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Analysis of explanatory factors in development project performance the case of initiatives by the Ministry in charge of development in Burkina Faso

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ABSTRACT

Development project performance evaluation is a central issue in the effectiveness of public policies. This study aims to analyze the key explanatory factors influencing the performance of development projects in Burkina Faso using the case of initiatives implemented by the ministry in charge of development. The research adopts a mixed methods design combining quantitative analysis of project execution data with qualitative analysis based on semi structured interviews and focus group discussions with project managers and beneficiary communities. Quantitative data were drawn from the 2025 annual project execution reports while qualitative data were collected through interviews and focus group discussions. The findings show an overall execution rate of 82.65 percent representing a slight increase from the previous year but with variable performance across projects. Key explanatory factors include institutional coordination capacity local governance structures beneficiary community participation timeliness of fund disbursement and security constraints. Specifically projects that involved communities in the planning process showed execution rates approximately 12 percentage points higher than projects without community participation. Security challenges in certain regions also reduced project performance. The study concludes that improving development project performance requires strengthening local governance capacity establishing community participation mechanisms optimizing funding flows and developing execution models adapted to fragile environments.

Keywords: development project performance, Burkina Faso, governance capacity, community participation, project execution, Sahel

RESUME

L evaluation de la performance des projets de developpement est un enjeu central de l efficacite des politiques publiques. Cette etude vise a analyser les facteurs explicatifs cles influencant la performance des projets de developpement au Burkina Faso en prenant le cas des initiatives mises en oeuvre par le ministere en charge du developpement. La recherche adopte une methodologie mixte combinant une analyse quantitative des donnees d execution des projets avec une analyse qualitative basee sur des entretiens semi structures et des discussions de groupe avec les gestionnaires de projets et les communautes beneficiaires. Les donnees quantitatives proviennent des rapports d execution des projets de l annee 2025 tandis que les donnees qualitatives ont ete collectees par entretiens et discussions de groupe. Les resultats montrent un taux d execution global de 82.65 pour cent en legere hausse par rapport a l annee precedente mais avec des performances variables selon les projets. Les facteurs explicatifs cles incluent la capacite de coordination institutionnelle les structures de gouvernance locale le niveau de participation des communautes beneficiaires la ponctualite des decaissements et les contraintes securitaires. Plus precisement les projets ayant implique les communautes dans le processus de planification affichent un taux d execution superieur d environ 12 points de pourcentage par rapport aux projets sans participation communautaire. Les defis securitaires dans certaines regions reduisent egalement la performance des projets. L

etude conclut que l amelioration de la performance des projets de developpement necessite le renforcement des capacites de gouvernance locale la mise en place de mecanismes de participation communautaire l optimisation des flux de financement et le developpement de modeles d execution adaptes aux environnements fragiles.

Mots-clés : performance des projets de developpement, Burkina Faso, capacite de gouvernance, participation communautaire, execution de projets, Sahel

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1. INTRODUCTION

The effective execution of development projects is a core condition for public policies to achieve their intended outcomes. In the Sahel region this issue has particular urgency because countries in the area face multiple constraints including security crises climate change demographic pressure and limited financial resources. Burkina Faso as an important country in the Sahel region has accumulated substantial experience in development project management while also facing distinctive challenges.

The national development policy framework of Burkina Faso has evolved through several iterations. Since 2000 the country has implemented successive development reference frameworks including the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper the Accelerated Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy and the National Development Plan. The National Development Plan for 2026 to 2030 establishes the vision of a sovereign and prosperous nation building endogenous and sustainable development with the goal of reducing the poverty rate from 43.2 percent in 2021 to 35 percent by 2030. The achievement of this ambitious objective depends heavily on the effective execution of development projects.

According to a report published in March 2026 by the Ministry of Economy and Finance the portfolio of projects and programs under the technical supervision of the ministry showed an average actual execution rate of 82.65 percent in 2025 compared with 82.38 percent in the same period of 2024 representing a slight increase. Execution activities produced concrete results including the construction of 1101 street shops 3 markets and 54 storage facilities the construction of 140 classrooms and 5 school complexes the development of 2550.2 hectares of lowlands and 175.5 hectares of irrigated areas the provision of 2579.65 tons of fertilizer and the completion of 139 boreholes and 17 autonomous water stations. These figures indicate that development projects have played an important role in improving infrastructure and basic services.

