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Support Program for Improving the Performance of Municipalities by the World Bank: What impacts on the target municipalities in Morocco

Impacts of the program to support Moroccan Municipalities performance

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summary:

The Support Program for Improving the Performance of municipalities in Morocco is a project carried out in partnership between the General Directorate of Territorial Communities (DGCT) under the Ministry of the Interior, the World Bank, and the French Development Agency (AFD). Scheduled for a period of 5 years (2019 - 2023), it targets 103 municipalities representing over 85% of the urban population of the country and nearly 55% of its total population. An assessment of the Environmental and Social Systems (ESES) of the program was conducted by the World Bank with the support and collaboration of the DGCT as part of the preparation for the World Bank's support operation to this program.

The program aims to strengthen good governance in municipalities by improving the provision of quality local public services to the inhabitants of Moroccan cities. The Program aims to achieve this objective by strengthening the management performance of participating municipalities, supporting the development of inter-municipal cooperation in selected urban areas, and supporting the strengthening of the organization and capacities of municipalities.

The objective of this article is to shed light on the impact of the program supporting the performance of municipalities on the local governance of target municipalities by conducting a brief analysis of the evaluation process to measure to what extent the program has raised the level of performance of municipalities and what are the main lessons learned from this experience.

Keywords: Support Program for Improving the Performance of municipalities; General Directorate of Territorial Communities "DGCT"; Public services; local governance; municipal performance.

Type of article: Theoretical article.

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Introduction

Municipalities play a leading role in local development and in the relationship between citizens and their administration. It is essential to strengthen municipalities, both financially and institutionally, to enable them to exercise their competencies in terms of service provision and thus enhance citizens' trust in public administration," says Augustin Maria, Senior Urban Development Specialist at the World Bank.

Indeed, Morocco, in its new social dynamic, places territorial communities at the heart of its local development strategy. This is done through the establishment of a comprehensive legal framework: the new Constitution of 2011 and organic laws related to territorial communities, which give particular importance to equity, parity, social inclusion, and participation of populations in decision-making. Numerous actions have been initiated to strengthen participation mechanisms, grievance and petition management, gender integration, notably through the development and dissemination of guides, procedures, and capacity-building programs for elected officials and municipal staff.

It is in this perspective that the Support Program for Improving the Performance of Municipalities (PAPC) was conceived and developed in partnership with the World Bank and the French Development Agency to align with the process of advanced regionalization and decentralization, which is a priority in the Kingdom's economic and social development program. The program is evaluated based on performance indicators that municipalities must achieve to benefit from incentives or additional financing. The target municipalities of the Program are those with a population of more than 50,000 inhabitants and/or the capital municipalities of prefectures and provinces, where infrastructure financing needs and issues related to urban planning and local governance are particularly significant.

The Program will support the following three sub-programs: - Sub-program 1: Strengthening the financial environment of municipalities and implementing a pilot performance-based grant transfer system for a group of selected municipalities. - Sub-program 2: Establishment and operationalization of selected Inter-municipal Cooperation Bodies (ICB). - Sub-program 3: Strengthening the organization and human capacities of municipalities.

The Program's management is ensured by a governance structure comprising: A coordination committee composed of governors from different DGCT Directorates as well as representatives from other institutions involved in the Program, chaired by the Wali of the DGCT. A Program Management Unit comprising: a coordinator designated by the DGCT, who will be supported by a sub-program manager and a monitoring/evaluation manager. The targeted municipalities will be responsible, with

the support of the Provincial Local Communities Divisions (DCL), for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Program within their jurisdictions. The IGAT, through its institutional mandate, will be the instance responsible for verifying results, conducting control/audit of the Program's achievements.

In this article, we will first briefly shed light on the main axes of the program, particularly the public service considered as the ultimate objective towards which all municipal performances should converge, and finally, conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of this program, which is nearing its completion, on the performance of target municipalities..

