



Analysis of the success factors of projects in rural areas in Mali

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Summary: This article explores the key success factors for projects in rural areas in Mali. Elements identified include:

Involvement of local communities: The active participation of the population in the design and implementation of projects guarantees their ownership and sustainability. Projects must respond to priorities identified through in-depth field assessments. Train and support communities to make them autonomous in the management of initiatives Collaborate with NGOs, public and private institutions to pool resources and expertise. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation: Implement control mechanisms to measure results and adjust actions. Integrate resilient strategies to cope with climate hazards. Adopt innovative financing models while avoiding over-dependence on external donors. In conclusion, a participatory approach adapted to local realities is essential to ensure sustainable impacts and improve the living conditions of rural populations.

Keywords: Community Participation, Sustainable Development, Monitoring and Evaluation, Climate Resilience, Innovative Financing.

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Introduction

Mali, a Sahelian country in West Africa, faces major challenges in its rural areas, where a large part of the population depends on agriculture and livestock for their livelihoods. Development projects in these areas play a key role in improving living conditions and promoting sustainable development. However, the success of these projects is not always guaranteed. This article examines the main success factors of rural projects in Mali.

For several decades, Mali, like all developing countries, has been the subject of massive investments by governments, NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations), organizations, agencies and institutions and donors. These investments have made it possible to carry out projects focused on the economic and social development of the beneficiaries.

A project, by definition, is the set of actions to be undertaken in order to meet a defined need within a set deadline. Thus, being a temporary action with a beginning and an end, mobilizing identified resources (human and material) during its implementation, a project also has a cost and is the subject of a budgeting of actions and a balance sheet independent of that of the company.

For the smooth running of the project, it is necessary to clearly define the roles of each entity and to identify a representative within the project management and project management.

Project management requires a clear methodology to ensure that the work carried out by the project manager meets the client's

expectations, and that it is delivered on time and on budget, regardless of how it is "manufactured". To achieve this, project management aims to ensure that all players and tasks are coordinated with a view to efficiency and profitability.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the world's states were looking for a new global dynamism, one that would avoid new serious crises in the future, and where there would be greater harmony, dialogue and international cooperation. To this end, a number of actions were included in their action plans, including reconstruction, international cooperation and bringing peoples closer together.

Numerous organizations and institutions (FAO, UNDP, WFP, UNFPA, UNESCO, UNHCR, the World Bank, etc.), each with a specific objective, came into being under the aegis, for the most part, of the United Nations Organization (UNO), created in the aftermath of the war.

The World Bank and IMF, set up during the Second World War (1944) by the Breton Wood Accords in New Hampshire (USA), initially focused their efforts on the reconstruction of post-war Europe.

Today, they place all their activities within the global framework of the fight against poverty, financing programs and projects to alleviate the consequences of natural disasters, deal with humanitarian emergencies, manage conflicts in developing countries and support economies in transition (YODA, 2004).

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To this should be added the considerable actions of NGOs (ENDA) and certain donor government bodies (EU, CIDA, GTZ, ENDA, USAID, JICA, etc.) at national and international level. The overall aim of these actions, which take the form of humanitarian interventions financed by rich countries in favor of poor countries, is to combat famine and epidemics, and to help the most vulnerable groups (women and children) during times of serious crisis, such as wars and natural disasters (YODA, 2004).

Despite decades of investment and development aid to developing countries, the results have proved unconvincing. In fact, development actions carried out in the form of identified projects are often confronted with major difficulties throughout their cycle. One of these difficulties is the ineffectiveness of the methodologies and approaches used. In fact, in most cases, these are deficient in terms of project planning, monitoring and evaluation.

Literature review

Since then, development projects have been based on a participatory approach. Participation is seen as: “an active process whereby the person or group in question takes the initiative and asserts its autonomy to do so” (Oakley and Marsden, 1986, p. 24). Since then, policies, particularly in Africa, have introduced stakeholders into economic and social development projects. In practice, however, there are two types of participation. More precisely, two paradigms underpin the discourse and practice of participatory development (Assogba, 1989):

The deterministic paradigm influenced by positivism (Rostow, 1963). Development experts inspired by this paradigm remove the social actors involved from the development process. Development is reduced to a simple question of the “mechanical” transfer of factors defined as the determinants of the social transformations necessary for the “evolution” of an underdeveloped society: technology and financial capital” (Assogba, 1989, p.150). According to Berger (1978), the result is that “the perceptions, values and symbolic universe of project beneficiaries are scarcely taken into consideration in the process” (Berger, 1978, p. 221).

The Weberian interactionist paradigm (Boudon, 1984; Mendras and Forsé, 1983). According to this paradigm, development projects are seen as long processes with several phases in which the participation of all stakeholders, especially the beneficiary populations, must be introduced. Their main role is to participate in all stages of the project, sharing responsibilities, decision-making power and the resulting benefits (Assogba, 1989).

The interactionist paradigm assumes that development agents take into account the beliefs, motivations, economic rationality and strategies of beneficiary populations in the process of carrying out a project (Assogba, 1989). It is therefore essential to distinguish between the two forms of participation, and not stop at simply using the term without analyzing the actual practices of the actors involved.

Assogba (1989) stresses that the challenge for associations working in this field is to grasp the culture of the environment in which they operate, to understand and take account of the strategies, motivations and aspirations of the populations concerned, and to understand the logic of the players and the social context, at every stage of a project.