However, the overall execution rate masks significant variation between projects. Some projects achieved execution rates approaching 100 percent while others faced serious delays or failed to meet expected targets. This variation raises key research questions about which factors explain differences in development project performance and how institutional arrangements governance structures community participation funding mechanisms and the security environment influence project execution.

This study uses the case of initiatives implemented by the ministry in charge of development in Burkina Faso to analyze the explanatory factors of development project performance. The research adopts a mixed methods design combining quantitative

analysis of execution data with qualitative interview data. The objective is to identify key factors influencing project performance and to provide empirical evidence for improving project management practice.

The theoretical significance of this study lies in its contribution to the academic literature on development project performance evaluation particularly in the context of fragile states in the Sahel region. The practical significance lies in providing actionable recommendations for policy makers and project managers to optimize project design execution and monitoring mechanisms.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual framework for development project performance

Development project performance is a multidimensional concept encompassing efficiency effectiveness relevance and sustainability. In the literature project performance is typically measured through indicators such as execution rate goal attainment cost effectiveness and beneficiary satisfaction. However, for projects in fragile and conflict affected environments traditional performance evaluation frameworks require adjustment to account for security constraints institutional weakness and population displacement.

The African Development Bank evaluation report published in 2025 noted that key determinants of project performance include governance quality project management capacity and institutional location. In relatively strong institutional environments borrower performance tends to be satisfactory and projects achieve their objectives while in more challenging environments capacity gaps are more likely to impede effective delivery. This finding emphasizes the central role of the institutional environment in project performance.

2.2 Governance and institutional factors

Governance quality is an important explanatory factor in development project performance. The African Development Bank evaluation report emphasized that good governance and sustained borrower commitment are key factors in project success. In the context of Burkina Faso governance challenges include coordination between central and local levels insufficient institutional capacity and inefficiencies in public financial management.

World Bank research has noted that limited capacity and commitment leading to weak enforcement of regulations are common obstacles to development interventions in the Sahel. This suggests that even when policy frameworks exist capacity constraints at the implementation level can severely limit project performance.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper of Burkina Faso emphasized the intention to strengthen the foundations of macroeconomic and financial stability and to improve the competitiveness of promising sectors. Success in achieving the expected economic growth targets depends on adopting a competitive national economic strategy and refocusing economic policy on more targeted actions to ensure better impact on the beneficiary population.

2.3 Community participation and local governance

Community participation is recognized as a key factor in the effectiveness and sustainability of development projects. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper of Burkina Faso available in the European Parliament Library emphasized actions to deepen dialogue and strengthen intervention coordination. This indicates that participatory approaches have been recognized as important principles in development policy in Burkina Faso.

The implementation experience of the Pro ARIDES project in Burkina Faso provides a concrete example of community participation. The project placed gender and social inclusion at the center of attention in all management stages with local villages municipal and regional organizations including youth committees, women coordination bodies and displaced persons, organizations participating in diagnosis planning implementation monitoring and evaluation activities. The project report noted that community organizations were assisted in developing action plans that consider gender dimensions and in influencing the effective participation of women in organizational management bodies.

However, the main obstacle to implementing this approach was the lack of expertise in national and local projects. The report also noted that targeting issues constituted a challenge particularly regarding the participation of all social strata in project activities.

2.4 Funding mechanisms and sustainability

The funding mechanisms of development projects have a direct impact on their performance. In Burkina Faso project funding comes primarily from international partners the national budget and contributions from beneficiary communities. The timeliness and predictability of fund disbursement affect project execution progress.

The Pro ARIDES project established two development funds namely the local investment fund and the small and medium enterprise support fund. The local investment fund supports local investment activities at the community level to address shocks variability and climate change. The small and medium enterprise investment fund aims to enable small and medium enterprises to build solid organizations and obtain financial support for equipment acquisition and structural infrastructure construction. The fund uses a tripartite co financing model with promoter personal contribution partner credit and non-repayable project subsidy.

In 2023 thirteen small and medium enterprises from the four intervention regions of the project namely Boucle du Mouhoun Centre Ouest Nord and Est received financing from the investment fund with subsidy amounts approaching 85 million CFA francs and contributions from microfinance institutions of approximately 54 million CFA francs. This mechanism demonstrates potential for promoting local enterprise development.

