GIZ’s evaluation system

Theory of change for GIZ’s evaluations
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The Corporate Unit Evaluation of GIZ reports directly to the Management Board. She is separate from and independent of GIZ’s operational business. This organisation strengthens the independence. The Corporate Unit Evaluation is mandated to generate evidence-based results and recommendations for decision-making, to provide a credible proof of effectiveness and to increase transparency on the results.

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Theory of Change – GIZ’s evaluations

**Impact**

- More sustainable development
- Democratic governance
- Improved service delivery by the partners for their own population

**Outcome II Benefits**

- Enhanced effectiveness of projects
- Strengthening of modern management
- Informed public consensus-building in Germany and the partner countries

**Outcome I Utilisation**

- Improved delivery of outputs with partners
- Improved policies and strategies
- Accountability to clients, the public and partners
- Improved delivery of outcomes with partners

**Output**

- Corporate development, organisational learning
- Evidence-based decisions (clients, partner countries – projects, GIZ)
- Methodologically high-quality evaluations
- High process quality of evaluations
- Useful and benefit-oriented evaluations
- Evaluation findings processed and published with a focus on subject matter and target group
- Evaluations in line with national and international standards and principals
Activities by the Evaluation Unit

1. Activities for methodically high-quality evaluations
   - All central evaluations:
     - Stipulation of standards
     - Invitation to tender, incl. selection and assessment grid
     - Methodological quality check of the inception reports and the main reports
     - Training for Evaluation Unit staff
   - Central project evaluations and corporate strategic evaluations:
     - Provision of annotated structure and guidelines
   - Central project evaluations:
     - Meta-evaluations conducted

2. Activities for high process quality of evaluations
   - All evaluations:
     - Inclusion of the stakeholders
   - Central project evaluations:
     - Briefing/debriefing of the stakeholders by the evaluation mission

3. Activities for useful and benefit-oriented evaluations
   - All central evaluations:
     - Identifying the information required in interviews and workshops
   - Central project evaluations:
     - Criteria-based selection of projects
     - Stakeholder involvement
     - Quality check on content of the evaluation products by stakeholders
   - Corporate strategic evaluations:
     - Criteria-based selection of evaluations
     - Creation of a reference group
     - Quality check on content

4. Activities for evaluation findings processed and published with a focus on subject matter and target group
   - Central project evaluations, corporate strategic evaluations and cross-section evaluations:
     - Publication of evaluation findings (main reports, brochures, factsheets)

5. Activities for corporate development and organisational learning
   - Central project evaluations:
     - Evaluation syntheses produced
   - Corporate strategic evaluations and cross-section evaluations:
     - Organisation of information, dialogue and learning events on evaluation findings

6. Activities for evidence-based decisions
   - Central project evaluations:
     - Facilitation of the management response process
   - Corporate strategic evaluations and cross-section evaluations:
     - Needs-oriented timing of evaluations

7. Activities for accountability to clients, the public and partners
   - Central project evaluations:
     - Random sample selected
Theory of change – GIZ evaluations (description)

We have developed a separate results model for GIZ’s evaluations too, which is designed to serve as a guide for planning and carrying out evaluations at GIZ. It shows how gearing GIZ’s evaluations to the three basic functions can help achieve further direct and indirect results that enhance the benefits of these evaluations.

As with all of GIZ’s results models, these are systemic, not linear relations. Political and managerial decision-making processes are complex in nature and are influenced by a number of actors and interests. Negotiation processes and institutional inefficiencies hinder and delay decision-making. The process of translating decisions that have been made into specific actions is not an automatic one. A number of delaying effects may occur here as a result of institutional inefficiencies and resistance by individual and collective actors.

1.1 Areas of influence

GIZ's evaluations make key contributions to three areas of influence:

- They strengthen good democratic governance and democratic consensus-building processes when the findings of evaluations are published, processed and communicated. If international cooperation clients, policy-makers and the interested public make use of the information on offer, they are able to shape opinion-forming processes on designing international cooperation on a more informed basis and hence more effectively. All actors have the same, improved access to relevant data and information about effectiveness and relevant factors that influence international cooperation projects and approaches. This also means enhancing citizen participation in public communication and in decision-making processes. At the same time, by publishing all evaluation reports and GIZ’s evaluation report in German and English, GIZ helps boost transparency. It accounts for how the taxpayers’ money and/or other funds are used and for the results achieved. The independence and credibility of the findings of the central evaluations are also highly important and are ensured by the Evaluation Unit's evaluation managers.