1. General Overview of the Support Program for Municipal Performance

The Support Program for Municipal Performance Improvement (PAPC), which benefits from the contribution and technical support of the World Bank as well as the French Development Agency (AFD) through a Results Program (PPR), covering the period 2019-2023, was materialized by a loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD Loan Number P149995), in the amount of 300 million US dollars (271 million euros) and a loan from AFD of 114 million US dollars (100 million euros), totaling a loan of approximately 414 million US dollars (375,084,000 euros).

The development objective of the program (DOP) is to improve the institutional performance of target municipalities, as well as the quality of public services provided by these same municipalities to citizens.

The operationalization of this PPR granted by the World Bank (WB) requires the implementation of a set of missions under the supervision of the General Directorate of Territorial Communities (DGCT), which has been designated as the Program Management Unit (PMU).

Disbursements of the loan by donors will occur upon request from the Borrower when Disbursement-Linked Indicators (DLIs) are achieved. The amount to be disbursed based on the results obtained and verified will be determined in accordance with the loan agreement provisions.

The program for improving municipal performance revolves around three sub-programs:

- SP1 : Development and implementation of a performance-based allocation system for the 97 target municipalities (Annex 1);
- SP2 : Strengthening the institutional framework for inter-municipal cooperation;
- SP3 : Improvement of organization and human resource capacities in target municipalities;

1.1 Sub-program 1 (SP1): Development and implementation of a performance-based allocation system for target municipalities

1.1.1 Objective of the sub-program:

The allocation system for municipalities is based on an objective and transparent allocation formula. The allocation would be divided into a flat-rate allocation (30 percent) and a population-based allocation (70 percent). The theoretical amount to which each municipality will be eligible will be communicated to them annually.

The disbursements are intended to strengthen the investment capacities of municipalities that have demonstrated their ability to improve the performance of their management. Disbursement to municipalities will be based on the evaluation of their performance rather than the physical progress of projects.

Furthermore, performance-based allocations are unrestricted in use. However, their allocation to beneficiary municipalities is conditioned upon the development of an employment program, while respecting compatible requirements of the CAS-TVA. The development of these employment programs must take into account the freedom for municipalities to choose investment projects to finance, while adhering to government guidelines on territorial development and expenditure optimization.

1.1.2 Components of the performance evaluation system:

The municipality performance evaluation system is based on two components:

- *The Mandatory Minimum Conditions (MMC)* : These are the basic and non-negotiable conditions that must be fully satisfied as a whole before qualifying for the grant.
- *Performance Indicators (PI)* : These are incentives for greater compliance with legal provisions and for the improvement of municipality management systems' performance.

As a whole, the indicators reflect the spirit of decentralization policy, with, on one hand, the accountability of municipalities for the management of their resources and expenses, and on the other hand, the improvement of citizen participation, aiming to enhance the services provided to citizens.

The following five mandatory minimum conditions have been defined:

MMC-1: Publication of financial statements and accounts.

MMC-2: Annual evaluation of the execution of the Commune Action Plan (CAP).

MMC-3: The triennial programming is up to date and has been included in the budget.

MMC-4: Publication of the planned procurement program.

MMC-5: The Equity, Equality of Opportunity, and Gender Approach Committee (IEECAG) is operational at the commune level and holds regular meetings.

For the performance component, six (6) key themes have been identified:

- **Theme 1** : Governance and Transparency;
- **Theme 2** : Expense Management;
- **Theme 3** : Resource Management;
- **Theme 4** : Human Resources;
- **Theme 5** : Environmental and Social Management;
- **Theme 6** : Quality of Service to Citizens.

These six themes are articulated around 22 sub-themes and 24 performance indicators. For each theme or sub-theme, and for each indicator, a maximum number of performance score points has been defined. The tables below illustrate the distribution of performance scores by themes, sub-themes, and performance indicators.

