GIZ’s evaluation system

Central project evaluations for BMZ business
As a federally owned enterprise, GIZ supports the German Government in achieving its objectives in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development.

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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Published by:
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Printed on 100% recycled paper, certified to FSC standards.
Bonn 2018

This document may be downloaded from GIZ’s website at www.giz.de/evaluierung.
Print versions are available from evaluierung@giz.de
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1 Appraisal, project evaluation and reporting

1.1 New features, advantages and instruments

The new appraisal, project evaluation and reporting system that GIZ is in the process of introducing is designed to ensure that GIZ is able to implement the requirements of the Joint Procedural Reform in line with BMZ’s expectations. By separating the appraisal and evaluation processes and introducing central project evaluations, the new system will help improve efficiency and the quality of results in the areas of decision-making, accountability and learning, in accordance with the Joint Procedural Reform. The new system also improves the quality of project evaluations and strengthens their results orientation.

Above all, the new system offers the following advantages:

- It will facilitate a stronger focus of the individual instruments on their actual function and, in this way, increase their professionalism (particularly for evaluations).
- In appraisal processes, it will create scope for the requirements of the Joint Procedural Reform to be taken into account as regards the collection of more detailed information and for preparations to be made on a more binding basis. Scope will also be created for improving the quality of project evaluations and for incorporating additional evaluation questions as required (for example, in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development).
- Central project evaluations that are carried out independently, i.e. by external evaluators on behalf of the Evaluation Unit, will increase transparency and improve the foundation for evidence-based decision-making processes at the level of projects and the steering of development policy. They will also improve the credibility of evaluation findings.
- Accountability and the verification of results will be strengthened by new, more flexible project evaluation instruments (evaluations of several related modules, interim and final evaluations and ex-post evaluations).
- By staggering the timing of project evaluations, it will be possible to use them for early dialogue with BMZ at the time of the brief assessment.

Based on the agreements made within the framework of the Joint Procedural Reform and the introduction of the new appraisal, project evaluation and reporting system, GIZ will have the following instruments and mechanisms to support decision-making, accountability and learning (as a contribution to effective knowledge management):

- brief assessment and appraisal (standard requirement for all TC modules);
- monitoring and reporting at the programme level (standard requirement for all TC modules);
- annual reporting at the module level (standard requirement for all TC modules);
- continuous results-based monitoring at the module level (standard requirement for all TC modules);
- central project evaluations (see Section 2).

When used in combination with each other, these instruments provide a comprehensive review mechanism. This ensures that the effectiveness, implementation quality and cost-effectiveness of all TC modules commissioned by BMZ are continuously and carefully reviewed.

The instruments listed above are embedded in BMZ’s continuous policy dialogue with partner governments (a process that includes consultations and government negotiations, for example) and in the corresponding country and sector strategies of BMZ and the German Federal Government. They also take into account evaluations conducted by the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval), other external evaluations and additional evaluations and studies (e.g. for compiling country strategies and developing programmes).
1.2 Brief assessment and appraisal

In the overall appraisal, evaluation and reporting system, GIZ takes account of the requirements for brief assessment and appraisal laid down in the Joint Procedural Reform as follows:

- The methodological approach used in appraisals is geared towards supplying additional, more binding information at an early stage than was previously the case (target criteria for the Joint Procedural Reform: increased transparency and policy steering options).
- The gathering of information focuses on the planning/preparation of the new TC module. Relevant lessons learned that focus on planning/preparation needs are processed mainly using documents and data from related projects or interventions that directly preceded the module.
- Inventories (reviews, reports and evaluations) and analyses of the ACTUAL situation are a key component when developing options for the brief assessment. To this end, centrally steered project evaluations that are conducted by independent evaluators will be available for a representative sample.

Consequently, the appraisal of follow-on modules does not include an evaluation or progress review. It therefore does not serve accountability purposes. As outlined below, accountability for the progress of the TC module and for the results achieved to date is ensured via continuous results-based monitoring, annual progress and final reports and – for selected TC modules – via central project evaluations. Within the scope of the appraisal, it is not possible to comprehensively analyse and assess the ongoing measure in line with the new requirements, and carrying out such an analysis/assessment at the time of the appraisal would be too late to ensure usefulness/utility.