- Evaluations help enhance the effectiveness of GIZ’s projects and operations by supporting evidence-based decisions, corporate development and organisational learning. Institutionalised management responses at GIZ are a key lever in this context. In particular, they translate recommendations from corporate strategy evaluations into specific measures and action plans, which the Management Board then instructs the company to implement. This creates learning platforms at GIZ in which evidence-based discussions are held and technical and managerial aspects of the various topics and objects of the evaluation are considered. This debate is designed to help refine strategies, structures and processes and ultimately to achieve effective knowledge management. For these processes to be implemented and steered by the relevant GIZ units, it is vital that the object of the evaluation is relevant and topical and that it attracts the interest of the company’s managers. To this end, the Evaluation Unit’s evaluation managers ensure that decision-makers play an active role in planning, designing and carrying out evaluations. This takes account of the information to be obtained, the need for information and the implementation capacity of the actors involved in designing and carrying out the evaluation as part of reference groups. The Management Board mandates a member of the Board or of GIZ’s first managerial level to commission the individual evaluation with all the decision-making authority to carry out the corporate strategic evaluation. This ensures that the evaluation is geared towards corporate policy
and enjoys acceptance and that potential synergies with other relevant processes in the company are assessed. In addition, the active role of these key actors in the evaluation process helps identify lessons learned and promotes the use of the evaluation findings, ultimately boosting the impact of GIZ’s work.

- GIZ’s evaluations make a key contribution to **sustainable development** by outlining effective solutions to social, environmental and economic challenges that offer prospects for people and improve their living conditions on a permanent basis. The two areas of influence presented above contribute to this: the enhanced impact of GIZ’s work, and democratic governance and consensus-building processes. The credibility, quality and relevance of the evaluations promote their image as a useful tool for democratic governance and modern management, and make it possible to address the results orientation of state and organisational action.

Evaluations contribute to **evidence-based decisions by commissioning parties/clients involved in international cooperation**. These commissioning parties/clients are thus able to design and focus their support policies, strategies and measures better in the context of growing complexity, also taking account of the principles of the 2030 Agenda. Supported measures can thus become more targeted and effective.

In the **partner countries**, the provision of better services for citizens and target groups plays a major role in developing and implementing sustainable solutions. In both cases (commissioning parties/clients and partner countries of international cooperation), the starting point is a greater ability of key actors to take action and make decisions as a result of evaluations. The actors include state actors such as ministries and local administrations, private sector organisations, civil society, and established and new international institutions, not forgetting the target groups themselves. The availability of evaluation findings in the form of evidence-based information on the benefits, quality and value of the objects of the evaluations, which the Evaluation Unit specifically prepares for user groups, helps promote proactive management and decision-making skills. Evaluation is thus an integral part of GIZ’s capacity development approach too.

In addition to robust insight in the form of evaluation findings, lessons learned by the key actors through their active part in the evaluation process also play a role in boosting the proactive management skills of decision-makers and change agents.

In organisations in international cooperation partner countries and projects, the enhanced proactive management skills will ideally promote a culture of evidence-based self-reflection and hence allow better planning and steering of projects. Evaluation findings can highlight potential new courses of action. At the same time, this means that GIZ can provide better services. Central evaluations thus create a basis of evidence-based information upon which to negotiate and shape project objectives and strategies with partners and commissioning parties/clients. At the level of society in the partner countries, it is hoped that this will enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of political, economic and social transformation processes and thus contribute to the aforementioned impact of improved service delivery for citizens and target groups.

### 1.2 Activities

The Evaluation Unit helps achieve these results through its **activities** and the **professional management of evaluations**. It is responsible for the process quality, independence and credibility of the findings of central evaluations, and it publishes and communicates these findings.

The **frame of reference for the evaluations** are essentially international and national evaluation standards such as utility, feasibility, propriety and accuracy (DeGEval), the quality standards, principles and evaluation criteria of OECD-DAC and BMZ, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
Adjustments are made in dialogue with the relevant commissioning party/client. On the basis of this, the object of the evaluation, the evaluation criteria to be applied and the evaluation design and process are jointly developed and agreed on in line with the context and the information to be obtained.