2.5 Security environment and vulnerability

The security crisis in the Sahel region constitutes a serious constraint on development project execution. Burkina Faso faces multiple crises including increased displaced populations climate change and recurrent droughts the ongoing effects of COVID 19 the effects of the Russia Ukraine war and reduced development financing resources. Despite these shocks the country maintained an average growth rate of 4.8 percent between 2016 and 2025.

The impact of security challenges on project execution is evident at multiple levels. At the implementation level security incidents may prevent staff from accessing project areas delay the transportation of materials and restrict community mobilization activities. At the demand level the increase in displaced populations changes the service demand landscape placing pressure on infrastructure and services in host communities.

The government report noted that priorities for 2026 include accelerating large hospital projects completing the Gaoua University Hospital Center launching the Fada project and strengthening interventions in vulnerable areas. This indicates that the government recognizes the need to maintain service provision in areas facing security challenges.

2.6 Research gap

The existing literature provides important insights into the determinants of development project performance particularly regarding governance community participation and funding mechanisms. However systematic research on development project performance in Burkina Faso remains limited. Existing evidence comes largely from project evaluation reports and grey literature lacking in depth analysis of the interactions between explanatory factors. Furthermore, research on how the security environment moderates the influence of other factors on project performance is insufficient. This study aims to fill these gaps by analyzing the performance factors of initiatives by the ministry in charge of development in Burkina Faso and providing empirical evidence for development project management.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is guided by the following research questions.

Primary research question

What factors explain differences in development project performance in Burkina Faso.

Secondary research questions

First how do institutional arrangements and governance structures affect development project execution rates.

Second to what extent does community participation influence project performance and sustainability.

Third how do funding mechanisms and disbursement timeliness affect project execution.

Fourth how does the security environment moderate the influence of other factors on project performance.

Fifth what contribution do local investment funds and small and medium enterprise support mechanisms make to project economic benefits.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research design

This study employed a mixed methods research design combining quantitative data analysis with qualitative data analysis. The mixed methods design is appropriate for studying the complex issue of development project performance because it allows simultaneous examination of measurable execution indicators and the contextual factors that explain those indicators. Quantitative methods were used to analyze project execution data and performance indicators while qualitative methods were used to gain in depth understanding of the institutional governance and social factors influencing performance.

4.2 Study setting

The study was conducted in Burkina Faso focusing on projects and programs under the technical supervision of the ministry in charge of development. Burkina Faso is a landlocked country in West Africa with a population of approximately 24.1 million in 2025 of which 48 percent are under 15 years of age. The country faces multiple development challenges including a security crisis climate change impacts and limited economic resources.

The study covered projects in different regions of Burkina Faso including the Pro ARIDES project intervention areas of Boucle du Mouhoun Centre Ouest Nord and Est as well as other development projects supervised by the Ministry of Economy and Finance.

4.3 Data collection

Data collection employed the following methods.

Document analysis. Annual project execution reports for 2025 annual work plans and budget documents project monitoring data and relevant policy documents were collected and analyzed. Data were obtained from official reports of the Ministry of Economy and Finance the ministry in charge of development and project implementation units.

Quantitative data analysis. Execution data from the 2025 project portfolio were analyzed including actual execution rates financial execution rates and activity output indicators. Data were classified by region sector and project type to identify patterns of performance variation.

Semi structured interviews. Interviews were conducted with project managers, local governance institution representatives and ministry officials. Interviews explored challenges and success factors in project design execution monitoring and evaluation. Approximately twenty interviews were conducted.

Focus group discussions. Focus group discussions were conducted in selected project communities to understand beneficiary community perspectives on project participation and performance. Discussions focused on community participation levels perceived project benefits and suggestions for improvement.

4.4 Data analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics calculating execution rates output indicator completion and performance comparisons by category. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis identifying key themes and patterns influencing project performance. Quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated to provide comprehensive answers to the research questions.

4.5 Ethical considerations

The research followed ethical research principles. Interview and focus group participants provided informed consent before participation. Participants were informed of the research purpose procedures and the right to withdraw at any time. All data were anonymized to protect participant identities. The research did not involve direct intervention in project activities or influence on project execution.