1.3 Reporting and monitoring

In accordance with the Joint Procedural Reform, reporting at the module level provides an important basis for policy steering, is used to ensure transparency and accountability, and plays a key role in knowledge management for German development cooperation. It carries out the following main functions:

- It reports on changes in the module’s area of intervention.
- It presents the degree to which the TC module’s objectives have been achieved based on the indicators and assesses whether the intended objectives are attainable during the remaining term.
- It describes the contributions the module makes to the programme objective as well as synergies with other programme modules.
- It presents the module’s contribution to implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the national level.
- It reflects the intervention’s relevance (‘Are we doing the right thing?’).

By meeting these requirements, reporting takes on the role of an ‘evaluative self-reflection’ process. This means that, for all TC modules, it is a suitable way of providing BMZ with a reliable (but not necessarily independent) assessment of the current status of implementation, the potential for achieving objectives and the TC module’s relevance. By virtue of these functions, reporting is also an important source of information for project evaluations.

A well-functioning monitoring system is a key prerequisite for meeting reporting requirements. Results-based monitoring is a standard that must be met by all TC modules implemented by GIZ. The monitoring systems ensure that relevant data and information are available for reporting, evaluation and the analysis of lessons learned when preparing follow-on modules and conducting evaluations. Furthermore, GIZ’s Capacity WORKS management model supports a reflective approach that is geared to continuous feedback and learning.
Central project evaluations for BMZ business

2.1 Object of the evaluation and types of evaluation

Central project evaluations for BMZ business,¹ for which responsibility is delegated to GIZ, account for the majority of GIZ evaluations (see Fig. 3 in the ‘General description’ document). Central project evaluations for BMZ business assess projects² that GIZ carries out on behalf of BMZ, in order to either support the partner’s change projects or to work on sector and global issues. They incorporate a critical analytical review of the results and implementation of a project. The different types of evaluation are designed so that they deliver statements about the long-term results and sustainability that are as robust as possible. Where cost-effective and expedient in terms of the content, a project evaluation examines the predecessor projects too in order to underpin the statements made.

In accordance with the duties of reporting laid down in the Joint Procedural Reform, central project evaluation should analyse and evaluate:

- the results of the module as well as its design and quality of its implementation;
- the module’s contributions to the programme objective as well as the synergies with other programme modules;
- the module’s contribution to national implementation of the 2030 Agenda;
- the changes in the module’s area of intervention and their influence on the development measure’s success.

Central project evaluations may be carried out as final evaluations or as ex-post evaluations of completed projects or interim evaluations of ongoing projects. Ex-post evaluations usually take place between two and five years after completion of the project to be evaluated. Final evaluations are usually carried out around eight months following completion of the term, which usually runs for three years. Interim evaluations are usually carried out around twelve months before the end of the ongoing project, whereby no interim evaluation is carried out for projects with no predecessor project. Where necessary, the exact timing of the project evaluation may be determined with the officer responsible for the commission so that it may be synchronised with and support preparation of the brief assessment and/or planning of the follow-on module. The earlier it can be determined that there will be a follow-on project, the greater the degree of flexibility in determining the timing of the evaluation. For cofinancing arrangements, the evaluation is discussed and agreed with the cofinancing agencies in order to avoid duplicate work. For cooperation projects with KfW, it is examined whether a joint evaluation is expedient. A joint evaluation uses a coordinated approach as well as joint terms of reference, a joint evaluation team and joint reporting.

2.2 The evaluation portfolio

In BMZ business, all projects with a commission value greater than EUR 3 million are always incorporated into the evaluation procedure. All projects with a commission value over EUR 3 million that end within a specified twelve-month period (e.g. October 2018 – September 2019) form the ‘population’

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¹ So far, the Joint Procedural Reform applies only for BMZ commissions from TC budget item 89603 (bilateral, regional). Adjustments for BMZ commissions for global, convention and sector projects from the TC budget item are still pending, as are adjustments for projects from the budget item international technical cooperation with regions or for commissions from budget items of special initiatives, the development partnership with the private sector, crisis management, support for international agricultural research or of international environmental protection and climate change mitigation. The central project evaluation system applies for all BMZ business and not just for TC modules covered by the current scope of application of the Joint Procedural Reform.

² ‘Project’ is the overall term used here for all commissions in BMZ business and covers TC modules, global, convention, sector and international cooperation with regions projects, special initiatives, etc.
of projects to be evaluated (definition: target end, 7-digit project number (PN) including projects from special initiatives, 10-digit project number for individual measures from funds – i.e. without the fund 'shell').

