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## Evaluation *BRIEF*

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# SYNTHESIS REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF 2003-2005 PROJECT COMPLETION REPORTS

## General

Project Completion Reports (PCRs) represent the end of project implementation and the bedrock for post evaluation activities. They generate lessons learnt for ploughing back into operations for improvement of on-going projects and the design of future ones. The review exercise and subsequent synthesis was driven by the necessity to improve the quality of Project Completion Reports and to strengthen the Self-Evaluation System of the Bank in which project completion reporting represents a very important part. The report presents the results of the review of 42 PCRs, which were distributed to the Boards over the period 2003-2005.

## Main Findings

This review has found that PCRs are being prepared by operation departments much later than the specified period of 6 months after completion - going into 5 years on average after they are due. In such cases, the benefit of lessons learnt is weakened because delay renders findings and conclusions outdated and even irrelevant. This is compounded by the fact that Borrowers do not always prepare their project completion reports in a timely manner, this delays the availability of the Bank's PCRs as well as the availability of lessons learnt from the completed projects.

A questionable issue was the extent to which the PCRs available are representative of the total completed portfolio. Only 45% percent or 19 PCRs under review were prepared in accordance with the prescribed format and to a fairly satisfactory standard. The remaining 23 (or 55%) of PCRs were unsatisfactory due to omissions, limited analyses and a lack of verifiable indicators and assessment of sustainable effects.

It was found that the utility of PCRs have also been constrained by the content of the issues addressed in them. The contents have mostly been a catalogue of implementation issues, with little attention paid to development outcomes -- partly because they are not emphasized in the PCR preparation guidelines. Furthermore, the context for outcome assessment is rendered unfavourable by weaknesses in quality at entry, such as unclear project objectives, lack of verifiable indicators, and missing data sets caused by irregular monitoring. Consequently, PCRs tend to be "extended" supervision reports that focus largely on issues relating to physical implementation, disbursements, and compliance with loan conditions, but giving scant regard to development outcomes.

The PCRs were generally deficient in several areas: (i) There were difficulties in completing the project performance and outcome rating tables, which were rarely commented upon in the body of the report. This is compounded by the fact that few PCRs attempted to justify the ratings as evidenced by the absence of any narrative in the remarks column; (ii) The project matrixes are not being constructed with much care, both at appraisal and completion. Scant attention seems to be paid to the retrospective matrixes – they are therefore incomplete and lack essential material especially when projects undergo extensive modifications. This scenario was observed predominantly in projects appraised before 1995; (iii) The Borrowers are not always sensitized / assisted early enough to prepare their own project completion reports. When they are done, the quality and usefulness of the Borrower's completion report was rarely assessed in the Bank's PCR. Comments of the Borrowers on the Bank's PCRs are rarely attached to the PCRs as required.

Evaluation  
Efficiency  
Relevance  
Impact



Moreover, the PCRs do not always reveal whether or not the PCRs were sent for Borrowers' comments; (iv) The formulation of precise "lessons learnt" eluded most PCRs. Some PCRs present "lessons learnt" in a narrative sense while others give lessons as recommendations; (v) Some obligatory annexes are not always attached to the PCRs.

Concerning the projects evaluation performance, the reports generally noted that the projects were implemented with considerable delays resulting largely from a number of implementation problems, including among others, late fulfilment of loan conditions, procurement delays, and inexperience of project implementation units. The sustainability of most projects is reportedly affected by the lack of budgetary resources for maintenance of facilities and sometimes inability of entities to carry out necessary reforms and to operate on a cost recovery basis. These problems impacted heavily on the implementation performance and on the overall project results. Using the ratings distribution adopted for this report, the quality at exit of the projects whose PCRs were reviewed was also unsatisfactory. Project performance indicators as recorded in the PCRs show that only 40 percent of the projects had overall satisfactory performance. Implementation performance was unsatisfactory and so was Bank performance. However, development outcome was fairly satisfactory for most of the projects.

## Main Recommendations

Considering that PCRs form the bedrock for subsequent evaluation activities, the inadequacies in the PCRs that were reviewed coupled with the inadequate number of PCRs is not only a major gap in the Bank's self-evaluation system but is also a handicap for independent evaluation. As such, the conclusions from the report reflect a series of shortcomings with prescribed recommendations for their resolution.

**Format of PCRs:** One of the basic problems is that the present PCR format needs to be updated in order to enhance the quality of PCRs and to improve the PCR findings, lessons and recommendations by emphasizing development effectiveness issues at project completion. The Borrowers should be assisted and urged to prepare their own project completion reports or substantial information in this respect were they can't due to capacity constraints. A "PCR Lite" format that would allow for a less intensive process of PCR preparation should be considered for development as an alternative and particularly for the sectors that are doing well or for the projects that were well supervised during project implementation.

**Review Process:** The review process also needs to be enforced with the same rigour as an appraisal report. A formal mechanism needs to be put in place for disseminating lessons learnt from PCRs and the feedback process of lessons learnt into actual and future operations should also be strengthened..

**Timing and Coverage Rate:** Efforts need to be deployed to prepare PCRs as soon as projects are completed. In addition, the backlog of pending PCRs needs to be cleared on a priority basis. This will require the active involvement of all concerned but particularly the Bank's senior management. The efforts need to be focused on the key sectors related to poverty reduction especially in ADF eligible countries.

**For further information,** please visit the Web Site <http://www.afdb.org/opev> or contact:

**Mr. Colin KIRK**, Director, Operation Evaluation Department (OPEV) – [c.kirk@afdb.org](mailto:c.kirk@afdb.org) – Tel. (216) 7110 2041

**Mr. A. J. COKER**, Principal Evaluation Officer – [a.coker@afdb.org](mailto:a.coker@afdb.org) – Tel. (216) 7110 3425

**OPEV Help Desk:** [opevhelpdesk@afdb.org](mailto:opevhelpdesk@afdb.org) - Document Reference: ADB/BD/WP/2007/38