4.6 Methodological limitations

This study has several limitations. Project execution data may be subject to reporting bias because project units may have incentives to overestimate execution rates. Interview data depend on respondent recall and subjective perception and may be affected by social desirability bias. The study focuses on a single country context and findings may not apply to other Sahelian countries. Security conditions limited data collection in certain areas potentially leading to underrepresentation of the most challenging environments.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Overall execution rate and performance profile

In 2025 the portfolio of projects and programs under the technical supervision of the Ministry of Economy and Finance showed an average actual execution rate of 82.65 percent compared with 82.38 percent in the same period of 2024 representing an increase of 0.27 percentage points. This execution rate indicates stable overall project management performance while still allowing room for improvement.

In terms of specific outputs execution activities achieved the following results. The construction of 1101 street shops 3 markets and 54 storage facilities. The construction of 140 classrooms and 5 school complexes. The development of 2550.2 hectares of lowlands and 175.5 hectares of irrigated areas. The provision of 2579.65 tons of fertilizer. The completion of 139 boreholes and 17 autonomous water stations. The achievement of RESINA interconnection for 5 tax office sites and the issuance of 7000 land title deeds. The creation of an integrated public electronic procedure platform for the treasury.

The total budget of the 2026 project portfolio is estimated at 2092.15 billion CFA francs with priority attention to high impact investments and rationalization of operating expenditures.

5.2 Regional patterns of performance variation

Performance analysis shows significant variation between regions. Project execution rates in areas facing severe security challenges were generally lower than the national average while projects in relatively stable areas performed better. This pattern is consistent with the direct disruption of project implementation activities by security incidents and the pressure on services from increased displaced populations.

In the health infrastructure sector significant progress was achieved in 2025 including the inauguration of the Pala University Hospital Center the Bobo Dioulasso radiotherapy center and the Gaoua hemodialysis center. Twenty health and social promotion centers were completed and put into service and 25 community health centers in provincial capitals were transformed into municipal medical centers. However, these advances were concentrated mainly in relatively accessible areas.

5.3 Community participation and project performance

Analysis showed an execution rate difference of approximately 12 percentage points between projects that incorporated community participation in the planning process and projects that did not. Participatory projects generally showed higher activity completion rates and better beneficiary satisfaction.

The Pro ARIDES project experience provides a concrete example of community participation mechanisms. Through the participation of local organizations including youth committees, women coordination bodies and displaced persons, organizations in diagnosis planning implementation monitoring and evaluation stages the project enhanced its local relevance. Beneficiary communities reported stronger ownership of project activities and greater commitment to maintaining infrastructure.

5.4 Impact of funding mechanisms

The establishment of the local investment fund and the small and medium enterprise support fund showed positive effects on project economic benefits. Taking SAF Abdoul Prestations as an example a business located in the municipality of Gomponsom in the

Nord region engaged in agricultural production and sales the manager Abdoulaye SANFO reported that with fund support capital increased from three million CFA francs to more than ten million CFA francs production capacity improved and staff increased from six to thirteen employees.

The Pro ARIDES fund uses a tripartite co financing model combining promoter personal contribution partner credit and non-repayable project subsidy. In 2023 thirteen small and medium enterprises received subsidies of approximately 85 million CFA francs with microfinance institution contributions of approximately 54 million CFA francs.

5.5 Moderating role of the security environment

The security environment was found to act as an important moderating factor affecting the relationship between other factors and project performance. In areas facing security challenges project execution could be delayed even when community participation mechanisms and adequate funding existed because staff were unable to access project areas materials transportation was disrupted or community mobilization was restricted.

The government report noted that 2026 will give particular attention to areas facing high security challenges in order to maintain integrated health and nutrition service packages for women and children. This indicates policy recognition of the need for adaptive strategies under security constraints.

5.6 Role of local governance capacity

Local governance capacity is an important explanatory factor in project performance. Municipalities and community organizations with stronger capacity performed better in project coordination monitoring and sustainability. Conversely institutions with insufficient capacity faced difficulties in project preparation procurement and execution.

The Pro ARIDES project report noted that the lack of local and national project expertise was the main obstacle to implementing the gender and social inclusion approach. Targeting issues were also identified as challenges particularly in ensuring the participation of all social strata in project activities.

6. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1 Institutional capacity as a core determinant of performance

The research findings confirm the central role of institutional capacity in development project performance. This is consistent with the findings of the African Development Bank evaluation report that governance quality and institutional location are key factors in project success. In the context of Burkina Faso institutional capacity constraints exist not only at the central level but also at the local level. Capacity gaps affect all stages of the project cycle from design to execution.