Table 1: Themes and sub-themes of municipal performance evaluation

Themes and Sub-themes		Points to be earned	
1. Governance and Transparency			16
1	Publication of key documents and delegated management contracts	8	
2	Mechanism for managing petitions	4	
3	Internal audit	4	
2. Expense Management			15

4	Expenses related to conventions	3	
5	Subsidies to associations	4	
6	Investment expenses	4	
7	Public procurement	4	
3. Resource Management			18
8	Own resources managed by the municipality	8	
9	Asset Management	4	
10	Purging of inactive CAS	3	
11	Management of revenue orders	3	
4. Human Resources			10
12	Organizational chart	5	
13	Annual Capacity Building Plan	5	
5. Environmental and Social Management			16
14	Screening and monitoring of PGES	5	
15	Gender Approach	2	
16	Regularization of land acquisitions	4	
17	Energy Efficiency	5	
6. Quality of Service to Citizens			25
18	Household waste collection	6	
19	Administrative policing	3	
20	Digitalization of services	5	
21	Citizens' satisfaction	4	
22	Response to grievances	4	
23	Municipality website	3	
Total points to be earned			100

1.1.3 Steps in the performance evaluation process:

The annual calendar begins on the 1st of February of year n (or at a later date agreed upon with the funders) and ends with a transfer that is made before the 31st of March of year n+1 (or at a later date agreed upon with the funders).

The process of evaluating the performance of municipalities includes the following (9) steps:

- 1) Preparation of the evaluation
- 2) Communication to municipalities to initiate the evaluation exercise
- 3) Completion by municipalities of self-assessment grids on the platform : www.performancecommunes.ma

- 4) Evaluation based on municipalities' self-declarations via the platform :
www.performancecommunes.ma
- 5) Field verification based on a sample
- 6) Communication of provisional results via the platform
www.performancecommunes.ma
- 7) Contestation period (contradictory procedure) conducted on the platform
www.performancecommunes.ma
- 8) Communication of final results via the platform www.performancecommunes.ma
- 9) Submission of the final evaluation report and validation

These steps mainly take place during the period from January to December of each year. This is to allow municipalities to become aware of their score, and consequently, the amount of the allocation, before the vote on the budget for the following year.

1.2 Sub-program 2 (SP 2): Strengthening the institutional framework of inter-municipal cooperation

This Sub-program aims to strengthen inter-municipal cooperation to optimize and coordinate resource management and investments, and improve service delivery in:

- a. Developing a national territorial cooperation scheme,
- b. Establishing a sustainable operational framework for Intermunicipal Cooperation Entities (ICEs) (including the adoption/enforcement of a new financial model and the implementation of the newly adopted organizational chart),
- c. Implementing the provision of technical assistance upon request to help interested municipalities collaborate under an ICE model and support the creation of ICEs.

1.3 Sub-program 3 (SP3): Improvement of the organization and human resources capacities of Targeted Municipalities

The implementation of the Municipal Capacity Building (MCB) program falls within the framework of SP 3 of the PAPC. It includes several steps aimed at: (i) identifying the needs of targeted municipalities in MCB and enabling the enhancement of the management performance of these municipalities, (ii) supporting the development of inter-municipal cooperation, and (iii) supporting the strengthening of the organization and capacities of municipalities.

The specific procedures manual for this sub-program is attached to this MOP in Annex No. 10.

A medium and long-term strategy for the capacity building component was developed and validated by the funders on December 30, 2020.

1.3.1 Duration and Objectives:

SP 3 extends for the duration of the PPR and has two objectives aimed at supporting program activities towards municipalities:

- Supporting municipalities in achieving Minimum Mandatory Conditions (MMC) and performance indicators (PI);
- Enhancing the professional and cognitive capacities of targeted municipalities.

These objectives are included and translated into Annual Capacity Building Plans (ACBP) that each municipality must prepare and implement with the support of the DDCTD.

1.3.2 Components of SP 3:

SP 3 of the Municipal Performance Support Program comprises three components:

- (i) Training;
- (ii) Technical assistance (TA);
- (iii) Information systems.