The projects to be evaluated (evaluation portfolio) are selected in three steps: as a first step, a regionally stratified random sample is used to identify the projects to be evaluated\(^3\). Secondly, projects that have already been evaluated are removed, along with projects whose content can be assigned to other projects – e.g. development workers financed from the Study and Expert Fund. The random sample of evaluated projects should be chosen so that representative statements regarding the assessment of the OECD-DAC criteria can be made for all projects in the population.

In step three, evaluations are added to the evaluation portfolio based on the specific information required, as suggested by the operational departments, the Sectoral Department, the Evaluation Unit or BMZ, and on the basis of the following criteria:

- the project's strategic importance and/or
- the project's political profile and/or
- the strategic evaluation priority for BMZ/GIZ/the partner side and/or
- the relevance of the use of the evaluation findings and/or
- the project's potential for broad-scale replication and/or
- the project's potential for risk and innovation and/or
- the project’s relevance within the context of the 2030 Agenda.

Overall, in the medium term, central project evaluations are guaranteed to account for 50% of the population of all projects with a commission value of over EUR 3 million.

### 2.3 Functions and use of central project evaluations

Evaluations of projects commissioned by BMZ fulfil three basic functions: they support evidence-based decisions, promote transparency and accountability and foster organisational learning within the scope of contributing to effective knowledge management. GIZ structures the planning, implementation and use of evaluations so that the contribution the evaluation process and the evaluation findings make to these basic functions is optimised.

**Support for evidence-based decision-making**

Central project evaluations are designed to support evidence-based decisions at the following three levels:

- steering of ongoing projects and planning of follow-on projects (project level);
- alignment with and implementation of the supported political and administrative reforms among partners (partner level);
- basic orientation of the project and, where applicable, of the programme and of policy in the area of intervention (at the level of BMZ).

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\(^3\)Proportionate stratification (proportionate to the population): according to GIZ’s operational departments

- GloBe (Sector and Global Programmes Department) = the world
- Africa = sub-Saharan Africa
- Asia/Pacific, Latin America/Caribbean
- Mediterranean/Europe/Central Asia, Middle East
In order to optimise the use of project evaluations for evidence-based decision-making at these three levels, evaluation management at GIZ ensures that:

- decision-makers at BMZ (country and sectoral divisions), in the partner organisations and in the projects
  - are able to incorporate the particular information they require, and
  - are the primary addressees and intended users of the project evaluation;
- there is close interaction between evaluators, sector experts and decision-makers during the project evaluation;
- the knowledge generated by the project evaluations and the recommendations drafted on this basis are relevant for decision-making – where possible at all three levels – and promote strategic reflection among all stakeholders;
- the evaluation process adopts a participatory approach that is geared to inclusion, dialogue and deliberation and, in this way, can help strengthen the decision-making competence of decision-makers and change agents on the partner side.

**Transparency and accountability**

In order to optimise the use of evaluations for transparency and accountability, GIZ’s evaluation managers ensure that project evaluation reports are submitted to BMZ and their findings communicated to the cooperation partners and the general public. Project evaluation reports are available to interested members of the general public on the transparency portal. They are prepared and published in German or English. They always contain a summary report in German and English that sums up the key findings and recommendations and – depending on the requirements of the commissioning party/client or partner – is translated into the language of communication of the partner countries. Additional needs-oriented and addressee-oriented versions of the findings and recommendations may be prepared and published.

In consultation with BMZ, there are some situations where GIZ does not publish the project evaluation’s main report, namely only if: publication would violate the rights of third parties, the anonymisation of personal data cannot be safeguarded, the report contains business secrets or could impact on ongoing national and international negotiations or affect foreign or security policy.

**Organisational learning and contribution to knowledge management**

Project evaluation findings are processed and used so as to facilitate learning among partners and within the project as well as at GIZ and BMZ. In order to ensure that the findings can be fed into the continuous improvement process, GIZ uses learning instruments that generate feedback loops that channel the evaluation findings back into the standard processes and decision-making structures. These include:

- **Reflection forums with partners:** Reflection forums provide the opportunity to engage in dialogue on the potential use of evaluation findings on the partner side, particularly as regards incorporating the findings into the partner’s decision-making processes. They are attended not only by the people directly involved and responsible, but by anyone who could benefit from the findings.
- **Reflection forum with BMZ:** The findings and recommendations of the evaluation report are discussed with the BMZ division responsible for the project, the relevant sector division and the evaluation division at BMZ in terms of the need for action for the project and the area of intervention, and in relation to the development policy lessons learned.
- **Sector networks:** Sector networks systematically identify, discuss and assess the findings of evaluations, above all in relation to cross-cutting issues.
- **Product managers:** Evaluation findings that are relevant for the corresponding product are made available by the product managers under ‘Results and practical knowledge’.
- **Dialogue and information events**: These events offer a platform for cross-sectoral exchange on evaluation findings. They are geared not only to the people directly involved and responsible, but to anyone who may benefit from the findings.