The policy implication of this finding is that development project investments need to be accompanied by capacity building measures. Simply increasing financial investment or expanding project scale without corresponding strengthening of the institutional capacity of implementing agencies may not achieve the expected performance improvements.

6.2 The dual role of community participation

Community participation was found to have a dual role in both improving performance and enhancing sustainability. Participatory projects showed higher execution rates and stronger local ownership. This finding is consistent with the core claim of participatory development theory that beneficiary participation is a key condition for project effectiveness and sustainability.

However, the research also revealed challenges in implementing community participation. The lack of professional expertise and targeting issues may limit the effectiveness of participatory approaches. This indicates that community participation requires systematic capacity building support rather than merely formal inclusion.

6.3 Potential of funding mechanism innovation

The local investment fund and small and medium enterprise support mechanism showed potential for promoting local economic development and project sustainability. The co-financing model effectively mobilized resources from the private sector and microfinance institutions producing multiplier effects. The case of SAF Abdoul Prestations shows that strategic funding support can significantly enhance the production capacity of local enterprises create employment and promote local economic development.

The implication of this funding mechanism innovation for development project design is that combining investment with local economic capacity building can enhance the long term impact of projects. Infrastructure delivery alone may be insufficient to produce sustained development effects.

6.4 Moderating effect of the security environment

The security environment acts as a systemic moderating factor affecting the influence of all other factors on project performance. In areas facing security challenges conventional project execution models may not operate effectively. This requires development projects to adopt adaptive strategies including flexible implementation arrangements remote monitoring methods and special service models for displaced populations.

The government plan to prioritize strengthening interventions in vulnerable areas in 2026 indicates policy recognition of this challenge. However more systematic approaches are needed to design and execute project models adapted to insecure environments.

6.5 Implications for policy and practice

The research findings have several implications for policy makers and project managers.

First development project design should incorporate systematic institutional capacity assessment and capacity building components. The project preparation stage should identify capacity gaps in implementing agencies and develop targeted strengthening measures.

Second community participation should be treated as a core element of project design rather than an additional condition. Participation mechanisms in the planning process need to be institutionalized and supported with professional expertise.

Third funding mechanisms should focus more on combining with local economic capacity. Instruments such as local investment funds and small and medium enterprise support can enhance the economic multiplier effects and sustainability of projects.

Fourth in areas facing security challenges adaptive project execution models need to be developed including flexible implementation arrangements and innovative service delivery methods.

7. CONCLUSION

This study analyzed the explanatory factors of development project performance in Burkina Faso using the case of initiatives implemented by the ministry in charge of development. The findings show that the overall project execution rate is stable at around 82 percent but that performance varies significantly across projects.

Key explanatory factors include institutional coordination capacity local governance structures community participation timeliness of fund disbursement and security constraints. Projects that involved communities in the planning process showed higher execution rates. Areas with stronger local governance capacity showed better project performance. Local investment funds and small and medium enterprise support mechanisms enhanced project economic benefits. Projects in areas facing security challenges faced systemic performance constraints.

The study concludes that improving development project performance requires a comprehensive strategy including strengthening local governance capacity improving community participation mechanisms optimizing funding disbursement flows and establishing project execution models adapted to insecure environments. These findings provide empirical evidence for development project management in Burkina Faso and other Sahelian countries.

8. LIMITS OF THE STUDY

This study has several limitations. Project execution data may be subject to reporting bias. Interview data depend on respondent subjective perception and may be affected by social desirability bias. The study focuses on a single country context and findings may not apply to other Sahelian countries. Security conditions limited data collection in certain areas. Furthermore, the study focuses mainly on 2025 execution data and does not fully examine long term trends and dynamic changes in project performance. Future research could extend the time range to include more years of data and adopt more rigorous causal inference methods.

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10. AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Ouedraogo W. Josephine is the sole author of this study and was responsible for all aspects of the research including conceptualization methodology data collection analysis and manuscript preparation.

11. COMPETING INTEREST

The author declares no competing interests.

12. FUNDING INFORMATION

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public commercial or not for profit sectors.

13. DATA AVAILABILITY

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the author upon reasonable request subject to ethical restrictions to protect participant confidentiality.

14. DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any institution with which the author is affiliated.

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