

Shaping sustainability: The 2030 Agenda in German development cooperation; Focus report

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Focus Report

Shaping sustainability

The 2030 Agenda in German development cooperation



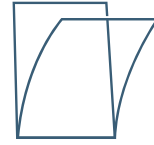
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Focus Report

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Abbreviations

BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development <i>Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung</i>
CPR	Country portfolio review
DAC	Development Assistance Committee, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
DEval	German Institute for Development Evaluation <i>Deutsches Evaluierungsinstitut der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit</i>
ECD	Evaluation capacity development
FOCELAC	Competence development and networking of evaluation actors in Latin America as a contribution to the Agenda 2030 <i>Fomento de Capacidades y Articulación de Actores de la Evaluación en Latinoamérica</i>
FOCEVAL	Evaluation capacity development in selected countries in Latin America <i>Fomento de Capacidades en Evaluación</i>
GDP	Gross domestic product
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HLPF	High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
IEG	Independent Evaluation Group, World Bank Group
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TrC	Triangular cooperation
UN	United Nations
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WFP	United Nations World Food Programme

Foreword

Dear readers,

In agreeing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the international community has created its own ambitious reference framework with a highly significant bearing on development policy and development cooperation. Its concept of sustainable development encompasses not only the persistence of development impacts but also the interlinkages between the social, environmental and economic aspects of development. This multidimensionality along with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the principles for putting them into practice make the 2030 Agenda a supremely demanding and multifaceted endeavour.

It was on account of the complexity and significance of the 2030 Agenda, and the status of sustainability as a trans-sectoral theme in development cooperation, that DEval chose sustainability as one of its thematic focuses for the last few years. This publication, our first Focus Report, aims to shed light on the 2030 Agenda as an orientation framework from different perspectives – those of the policy sphere, evaluation, research and civil society – and to highlight lessons learned from putting the Agenda into practice whilst calling attention to critical challenges.

We also report findings from our evaluation work so as to contribute to a stronger evidence base for sustainable policy making. A clear message emerges that implementing sustainable strategies, measures and projects in development cooperation is anything but effortless. The difficulties of implementation are compounded not only by the Agenda's demanding content but also by the fact that governmental and non-governmental actors, in development cooperation organisations and our partner countries alike, often pursue interests and interventions with a short-term rather than a sustainability focus. For these reasons, learning and reflection processes as well as continuous accountability measures will be necessary in order to improve the sustainability of development cooperation and its alignment with the 2030 Agenda. Evaluation will play a significant role in this as an instrument for evidence-based and sustainable policy making.

For that reason, this report also addresses challenges and potentials of evaluation. To improve the empirical robustness and practical usefulness of evaluation further, it will be necessary to make use of data from new sources on a new scale, to combine different survey methods and to deal with more complex systems of targets analytically. Ultimately, from a development policy perspective, the aim is to put our partner countries themselves in a better position to evaluate development measures and their own policies as a means of strengthening sustainable learning processes and democratic accountability.

On that note, I wish you, our readers, a thought-provoking read and I hope that the report itself can make a modest contribution towards shaping development cooperation more sustainably.

Prof. Dr Jörg Faust

Director
DEval



Prof. Dr Jörg Faust
Director
DEval

Introduction: The 2030 Agenda – sustainability as a guiding vision for development cooperation and evaluation

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, the international community set out a concept for global development which applies to all countries of the world and thus considerably outstrips the status of a pure development agenda. The Agenda gives prominence to sustainability as the central principle of global development.

Sustainability within the terms of the 2030 Agenda implies a transformation towards a new vision of development that goes beyond the confined consideration of per-capita income. The three central dimensions – environmental, economic and social – should be thought of and implemented as a whole. This integrative character is also anchored in the 17 SDGs, which in turn are associated with 169 subsidiary targets.

In addition, there are four central principles, which run through the entire 2030 Agenda and lay the foundation for all action taken to achieve the 17 SDGs:

- Leaving no one behind: All states and all population groups within a country must be able to benefit from sustainable development; the poorest should be reached first wherever possible.
- Considering interdependencies: Numerous interdependencies come into play between the three dimensions of sustainability and between the 17 goals, and the principle is that no single goal may be achieved to the detriment of another.
- Joint responsibility and universality: The 2030 Agenda applies to all countries, and SDG 17 holds that non-governmental actors, for example from civil society, the private sector, and academia also have their parts to play in global sustainable development.
- Accountability: Every country bears primary responsibility for its social and economic development and must account for how it is pursuing the principles and goals of the 2030 Agenda.

Since 2015, all governments have been called upon to implement the sustainability agenda in their countries. For instance, in its current Sustainable Development Strategy dating from 2017, Germany has undertaken to implement the 2030 Agenda at international, European and national levels. The Strategy also affirms that the Agenda represents the central reference framework for German development cooperation.

The contribution of DEval to sustainability in development cooperation

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda poses enormous challenges, however, both to industrialised nations and to developing countries. This is partly because of the extraordinarily ambitious system of targets laid out in the SDGs, and the trade-offs inherent within them. On the other hand, when certain countries and international organisations attempt to document their contributions towards achievement of the goals, they soon encounter methodological limitations. In this context, evaluation is credited with a key role.

“**According to the German Strategy for Sustainable Development, the 2030 Agenda has become the central reference framework for German development cooperation.**”

There are few policy areas in which the global development goals are of such great importance as in development cooperation, which has a long-standing tradition of evaluation. With the present report, DEval aims to bring key insights and experiences on the sustainability of development cooperation and its evaluation into the international debate. One particular concern is to answer the questions of what evaluation can contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and how evaluations in development cooperation need to be adapted for this purpose.

This report takes stock of the challenges that arise for development cooperation, and for the evaluation of it, as a result of the comprehensive character of the 2030 Agenda and its vision of sustainability. It draws on DEval evaluations, supplemented with articles by renowned experts from evaluation, development cooperation, research, politics and civil society.

The first chapter provides an overview of current progress with implementation and how the challenges of the 2030 Agenda are being addressed, especially in German development cooperation. It goes on to present the implications of the Agenda for the evaluation of development cooperation. For instance, international experts call for more division of labour and knowledge sharing, and for methods which do justice to the Agenda’s systemic approach. Evaluation experts from German development cooperation discuss how the 2030 Agenda is changing the evaluation of German development cooperation, and how important it is to achieve greater harmonisation of activities and to carry out joint evaluations.

Because of the crucial importance of the Agenda’s principles, examples of their implementation and the demands of doing so are presented in Chapter 2. Which conditions must be met to ensure that no one is left behind? What are the interdependencies between the SDGs and how can they be measured? How can new actors from the private sector or the population be recruited for sustainable development? And how can the partner countries be supported to evaluate the successes of their measures independently? To complete the picture, Chapter 2.5 considers which system levers might be used by development cooperation to improve the persistence of measures over time, and which factors are impervious to any such influence.

In the four years since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, some progress has been achieved: The Agenda acts as a central orientation framework for all development cooperation activities. Evaluation, for its part, has made progress in reflecting this orientation framework. The outlook in Chapter 3 examines which steps towards implementation of the Agenda are still outstanding and which mandates for action can be derived for development cooperation. Many tasks also remain to be tackled in the field of evaluation to ensure that it contributes fully to evidence-based policy making, and hence to global sustainable development.



Dr Marcus Kaplan
DEval Team Leader



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DEval Evaluator

Part 1

**Taking stock after
four years of the 2030
Agenda: Shaping and
evaluating sustainability
in development
cooperation**



Chapter 1.1

The 2030 Agenda: Pathways from the vision to the reality

The 2030 Agenda is a global concept for development with 17 ambitious goals. As it lays the foundation for a new global policy, its implementation demands a multitude of transformations – including new development strategies, partnerships, structures and forms of cooperation. Snapshots from the perspective of development research, development policy and development evaluation highlight the issues that count when implementing the 2030 Agenda.

“**The 2030 Agenda has not yet taken hold as a system of targets for international cooperation between industrialised countries.**”

Business as usual is not an option

After its adoption in September 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its 17 goals came face to face with institutions that were poorly positioned for the implementation of such a universal, integrated agenda. At the same time the Agenda was quickly confronted with political and economic dynamics that had received scant attention while it was being negotiated.

The need for action to spur on ambitious implementation of the 2030 Agenda is clear from the three following observations in particular:

— Finding institutional answers

Although the governments of developing and emerging countries and institutions of international development cooperation could tie in the Agenda with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), ever since 2015 they have been somewhat in danger of misunderstanding the SDGs as a continuation of the MDGs, which really concentrated on the reduction of extreme poverty. This same tendency is reflected in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) adopted in July 2015, which sets out to achieve the SDGs essentially by building on the traditional process of development financing. But the SDGs represent a universal welfare concept for a civilisation that will soon reach ten billion people within the boundaries of the Earth system – a major

step forward and an important shift in perspective!

So the SDGs are not only a guiding vision for developing and emerging countries, and for cooperation with and among them; they are also a transformation agenda for industrialised countries and for their cooperation with each other. For these countries, however, internationally agreed, quantified and time-bound systems of targets to be implemented in domestic policy are largely a new experience.

Germany is one of the few countries to have passed relevant comprehensive action plans, such as the Federal Government's updated Strategy for Sustainable Development, and to have created supporting institutions and actor networks like the Science Platform Sustainability 2030.

Four years on from the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the European Union is still in the process of reflecting on how the SDGs can be linked with relevant European policy processes. It is encouraging that the international community's one institutional innovation, the newly created High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) at the United Nations (UN), is evolving a positive dynamic of collective pressure and mutual learning – particularly with the Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) – which also extends to the industrialised countries.

Nevertheless, the 2030 Agenda has not yet taken hold as a system of targets for international cooperation between industrialised countries. Also there are too

few international institutions which, like the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund, effectively support transformation processes in both developing and industrialised countries. In important global governance forums like the G7 or the G20, the SDGs serve as a development-policy framework for action for purposes such as the orientation of cooperation with Africa, but seldom as a system of targets for shaping core activities – the continuing development of the global economy as a whole. The G20 Action Plan on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, developed in 2016 under the Chinese Presidency, was not ultimately able to unleash a transformative effect. If the world's largest economies hesitate to implement the Agenda domestically and in cooperation with each other, it will scarcely be possible to achieve the SDGs globally. International cooperation to achieve the SDGs cannot be reduced either to aid for developing countries or to pure mutual learning among industrialised countries.

What is required is mutually transformative cooperation between countries at all stages of development, aiming for complementary structural changes on both sides. The new Aachen Treaty between France and Germany, which provides for intensified cooperation between the two countries, might serve as an example here – if its chapter on sustainable development does indeed result in joint projects concerning the restructuring of both national economies. Likewise, transatlantic cooperation and cooperation with Russia and China should be shaped as transformative partnerships in keeping with the SDGs. Instead of delegating the SDGs to development policy, in this way they could be positioned as the centrepiece of global (economic) policy. Admittedly, given the current crisis of multilateralism and

“**If the world’s largest economies hesitate to implement the Agenda domestically and in cooperation with each other, it will scarcely be possible to achieve the SDGs globally. International cooperation to achieve the SDGs cannot be reduced either to aid for developing countries or to pure mutual learning among industrialised countries.**”

increasingly populist governments in many important states, cooperations on the basis of the 2030 Agenda are difficult. But pioneer countries should shift the SDGs to the centre of their international cooperation.

— **Six transformations for all 17 SDGs**

Just as the 2030 Agenda was faced with an institutional landscape that had not been built to implement it, the SDGs encountered a silo mentality, conceptually and strategically. The 17 SDGs were conceived as an interdependent whole. They cannot and must not be implemented singly or in isolation, and never at the expense of other goals. In spite of this, many organisations and governments have a tendency to pick out individual goals, especially their “favourites”, and carrying on as before on that basis. Rather than thinking about the end result, their focus is on what they do (and always have done). This is how the indivisible nature of the system of targets is quickly forgotten.

The research consortium The World in 2050 argues that all 17 goals can be achieved if six key transformations can be realised in all countries and the global economy as a whole. These were developed based on an analysis of the interdependencies, the common benefits and the trade-offs between the 17 SDGs.

A framework for action has thus emerged which permits governments or international organisations to develop the necessary and sufficient transformation pathways towards implementation of the 2030 Agenda and strategic interventions for particular countries, rather than losing their bearings in the maze-like system of the 17 SDGs.

Six transformations to achieve the SDGs



Source: TWI2050 – *The World in 2050 (2018), Transformations to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals*. The World in 2050 Initiative, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), Laxenburg, Austria.

”
Only when the transformations of digitalisation and sustainability are synchronised can the implementation of the 2030 Agenda succeed.

— Bringing the SDGs into the digital age

Technological changes only play a secondary role in the 2030 Agenda. But the transformations required for sustainability are taking place in a global economy that is being radically changed by digital automation, artificial intelligence and virtual spaces. Only when the transformations of digitalisation and sustainability are synchronised can the implementation of the 2030 Agenda succeed. That is easier said than done, for neither the research disciplines addressing sustainability and digital transformation nor the corresponding political actors are well integrated with each other. How else could it be that the digital revolutions were overlooked or forgotten during the negotiation of the 2030 Agenda?