2. Main social and environmental effects of the Program

2.1 Social and Environmental Benefits of the Program:

2.1.1 Social benefits:

The Program will undoubtedly have positive social impacts, notably by:

- Improving citizens' equal access (especially women, youth, and the most vulnerable individuals) to quality basic services meeting citizens' expectations; facilitating and digitizing administrative procedures and access to administrative documents (civil status, legalization, permits, etc.);
- Strengthening citizen participation through the effective operationalization of mechanisms for access to information, consultation, and citizen participation, as well as mechanisms for managing grievances and petitions;
- Systematizing the integration of the gender dimension into territorial programs and policies, through the operationalization of the Equity, Equal Opportunities, and Gender Approach Instance, and the capacity building of municipalities;
- Enhancing the performance and governance of municipalities, which aim not only to establish an efficient local administration attentive to citizens (including women,

youth, and the most vulnerable populations) but also to improve the responsiveness of local administration to citizens.

2.1.2 Environmental benefits:

Through the activities it aims to finance, the Program will :

- Support, introduce, and accompany the implementation of sustainable development and management practices for communal infrastructures through support to eligible municipalities;
- Strengthen the partnership framework through support for inter-municipal cooperation, which optimizes communal infrastructures and minimizes the environmental and social risks and impacts of these infrastructures;
- Improve the environmental performance of communal infrastructures through waste minimization and recycling, as well as the use of by-products;
- Introduce a new model of sustainable management of communal infrastructures through capacity building of municipalities and the development and implementation of appropriate environmental and social management tools.

2.2 Public service at the heart of PAPC concerns

Public service is defined as "any activity whose accomplishment must be ensured, regulated, and controlled by governments." According to Jèze (1914), only and exclusively qualified as public services are "the needs of general interest that the rulers of a given country and at a given time have decided to satisfy through the public service process." Based on these two definitions, it appears that the management of public services falls under the responsibility of a public entity (the State, local authorities, public administrations, etc.), which, if carried out by a private entity, "retains the power to determine the fundamental rules of organization and operation of the service as well as the ability to impose general orientations on the private entity." In other words, a public service is an activity that cannot be carried out without "public control or regulation." It is directly provided by a public authority or under its control. Through the adoption of the new Constitution of 2011, the implementation of advanced regionalization, and the promulgation of organic laws governing local authorities, Morocco has transformed the latter into key actors in the socio-economic development process at the territorial level. Thus, all the performance indicators stipulated by the PAPC, whether procedural, financial, organizational, or human, are all designed in such a way as to converge towards the achievement of quality public service that meets the concerns of citizens ([Table 2: Themes and sub-themes of performance evaluation](#))

Performance in terms of the quality of public service has been evaluated by the PAPC according to six dimensions summarized in the following tables :

2.2.1 Level of public service rendered to citizens (case of household waste management):

In order to provide adequate service to citizens, the municipality must ensure a collection, cleaning, and landfill service with an adequate level of cleanliness and satisfactory rates. Thus, the evaluation focuses on:

- Achievement of waste collection and cleaning rates ;
- Achievement of controlled landfill rates ;
- Achievement of waste sorting/recycling rates ;
- Achievement of treatment rates in controlled landfills.

2.2.2 Establishment of Administrative Policing

Experience has shown that several legal and organizational difficulties hinder the proper application of administrative policing measures, given the very broad scope of its application.

The evaluation mainly focuses on two main questions:

- Has the municipality adopted a regulatory decree establishing a team composed of administrative policing agents?
- Is the exercise of administrative policing agents in municipalities that have adopted the aforementioned regulatory decree effective?

2.2.3 Rate of Dematerialization of Administrative Services

To facilitate and streamline access to administrative procedures for citizens and businesses, the DGCT wishes to support municipalities in dematerializing administrative services within their jurisdiction. In this context, the evaluation focuses on the following points:

- Does the municipality subscribe to the Watiqa.ma service?
- Does the municipality use the Rokhas.ma platform?
- Does the municipality use the Civil Status Management System (SGEC, deployed by the Ministry of the Interior)?