GIZ also uses cross-section evaluations to ensure that the findings of project evaluations can be used for company-wide learning. It pools the available experience-based knowledge and expertise in cross-section evaluations that take the form of evaluation syntheses. To this end, project evaluations from a given year, sector, region or country are analysed and factors influencing success or failure are identified, along with good practices.

### 2.4 Evaluation criteria

In order to ensure that project evaluations are comparable at an international level and to support the process of harmonising evaluations between the German actors of bilateral development cooperation, since 2006, BMZ has stipulated that the **evaluation criteria for German bilateral development cooperation** be used for evaluations of projects commissioned by BMZ. These criteria are based on the five standard evaluation criteria used by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact (overarching development results) and sustainability – and are defined as follows:

- **Relevance**: examines whether the project is doing the right thing. The alignment of the project objectives with the priorities of the target group, the partner country and of the development measure’s commissioning party/client is assessed.

- **Effectiveness**: looks at whether and how the project achieves the development measure’s objectives. The degree to which the project objectives have been achieved is examined, as is their consistency.

- **Efficiency**: analyses whether the use of resources is appropriate in relation to the outputs and outcomes achieved.

- **Impact**: examines whether the development measure contributes to the achievement of overarching development objectives. Not only is the achievement of the development measure’s targeted overarching development objectives analysed, so too are its direct positive and negative changes and the unintended effects.

- **Sustainability**: looks at whether the identified positive results within the scope of the three dimensions of sustainability (social, environmental and economic) are durable/institutionalised in the partner system. The duration of the positive results following the end of support by GIZ is then assessed.

Issues related to coherence, complementarity and coordination are appraised as individual criteria or within the scope of other criteria. The quality of implementation is also examined as part of central project evaluations.

### 2.5 Evaluation design and data collection methods

The term ‘evaluation design’ refers to the plan used to implement an evaluation and, for central evaluations, comprises the following:

- a brief description of the project (object of the evaluation) and discussion of tasks and challenges related to project evaluation that are identified on this basis;

- a description of the goals and of the overarching evaluation questions and clarification of the evaluation criteria to be used;
• a description of how the relevant stakeholders are identified and involved (selection, information, role in the evaluation process, etc.);

• an outline of the strategies that will ensure the optimal use of the evaluation process and of the evaluation findings;

• definition of how data collection for the project evaluation will be designed (including gathering data, analysis, assessment/interpretation).

In its evaluations, GIZ always makes sure that it uses an appropriate combination of quantitative and qualitative empirical social research methods. The mix of methods is aligned with the object of the evaluation, the evaluation questions, and the time and human resources available. By ensuring that the evaluation team is as diverse as possible (e.g. it includes both men and women from a range of sectoral backgrounds and with country-specific knowledge), evaluations can establish critical findings that take account of different perspectives (investigator triangulation). Method and data triangulation also balance out the strengths and weaknesses of individual data collection methods and increase the validity of the findings.

Results-based evaluations of projects commissioned by BMZ are not only concerned with capturing results. The main challenge here is to provide evidence of a causal relationship between measures and results (association) or to plausibly substantiate the contribution that measures have made to results (association). Addressing the challenges posed by attributing results to measures requires a theoretically sound and verifiable (rigorous) approach. GIZ believes that such an approach includes not just experimental evaluation designs but also any methodologies that systematically deal with the attribution of results to measures. These include experimental, statistical, theory-based and participatory methods.

For central project evaluations for BMZ business, it is usually sufficient to capture as robustly as possible the contribution that the project under review has made to achieving objectives (association) as a credible basis for meeting accountability requirements. The aim here is to identify a plausible relationship between the project and the results achieved, i.e. using methodological and data triangulation to gather sufficient evidence that the observed intended results can more than likely be attributed to the project. In addition to documenting the project contribution, an understanding should be gained and knowledge increased about what works and what does not, in order to provide a basis for making sound decisions on the project’s future orientation.