This leaves many questions to be resolved: How can digital tools be used to achieve the SDGs? Which counterproductive effects need to be kept in check? Moreover, entirely new challenges to concepts of human development are emerging in the digital age. The interplay of artificial intelligence, DNA research, brain research and medicine in the broad sense culminates in debates about strategies for “human enhancement”. Some researchers talk about artificial evolution as an imminent possibility. The concept of the Anthropocene, associated with sustainability research, refers to the age in which humans have become the most powerful force for change in the Earth system. Now it needs to be extended: In the digital Anthropocene, people are not only poised to induce Earth-system change but also to transform themselves as human beings.

Against this backdrop, concepts of human development, dignity and ownership must be reconsidered and reasserted. The B20 Tokyo Summit held in 2019 talked about a creative “Society 5.0”, the next developmental stage for humanity after the Information Age. The German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU) published a first comprehensive report in April 2019 on the relationship between sustainability and the digital revolution. Its title “Towards our Common Digital Future” deliberately alludes to the Brundtland Report of 1987 (“Our Common Future”), and it sets forth important guidelines which already range beyond the 2030 Agenda. The digital transformation is happening rapidly and disruptively in many places. Its effects should therefore be given urgent consideration within strategies for implementation of the SDGs – in industrialised, emerging and developing countries alike. ■



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From the Paris Declaration to the 2030 Agenda: Is the global sustainability agenda overburdening development cooperation?

In recent years, the international aid effectiveness agenda has continuously evolved and opened up: From the Paris Declaration of 2005 to the Accra Agenda for Action in 2008 and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation that followed in 2011, it underwent a shift in focus from traditional development cooperation with a strong donor focus towards the integration of additional actors (particularly from civil society) and the expansion of aid into development. Now the 2030 Agenda represents a further evolution, since it explicitly applies to all the states in the world and places more emphasis than ever on the involvement of new, non-governmental actors.

The central principles of the aid effectiveness agenda – impact orientation, partner integration, ownership and accountability – continue to be valid, and their significance, not least for achieving the SDGs, was reaffirmed at the high-level meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC) in Nairobi in 2016.

Given its universal applicability to all states – not just developing countries – and its all-encompassing vision of sustainable development, as manifested in its 17 goals and

169 subsidiary targets, the 2030 Agenda far exceeds the requirements of an agenda for effective development cooperation. Moreover, it articulates the lofty aim that everyone must be able to benefit from sustainable development, also framed as “leaving no one behind”.

Shortcomings in implementing the aid effectiveness principles

Yet the ever more ambitious requirements of the international agendas in terms of effectiveness and sustainability are increasingly at odds with implementation of the principles that were originally core to the aid effectiveness agenda. Even just a few years ago, the aid effectiveness principles were still broadly accepted. Today, although positive trends are registered on individual indicators, the implementation of the aid effectiveness principles has largely taken a retrograde turn. Not only is bilateralisation on the increase, which much reduces the traditional donors’ coordination and harmonisation efforts, but it also seems that principles like ownership and alignment of development cooperation to partners’ priorities, including use of the partners’ own systems and processes for the implementation of measures, have become increasingly unattractive to donors.

Particularly in view of a marked rise in the numbers of development cooperation actors, this has resulted in an increasing (re-) fragmentation of international cooperation. Meanwhile, the highly complex and trans-sectoral system of targets set forth in the 2030 Agenda calls for a much more coordinated approach, globally and locally.

Official development cooperation called upon to manage flexibly

The requirement to involve new actors, the 2030 Agenda's claim to universal applicability and its integrative approach make it necessary to reflect on the role of official development cooperation in this changed environment. The emergence of new actors in no way implies that official development cooperation can assume a weaker role and completely surrender responsibility; that is ruled out by the sheer diversity of challenges and expectations. On the contrary, managing and compensating governmental institutions are needed, which can lay down the major lines and mediate between the actors. The private sector has different objectives from civil society, and in neither case do they necessarily coincide with the ideas of traditional official development cooperation or of emerging countries as potential new donors. The consequence of this, however, must not be for traditional bilateral donors to turn their backs on the aid effectiveness agenda. They must instead redouble their efforts to implement its principles and make them accessible and attractive to other actors as well; for example, while cooperating with the private sector or engaging in new forms of

cooperation between state partners, such as trilateral cooperation.

Until now, official development cooperation institutions have lacked the requisite flexibility and adaptability to be able to respond appropriately to new partners and new forms of cooperation without undermining important standards and values of development cooperation such as adherence to and promotion of human rights standards and principles. Here evaluation provides the means to learn from experience, to highlight existing deficiencies and to identify system levers for the implementation of fundamental principles. It is thus all the more important to make even greater use of strategic evaluation for evidence-based policy making and accountability. ■

The traditional donors must redouble their efforts to implement the principles of the aid effectiveness agenda and make them accessible and attractive to other actors as well.



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German development cooperation and the 2030 Agenda – our contribution to the agreement for our global future

In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the international community makes it unmistakably clear that global challenges can only be solved together. “Transforming our world” is its declared aim. By the year 2030, extreme hunger and poverty are to be eliminated, life-sustaining natural resources protected and development opportunities created for all human beings, leaving no one behind. The 2030 Agenda is a benchmark for all the world’s governments and, as such, defines a new kind of partnership in which all countries are called upon to play their part.

The German Federal Government aligned its policy to achieving the 17 SDGs in its 2016 revision of the German Strategy for Sustainable Development. With this Strategy, which is updated regularly in an inclusive process, Germany is working towards a sustainable and just future, so that following generations have every chance of a life in dignity and prosperity and life-sustaining natural resources are safeguarded for future use.

— We must redouble our efforts

Despite many areas of progress, the global community’s efforts towards the SDGs are falling short of expectations, and Germany is no exception. If we want to achieve the goals by 2030, we must now increase the speed and ambition of implementation. So far these have not been sufficient to bring about the necessary transformation towards social,

economic and environmental sustainability. This is why in 2018 the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) developed a roadmap setting out its particular challenges in implementing the 2030 Agenda. The plan shows that we must firstly act sustainably, secondly leave no one behind, thirdly make use of innovations for sustainability, and fourthly promote and insist on sustainable financing.

German development cooperation with its partner countries is comprehensively oriented towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. One of its highlights is the [2030 Implementation Initiative](#), a unique bilateral programme for implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The BMZ has spent around 58 million euros since 2016 on supporting measures in 26 partner countries and in three regional organisations on the following aspects:

1. Policy: In its partner countries, the BMZ is improving the institutional and strategic enabling conditions for implementing the 2030 Agenda, such as the updating of national development plans. In Mexico the BMZ supported the drafting of the national sustainability strategy, and in Georgia, the assessment of legislative proposals from the viewpoint of sustainability.
2. Finance: The BMZ supports innovative approaches like green financing instruments in order to mobilise the necessary resources in partner countries for the implementation of the Agenda.

We must all intensify our efforts and accelerate the transformation towards greater sustainability to achieve the goals by 2030.

3. **Measurement:** In order to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda, evidence-based policy decisions are necessary. The BMZ therefore helps develop the partner countries' capacities for monitoring and review; for example by establishing digital databases, providing training and developing curricula.

Enhancing review mechanisms

An important priority for the BMZ are review mechanisms for successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The most important UN forum for this purpose is the annual High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in New York. This is where countries present their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) for discussion.

In conjunction with the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU), the BMZ supports the transnational [Partners for Review](#) network to improve national and international review mechanisms and raise the quality of the VNRs. At the five Partners for Review meetings held to date, including one hosted in Berlin in 2018, representatives from government, civil society, the private sector and research reflected and discussed lessons learned from the review processes. This network activity has established a common learning and exchange process founded on the equitable participation of developing, emerging and industrialised countries in keeping with SDG 17 (Partnerships to achieve the goals). Moreover, it has advanced the international discourse on other open questions such as the role of audit courts and

UN Regional Commissions. Positive experiences from the network have been documented and made accessible to a broader audience of development experts.

Issuing a wake-up call at the SDG Summit

The first SDG Summit of Heads of State and Government since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, to be held in September 2019, is an important opportunity to take stock: How far have we come with implementation of the 2030 Agenda? We want to use the Summit to issue a resolute wake-up call for greater sustainability: We must all intensify our efforts and accelerate the transformation towards greater sustainability to achieve the goals by 2030! Another item for discussion is the future of the High-level Political Forum as a review mechanism. Where must we act more ambitiously, and what levers can be adjusted for an even more effective exchange of knowledge? The German Government will make the case for additional strengthening and effective organisation of the forum. ■



Dr Ingolf Dietrich
Commissioner for
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Federal Ministry for
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and Development (BMZ)

Country portfolios: More strategic planning and management necessary

The 2030 Agenda calls on international development cooperation to take account of the interdependencies between the social, economic and environmental dimension of development, and to align itself to the priorities and needs of the partner countries. It also calls for more intense cooperation between the different stakeholders.

— Clear positioning is important

The DEval study [“Country portfolio reviews – a tool for strategic portfolio analysis in German development cooperation”](#) highlights the major challenges faced by German bilateral development cooperation in positioning itself amid the nexus of the sustainability agenda’s diverse demands. For instance, one question that arises is how it can promote a country’s economy without risking negative consequences for the social or environmental dimension of sustainability. In aligning its country portfolios to partners’ needs, it must bear in mind that partner governments’ priorities do not always coincide with the needs of especially disadvantaged population groups. Furthermore, the high fragmentation of international development cooperation impedes the donor coordination (among donors themselves and with the partner government) that is so important for effectiveness and sustainability. More and more actors are engaging in more and more development projects. All of these actors

pursue their own interests and apply their own methods. And within German development cooperation also, fragmentation has increased. The BMZ has expanded and diversified its activities, while many other German ministries have stepped up their international engagement.

If development cooperation is to be effective and sustainable, it is fundamental that the country portfolios take the diverse requirements into appropriate consideration and adequately address existing areas of tension. To this end, strategic objectives at country level are necessary. This means that to shape German development cooperation according to the 2030 Agenda’s demands, management decisions in German development cooperation cannot be taken at the level of individual programmes and projects but must be taken at portfolio level.

In recent years the BMZ has initiated structural changes to the strategic planning and management of its bilateral cooperation. Rather than setting the focus on individual, stand-alone programmes, it is envisaged that portfolio management will now focus on integrated and holistic country-level approaches. Accordingly, the BMZ’s aim since 2012 has been to strengthen the coherence of country portfolios via a triad of country strategies, programmes and modules so as to advance sustainable development in the partner countries.

— Lack of evidence at portfolio level

Country strategies lay the foundation for the strategic planning and political steering of German bilateral development cooperation with a partner country. To shape these approaches in accordance with the 2030 Agenda, evidence-based information on the country level is needed. However, the monitoring and evaluation systems currently in use are not sufficient to support systematic assessment of the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of approaches. They yield little information on such questions as whether the portfolio as a whole is coherently aligned, whether the agreed priorities are still the right ones, how the individual modules and programmes integrate with one another, and whether the overall portfolio is capable of bringing about systemic and sustainable changes in the sense intended by the 2030 Agenda. Consequently there is a risk that, rather than strategic requirements, other aspects such as aspirations to continue existing programmes might be unduly influencing portfolio decisions.

— Developing information systems

To strengthen coherence within German bilateral development cooperation and ensure coordination with other actors, particularly the partner governments, as required by the 2030 Agenda's integrative approach, the BMZ must develop its strategic planning and management on the country level along with the necessary information systems. A first step in that direction is the instrument for strategic country portfolio reviews (CPRs) developed by DEval from 2017 to 2019, which independently analyses country portfolios in the context of the 2030 Agenda and yields relevant information about the overarching relevance, coherence and complementarity of German bilateral development cooperation. This has laid an important foundation for evidence-based strategic portfolio management, which should be supplemented with further instruments such as country programme evaluations in future. ■

Country portfolio reviews – an overview

Purpose and function of CPRs	CPRs answer the question
<p>CPRs support the regional divisions of the BMZ in elaborating country strategies</p>  <p>and systematically and independently analyse official bilateral development cooperation.</p> 	<p>Is German development cooperation (still) doing the right thing in the partner country?</p>  <p>and are based on the following criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. development needs in the partner country, 2. momentum for reform and government priorities, 3. coordination and cooperation with other stakeholders, 4. priorities and strengths of German development cooperation in the partner country, and 5. risks and challenges.

Source: DEval.



Kirsten Vorwerk
DEval Evaluator

Christoph Hartmann
DEval Team Leader

In partnership towards 17 goals: From global to local action on sustainability

Bonn is a centre of international cooperation and sustainable development and hosts the headquarters of 20 UN institutions including the Climate Secretariat of the United Nations. Alongside them, federal government institutions, scientific organisations, companies, non-governmental organisations and media devote themselves to solving global questions affecting our future. At the interface with the United Nations in Bonn, two key centres of expertise – the Bonn Alliance for Sustainability Research and the new Innovation Campus Bonn – Sustainability and Global Change – are growing and developing into a global research cluster on the economy and civil society.