2.2.4 Actions Taken to Measure Citizen Satisfaction:

Evaluating the population's perception of the quality of service provided to citizens is beneficial both for raising awareness among the population and for improving the quality of service provided by the municipality. This evaluation will also enable municipalities to improve the governance of their services and to adopt a new logic of service provision and citizen satisfaction. The following questions are used to evaluate this point:

- What actions have been taken to measure citizen satisfaction with the quality of public services? Real-time satisfaction? -On the internet? Random citizen panel? Survey?
- Data from satisfaction surveys conducted.

2.2.5 Response Rate to Complaints:

A complaint is any claim made by citizens regarding the quality of municipal service provision. Thus, resolving complaints helps improve the quality of services provided to citizens. The verification base can be the incoming/outgoing registers of the Order Office, specific registers for collecting complaints for dedicated databases. The evaluation focuses on the following questions:

- All complaints received by the council president and forwarded to the relevant department for processing.
- What is the average processing time for complaints?
- Does the municipality have a dematerialized system for collecting and processing citizen complaints?

3. What impacts does the PAPC have on local governance?

A few months after the completion of the Municipal Performance Support Program launched in 2019, it is time to question the results of this ambitious program. For example, according to media sources, it has been learned that some municipalities have received awards of excellence, as is the case for the municipality of Ait Melloul, which was awarded an excellence subsidy of 16.5 million dirhams (MDH) in 2022 for the quality of its governance indicators, transparency, management of expenses and financial and human resources, as well as the quality of services provided to citizens. This raises a more strategic question regarding municipal performance: To what extent has meeting the evaluation criteria stipulated by the PAPC actually contributed to strengthening good governance in municipalities and the quality

of service provided to citizens? In other words, it is necessary to critically analyze the limitations of the methodology adopted to measure municipal performance and draw important lessons from it. To do this, it is necessary to examine several aspects such as the effectiveness of the program in improving local public services, its transparency and fairness in resource allocation, as well as its impact on local governance and citizen participation. Furthermore, it would be important to evaluate how the program took into account the specificities and needs of different target municipalities.

3.1 A look at the performance evaluation criteria adopted by the PAPC

Table 2: Performance Indicators and their Weighting in the Performance Score

Theme		Performance Indicators (PI)		Score Max
Governance and transparency	16	IDP 1.1	Access to key documents of the municipality is open to the public	4
		IDP 1.2	Control and monitoring of delegated management contracts	4
		IDP 1.3	Proportion of the number of petitions placed on the council's agenda compared to the number of petitions meeting the admissibility criteria	4
		IDP 1.4	Implementation of recommendations from external audit and control bodies	4
Expense management	15	IDP 2.1	Budgeting and execution of mandatory expenses related to conventions	3
		IDP 2.2	The subsidies allocated to associations based on a call for projects or through consultation with the population compared to the total subsidies allocated to associations. (Participatory Budgeting)	4
		IDP 2.3	Rate of investment budget commitment	4
		IDP 2.4	Timeframe for approval notification and procurement order deadlines	4
Resource management	18	IDP 3.1	Progression of self-administered resources by the municipality.	8
		IDP 3.2	Actions taken to ensure the management and valorization of heritage.	4
Financial management		IDP 3.3	Number of inactive cases that have been resolved	3
		IDP 3.4	The regularity of revenue order issuances	3

Human resources	10	IDP 4.1	Adoption of the organizational chart and filling of management positions	5
		IDP 4.2	The Annual Capacity Strengthening Plan of the municipality (PARC) is implemented.	5
Environmental and social management	16	IDP 5.1	The municipality has an environmental and social management mechanism	5
		IDP 5.2	Gender-related objectives and indicators are integrated into the PAC (Annual Action Plan).	2
		IDP 5.3	Land acquisitions are carried out in compliance with current regulations.	4
		IDP 5.4	Measures taken by the municipality to increase its energy efficiency	5
Quality of municipal services	25	IDP 6.1	Level of public service provided to citizens (case of household waste)	6
		IDP 6.2	Implementation of administrative policing	3
		IDP 6.3	Rate of dematerialization of administrative services	5
		IDP 6.4	Actions taken to measure citizen satisfaction	4
		IDP 6.5	Rate of response to grievances	4
		IDP 6.6	The municipality's website provides useful information to citizens	3