GIZ stipulates that a theory-based approach be used so as to ensure the robust verification of results in central project evaluations. Theory-based approaches such as realist evaluation, process tracing and contribution analysis have the following methodological elements:

• a results model that is usually included in GIZ’s project proposal to BMZ and maps expectations of the project’s cause-and-effect relationships and demonstrates the paths to achieving the targeted results via the inputs, activities and outputs;

• a theory of change that is based on the results model and that incorporates hypotheses and, where applicable, mechanisms for describing the cause-and-effect relationships that are set out in the results model and that can be examined and assessed in the evaluation. Potential risks during project implementation are also to be taken into account, along with the unintended positive and negative results.

• a contribution story that documents the observed changes and the role the project under review plays in achieving results based on reliable, transparent and credible evidence. To this end, alternative explanatory approaches (such as contextual factors or third-party measures) must also be analysed and the theory of change adapted where necessary.

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4BMZ working paper on impact evaluations, 2008 German only, p. 6
Central project evaluations are designed to select mainly theory-based evaluation designs that are aligned with the information required and with the object of the evaluation. Based on GIZ’s results model and its results-based monitoring system, the indicators described in the offer and the hypotheses outlined in the results model can be used as a basis for the assessment and their plausibility checked. Appropriate quantitative and qualitative methods such as document analysis, exploratory individual and group interviews and standardised online surveys are used to collect data. Additional methods to capture unintended results and to assess efficiency must be used to supplement the theory-based approach.

In order to assess efficiency, central project evaluations look at cost-output ratios and use the follow-the-money approach to analyse them and take better account of the ‘efficiency’ criterion. Unlike the descriptive method of expert judgement previously used in decentralised project evaluations, this enables an efficiency analysis to be carried out on the basis of facts and figures and facilitates much better analysis.

2.6 Quality assurance of project evaluations

Quality standards

GIZ’s evaluations are oriented towards the evaluation standards of the German Evaluation Society (DeGEval) – utility, feasibility, propriety and accuracy – as well as towards OECD/DAC’s quality standards for development evaluation. GIZ’s Evaluation Unit lays down quality standards for process, methodological and product quality as a basis for developing quality-assurance instruments.

Usefulness

The usefulness of an evaluation guarantees that the information requirements of the evaluation’s users are taken into account and that they are provided with the desired information.

- **Identification of the stakeholders and affected parties:** The stakeholders in or the individuals or groups affected by the object of the evaluation should be identified so that their interests are clarified and can be taken into account to the greatest degree possible when preparing the evaluation.
- **Clarification of the evaluation’s purpose:** The purpose of the evaluation should be clearly identified so that the stakeholders and the affected parties can adopt a definite stance and the evaluation team has a clear mandate.
- **Credibility and competence of the evaluator:** Evaluators should be credible and have the methodological and sectoral skills needed to maximise the credibility and acceptance of the evaluation findings.
- **Selection and scope of information:** The type and scope of information gathered should make it possible to address the issues to be examined in relation to the object of the evaluation and also take account of the information required by BMZ and other addressees.
- **Transparency of values:** The perspectives and assumptions of the stakeholders and affected parties – on which the evaluation and the interpretation of the findings are based – should be described so that the basis for rating the criteria is clear.
- **Completeness and clarity of reporting:** Evaluation reports should provide all of the key information required and should be transparent and easy to understand.
- **Punctuality of the evaluation:** Project evaluations should be started and completed punctually so that their findings can be incorporated into upcoming decision-making and improvement processes.
- **Utilisation and benefits of the evaluation:** Planning, implementation and reporting of an evaluation should encourage the stakeholders and affected parties to take good note of the evaluation and to use its findings.
Process quality

‘Process quality’ corresponds to DeGEval’s standards of ‘feasibility’ and ‘propriety’. The way in which an evaluation’s process is designed is key to its utilisation. In order to ensure that it is as useful as possible, the following standards should be fulfilled:

- **Appropriate approach**: Evaluation procedures, including those used to obtain the required information, should be selected so that the burden on the object of the evaluation and on the stakeholders and affected parties is proportionate to the anticipated benefits of the evaluation.
- **Diplomatic approach**: Evaluations should be planned and implemented so that they can achieve the maximum possible acceptance among the different stakeholders and affected parties as regards the approach used and the findings obtained.
- **Efficiency of the evaluation**: The resources required for the evaluation should be proportionate to its benefits.
- **Formal agreements**: The obligations of the contractual parties to an evaluation (what should be done by whom, how and when?) should be laid down in writing in order to ensure that the parties are obliged to fulfil all conditions stipulated in the agreement or to renegotiate them should they be unable to do so.
- **Protection of individual rights**: Evaluations should be planned and implemented so as to protect the safety, dignity and rights of those involved.
- **Complete and fair review**: Evaluations should examine the strengths and weaknesses of the object of the evaluation as completely and fairly as possible and present them so that strengths can be optimised and any deficiencies addressed.
- **Unbiased implementation and reporting**: The evaluation should describe different perspectives of the stakeholders and affected parties in relation to the object of the evaluation and should clearly present the evaluation’s findings. The reports should also indicate the unbiased position of the evaluation team, as should the entire evaluation process. Ratings should be awarded fairly and, to the greatest extent possible, should be unbiased.
- **Disclosure of the findings**: The evaluation findings should be made accessible to all stakeholders and affected parties to the greatest extent possible.

Methodological quality

The methodological quality of an evaluation relates to the way in which empirical social research methods are applied to data collection and assessment and corresponds to the DeGEval criterion of accuracy.

- **Description of the object of the evaluation**: The object of the evaluation should be described and documented clearly and precisely so that it can be clearly identified.
- **Context analysis**: The context of the object of the evaluation should be examined and analysed in sufficient detail.
- **Description of the purpose and the approach**: In order to facilitate identification and assessment, the object of the evaluation should be accurately documented and described, as should its purpose, the questions examined and the approach used, including the methods.
- **Statement of information sources**: The sources of information used within the scope of an evaluation should be described in sufficient detail so that the reliability and appropriateness of the information can be assessed.
- **Secure and reliable information**: The procedures used to obtain data should be selected or developed and then used in such a way that the reliability of the data obtained and their validity in relation to the answering of evaluation questions can be safeguarded based on technical standards. These standards should be oriented towards the quality criteria used in empirical social research.
- **Systematic error check**: The information gathered, processed, analysed and presented in an evaluation should be systematically checked for errors.
• **Analysis of qualitative and quantitative information:** The qualitative and quantitative information gathered in an evaluation should be appropriate and should be systematically analysed based on technical standards in order to ensure that the questions examined can be answered effectively.

• **Justified conclusions:** The conclusions drawn by an evaluation should be derived from findings so as to ensure that the addressees can understand them.

• **Meta-evaluation:** Evaluations should be documented and archived in a suitable format in order to facilitate meta-evaluations.

### Quality assurance instruments and procedures

When conducting central project evaluations, the Evaluation Unit uses the following instruments to ensure that quality standards are observed:

• **Clarification of the mandate:** A clear definition of the mandate both with the party commissioning the evaluation and with the external evaluators – in consultation with the officer responsible for the commission – forms the basis of any successful evaluation. It prevents conflict from arising during the evaluation and increases acceptance of the evaluation findings and the satisfaction of all stakeholders with the process used. Evaluation managers must therefore ensure that the outcome of clarifying the mandate of the evaluation is as clear and unambiguous as possible.

• **Inception report:** An inception report summarises the preliminary findings of document analyses and interviews conducted in relation to the project to be evaluated. It also specifies the evaluation design, focus and scope and takes a critical look at the quality of the available documents. Within the scope of this report, the evaluators entrusted with implementation also fine-tune details of the data collection instruments used. The inception report is a key input by the evaluator, and comments by the commissioning party/client and the evaluation managers constitute an important quality assurance instrument in a project evaluation.

• **Annotated structure of the report:** These are binding guidelines for creating evaluation products such as inception reports and main reports and for the content and structure of related comments and the quality expected.

• **Methodological requirements for external evaluators:** GIZ usually specifies a theory-based approach as outlined in Section 2.5. In this context, GIZ does not regard contribution analysis as an evaluation method in the stricter sense of the term, but as a systematic analytical and reporting strategy that facilitates the use of different data collection methods.

• **Comments on the project evaluation report:** The final project evaluation report is an independent report produced by the evaluators commissioned by GIZ. When discussing the draft report, the evaluators are free to decide whether or not they will include the feedback they receive from representatives of the project-managing units at BMZ and GIZ and from the evaluation managers in the Evaluation Unit, unless the comments relate to services that have been contractually agreed. GIZ reserves the right to comment on the independent project evaluation report so as to shed light on divergent assessments or findings.