Commensurately with its role as Germany's leading national centre for development policy, Bonn is also creating the impetus for activities at local level. The city has six development project partnerships working on climate protection, adaptation to climate change, biodiversity and sustainable tourism, and on early warning of hazardous events. In partnership with Cape Coast (Ghana) and Chengdu (China), projects on transitioning towards a circular economy will be planned shortly.

Furthermore, Bonn engages with international projects such as the study of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on the implementation of the SDGs at local level. Since 1999, Bonn

has been a member of the ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability – network with over 1,750 members worldwide. ICLEI organises the annual Resilient Cities Congress on urban climate change adaptation, in Bonn.

Bonn carries weight as a centre for sustainability – thanks to and far beyond the presence of the United Nations. It is also gaining ever-increasing significance as an international conference destination. In 2017, the 23rd United Nations Climate Change Conference was held in Bonn, with over 22,000 participants – the largest international conference held in Germany to date.

A clear affirmation of sustainable development is given in the Sustainability Strategy adopted by Bonn City Council in February 2019. In a participatory process, six municipal fields of action were identified – from sustainable “Mobility” through “Climate and Energy” to “Natural Resources and Environment”, and from “Labour and Economy” through “Social Participation and Gender Justice” to “Global Responsibility and One World”. Concrete measures addressing all of these fields were drafted and can now proceed to be implemented.

“Leaving no one behind” is a guiding principle of the 2030 Agenda. For Bonn, this applies in the Global South as well as here at home, acting as partners in projects and with a shared commitment, as postulated in SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals). ■



Ashok Sridharan
Mayor of the Federal
City of Bonn
President of ICLEI
(Local Governments
for Sustainability)



Chapter 1.2

The evaluation of development cooperation in light of the sustainability agenda

The 2030 Agenda changes not only development cooperation but also the way it is evaluated, which must do justice to the Agenda's systemic approach. Currently evaluation criteria and methods are being adapted to the sustainability agenda. A new division of labour and more capacity building for evaluation specialists are needed to pave the way for Agenda-compliant evaluation practice, just one of the demands voiced by four leading evaluation experts from German development cooperation when interviewed.

A new era for evaluations

Development partners widely recognise that the advent of the 2030 Agenda presents opportunities and challenges for the evaluators of international cooperation, both individually and collectively, to ensure that progress and performance is assessed in terms of numbers and targets, and that evaluations address the why and the how of international development cooperation and what further action is needed.

Many assumptions have been built into the SDG framework and its follow-up. For example, it has been assumed that country data will be sufficiently robust and timely to be able to populate relevant SDG indicators and demonstrate progress or lack thereof; also, that there will be sufficient country capacity for analysis and the conduct of country-led reviews and evaluations. The reality, though, is that for many countries, one or both of these assumptions do not hold at this time.

In addition, expectations will increasingly be placed on UN agencies and other development cooperation actors to demonstrate their contributions to the SDGs. The UN's initial focus was on strengthening data and statistics. Because data collection remains challenging, however, and there are large gaps in some areas, the focus on measuring progress as part of the Voluntary

National Reviews (VNRs) will eventually need to shift to answering more evaluative questions about what works and why.

— **New complexity calls for new answers**

The complexity of the 2030 Agenda, including the interlinkages between the SDGs, is challenging the evaluation community as never before. What is clear is that we cannot continue to take a piecemeal approach if we want to make robust statements on which SDGs are being met, and whether they are met in a holistic and sustainable way. How, indeed, can single evaluations of single interventions provide these answers? Neither the United Nations nor most countries have the necessary organisational and system-wide evaluation capacities to do so at present.

The importance of assessing system-wide efforts through system-wide evaluation was not taken into account sufficiently during the development and adoption of the 2030 Agenda. Now a door is opening for an increase in joint and system-wide evaluation. The UN Evaluation Group advocated for this early on, and has collaborated with other actors in the evaluation community with some success, although the pace of progress is slow.

We cannot continue to take a piecemeal approach if we want to make robust statements on which SDGs are being met, and whether they are met in a holistic and sustainable way.

System-wide evaluations are the future

Looking ahead, this is how evaluation can be expected to evolve:

1. The demand for metasynthesis of existing evaluative work is likely to increase. The challenge here will be to ensure that the bulk of evaluations used for the synthesis work are sufficiently robust and allow a degree of specificity. A recent metasynthesis study by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on SDG 4 (Quality education) found that over 800 relevant evaluations had been conducted between 2015 and 2018.
2. Developing guidance and supporting evaluations of the SDGs and the UN Development Assistance Framework will be among the UN Evaluation Group's main strategic engagements in the coming years. This must be done in partnership with other actors including academia, international organisations, national governments, regional evaluation associations and civil society. The complexity of SDG-era evaluation is well recognised but there is currently no clarity or common understanding of how to tackle such evaluations. This is also evidenced in the recent discussions on how to revise the evaluation criteria of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) so that they are fit for purpose. All this will require an international dialogue and joint action.
3. More vigorous efforts must be made on joint and system-wide evaluations. This is easier said than done. Joint and system-wide evaluations, other than metasynthesis, are high in transaction costs and resource heavy. The UN system has only conducted one of these evaluations: in 2005, following the Indian Ocean tsunami. The initiative involved over 40 UN agencies, non-governmental organisations and bilateral donors, and took over one year at a cost of almost three million dollars. At a minimum, we need to map future plans for single and joint evaluations by SDG and by country. A further step would be to ensure that these ask the same key questions and collect predefined data so as to inform system-wide analysis. Given the limited resources available, the United Nations and its national and global partners will have to rise to the challenge of an ever more complex evaluation context. ■



Susanne Frueh
 Director
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 United Nations
 Educational, Scientific
 and Cultural
 Organization (UNESCO)
 Chair
 United Nations
 Evaluation Group
 (UNEG)

Using an institutional systems perspective in evaluation

We live in an increasingly policy-saturated and interconnected world. This raises challenges of scope and methodology in evaluation. Evaluations by their very nature tend to be intervention- or institution-centric: Evaluators view the world through the lens of the evaluand and are consequently at risk of overestimating its influence and underestimating the role and complexity of contextual factors. So how, as evaluators, can we deal with this cognitive bias and what methods are available to overcome it?

One sensible way forward is to employ a systems perspective in evaluation – in line with SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals), which puts challenges of coordination and alignment between institutions at the centre of the policy debate. Rather than using the intervention as a starting point, evaluators start out by conceptualising and understanding the system, which is constituted by elements such as institutions and causal steps, the links between the elements, and the system's boundaries defining what the evaluation considers and what it disregards. Of particular interest is a subset of systems approaches, which allow us to systematically look at the institutional landscape in which a particular organisation operates and to address more rigorously its strategic role and positioning. Two recent evaluations conducted by the World Bank Group's Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) illustrate this approach.

— Poverty-orientation of institutions in Mexico

The first example concerns the use of geospatial data on financial flows to understand the [spatial targeting of World Bank support](#) at the state level in Mexico. This can be considered a first step to assessing the World Bank's contribution to SDG 1 (No poverty). The systems lens in this example concerns the combined use of different sources of spatial data:

1. the share of the national population belonging to the poorest 40 per cent living in a particular state,
2. the state-level allocation of World Bank project funding, and
3. the state-level allocation of public expenditures by the national government.

When comparing these data one can ask questions such as: Is the World Bank operating in the poorest areas of the country? Is World Bank support (with its aim to reduce poverty and inequality) more pro-poor than national public spending (in similar areas of work)? Despite some caveats about such analyses and particularly concerning their granular accuracy, the results of the evaluation were clear. Using regression analysis to understand World Bank allocations at state level, and controlling for relevant exogenous variation, the analysis showed among other things that World Bank support at state level is positively correlated with the presence of

the poorest 40 per cent and is fairly independent of national public spending.

___ Institutional financial flows to the Liberian health sector

In the second example, the IEG made use of social network analysis to assess the role of the World Bank Group in the health sector in Liberia, which directly speaks to SDG 3 (Good health and well-being). The systems lens involved the systematic mapping and interpretation of public, not-for-profit financial flows, knowledge leadership, and operational collaboration between the main organisations supporting and receiving support in the sector. The figure below shows the network map for financial flows, and indicates that the World Bank Group is the second biggest

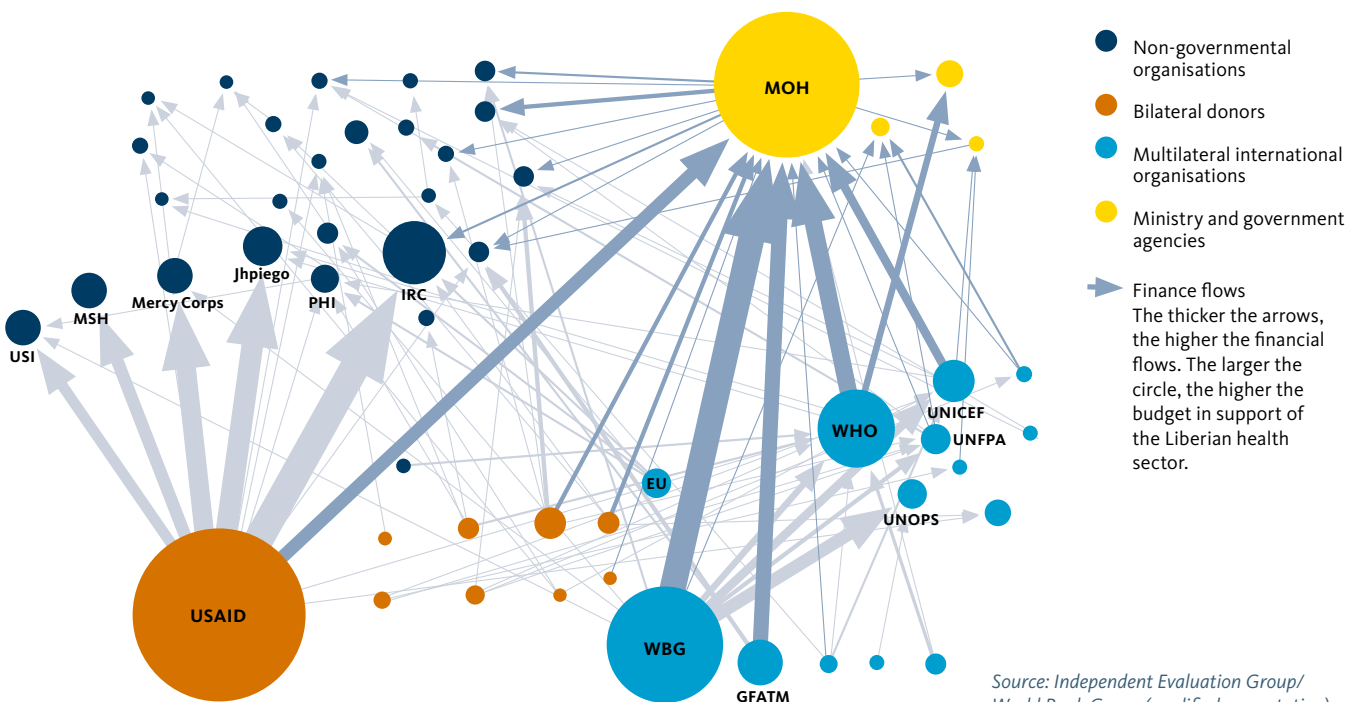
source of public, not-for-profit funding in the health sector. It also clearly shows that USAID favours the direct funding of NGOs, while the World Bank Group channels its funding mainly through the government and the United Nations. In comparing the two, there are potential trade-offs regarding short-term and medium-term results in the delivery of health services, and differential implications for capacity development in national government.

To conclude, an institutional systems perspective helps us to understand the role of a particular organisation in the broader institutional landscape. In an increasingly interconnected world, and with the ambitious SDGs in mind, we need to expand our toolbox and apply this type of lens more frequently and consistently in evaluations. ■



Dr Jos Vaessen
Methods Advisor
Independent Evaluation Group
World Bank Group

The World Bank Group as a financier in Liberia’s health sector



Source: Independent Evaluation Group/ World Bank Group (modified presentation).

The evaluation of sustainability in German development cooperation

The evolving development discourse of the 1980s introduced sustainability into the evaluation of development cooperation.

But only the launch of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development made the principle of sustainability central to today's aid effectiveness debate. Ever since then, both the conception of sustainability and the practice of evaluation have been put to the test: high time for a systematic stocktake.

— What was the guidance on assessing sustainability until now?

In German official development cooperation the responsibility for specifying the conceptual basis for the assessment of success rests with the BMZ. On that basis, sustainability is assessed across the five evaluation criteria of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC). Along with sustainability, the other assessment criteria are relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact. Guidance has been in place since 2006 requiring the sustainability of development measures to be assessed with reference to three key aspects:

1. persistence of positive changes and results over time,
2. stability of the context in terms of social justice, economic performance, political stability and ecological balance, and

3. possible risks and potentials for lasting effectiveness.