A review of all the evaluation criteria used by the PAPC shows that the experts who worked on these indicators have touched on practically all dimensions of public performance, namely: organizational, financial, human, environmental-territorial, and public service dimensions. The scoring is also established progressively, highlighting the score of the indicator of the quality of municipal services (25 points) as the ultimate objective to which all indicators contribute. However, in order to ensure fair scoring for all target municipalities, it is important to consider the specificities of certain municipalities when evaluating certain performance indicators (IDPs). This can be achieved by neutralizing (where applicable) certain IDPs that may disadvantage municipalities not covered by their contents. The neutralized points should be subtracted from the calculation base of the total score obtained by the municipality, either by deducting the number of points to be neutralized from the denominator. This mainly

concerns the points grouped in the table below, or any other point deemed neutralizable depending on the context of the target municipality. For example, it becomes appropriate to neutralize the indicator related to the Control and monitoring of delegated management contracts in cases where the municipality has direct management and not delegated management. Another scenario is why evaluate the implementation of recommendations from audit and control bodies in cases where the municipality declares not to have received any external audit missions during the mandate, or the evaluation concerning the Number of inactive cases that have been settled if the municipality has no inactive cases.

3.2 Performance indicator and user satisfaction: What relationship

Nowadays, listening to and satisfying users is considered a tool for modernizing public services. According to Warin (1999), "user satisfaction with public services and administrations becomes an indicator of public performance choice." This is a novelty for the public sector, whereas measuring customer satisfaction has long been part of private sector practices. It is one of the explicit objectives of public sector reform programs inspired by the New Public Management.

Although less present in legal obligations, measuring user satisfaction seems somewhat complex and requires careful consideration regarding the indicators necessary to objectively evaluate and measure this concept. Indeed, the PAPC has relied on a set of IDPs touching on various dimensions of public performance, which highlight the quality of public service and consequently user satisfaction as a strategic objective in which all IDPs participate. The question at this stage is: To what extent do the "IDP" indicators of the PAPC actually contribute to the production of quality public service?

Indeed, the difficulty of understanding and measuring performance is not unique to public organizations. It is a recurring issue in both public and private organizations, which often struggle to precisely define what this vast term encompasses. However, if we consider that the performance of a municipality is reflected in compliance with regulatory requirements in terms of organizational and budgetary aspects, such as publishing financial statements, clearing accounts, or maintaining a complaints register, this simplified appearance of performance quickly runs into the nature and variety of the real objectives of public service. Performance is therefore multidimensional, reflecting organizational goals but also subjective because it depends on the nature of the expected objectives and the benchmarks chosen for its

assessment. This particularity of public performance implies an interest in the notion of impact and requires a detailed and precise description of what each IDP is supposed to achieve.

Conclusion

The impact of the Municipal Performance Support Program (PAPC) on local governance in Morocco depends on various factors. Overall, the PAPC aims to strengthen local governance by encouraging transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in the management of public affairs at the municipal level. It can contribute to improving the management of local resources, promoting better coordination among various local actors, and enhancing the capacities of municipal authorities. However, the effectiveness of these efforts may vary depending on the implementation of the program, local capacities, and the engagement of stakeholders. A comprehensive evaluation would be necessary to measure the specific impact of the PAPC on local governance in different regions of Morocco. Therefore, it would be advisable to conduct field surveys in the various target municipalities of the program to truly measure the program's impact on all dimensions of municipal performance in general and particularly on the quality of municipal services in a participatory approach by involving citizens as an integral part of the evaluation process.

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