As the quality of an evaluation depends to a large degree on planning and monitoring of the project, it is very important that the **evaluability of projects** is safeguarded. This includes having a results model with corresponding hypotheses, SMART-compliant indicators, baseline data and an adequate monitoring system as well as a record of comparative perspectives of partners, target groups and other relevant actors that is openly documented using qualitative survey methods (KOMPASS), in order to supplement indicator-based monitoring.

Furthermore, the quality of an evaluation depends to a large degree on its design. The Evaluation Unit therefore advises selected projects⁶ to conduct an **evaluability assessment**. The aim here is to stipulate the crucial elements of an evaluation at a point in time in the project at which it is still possible

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⁶ The Evaluation Unit will compile the relevant selection criteria.
to shape its design. On this basis, an evaluability assessment is conducted during a project’s planning phase or at the start of implementation and adopts a utilisation-focused approach that is designed to underpin the usability of evaluation findings. This not only improves the quality of evaluations, it also optimises their cost-effectiveness. This applies to short-term and, above all, to long-term projects.

**Review of the quality of central project evaluations**

Every two years, project evaluations are subjected to an independent meta-evaluation that is conducted as a full survey by external evaluators on behalf of the Evaluation Unit. This meta-evaluation reviews whether quality standards have been applied and met and ensures that the quality of central project evaluations is continuously monitored so that adjustments may be made where necessary.

Meta-evaluations not only examine methodological quality, they also look at process quality and the use of central project evaluations. This broader definition of ‘quality’ is an innovative feature of meta-evaluations, which usually only analyse methodological quality.

From 2019 onwards, the average ratings for the DAC criteria in GIZ evaluation reports will be calculated on the basis of the project evaluation reports deemed ‘sufficiently robust’ by the meta-evaluations. In order to ensure that there is a sufficient data basis, a meta-evaluation must conduct a full survey, however. Therefore, as a means of comparison, the average ratings of methodologically appropriate evaluations with room for improvement can be used as an alternative.

**2.7 Module contribution to the programme objective and to the 2030 Agenda**

In accordance with the requirements of the Joint Procedural Reform, central project evaluations should also analyse and evaluate the project’s contribution to both the programme objective and to national implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The evaluation of the module’s contribution to the programme objective is based on the indicators and on the programme’s underlying theory of change.

When assessing the contribution to the 2030 Agenda in central project evaluations, it is important to establish to what extent the 2030 Agenda (individual SDGs and principles) has already been taken into account in project design and implementation (and in the monitoring system) and whether the project evaluation therefore need ‘only’ document, analyse and evaluate this, or whether it first needs to reconstruct the reference to the 2030 Agenda. The principles of the 2030 Agenda may be integrated into application of the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria or they may serve as additional aspects.

If references to the 2030 Agenda are integrated into the OECD/DAC criteria, they are also relevant to evaluations and are incorporated into the rating of the project based on the OECD/DAC criteria. In future, central project evaluations will address the following requirements of the 2030 Agenda where possible and appropriate:

- description of the contributions to the SDGs and principles set out in the country strategies and programme design;
- description of the sustainability dimensions and analysis of trade-offs (synergies, interaction, unintended results);
- implementation of the ‘leave no one behind’ principle, e.g. using disaggregated data collection and reporting on different sub-target groups, taking special account of marginalised groups.
- reflection on learning approaches that have emerged when implementing multi-stakeholder partnerships, integrated approaches and the ‘leave no one behind’ principle.

The specification of a theory-based approach as a standard in central project evaluations facilitates the documentation of contributions to the programme objective and to implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The characteristics of a contribution analysis approach, for instance (e.g. focus on answering the questions ‘how’ and ‘in what circumstances’; consideration of other influencing factors/alternative rationale; participation of various stakeholders) could prove useful in making robust statements on the contribution to the programme objective and the 2030 Agenda, taking into account contextual factors.
2.8 Evaluation management

The evaluation management process is a key element of GIZ’s evaluation system. Evaluation managers design it in dialogue with the intended users of the relevant evaluation (in particular with decision-makers and change agents). Central project evaluations are steered in consultation with BMZ and with partners. The officers responsible for the commission interface with the partners in this context.

The following core elements need to be taken into account in evaluation management:

- the complexity of political, institutional and cultural contexts and the embedding of project evaluations;
- the evaluation and decision-making culture of the partner organisations that are relevant for project implementation;
- the project evaluation’s utilisation potential;
- the key role played by the involvement of stakeholders (decision-makers, change agents and potential agents for implementing recommendations).