It is immediately clear that these aspects diverge somewhat from the comprehensive sustainability principles of the 2030 Agenda. Neither the interplay of the social, economic and ecological dimensions of sustainability nor the integrative character of the SDGs have been made explicit in the evaluation guidelines used to date. On the conceptual level, however, some of the Agenda's principles are already integral to the existing evaluation criteria. For example, the presentation of results has to be differentiated according to the three dimensions of sustainability. As yet, however, addressing the synergies and tensions between the dimensions does not form part of the guidance.

— How has evaluation practice followed the guidelines so far?

In the course of analytical research on German development cooperation's conception of sustainability, in 2018, D Eval published a [meta-evaluation of sustainability in German development cooperation](#), which also took in evaluation practice. This representative analysis of over 500 evaluation reports from Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and KfW Development Bank shows that implementation of the BMZ

Implementation of the BMZ guidance was inadequate in the past. Only around one third of the evaluation reports analysed cover all the sustainability-related questions from the BMZ guidelines.

guidance was inadequate and unsystematic in the past. Only around one third of the evaluation reports analysed cover all the sustainability-related questions from the BMZ guidelines. The discrepancy between guidelines and practice is most striking in relation to the aspect of “persistence of positive changes and results over time”.

Nevertheless, an overall view of the evaluation reports analysed reveals that the conception of sustainability is already much more comprehensive than the guidance may have indicated. It is found that programme sustainability is not measured solely in terms of the persistence of results over time, the context of the measures, and local capacities, but across a range of additional criteria under the headings of project implementation and direct and indirect outcomes and impacts. These include the adaptation of projects and programmes to the partners’ national policies, the participation of target groups, the use of institutional structures locally, acceptance and ownership, resilience, and the reach of the development measures.

That said, there are other aspects, such as unintended effects or the interplay of the different dimensions of sustainability, which are mentioned comparatively infrequently in such assessments, contrary to the assumptions of the meta-evaluation. In the evaluation practice of the implementing organisations overall, sustainability is assessed across a large number of criteria, but as these vary from one report to another, they are not readily comparable.

Necessary reforms are on the way

The key reason why reporting tends to be unsystematic and inconsistent is the lack of a conceptual framework: a comprehensive conception of sustainability informed by the 2030 Agenda. That being the case, DEval recommended a reform of the existing guidelines. The BMZ and its implementing organisations have embraced the recommendation and are overhauling the evaluation criteria with support from DEval. The working group convened for this purpose is also tasked with harmonising evaluation practice to bring the evaluation system into conformity with the 2030 Agenda. In future, evaluations will be equipped to report on how development programmes contribute to the goals and principles of the 2030 Agenda. With its experience accrued over the years and thanks to these efforts, German development cooperation is well positioned to move forward. ■



Dr Martin Noltze
DEval Team Leader

Interview

The 2030 Agenda: Impetus to reform the evaluation of development cooperation

What does the 2030 Agenda mean for the evaluation of German development cooperation? This was discussed in individual telephone interviews with Prof. Dr Jörg Faust (Director of DEval), Dr Ricardo Gomez (Head of the GIZ Evaluation Unit up to July 2019), Prof. Dr Eva Terberger (Head of the Evaluation Unit at KfW Development Bank up to June 2019) and Michaela Zintl (Head of the BMZ Evaluation and Development Research Division up to March 2019). In their responses, collated here, they traced an arc from the 2005 Paris Declaration to the current revision of the OECD DAC evaluation criteria.

What key challenges arise from the 2030 Agenda for the evaluation of German development cooperation and for the associated institutional structures?

Michaela Zintl: What I see as the greatest challenge is how we deal with potential goal conflicts between the three dimensions – economic, environmental and social – of the 2030 Agenda. Evaluations cannot solve these goal conflicts but neither can they avoid them. We are seeing the scale, or perceived scale, of these goal conflicts right now – for instance in the German debate around climate action versus jobs.

Jörg Faust: The 2030 Agenda sets out an important and internationally legitimised orientation framework for central objectives of human development. This is an asset of supreme value. At the same time, the complexity of this system of targets not only harbours the danger of normative overload and the disillusionment that regrettably ensues; from the evaluation point of view, it

also makes it very difficult to identify and compare the contributions of individual countries to the 2030 Agenda.

Ricardo Gomez: So far, the evaluation of German development cooperation has had no definitive joint concept for tackling the challenges of the 2030 Agenda. In my view, integrating the SDGs into projects and project evaluations is relatively straightforward, because we can measure the achievement of goals based on indicators that map to the SDGs. What seems more problematic to me is how to evaluate the principles, such as “Leaving no one behind”, or the multi-stakeholder approach of the 2030 Agenda. For this we have to be innovative and refine our existing methods or apply new methods for dealing with complexity and goal conflicts.

Eva Terberger: To my mind, the consequences of the 2030 Agenda are not that far-reaching for evaluations at project level. For one thing, many elements of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were carried over



Michaela Zintl



Prof. Dr Jörg Faust

into the SDGs; for another, a single intervention is most unlikely to address all the goals at once. Like the MDGs before them, the SDGs provide a fantastic orientation but – because they are so all-encompassing and not always complementary – do not directly govern what action is taken. Should a project pursue several objectives that are partially incompatible, weighing them against one another is a major challenge for evaluation; but this was already a known problem with the MDGs.

How are you meeting these challenges, and are the adaptations already making a difference?

Ricardo Gomez: We are only just in the process of designing projects that conform to the 2030 Agenda. At GIZ we are making institutional preparations and considering, for instance, how our programmes can better incorporate the 2030 Agenda. However, we do not know yet how the BMZ intends to reflect the 2030 Agenda in the project cycle, and on which level it intends to align activities with the Agenda, which will certainly have implications for evaluation.

Eva Terberger: The SDGs play a role in our evaluations insofar as we can contribute to the desired harmony between environmental, economic and social development with our project evaluations, since they supply numerous

examples of the actual interplay – of both kinds: cases where the harmony works, but also cases where disharmonies arise between the dimensions.

As I said, we do not see the 2030 Agenda as revolutionary, so there is no reason to overhaul the evaluation system completely. German development cooperation has proposed that, in addition to the other OECD DAC evaluation criteria, we highlight the nature of a project's or programme's SDG contribution. To me this seems an appropriate way for evaluation to deal with the SDGs.

Michaela Zintl: We are currently conferring on how, exactly, we interpret the evaluation criteria and how we will operationalise them even better in future, even though the BMZ guidelines on the criteria, issued in 2006, do already reflect the multidimensionality of the SDGs. This is turning into a somewhat more complicated undertaking now that a parallel discussion is under way at the OECD DAC, more specifically within the DAC Network on Development Evaluation (EvalNET), about possibly adapting the criteria to the 2030 Agenda. We must join up these processes because evaluation results also need to be internationally comparable. For higher-order learning, we need more synthesis studies, analysing what works (or not) in German development cooperation and with other donors' interventions.

“**In European evaluation practice there are still too few joint studies being conducted. This is hampering everyone’s collective learning for the purposes of more effective and sustainable development cooperation.**”

Prof. Dr Jörg Faust

How can evaluation contribute to strengthening sustainability, as defined in the 2030 Agenda, within your organisation and in German development cooperation as a whole?

Jörg Faust: DEval’s meta-evaluation on the assessment of sustainability in the evaluations of GIZ and KfW provided some important impulses on this very issue. The cross-institutional analysis of project and programme evaluations showed that Germany’s BMZ guidelines have required a multidimensional assessment of sustainability (social, economic and ecological) ever since 2006. At the same time, the actual practice of assessing sustainability was very heterogeneous, which made comparability between individual evaluations, and hence cross-project learning, far more difficult. The fact that work is now in hand to sharpen the criterion of sustainability is therefore a positive development. Beyond this, in Germany we need considerably more experimental and quasi-experimental impact evaluations and flanking research. This is necessary in order to gather more rigorous evidence about the impacts and sustainability of German development cooperation.

Michaela Zintl: There is a particular lack of conclusions at the meta-project level, drawn from multiple impact evaluations, which can and should be feeding into new plans. We have therefore set up a research project on this, in collaboration with and hosted by DEval. We plan to follow this up with a flanking empirical research programme, which we will support financially and conceptually.

Eva Terberger: Evaluation can contribute evidence; for instance, our approach to evaluating financial cooperation programmes frequently relies on the quasi-experimental

analysis of existing data. Evaluation can also help to prevent the overburdening of individual projects. The reality is, a climate action project cannot necessarily be expected to tackle poverty at the same time. Aided by evaluations, we can help to sharpen the objectives of future interventions and point out where their priorities should lie, if in doubt.

How does German development cooperation support its partners in fulfilling their duty of accountability in the framework of the 2030 Agenda? Does this entail any special challenges?

Jörg Faust: Development cooperation can also contribute to putting organisations in our partner countries in a position to conduct their own independent and transparent assessments of their governments’ sustainability agendas and strategies and the activities of development cooperation. The full potential of such “evaluation capacity development” is still a long way from being realised. In many developing countries, the development cooperation agencies still dominate the evaluation landscape. This should change in the next decade.

Michaela Zintl: The second way, alongside supporting freestanding capacity development projects in partner countries, is mainstreaming capacity development during the implementation of donor evaluations; that is, increasing the participation of partners and local experts so that evaluations are more often used to develop capacities. Evaluation is not an advocacy exercise, but is based on evidence. Now that relevant questions are anchored in the evaluation criteria, evaluations can indicate where sustainability, as defined in the 2030 Agenda, is not yet being given sufficient attention.



Dr Ricardo Gomez



Prof. Dr Eva Terberger

Ricardo Gomez: My impression is that many partner countries of German development cooperation opt for the minimal approach and pick out just a few SDGs and the corresponding indicators. They are at liberty to do so, which in retrospect was not a good idea for the development of the 2030 Agenda. So far I am not aware of any partner country that has developed a really comprehensive concept. The majority concentrate on the SDGs they are tackling anyway in their national development strategies. On a different note, the implementation of the principles is a blind spot everywhere. This is something we should address in our advisory work.

What lessons for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda can be derived from the weak implementation of the aid effectiveness agenda and from the evaluation of the Paris Declaration?

Michaela Zintl: It was already integral to the Paris Declaration that the evidence of effectiveness had to come from the partners themselves. That was right in principle, but it was also somewhat naive, because if the money comes from a donor country, duties of accountability apply there, too, and donor organisations also have things to learn. The Paris Declaration had established additional rules that were right in principle, with a strong emphasis on ownership. At the same time, the interpretation of this was sometimes

stretched to “We are only doing what the partner wants”. This in effect whitewashed over the big differences that exist between adequately stable, democratic partner countries and more fragile ones. Development cooperation must be structured in such a way that it can differentiate its response – which, in turn, has consequences right through to evaluation.

Jörg Faust: Many European governments in the last decade placed national interests at the forefront of development cooperation so emphatically that it made harmonisation and division of work more difficult. Likewise, in European evaluation practice there are still far too few joint studies being conducted today. This is hampering collective learning for the purposes of more effective and sustainable development cooperation. Accordingly, Germany should press for stronger harmonisation of European development cooperation, and consequently more joint evaluations as well. Because the present fragmentation of development cooperation is inefficient and entails major effectiveness losses.

Eva Terberger: At times, harmonisation is also made harder by the fact that every donor wants to claim sole credit for positive outcomes. Until this changes, we can only keep stating in evaluations that a lack of coordination is a bad thing – but we must not delude ourselves that changes in practice will

necessarily follow. We have had positive experiences with joint evaluations in recent years, above all when projects were jointly financed from the outset.

Ricardo Gomez: Of course, it was a naive idea to believe that after the Paris Declaration we just needed to focus on joint implementation and joint evaluation, or that national interests would no longer play any part in the formulation of strategies. At the latest, the refugee crisis in 2015 taught us how wrong we were.

Today the question is whether actors are prepared to integrate the principles of the 2030 Agenda consciously into projects and programmes. The established local dialogue mechanisms, such as donor roundtables, provide a good platform for discussing the implementation and performance measurement of the 2030 Agenda, and for increasing the pressure to integrate the Agenda more thoroughly into programme planning. ■

Interview:



Dr Susanne Reiff
Freelance editor

Reform of the evaluation criteria puts the focus on sustainability

The success or otherwise of development cooperation is measured according to the five evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability (in the sense of continuation of the results over time). These criteria enjoy a high level of international acceptance, set incentives for the design of development programmes, and open up learning potential beyond the confines of individual projects.

As the success story of the “big five” has unfolded, most recently the debate about the appropriateness and usefulness of the list of criteria has intensified, internationally and in Germany. A key impetus for this came from the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, with its universal aspiration to reflect the interplay between the social, economic and ecological dimensions of sustainability, its integrated and inclusive approach, and new partnerships. From that point onward, validating the efficacy of development cooperation has necessarily meant examining its

contributions to the goals and principles of the 2030 Agenda.

