



Implementation of the Adaptable Program Lending project: What can we learn?

Overview

The World Bank provided funds amounting to US\$ 150 million for the Post Primary Education and Training Adaptable Program Lending (APL1) project. The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Sports (MoESTS) implemented the project from 7th January 2009 to 31st July 2014.

The project objectives were; (i) To increase and improve equitable access to post primary education, (ii) Improve quality and relevance of post primary education and training, (iii) and improve effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of post primary education and training.

The main project target was communities and all lower secondary school aged children in schools offering Universal Secondary Education program. This was under the Universal Post Primary Education and Training in both public and private schools nationwide. The initial number of beneficiary schools was 759. Implementation was to be done in three phases, however, due to delays in completion of phase I and phase II schools, and the very slow progress of civil works completion, phase III was not covered. The revised number of beneficiary schools therefore dropped to 659.

The purpose of this briefing paper is to highlight the pending issues of the APL 1 project which need to be addressed.

Key issues

- A total of 60 schools were left incomplete by the end of the project. Out of these, 28 contracts were terminated while 17 contracts never started. The incomplete civil works were worth Ug shs 20,397,530,206.
- A number of accountability issues remained unresolved months after the project end. There was an outstanding balance of Ug shs 5,940,162,013 which was not accounted for.
- A total of 32 head teachers were interdicted for diversion, mismanagement and failure to account for funds.

Introduction

This was the first International Development Agency (IDA)-supported education project in Uganda that was designed to mainstream project implementation within MoESTS. The project placed strong emphasis on school-based procurement, especially of civil works. The project therefore piloted a package of interventions (school-based procurement of civil works, science kits, consumables and furniture) at the school level in an effort to empower school management teams.

In addition it was to improve the quality of education service delivery, as well as foster ownership of the project.

Financial Performance

At the time of project close, a request to cancel US\$7 million of the credit was submitted to the World Bank. Upon submission of the final Interim Financial Report for the project in November 2014, project disbursement stood at US\$142,306,129.13 (94.04%) of the credit; leaving an undisbursed amount of US\$8,433,889.77 which was cancelled from the credit and will be used for future IDA operations in Uganda.

Physical Achievements

Table 1, summarizes project implementation by closure of the project in July 2014 in terms of achievement of set targets for the incomplete structures that were to be completed, new classrooms, administration blocks, science blocks, teachers' houses, libraries, latrine blocks, supply of water tanks and assorted furniture.

Table 1: Completion status of the APL1 project

Status of completion by project end	Completion															
	No. of schools for expansion		Incomplete structures earmarked for completion		New classrooms		Administration blocks		Science blocks		Teachers' houses		Library		5-stance latrine	
Actual completion by July 30, 2014	Target	status	Target	status	Target	status	Target	status	Target	status	Target	status	Target	status	Target	status
		659	573	610	497	3,559	3,198	41	35	344	290	68	57	128	122	1,429
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supply of water tanks to USE schools 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 768 rain water tanks (each 10,000 litre capacity) supplied to 658 schools 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 633 (82%) tanks were supplied and 542 installed 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 135 tanks pending completion of roofs construction at the remaining 116 schools. 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supply of assorted furniture for phase 1 schools 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 26,716 units of furniture supplied to 122 schools 								<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Furniture was supplied by February 2015 			

Source: *Implementation Completion and Results Report (WB)*

By project close, 60 schools were left incomplete, of which 28 contracts were terminated and 17 contracts did not start.

Benefits

The project realized a number of benefits which included:

- A total of 3,703 classrooms were completed. This enabled at least 222,180 students to access lower secondary education. The USE students benefitted from improved learning environments through provision of instruction items including textbooks and science materials and infrastructure.
- Other target groups included members of the School Boards of Governors, 922 head teachers received training for knowledge and skills in school management and pedagogical leadership. In addition, 5,313 members of school management committees for procurement and contracts management from 759 schools received training in knowledge and skills in financial management. Bursars, classroom teachers,

library and laboratory assistants as well as 20 staff members of the MoESTS attended training in various international programs.

- 633 (82%) of allocated rain water tanks installed in 542 of the 659 beneficiary schools improved sanitation and general hygiene thereby enhancing an enabling environment for education.

LESSONS LEARNT

At project design

- There is need for proper review of school infrastructure design documentation of lower cost designs.
- All project background activities should be ready before the project effective date. For future projects, all background activities such as sensitization of stakeholders on World Bank procedures; preparation of training materials, procurement documents on school based procurements etc., should be ready before the project becomes effective.
- The estimation of infrastructure costs should be realistic. The issue of unit costs of the different pedagogical structures in the different areas should be adequately addressed by future projects.

At implementation

- The procurement component should be handled in time. Some key procurement activities were behind schedule which delayed classroom construction and delivery of instructional materials. For instance, the MoESTS did not distribute bidding documents until October 2010 which delayed the procurement process.

- Project readiness should be ensured. There was lack of familiarity with World Bank procedures. The rapid domestic inflation during the period of contract execution necessitated changes in bidding documents. In addition, the constrained capacity of the MoESTS procurement unit caused delays.
- Capacity of local firms should be considered during contracting. The volume of civil works exceeded the supply by the local contractors. Many contractors with multiple sites failed to perform and were terminated. In future projects, the MoESTS should limit the simultaneous contract awards for any bidder.
- In future projects, due diligence should be conducted on all firms to ensure that those with low capacity are not contracted. Financially viable firms should be selected. Some of the firms were hurriedly formed, had no experience and no due diligence was conducted.
- Retention funds should be disbursed to schools that have completed works. The release of the contract sum in two tranches including the retention funds led to schools holding idle funds on their accounts, denying other schools in need of funding and delaying accountabilities.
- Strict supervision is a must for delivery of outputs. Many schools held advances on their accounts for over 18 months due to stalled works or delayed replacement of terminated contractors. The MoESTS started recalling such funds in 2013 and re-disbursing them to schools that needed funding. A total of 32 head teachers were interdicted for diversion, mismanagement and failure to account for funds.

- Effective school management is critical in completing works. Some school administrators were vigilant and civil works were completed in time and were of good quality. Some of these were transferred by the MoESTS and helped to fasttrack completion of stalled sites. Future projects of the same magnitude should capitalise on competencies of such head teachers for the success of projects.
- Efficient supervising firms or a well staffed and funded Construction Management Unit at MoESTS should be in place. The supervising firms contracted to supervise the volume of civil works on behalf of the MoESTS did not do their work as expected. Therefore, the MoESTS could not take timely corrective measures.
- The process of contract should not be given to schools with weak management structures. A total of Ug shs 5,940,162,013 remained unaccounted for by some head teachers. In order to minimize loss of funds on such projects, the MoESTS should selectively use the school based procurement method only with schools that have in-built capacities while for smaller rural schools, competent firms are contracted at the centre like in the case of the ADB IV project.

Conclusion

The completed structures under APL 1 contributed to the project objectives of increasing and improving equitable access to post primary education. The achieved targets under the supply of text books and science kits contributed to the improvement of quality, effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of

post primary education and training. In future, the many lessons learnt should be considered at both the design and implementation of similar projects.

References

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