisations are still very poor, and water supply plants are overstaffed. Other issues that need to be addressed in this context are the need for refresher trainings and continuous support measures to ensure good operation and maintenance of the installations concerned and sustainability of the programme, the simplification of

organisational structures and the decentralisation of responsibilities, and the involvement of the private sector.

- Operation and maintenance/sustainability: The success regarding operation and maintenance varies greatly between the different country programmes. In all of the projects, the biggest challenges are the establishment of sustainable institutional structures and the introduction and enforcement of cost recovering tariffs, together with the required regulatory framework.
- The sector policy and its application: The ADC water sector policy reflects the state of the art in a comprehensive way. There is, however, a need to consider lessons learned from within projects in more detail, to give more attention to cross cutting issues such as sustainable livelihoods, poverty alleviation and gender, to include a section on humanitarian aid, peace building and conflict prevention, and to regularly up-date and to better disseminate the policy. The sector policy also demonstrates ADC's active involvement in policy dialogue and donor coordination, which call for increased participation and involvement at the country level.
- Institutional development, monitoring and evaluation: There is need for the introduction of a structured and systematic M & E system for the projects and programmes of the ADC, including those in Eastern countries. Efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation should furthermore be increased through the introduction of clear organisational structures and a comprehensive Information Management System.