At the level of the OECD, Germany has successfully pressed for a reform of the international evaluation criteria. Jointly with the state implementing organisations and D Eval, the BMZ is working on the revision of the evaluation criteria in Germany and feeding suggestions into the OECD reform process. The aims of the revision include sharpening the audit questions conceptually, adding questions on unintended outcomes, and making the criteria more binding.

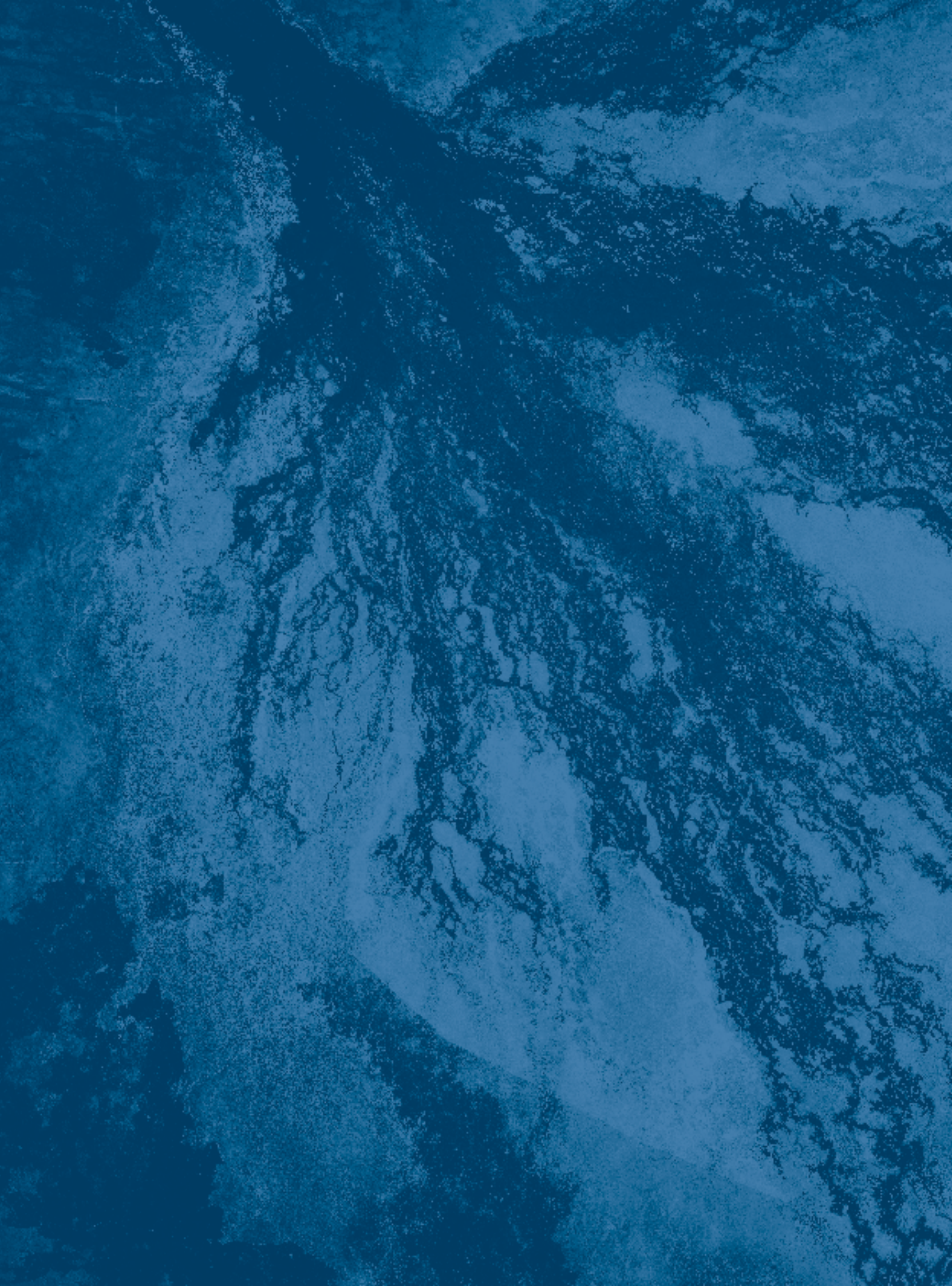
In future, the conception of sustainability from the 2030 Agenda will be embedded into the existing evaluation criteria by way of some additional audit questions. In addition, evaluation reports will be required to contain an extra conclusion addressing how the programmes contribute to the principles of the 2030 Agenda. Further harmonisation proposals aim to make the criteria more systematic and more distinct from each other.



Dr Martin Noltze
D Eval Team Leader



Berthold Hoffmann
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Part 2

**Putting the 2030 Agenda
principles into practice:
Experiences, insights and
perspectives**



Chapter 2.1

Leaving no one behind

The principle of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind presents huge tasks for development cooperation: It aims to provide opportunities for sustainable development to people with disabilities, refugees, the hungry and many other disadvantaged groups. But what does that mean in reality? The needs of the various vulnerable population groups are very diverse, and those advocating for them often have little room for manoeuvre. Many contexts lack a clear legal framework, and game-changing policies are not being adequately implemented. This is where evaluations provide important impulses.

Operating spaces for civil society: A must for “leaving no one behind”

The working conditions of civil society actors in many countries have been worsening considerably for a number of years. In some cases civil society organisations like non-profit associations, NGOs and unions had to cease their work entirely. They were prohibited from accepting foreign funding, stripped of their legal status or simply banned. Recently the term “shrinking space” has come into use to describe this phenomenon. Two billion people around the world live in countries where the force of the state entirely forbids independent and critical civil society engagement, according to the “Atlas of civil society” (*Atlas der Zivilgesellschaft*) published by Bread for the World. Only four per cent of people enjoy unrestrained freedom of opinion, assembly and association. The suppression of critical and independent elements of civil society also amounts to an attack on a development ideal which, in keeping with the 2030 Agenda, is human rights-based, leaves no one behind and codifies the chance for poor and disadvantaged people to improve their life situations.

What are the repercussions of shrinking space for achieving the SDGs?

A study commissioned by Bread for the World with other partners shows that marginalisation and impoverishment frequently occur in places where there are no independent, critical civil society actors who can take on a

Study: Development needs civil society

To investigate the effect of shrinking civic space on the achievement of the SDGs, Bread for the World, Swiss Church Aid (HEKS) and DanChurchAid (DCA) commissioned a study by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS). On the basis of twelve desk

studies and four country studies conducted in Brazil, Cambodia, Nepal and Zimbabwe, it shows that where there were no independent, critical civil society actors, marginalisation and impoverishment were likely to increase.

Naomi Hossain et al. (2019), [Development Needs Civil Society – the Implications of Civic Space for the Sustainable Development Goals](#), ACT Alliance, Geneva.

watchdog role, advocate for disadvantaged people’s rights, criticise public policy and hold the government to account.

Restrictions on foreign funding for civil society organisations had direct effects on their work and their ability to survive. This mainly applies to organisations that took a critical stance towards unjust structures, irresponsibility, unrestrained expansion of power or self-enrichment – and disproportionately affects the disadvantaged groups and minorities for whom these organisations previously advocated. The report also shows the consequences of censorship and surveillance, retribution against critics and violations of freedom of

opinion and freedom of association: It is then no longer possible to hold governments to account for corruption and mismanagement, incompetent administration and inadequate social services.

— No civil society engagement often means more poverty

The restriction of civil society engagement has especially dramatic consequences when food crises occur, which hits poor and marginalised groups the hardest. In Zimbabwe the government blocked social services provided by civil society organisations for communities in Matabeleland because the region was considered to be an opposition stronghold. This and the ban on any civil society control of political power reduced the region's resilience and exacerbated the food crises. Periods of drought, macro-economic crises and the state's inability to deal with such crises then drove millions of people deeper into poverty.

In contrast, Brazil started the millennium by reducing the share of its population living below the poverty line, tackling this with broadly-based, institutionalised forms of citizen participation, a minimum wage initiative and the family assistance programme *Bolsa Familia*. In part this happened because civil society exerted influence, monitored policy and could hold government authorities to account. Particularly in disadvantaged regions in the country's north and north-east, poverty declined drastically. This simultaneously reduced national inequality. The minimum wage rose by 250 per cent from 2004 to 2014, and the proportion of poor people in the

country fell from 25 per cent in 2003 to seven per cent in 2014. There is now mounting concern that recent changes in the political situation in Brazil, which also involve some curtailment of basic freedoms, will wipe out the progress made previously.

— Donors have a responsibility

State donors engaged in development cooperation, like Germany, should apply, promote and insist on the principles of inclusive and sustainable development. If state donors are serious about the SDG principle of "leaving no one behind", then they must resolutely and effectively stand up for civic space.

This human-rights-oriented responsibility should begin with the shaping of their own policy. State donors should introduce mandatory audit procedures so that political decisions and measures in policy areas such as migration policy and foreign trade promotion do not have a negative influence on human rights and civic space in other countries. During negotiations, too, donors must argue effectively against the restriction of civil society space and must take a firm stand to protect human rights defenders and to combat impunity for mismanagement and corruption. ■



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The BMZ Action Plan for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted by the United Nations in 2006 ascribes an important role to international cooperation for the implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities. The States Parties are required to take steps to realise the economic, social and cultural rights of persons with disabilities – with the support of international cooperation where necessary.

The Convention's rights-based approach is the expression of a paradigm shift: People with disabilities are no longer passive recipients of services and reliant on state welfare; they are legal subjects, whose human rights the state has an obligation to fulfil. Many people with disabilities from all over the world and their self-representative organisations participated in the drafting of the Convention. This lends it an especially high degree of legitimacy and honours the demand articulated by the disability rights movement: "Nothing about us without us". The Convention provides an important reference point for the 2030 Agenda because it stands for its fundamental principle of "leaving no one behind".

For the purpose of implementing the Convention in German development policy, the BMZ launched its [Action Plan for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities](#), which entered force in 2013. Its aim is "to ensure the

systematic mainstreaming of the inclusion of persons with disabilities" in development cooperation. From 2016 to 2017, [DEval analysed whether the Action Plan is achieving this objective](#), what demands remain to be met with regard to mainstreaming inclusion, and how German development cooperation can contribute more systematically to realising the rights of persons with disabilities.

— A political convention cannot guarantee "leaving no one behind"

Taking five projects in Bangladesh, Guatemala, Indonesia, Malawi and Togo as case studies, DEval analysed how sustainability opportunities and risks were manifested in relation to activities for the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Essentially the preconditions and political frameworks were favourable: All five projects conformed to the respective national policies for the inclusion of persons with disabilities and all five countries had ratified the UN Convention. Bangladesh and Indonesia had even transposed it into national action plans. However, the political and social reality almost always lagged behind the ambitions formulated in the legal standards. Moreover, as persons with disabilities were not adequately involved in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the measures, they had no chance to develop ownership. There is thus a

The rights approach of the Disability Rights Convention is no guarantee of sustainable outcomes. Binding standards for implementing the Convention and regular reviews are also necessary.

risk that the target group may not accept parts of the state services supported by the projects. This shows that the obligatory character of the Disability Rights Convention alone is not sufficient to guarantee a lasting improvement in living conditions for people with disabilities.

Better mainstreaming of inclusion necessary

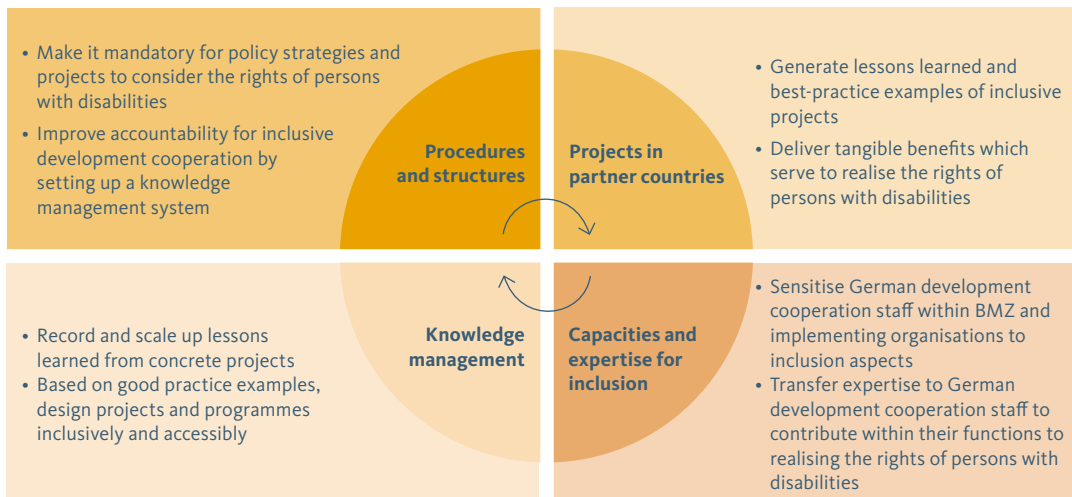
The same applies to the institutional level in German official development cooperation. Here the evaluation showed that the mainstreaming of inclusion should be advanced more systematically and consistently. Four components are of key importance:

1. Inclusion should be mainstreamed more systematically in procedures and structures of German development cooperation in order to make it more binding.
2. The concrete implementation of development projects should deliver tangible benefits for persons with disabilities.
3. Institutional knowledge management is needed in order to systematically analyse the lessons learned from projects whose work contains best practices for inclusion.
4. The capacities and expertise for inclusion of specialised development cooperation staff should be developed. ■



Dr Thomas Schwedersky
DEval Team Leader

Mainstreaming of inclusion in German development cooperation



Source: DEval.