GIZ’s evaluation management process covers the design and steering of the following three evaluation phases: concept and design, implementation and reporting and communication of and support for utilisation.

Design phase

During this phase, evaluation managers need to carry out the following tasks:

- identify and involve the stakeholders;
- determine and delineate the object of the evaluation and formulate the evaluation questions in consultation with the stakeholders, taking into account the evaluation criteria to be applied;
- draft the terms of reference and assess offers received as part of the tendering process;
- brief evaluators;
- analyse the existing data and knowledge available, provide initial documents and data.

The following tasks need to be carried out during the inception phase:

- review the results logic (including the description), define and assign the hypotheses, compare and whittle down the hypotheses to be examined;
- choose the data collection and evaluation methods: targeted, efficient selection to review the hypotheses drafted and selected;
- plan the processes to be used in the evaluation and identify interim products, plan the mission to be conducted on site, plan the budget;
- draft, discuss and agree and review the quality of the inception report.

Implementation and reporting phase

During this phase, the different actors carry out the following tasks:

- collect and evaluate data;
- draft, discuss and agree and review the quality of the project evaluation report;
- debrief the project team, partners and possibly other stakeholders.
Communication and utilisation phase

The communication and utilisation phase is key as it ensures that evaluations have the desired impact. Therefore, GIZ strongly supports the use of evaluations for evidence-based decisions and organisational learning and for transparency and accountability.

The following tasks are carried out in this phase:

- coordinate the drafting of comments on the report (where necessary);
- reflect on and discuss the findings and recommendations with the stakeholders;
- implement learning, dialogue and information events for additional addressee groups;
- disseminate the findings on the intranet and internet, via publications and at conferences.

2.9 Roles and responsibilities

Besides evaluators, the most important actors in central project evaluations are outlined below, together with their roles:

- **BMZ**: BMZ commissions central evaluations of projects implemented on its behalf. Therefore, BMZ and GIZ usually agree the evaluation criteria for central project evaluations, as well as the standards to be applied. GIZ informs BMZ of its annual project evaluation programme and provides it with the inception reports so that it can submit comments where applicable – particularly as regards the evaluation questions. Finally, GIZ submits the project evaluation reports to BMZ. BMZ also ensures that the entire German DC evaluation system is coherent and involves GIZ in relevant activities and evaluations.

- **Partners**: Partners play a key role throughout the entire central project evaluation process (to evaluate TC modules, for example). When the evaluation is being prepared, information on the required findings and the decisions that need to be made is obtained via the officers responsible for the commission and is incorporated into the evaluation’s terms of reference. Partner systems and their capacities are to be taken into account as regards the available and required data that are to be reviewed for the inception report. During the evaluation’s implementation phase, relevant partner perspectives are documented and joint dialogue and reflection sessions are held (briefing and debriefing). Partners are also key stakeholders when it comes to disseminating and utilising or supporting the use of evaluation findings and recommendations.

- **Management Board, operational units and the Sectoral Department**: The Management Board decides what projects will be included in the central evaluation portfolio and commissions the Evaluation Unit with its implementation. Within the operational units (that manage the project), the officers responsible for the commission play a particularly important role. They support the preparation and implementation of project evaluations, comment on drafts of the inception and evaluation reports and are responsible for use of the findings and recommendations within the project context. They have a particularly important role to play above all in involving partners. Evaluation officers in the departments and corporate units are key multipliers and represent the perspective of their department or unit, acting as a point of contact for the project evaluation. The Sectoral Department plays a key role in ensuring the evaluability of projects by advising on the results model, the development of smarter indicators, implementation of the baseline and on results-based monitoring and checking of the quality of offers.
**Evaluation Unit:** The Evaluation Unit is the key contact at GIZ for all evaluation-related issues and has the required methodological and managerial expertise to deal with such matters. It reports directly to the Management Board and is separate from GIZ's operational business. This organisational structure safeguards its independence. Its core tasks are evaluation management and ensuring that evaluation findings are disseminated. It carries out the following tasks during project evaluations:

- steers and is responsible for drafting the central project evaluations portfolio and submits it to the Management Board for decision-making;
- steers and is responsible for implementing central project evaluations and for quality assurance in this regard;
- submits the project evaluation reports to BMZ and arranges their publication;
- continuously develops the procedures, instruments and standards for project evaluations and ensures that the evaluations always comply with current national and international standards;
- supports use of the project evaluation findings.
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