**Activities for methodologically high-quality evaluations**

In order to guarantee methodologically high-quality evaluations, the Evaluation Unit lays down standards and organises training courses for the Evaluation Unit staff (1). Intense cooperation and networking with the academic and research community, international think tanks, consulting firms, freelance evaluators and the evaluation units of other development cooperation/international cooperation organisations also contribute to this. Prior to the evaluations, the Evaluation Unit selects the projects to be evaluated and develops assessment grids for the invitations to tender in order to choose the most suitable independent appraisers to conduct the evaluations. In addition, for central project evaluations and corporate strategy evaluations, the Evaluation Unit provides an annotated structure and guidelines containing methodological requirements for evaluators. The design and methodology should thus consist of an appropriate combination of quantitative and qualitative empirical social research methods. A theory-based, transparent methodological approach is guaranteed in order to demonstrate or plausibly show that measures contribute to results. These include (quasi-)experimental, statistical, theory-based and participatory approaches. The evaluation team should be as diverse as possible (in terms of criteria such as gender, professional background and country-specific knowledge) to enable critical findings to be appraised from several different points of view (investigator triangulation). In addition, method and data triangulation compensate for the strengths and weaknesses of individual survey methods and increase the validity of the findings. After the start of the evaluations, both the inception report and the main report are systematically examined in terms of their methodological quality. Moreover, the Evaluation Unit conducts meta-evaluations of the central project evaluations. When steering and conducting strategically important and methodologically innovative decentralised evaluations, the Evaluation Unit assumes an advisory role.

**Activities for high process quality of evaluations**

To ensure that the process quality of all the evaluations carried out is high, the Evaluation Unit includes relevant stakeholders or makes sure that they are involved, for example in central project evaluations as part of briefing and debriefing of the stakeholders by the evaluation mission (2). Organising stakeholder workshops promotes interaction, dialogue and use of the evaluation findings. Including the key stakeholders and ensuring that they play an active role develops the capacity of those involved in the evaluation process while it is still ongoing and promotes ownership and use of the evaluation findings.

**Activities for useful and benefit-oriented evaluations**

One of the main objectives is the focus on the benefit to be achieved in the areas of influence described above and the usefulness of the evaluations (3). When designing an evaluation, it is important to adapt it flexibly to the information required, the expected use and the different degrees of complexity as the situation dictates. In all central evaluations, the Evaluation Unit conducts interviews and holds workshops to identify the information required by the users. This ensures that the evaluations are linked up in terms of their timing and content with political, institutional and cultural contexts in the user systems, which is important for the use of the evaluation findings. In central project evaluations, projects are selected on the basis of criteria, including the stakeholders and their involvement in the process. Finally, the Evaluation Unit organises a quality check on the content of evaluation products by the stakeholders in cooperation with the Sectoral Department and the officers responsible for the commission. In corporate strategy evaluations, criteria are also used to select the evaluations. Here, the entire process is closely supported and steered by a reference group within the company, and the substantive quality of the findings is checked.
Activities for evaluation findings processed and published with a focus on subject matter and target group

A further aspect to promote the use of findings involves the Evaluation Unit processing and publishing the evaluation findings with a focus on subject matter and target group (4). In central project evaluations, corporate strategy evaluations and cross-section evaluations, the evaluation findings are published directly in the form of main reports, brochures, factsheets or other suitable formats.

Activities for corporate development and organisational learning

In order to promote organisational learning and contribute to corporate development, the Evaluation Unit draws up evaluation syntheses of the central project evaluations (5). Every two years, meta-evaluations of the central project evaluations are carried out to examine whether quality standards are being met. This ensures that the quality of the central project evaluations is continually monitored in order to make any necessary adjustments. The meta-evaluations not only examine the methodological quality, but also the process quality and use of the central project evaluations. The findings are used to enhance the quality of methods and the evaluation designs. In corporate strategy evaluations and cross-section evaluations, the Evaluation Unit organises information, dialogue and learning events on evaluation findings with relevant organisational units.

Activities for evidence-based decisions

By facilitating the management response processes for corporate strategy evaluations and cross-section evaluations, in which the company responds to the recommendations made in evaluations by drawing up implementation plans, the Evaluation Unit assists in making evidence-based decisions (6). Carrying out central project evaluations at the time they are required also helps ensure that any decisions can be taken on the basis of evidence, i.e. based on robust evaluation findings.

Activities for ensuring accountability vis-à-vis commissioning parties/clients, the public and partners

In addition to the above-mentioned activities and results, the random sample selected by the Evaluation Unit in central project evaluations contributes to accountability vis-à-vis commissioning parties/clients, the public and partners (7).
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