Sustainable refugee policy: Humanitarian aid alone does not go far enough

Never before have there been as many documented displaced persons as there are today. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) puts the current figure at some 68.5 million people. In a world in which conflict, poverty and climate change are resulting in this vast number of internally displaced persons, refugees and asylum seekers, the “leaving no one behind” principle of the 2030 Agenda cannot be realised without considering the rights and needs of displaced persons.

— Linking humanitarian aid with development cooperation

The protracted length of crises and of the ensuing displacement of people have characterised recent conflicts in particular. Consequently, over the past years an international consensus emerged to the effect that humanitarian aid, in the form of short-term emergency relief, as the sole response to human displacement does not go far enough. Instead, development cooperation is called upon to join in collective efforts to find longer-term solutions for displaced persons. The United Nations World Humanitarian Summit held in Istanbul in 2016 came to the logical conclusion that humanitarian aid and development cooperation should be better linked, although it held back from pronouncing on how this can effectively be accomplished.

DEval and the Swedish Expert Group for Aid Studies (EBA) took up the linkage issue in a [joint publication](#) and carried out a systematic analysis of the literature on the nexus of humanitarian aid and development

cooperation to identify the extent to which effective linkages have been established in practice and the requirements still to be met. It became apparent that the linkage of humanitarian aid and development cooperation is challenging in several respects, and specifically in relation to vision and strategy, planning, funding, institutional set-up, ownership, geographical focus and sequencing.

The analysed literature on the Syrian crisis indicates that some progress has been made in linking humanitarian aid with development cooperation. At the same time, substantial coordination problems remain: well-planned linkage of the implementation of humanitarian aid and development cooperation programmes still presents a major challenge to actors on both strategic and operational levels. For instance, if humanitarian actors in order to respond rapidly to an emergency do not involve national governments sufficiently in their planning, it is difficult for development cooperation actors to put this right at a later stage. Moreover, the financial resources of humanitarian aid, inadequate as they may be, are still greater than those allocated to development cooperation. This shortage of resources especially affects programmes for building the long-term resilience of vulnerable groups – in other words, precisely those programmes that could contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda principle.

Apart from the linkage of aid approaches, the host countries’ policies are a key condition for long-term solutions for displaced persons. This is particularly evident in the countries bordering Syria. Host countries’ decisions on whether they will grant a temporary right of

hospitality only or pursue long-term integration strategies determine the extent of the rights granted to refugees, such as freedom of movement or work permits.

“Leaving no one behind” requires a more differentiated discourse

The discussion about how the major aid approaches and state actors can contribute to achieving the Agenda principle of “leaving no one behind” does not sufficiently acknowledge the different types of vulnerability within the group of displaced persons. While “leaving no one behind” explicitly addresses all highly vulnerable groups, the refugee discourse frequently refers to “displaced persons” without any differentiation. Apart from the common distinctions with regard to family status, age and gender, differentiations between varying degrees of adverse physical and mental effects are necessary.

Currently the two main approaches aimed at putting in place long-term solutions for refugees in Syria – building self-reliance to meet their own needs and realise their rights, and strengthening their resilience to ongoing stress and uncertainty – are both faced with

very varied challenges, depending on whether displaced persons have some limited capacity to work or none at all. That being the case and given the constraints on financing, it remains open to debate whether people with disabilities are merely entitled to a long-term minimum level of support within the scope of humanitarian aid or should be comprehensively included in long-term work integration programmes like everyone else.

Not enough resources for “leaving no one behind”

The specific needs and rights of displaced persons have been discussed at length in the debate. But what does “leaving no one behind” mean with regard to long-term solutions for the most vulnerable? Can the principle be upheld at all, in view of the limited funding of aid interventions in prolonged crises? Or does the reality of crises and funding constraints teach us that it would be better to prioritise certain groups of beneficiaries? Regardless of how we answer this question, a minimum requirement is to manage expectations realistically in respect of what humanitarian aid and development cooperation can do, and for whom, in the conditions of the given context. ■



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Current status of the humanitarian-development linkage: planning and funding of programmes for displaced persons due to the Syria crisis

	Successful linkage	Remaining challenges
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host countries and international organisations cooperate on crisis response planning. • Joint sector working groups exist in host countries. • There is evidence of joint planning between humanitarian aid and development cooperation at donor country level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strict bureaucratic rules in host countries impede fast and flexible project approval. • Local actors are only partially involved in planning processes.
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative funding modalities enable joint funding of humanitarian aid and development cooperation. • Flexible funding modalities make it possible to respond rapidly to unforeseen situations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocation practice does not reflect the shift towards strengthening resilience as a common objective of humanitarian aid and development cooperation. • A strong emphasis is placed on emergency relief at the expense of resilience programmes. • At donor country level, bureaucratic factors and short funding cycles are still hindering a more development-oriented funding approach.

Source: DEval.

➔ Monitoring food security with big data

In pursuing its goal of zero hunger, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has committed to the “leaving no one behind” principle of the 2030 Agenda. To achieve this goal, as a basis for its operations the WFP needs to carry out regular monitoring of the food security situation in the more than 80 countries in which it is active. For a long time the WFP has done this by means of household surveys. However, these are time-consuming and staff-intensive, and hence costly, and often they can only reflect the situation at an aggregated level.

To refine the information obtained from the household surveys, the WFP uses other innovative data collection methods. “Humanitarian high resolution mapping” combines different data sources in order to assess food security based on machine-learning approaches. In this way information and maps can represent the food insecurity of the population on a much more granular scale than was previously possible.

Expenditures on food in Malawi yield information about the food security situation



Left: Survey clusters

Centre: Predictions at the one-kilometre resolution for tiles with at least 1,000 estimated inhabitants

Right: Prognosis multiplied with estimated population data (WorldPop) at the third administrative level

Green: higher expenditures on food

Red: lower expenditures on food

Source: World Food Programme, based on data from the World Bank Living Standards Measurement Study 2016.

As a foundation for this, geo-referenced household surveys are combined with satellite images, night-time light data, conflict data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, and infrastructure information from OpenStreetMap. Machine-learning algorithms make use of this information to estimate the food security situation down to village level. In order to make these findings relevant to the planning of WFP operations, population data is referred to for weighting purposes.

In order to encourage the widest possible use of the technique worldwide, attention is paid to making the method easy for staff in WFP country offices to use. A web-based tool has been designed to enable users to input relevant household surveys as source data and have the figures converted into computer-generated maps.



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Chapter 2.2

Considering interdependencies

The holistic approach of the 2030 Agenda is a mixed blessing: The implementation of one goal has consequences – sometimes positive, sometimes negative – for other SDGs. These interdependencies and potential trade-offs are complex, and development policy must take them into account – for example, with regard to land use, the provision of public goods and the valorisation of natural capital. Evaluations can adequately capture these global interdependencies, but to do so they require new data sources, new methods and more interdisciplinary research.

Using the network of SDGs for integrated international cooperation

The 2030 Agenda has confirmed sustainable development not only as a guiding vision for development policy but also as an overarching target horizon for all domestic and external policies in all countries, and for their international cooperation relationships. This is an ambition with a formal rationale, on the one hand, because the 2030 Agenda was negotiated in an open process under the United Nations and adopted by over 190 governments. In material terms the ambition is underpinned by the insight that diverse reciprocal influences and interdependencies must be considered if good living conditions are to be created for all people by 2030 and beyond, while ensuring that this increase in prosperity does not breach the Earth system's critical environmental limits.

The holistic approach of the 2030 Agenda is therefore expressed firstly in its breadth, for it spans social, economic and environmental policy goals, and secondly in its network of subsidiary targets, which connects different goal dimensions with each other. A look at the diagram on page 55 shows that, for example, food security (SDG 2) is linked at target level with progress in the reduction of poverty (SDG 1) and inequality (SDG 10), the improvement of water and wastewater systems (SDG 6), the conservation of biodiversity (SDG 15), and with sustainable

production and consumption patterns (SDG 12).

Hence, the individual sustainability goals are not positioned antagonistically to one another or pursued in isolation, as often happens in public budget negotiations and in administrations organised by sectors or policy fields. The approach is rather to focus on measures which yield a benefit for several goals. For instance, supplying people everywhere with clean drinking water supports efforts to prevent child mortality, and girls have more time for their schooling if they are not spending many hours a day fetching water.

The holistic approach is also expressed in the fact that the 2030 Agenda obliges governments to invest in international partnerships. In a globalised and finite world, public welfare in one's own country cannot be improved at the expense of other countries or of global collective goods. Cooperation with other countries and actors is fundamental in order to tackle problems like climate change and marine pollution effectively and to fulfil common interests such as securing fair and open global trade.

— Development policy can foster cooperation oriented to the common good

For the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, all countries – including Germany and other European Union members – must make better use of the interfaces between established fields of policy, which means recognising previously neglected reciprocal influences and interdependencies. For instance, if agricultural systems are to protect biodiversity, groundwater and soils, and be highly productive, what might they look like? How much human

labour will they require, and of what kind?

Answers to questions like these call for new knowledge and experiments to find substitutes for the previous practices that ultimately proved harmful. To this end, firstly German development policy would have to invest in the knowledge systems of the partner countries itself, or do so in cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). Secondly, it must consciously establish its cooperation relationships on a long-term basis, because institutional innovations cannot be prepared, conceptualised and piloted within two to three years.

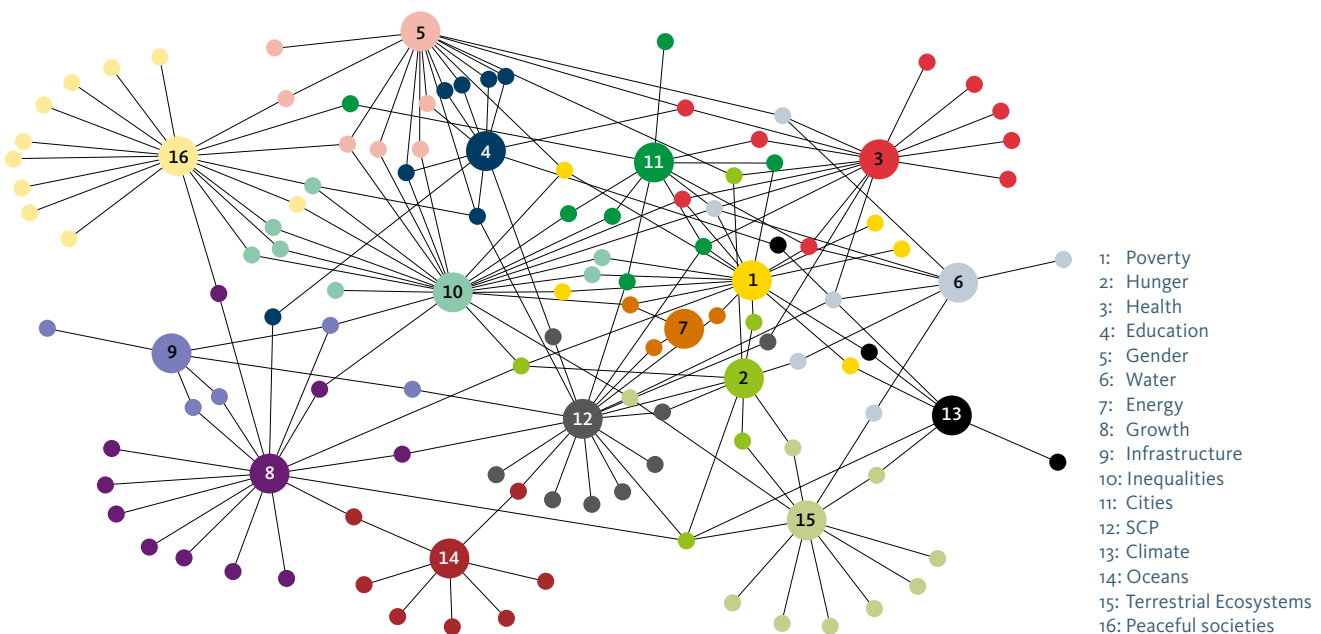
Sometimes, however, pursuing several goals simultaneously in development cooperation projects can be detrimental to their effectiveness. Does that mean giving up on integrated approaches? No, but a better knowledge of the administrative cultures, institutional responsibilities and capacities in the locality is a must. This paves the way for

fruitful use of political opportunities or other springboards for innovative action, in order to improve the conditions for a work-sharing approach involving different administrative entities – sometimes on different levels – towards a common, higher-order goal. Consequently, the evaluation of German development cooperation should analyse, firstly, the extent to which German bilateral and multilateral commitments support the partner countries in achieving the goals they have set themselves, and secondly, how negative reciprocal effects between goals or goal dimensions can be avoided. Thirdly, given the special imperative to conserve global collective goods, it would be important to investigate how bilateral and multilateral cooperation can work together more coherently, in order to achieve an effective work-sharing approach between agencies, for example between regional and UN organisations and national development banks. ■



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The network of SDGs and subsidiary targets



Source: Le Blanc, D. (2015), "Towards Integration at Last? The Sustainable Development Goals as a Network of Targets", UNDESA Working Paper 141, UNDESA, New York, p. 4 (modified presentation).