This paradigm was taken into consideration in the field of international aid and development towards the end of the 1970s, but the deterministic paradigm remains dominant in development practice. While fon notes a major failure of these persistent practices, research in this field is attempting to highlight the fact that the development of a community cannot take place outside the social, cultural and economic logic of its members.

It was at this point that development policy literature and debates “increasingly emphasized the importance of indigenous perceptions and values, and the desirability of seeking alternatives to the mechanical transplantation of Western institutional models” (Berger, 1978, p. 200).

Methodology

To analyze the success factors of projects in rural areas in Mali, a mixed methodological approach was adopted, combining qualitative and quantitative methods:

Literature review: An in-depth analysis of existing literature, including NGO reports, government studies and academic publications, was used to identify trends and best practices in rural development.

Field surveys: Surveys were carried out with local communities to gather data on their needs, perceptions and experiences regarding development projects.

Semi-structured interviews: Interviews were conducted with key players, including NGO leaders, government representatives and donors, to better understand the challenges and opportunities associated with these projects.

Case studies: Successful projects were analyzed to identify the specific factors that contributed to their success.

Comparative analysis: A comparison of successful and unsuccessful projects was carried out to identify lessons and recommendations.

This methodology ensures a holistic, data-driven approach to examining the complex dynamics of projects in rural Mali.

1. Involvement of local communities

The involvement of local communities is a decisive factor in the success of projects. When beneficiaries are consulted and involved in the design, implementation and monitoring of projects, they feel empowered and are more inclined to ensure the sustainability of achievements. Community mobilization also makes it possible to identify real needs and design solutions adapted to the local context.

2. Suitability to local needs

A project that responds directly to the priorities of local populations has a better chance of success. Preliminary assessments, based on socio-economic and environmental studies, are essential for understanding the realities on the ground and adjusting interventions accordingly. For example, in an area where access to drinking water is a major problem, a project focused on improving water infrastructures will be more relevant.

3. Strengthening local capacities

Transferring skills to local communities is an important lever for ensuring the sustainability of projects. This involves training, workshops and technical support to equip local people with the

knowledge they need to manage and maintain the infrastructures or initiatives put in place. For example, in an agricultural project, training farmers in good farming practices or in the use of modern equipment can significantly boost their productivity.

4. Strategic partnerships

The most successful projects are often based on partnerships between different players: non-governmental organizations (NGOs), public institutions, donors and the private sector. These partnerships help to pool resources, avoid duplication and benefit from diversified expertise. Strategic alliances are particularly useful for raising funds and guaranteeing high-quality technical support.

5. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation

An effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism is essential to measure progress and correct any deviations. Performance indicators, both quantity and quality, must be defined from the outset. Regular feedback from beneficiaries also enables actions to be adjusted in line with results observed in the field.

6. Facteurs environnementaux et climatiques

Projects in rural areas of Mali must take account of environmental and climatic conditions. Climatic hazards, such as recurrent droughts, can compromise the success of agricultural or water projects. Integrating resilient approaches, such as climate-smart agriculture or sustainable natural resource management, is essential to mitigate these risks.

7. Financement adapté et durable

Adequate, well-managed financing is a sine qua non for project implementation. Innovative financing mechanisms, such as revolving funds or micro-credits, can be explored to increase access to financial resources for rural populations. In addition, it is crucial to avoid over-dependence on external donors by encouraging local contributions.

Results

The results of this analysis highlight several elements crucial to ensuring the success of projects in rural areas in Mali:

Table 1: Percentage of successful, unsuccessful and troubled projects (2012, 2015)

Année	Succès	En difficultés	Echec
1994	16%	53%	31%
1996	27%	33%	40%
1998	26%	46%	28%
2000	28%	49%	23%
2002	34%	51%	15%
2004	29%	53%	18%
2006	35%	46%	19%
2009	32%	44%	24%
2010	37%	42%	21%
2012	39%	43%	18%
2014	28	55	17

Source: Standish group, 2013, 2015

1. Although Table 1 shows a positive trend in success between 1994 and 2012, it also highlights the high number of people in difficulty, who can easily fall into the trap of failure or abandonment. The latter situation will consequently increase the rate of underperformance, if we define success as meeting the triple constraint of quality - cost - deadline.
2. Increased community involvement: Projects that actively involved communities right from the design phase had a higher success rate. These initiatives fostered a strong sense of belonging and ownership among beneficiaries.
3. Adaptation to local specificities: Projects that take account of the economic, social and cultural realities of rural areas have been better accepted and have achieved more lasting results.
4. Capacity-building : The training provided has enabled local communities to better manage resources and infrastructure, reducing their dependence on external players.
5. Impact of partnerships: Intersectoral collaboration has made it possible to mobilize substantial financial and technical resources, increasing the effectiveness of projects.
6. Resilience to climate challenges: Initiatives integrating sustainable agriculture and natural resource management solutions have demonstrated greater resilience to climate hazards.
7. Effective monitoring systems: Projects with rigorous monitoring-evaluation mechanisms enabled real-time adjustments to be made, thus maximizing their impact.

These results confirm that the success of projects in rural areas depends on a combination of well-orchestrated technical, human and institutional factors.

Conclusion

The success of projects in rural areas of Mali depends on a participatory approach, a thorough understanding of local needs and planning that is adapted to the realities on the ground. By integrating these factors, development initiatives can have a lasting impact and significantly improve the quality of life of rural populations.

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