

EVALUATION SUMMARY

COUNTRY: BENIN



Porto-Novo Ville Verte (PNVV)

Evaluator: **Nathalie TEIXEIRA (Insuco)**
Evaluation date: **September 2025 - April 2026**

KEY DATA ON FFEM SUPPORT

Amount of FFEM funding: €1 200 000
Project grant date: September 30th, 2015
Duration: 8 years (2015-2023)
Project name: Porto-Novo Ville Verte (PNVV)
Project number: CBJ1207

Context

Porto-Novo, the capital of Benin, faces urban vulnerabilities linked to its lagoon context: bank degradation, recurrent flooding in coastal neighbourhoods, the isolation of certain areas, and weak planning tools. In response to these challenges, the Porto-Novo Ville Verte project has coordinated the rehabilitation of the lagoon waterfront, the development of a Sustainable Urban Development Plan (SUDP), and the strengthening of municipal capacities, with the ambition of demonstrating the feasibility of sustainable lagoon development. The final evaluation assesses the results achieved, the impacts on local populations, and the conditions for the sustainability of these achievements, within a context of transition toward full institutional ownership by the municipality.

Participants and operating procedures

The municipality of Porto-Novo acts as the direct contracting authority, supported by a dedicated Project Management Unit (PMU) based within the city hall. The project also mobilizes the AFD and the FFEM as co-financers, decentralized cooperation partners (Cergy-Pontoise, Lyon), technical and social project managers, as well as local cultural operators."

OBJECTIVES

To contribute to a more structured, resilient, and sustainable urban development in Porto-Novo by preserving and promoting the lagoon territory, improving the living conditions of local populations, and strengthening the municipality's capacity to steer its own urban development.

Specific objectives:

- The development of strategic planning tools integrating climate vulnerability, including the SUDP;
- The rehabilitation of the lagoon waterfront and coastal neighborhoods through developments adapted to the environment;
- Support for economic activities compatible with the lagoon ecosystem;
- The strengthening of the municipality's institutional capacities;
- The capitalization and dissemination of the experience.

TESTED INNOVATION

The project introduces an innovative institutional framework: conducting an urban operation in a lagoon environment that combines bio-based structures, territorial planning, and social mediation. This follows a demonstration logic aimed at improving urban climate resilience under direct municipal contracting authority, with a dedicated PMU and specialized technical support.



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EVALUATION RESULTS

Relevance

The evaluation concludes that the project's relevance is overall strong. It addresses identified vulnerabilities within the municipal territory: bank degradation, recurrent flooding, isolation, and weak planning tools. The integrated approach—linking physical investments, strategic tools, and institutional support—is consistent with the objective of urban resilience. The project's institutional setup, based on direct municipal contracting authority, is relevant given the need to strengthen local capacities. However, the evaluation notes that anticipating maintenance conditions and institutional transfer was a blind spot in the initial design, which is now identified as a critical factor for sustainability.

Coherence

The evaluation notes a satisfactory external coherence with Beninese urban resilience priorities and donor strategies. The complementarity between the AFD and the FFEM made it possible to link urban development with climate challenges. Internal coherence is more limited: the alignment between the produced SUDP and the Municipal Development Plan currently in force remains marginal, weakening the operational translation of these tools.

Effectiveness

The evaluation highlights mixed effectiveness. The planned developments were completed, the SUDP was produced, and consultation along with the action plan secured the project's implementation. However, the operational integration of planning tools into municipal practices, the institutional consolidation of the PMU's functions, and the sustainable restoration of livelihoods for project-affected persons remain partial or undocumented.

ADDED VALUE OF THE FFEM

The FFEM co-financing played a decisive seed-funding role by integrating, right from the design phase, climate change adaptation, environmental vulnerability, and urban resilience challenges into the 'green city' approach. It structured the programme's environmental orientation and consolidated the lagoon components during implementation.

"Before, people didn't like coming to our neighborhood, which was dirty and flooded. Today, we are proud."

Youth, focus group

Efficiency

The evaluation deems the efficiency to be satisfactory: close steering by the PMU, short decision-making channels, and structuring technical support, despite two extension amendments linked to the complexity of the lagoon environment.

Impact

The evaluation notes positive but uneven impacts: a tangible improvement in lagoon waterfront accessibility, living conditions, and public lighting, as well as the opening up of several neighborhoods. On an institutional level, the experience enhanced Porto-Novo's visibility and inspired the Climate Change Adaptation Programme for cities (PAVICC). Conversely, the socio-economic effects remain localized, and no sustainable improvement in income could be established.

Viability/sustainability

The evaluation identifies sustainability as the central post-project challenge and concludes that the situation is mixed. The mineral infrastructure (roads, squares, sanitation structures) is integrated into ordinary municipal maintenance routines and appears to be sustainable. The lagoon promenade, which is technically more demanding, shows early degradation linked to the environment, premature public use, and the absence of a maintenance framework. A budget line of 35 million CFA francs has been included in the municipal budget, but without a consolidated technical plan. The internalization of the PMU's functions within municipal services remains incomplete, and the operational ownership of the SUDP remains limited.

LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

Direct municipal contracting authority, supported by a PMU, proves to be an effective lever for steering complex urban projects. However, its long-term viability requires anticipating institutional transfer very early on and securing maintenance budgets:

- Anticipate and formalize, right from the design phase, the procedures for the institutional handover of PMU functions to permanent municipal services;
- Integrate, right from the appraisal phase, an in-depth analysis of maintenance conditions and infrastructure sustainability, particularly for materials exposed to lagoon constraints;
- Anticipate management and usage regulation procedures and strengthen the operational integration of planning tools into municipal cycles.

Find details of the project sheet by scanning the QR Code