The missing sub-goal 17.a to strengthen the provision of global public goods

There is a risk that the goals of the 2030 Agenda, most notably its overarching goal of sustainable global growth and development, will not be met. The reason is that the Agenda remains silent about the crucial differences between:

- the conventional types of development assistance such as poverty alleviation, and
- the policy approaches and instruments needed to support the adequate provision of global public goods such as climate change mitigation, communicable disease control, financial stability and cybersecurity.

Corrective steps have to be taken

To see why this lack of conceptual differentiation might curtail the Agenda's prospects of success, it is useful to consider the following five points.

1. Many global public goods are not only global public in consumption, in the sense that they affect all countries and people, but also global public in provision, meaning that their adequate provision requires all – state and non-state – actors to contribute.
2. Preferences and priorities for global public goods, notably for how to share related costs and benefits, vary widely across nations and stakeholders. As a result, both state and non-state actors' willingness to cooperate and contribute to their provision also varies widely. Experience shows that, in the North and in the South, individual actors tend to deal with global public goods to the extent that their particular interests

overlap with global interests. But, in many cases, this overlap is only partial. As a result, the sum of the efforts made by individual actors falls short of what is needed, and provision gaps arise.

3. A prime reason for the underprovision and underfinancing of global public goods is that international cooperation's support of global public good provision is mostly approached as if it were aid: It is delivered through bilateral and multilateral aid agencies based on their typically country-focused business models, employing conventional tools such as sovereign loans and grant allocations. Thus, today, the provision of global public goods, including their financing, has an individual-actor focus and not a global-challenge focus. Individual-actor interests determine how much is being done in terms of addressing global challenges.
4. While a growing volume of available development-assistance resources is flowing to global public goods, they remain underfinanced. In addition, there is no well-founded proof that donors' growing emphasis on global public goods provision does not lead to a neglect of "pure" national development concerns such as job creation.
5. When the 2030 Agenda was designed, policy makers' attention was not sufficiently drawn to the fact that we still lack a systematic theory and policy practice for global public goods finance. In particular, this would include incentives

to motivate actors to overcome the barrier of their self-interest and provide the additional global public goods inputs needed to close existing provision gaps.

Thus, the 2030 Agenda is missing a sub-goal calling for the development of a two-track model of operational international cooperation which recognises both the differences and the synergy between development cooperation and support for adequate global public goods provision.

— Moving forward on sub-goal 17.a

Evaluators bear a special responsibility for taking the lead in moving forward in this regard. They should draw their respective organisations' attention to the current obstacles to adequate global public goods financing and the need for reforms, including

the two-track approach. Moreover, they should strive to draw wider attention to this issue at the United Nations. An expert group might then convene on the issue and report on its findings to the relevant UN deliberating and legislative bodies for further consideration.

The objective would first be to formulate and then to decisively act on the missing sub-goal, calling for recognition of the differences and the synergy between development and global public goods provision. This sub-goal could be referred to as sub-goal 17.a, in line with the practice followed, for example, for SDGs 15 and 16, which also have sub-goals. ■



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The two-track model of international cooperation



Source: Kaul, I. (2017), *Providing Global Public Goods: What Role for the Multilateral Development Banks?* Overseas Development Institute, London (modified presentation).

Natural capital is the vital statistic for capturing sustainability

If asked how a country's economy is developing, most economists – as if by reflex – refer to the System of National Accounts, and especially to the gross domestic product (GDP). If a country's GDP is growing sufficiently, its economic development is said to be positive – that is the standard narrative. But what happens if the country is growing at the expense of the environment, and depleting natural resources?

This erosion of natural capital raises the question of whether the growth model based on GDP is sustainable in the long run. By way of comparison, when a bank makes a mortgage lending decision, it looks at the applicant's income and capital as well as any debts. Similarly, investors take a company's profits into consideration as well as its assets. For the assessment of a country's development, then, it is not just GDP that counts but the whole portfolio of assets: natural capital, human capital and produced capital. This holistic approach to capital accounting is an important foundation for capturing the sustainability of a country's development.

— Natural capital is the most important asset in many countries

Following the premise that only what can be measured can be properly managed, the capital stocks of 141 countries were surveyed for the World Bank report [The Changing Wealth of Nations](#). Here are some of its key findings: Although natural capital only accounts for nine per cent of wealth globally, it

represents almost half of the wealth of low-income countries. Efficient and sustainable management of natural resources is the key to their sustainable development. Countries like Chile, Peru and Vietnam were identified as positive examples. Their natural capital stocks grew because they invested prudently in natural resources, infrastructure and education and can now draw on a diverse base of wealth.

— A yardstick for sustainability

Is there a yardstick that indicates at what point a country's development ceases to be sustainable? How can we know when a country – particularly one that relies largely on natural resources like forests, agricultural land, minerals and fisheries – is overusing its natural capital to an unhealthy extent? Two types of analysis are necessary to answer this question, and both are based on natural capital statistics.

The first analysis looks at the degree to which natural capital was consumed, restored or appropriately substituted by human capital or produced capital. Renewable natural capital must not be consumed faster than it can be regenerated. In the case of non-renewable natural capital, it is important that the revenues from its use are invested wisely such that, for example, human capital is built up.

The second analysis looks at critical environmental limits of the respective ecosystem, and whether they are respected. They must not be exceeded if abrupt and irreversible environmental changes are to be

avoided. Breaches of certain environmental thresholds can give rise to sudden and irrevocable socio-economic changes. One example of this is the clearing of the Amazonas rainforest. In the last few years, experts have elaborated minimum areas of forest coverage, which they propose in order to prevent the entire tropical rainforest ecosystem from transforming into a savannah ecosystem with a lower water table, less biodiversity and reduced capacity as a carbon sink.

High socio-economic relevance

Sustainable management of natural capital and adherence to critical environmental limits are important not only for environmental sustainability but also for economic and social sustainability. The degradation of natural capital has negative societal and economic consequences, even leading to conflicts in some cases. Countries affected by conflicts

are at the same time often highly dependent on natural capital, and it tends to be severely degraded. In this context the causal relationship can operate in both directions: Conflicts can be caused by competition for (limited) natural capital or by a drastic reduction in natural capital. On the other hand, conflicts can be the cause of increased degradation of natural capital. ■

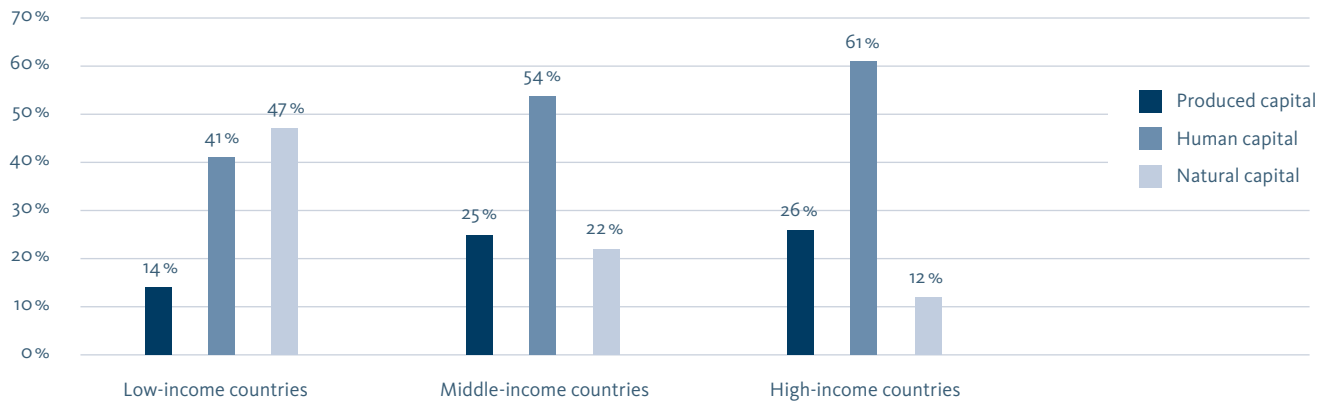
The degradation of global natural resources makes it increasingly necessary to measure natural capital and, building on that, to analyse sustainability.



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Composition of national wealth



Data source: Lange, G.-M., Q. Wodon and K. Carey (eds.) (2018), *The Changing Wealth of Nations 2018: Building a Sustainable Future*, World Bank, Washington, DC.

Land-use change as a mechanism for SDG trade-offs

Land use is the most visible footprint of human consumption and economic development. Agriculture accounts for the largest share of this footprint. Globally, the total amount of land under agricultural crops and pastures has remained relatively stable at around 49 million square kilometres since the 1990s. But agricultural land is not static. Each year roughly two million square kilometres of mainly natural vegetation cover are converted for human, mainly agricultural, uses and partly abandoned a few years later – a creeping and wasteful process of land degradation, which evaluation science can help us to understand better.

— Sustainable development in an interconnected world

Through global trade, the land-use systems of the world are increasingly interconnected or “telecoupled”. Changes in European consumption patterns, for example, can affect the land-use decisions of farmers in Europe’s trading partner countries such as Brazil and Indonesia. Likewise, we find that economic, agricultural and environmental policies in these countries modulate world market prices for major agricultural commodities. As countries gear up to achieve the SDGs, it is worth thinking about how their sustainability strategies interact with the global land-use system. Popular sustainability strategies rely on

1. technological change to increase agricultural yields in order to reduce poverty and hunger (SDG 1: No poverty, SDG 2: Zero hunger),
2. improvements in infrastructure to enhance economic growth and the quality and quantity of services provided to urban and rural populations (SDG 3: Good health and well-being, SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth, SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities), and
3. renewable and often bio-based energy to reduce pollution and mitigate climate change (SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy, SDG 13: Climate action).

Too little is known about how these measures affect land-use change at global scale and what safeguards are needed to minimise potential trade-offs with SDG 5 (Gender equality), SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities) and SDG 15 (Life on land).

— The local manifestation of global development processes

Two examples: First, productivity-enhancing technological change in agriculture has historically been a successful recipe to keep global food prices low and reduce pressure on natural ecosystems. Some forms of technological innovation in agriculture, however, can temporarily increase land demand at the world’s large and often poorly governed agricultural frontiers in South America, sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. Agricultural expansion at these frontiers, especially in combination with infrastructure

investments, is often associated with very high social costs such as the marginalisation of traditional populations, and with ecological costs, particularly carbon emissions from deforestation and biodiversity loss.

Second, the substitution of fossil-fuel-based energy and materials through renewable sources such as biomass can lead to competition over land resources with detrimental effects on food prices and natural ecosystems. Such substitution processes can be driven by fossil fuel prices or by environmental and economic policies aimed at inducing sustainability transformations. Uncovering the underlying cause-effect relationships of these well-intended sustainability strategies is a precondition for the design of effective social and environmental safeguards.

Recent and data-intensive advances in the traceability of transactions along global commodity value chains hold promise for improved governability and could enable conscious consumers and entrepreneurs to make more sustainable choices and investments. Voluntary supply-chain initiatives are thus frequently heralded as sustainability silver bullets in national strategies for green or bioeconomic transformation. Critics warn, however, that technological innovation and transparency are not enough to safeguard against the undesired side-effects of strategies to pursue individual SDGs.

— Evaluation has to break new ground

Finding the right mix of state-enforced rule of law and voluntary initiatives to encourage responsible consumption and production (SDG 12) of land-based products and services can only be the result of an evidence-based learning process. Such learning processes have been successfully established in medical science and development research. The global land-use system must become the next frontier of evaluation research if we are to effectively minimise trade-offs among the SDGs mediated by land use.

Exploring this frontier will require methodological innovations in evaluation research to accommodate new data types and phenomena specific to land systems such as regional and global displacement processes (“leakage”). It may also involve new types of ethical and practical limitations on the use of purely experiment-based evaluation approaches, for example, when it comes to evaluating the effectiveness of protected areas. Moreover, new research networks have to be formed to facilitate knowledge exchange between land system science and the existing evaluation communities. And we need coalitions of actors implementing policies and initiatives which affect land use, such as international NGOs and national and subnational governments across continents, who are willing to share data and engage in counterfactual-based research designs prior to rolling out new programmes. ■



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Chapter 2.3

Sharing responsibility

The 2030 Agenda calls for enormous engagement, but not just from the countries of the Global South and the stakeholders of international development cooperation. Stakeholders of all kinds from citizens to financial investors are called upon to step up and support sustainable development. Both established and new stakeholders bear joint responsibility for the 2030 Agenda and for forming new partnerships to deliver it – entirely in keeping with SDG 17. This is not always easy, as their interests and aims are often very disparate.

The 2030 Agenda from the viewpoint of the general public

To implement the 2030 Agenda successfully, the engagement of politics, the economy, academia and organised civil society will not be enough. Citizens, too, are called upon to contribute towards achieving the SDGs in their everyday lives. Development actors should therefore monitor – carefully and, above all, continuously – how the general public is positioned in relation to development policy, development cooperation and sustainable development, what people know about these issues and how they are engaging personally. D'Eval provided important empirical findings about public attitudes via its [Opinion Monitor for Development Policy 2018](#) study.

Strong support for development cooperation but doubts about effectiveness

90 per cent of the public in Germany regards development cooperation as important; 70 per cent would like to see Germany increase its commitment to global poverty reduction. At the same time, a quarter of the public doubts whether development cooperation is really effective. A particular issue here is the assumption that roughly half of development spending is lost to corruption. The findings of the Opinion Monitor 2018 study show that the framework conditions for both state and civil society engagement for sustainable development in Germany are favourable. Nevertheless, the doubts about the effectiveness of development cooperation must be taken seriously.

The Aid Attitudes Tracker

D'Eval's Opinion Monitor for Development Policy 2018 study is based on data from the Aid Attitudes Tracker (AAT), a longitudinal survey conducted in Germany, France, Great Britain and the USA since 2013. For the AAT, around 6,000 individuals in each of these countries are surveyed in six-month cycles about their attitudes, knowledge and engagement with regard to development policy and cooperation and sustainable development. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation finances the survey, while the survey research institute YouGov collects the data online. For the survey phase in the summer of 2017, D'Eval added questions to gauge attitudes towards the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

The SDGs are largely unknown

The German public is aware of global challenges and accepts the basic idea of global solidarity. Political orientation is found to be an important factor: The further to the right people are positioned politically, the less notice they take of global injustices and the more they distance themselves from the situation in the Global South. Although the fundamental idea of the 2030 Agenda meets with approval, the majority of the public is not familiar with the 17 SDGs. More than 50 per cent of citizens had still not heard of them in summer 2017. Only around 10 per cent were familiar with the concept and claimed to know what it refers to. It is striking that these values have not substantially changed since the 2030 Agenda was adopted in September 2015.

Concerns as to whether the SDGs can be achieved

The general public is sceptical about whether the 17 SDGs can be achieved by the year 2030. It is only with regard to achieving SDG 12 (Responsible consumption and production) that the general public is somewhat more optimistic. The goals that seem least achievable to the public are those further removed from everyday life such as SDG 1 (No poverty) and SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions).

People rate their own scope to influence the achievement of the SDGs as moderate, but see somewhat greater scope to exert influence in the areas of environmental protection and consumption. People also register somewhat higher engagement in these areas than for the rest of the goals. This could be explained by the more immediate relevance of these goals to everyday life. On top of this, if certain goals give citizens a greater sense of self-efficacy – in other words, if they help people perceive their actions as having concrete positive effects – then their engagement in pursuit of these goals will increase.

Although the fundamental idea of the 2030 Agenda meets with approval, the majority of the public is not familiar with the 17 SDGs.

Implications for politics and civil society

Much remains to be done:

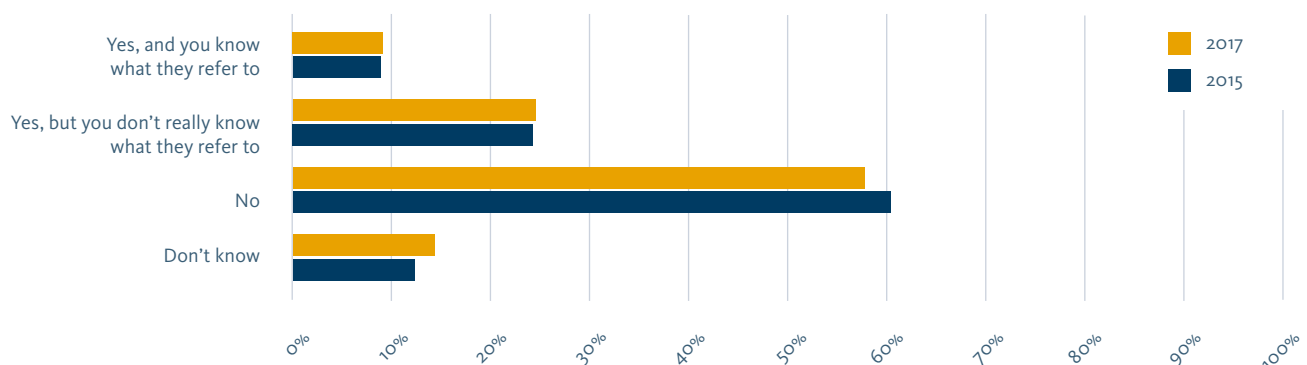
1. The basic idea behind the 2030 Agenda is more accessible for the general public than its complex system of targets. If all citizens are to be carried along on the road to sustainable global development, their lack of detailed knowledge must be taken into account. Emphasising the fundamental principles is therefore a more promising approach than communicating the 17 individual SDGs.
2. To promote engagement by the general public, it is necessary to create scope for influencing the goals in daily life, enable a sense of self-efficacy and give visibility to successes already achieved. ■



Dr Sebastian Schneider
DEval Team Leader

Jens Eger
DEval Evaluator

AAT question: Have you ever heard anything about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or read anything about them?



Source: Schneider S. H., S.H. Gleser and Martin Bruder (2018), Public Opinion of the 2030 Agenda. Results of the DEval Opinion Monitor for Development Policy 2018, DEval Policy Brief 6/2018, p. 2.

SDGs in partner countries: Who prioritises which goals?

Even though the 17 SDGs apply to all countries and are equally important in principle, limited resources mean that many countries need to prioritise working towards the SDGs that correspond to their most pressing local challenges.

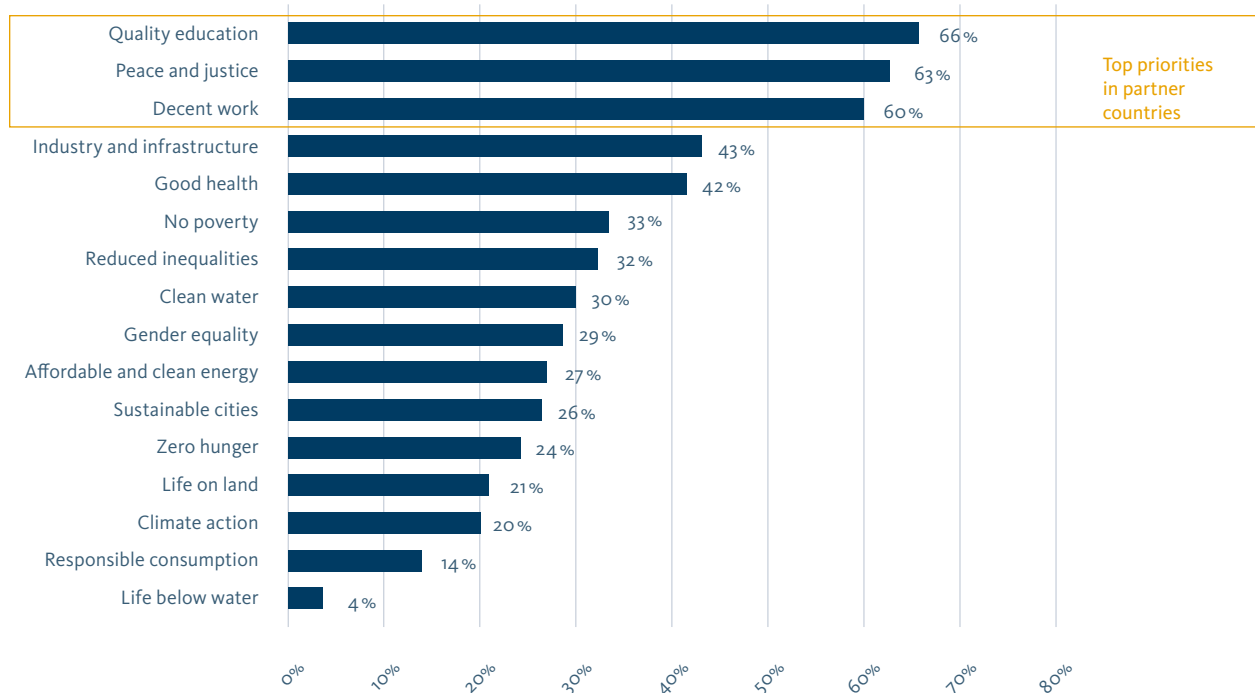
SDG priorities in partner countries

The [2017 Listening to Leaders Survey](#) interviewed nearly 1,800 decision makers from around 80 partner countries of German

development cooperation, asking them to identify six SDGs that they believed to be most important for advancing their country's development. The respondents represented the government, civil society, the private sector and development partners. Survey respondents evaluated SDG 4 (Quality education), SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) and SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth) as highly important.

The BMZ's special initiative on "Training and job creation", launched in 2018, is aimed in addition to existing activities in this area at increasing vocational training and employment. It thus relates to SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), one of the prioritised goals of decision makers in Germany's partner countries.

Different SDG priorities



Responses to the question "Based upon your experience, what are the most important issues for advancing [your country's] development?" The respondents could select up to 6 SDGs from a list. SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals) was not included.

Source: Data from the AidData Listening to Leaders Survey 2017, compiled by Mengfan Cheng (AidData).

The survey also revealed that stakeholder groups such as civil society and the private sector have different SDG priorities, particularly with regard to SDG 5 (Gender equality), SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy), SDG 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure) and SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities). For instance, development partners ranked SDG 10 as more important than other stakeholders.

Different perspectives on SDG 2

Fighting against malnutrition and undernutrition is one of the focuses of German development cooperation. Among other programmes, the special initiative “ONE WORLD – No Hunger” aims to achieve this goal. AidData’s Listening to Leaders 2018 Policy Report and data from the United Nations MY World Survey show that decision makers in all low- and middle-income countries (not just partner countries) assign a lower ranking to SDG 2 (Zero hunger) than do citizens in the same countries. SDG 2 is ranked fifth by citizens, whereas decision makers rank it fourteenth. Thus, the BMZ’s focus does more to meet the needs of citizens than of decision makers.

Implications for development cooperation

1. In addition to its present activities, BMZ founded the special initiative “Training and job creation” in 2018 and is thus addressing SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), one of the three most important SDG priorities for all stakeholder groups. Besides that, two other SDGs were also prioritised by different stakeholders – SDG 4 (Quality education) and SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions). It follows that these should not be ignored because they also represent important SDG priorities from the decision makers’ perspective.
2. With the focus on SDG 2 (Zero hunger) the BMZ seems to be responding to citizens’ needs in low- and middle-income countries. Through its activities the BMZ has opportunities to ensure that SDG 2 is on the radar of domestic decision makers so that it becomes a higher priority than it currently is. This will contribute to greater alignment between the priorities of citizens and decision makers. ■



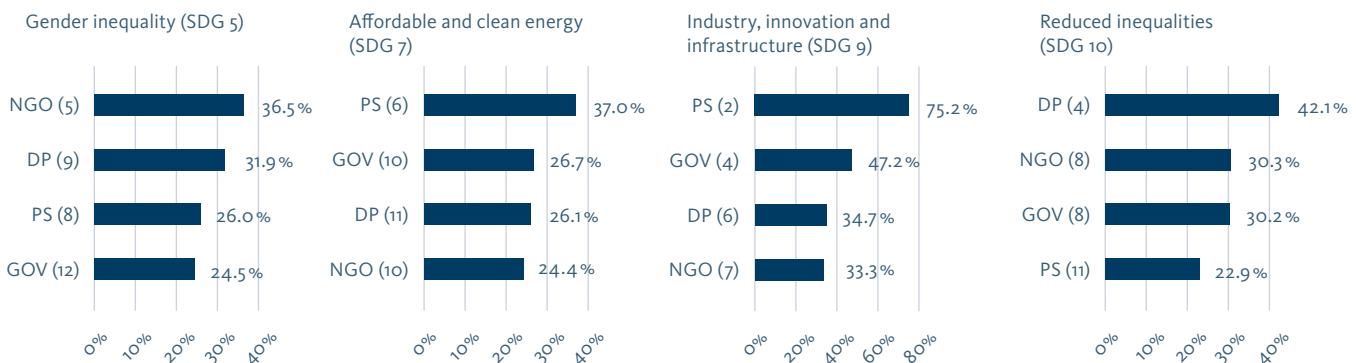
Dr Kerstin Guffler
DEval Team Leader



Tanya Sethi
Senior Policy Analyst
AidData

SDG priorities of different stakeholder groups

GOV = government, DP = development partner, NGO = civil society, PS = private sector.



Numbers in parentheses: rank of the SDG for that particular stakeholder group (rank 1 = most important, rank 16: least important). Percentages after the bars: share of the respondents in the stakeholder group who selected that SDG as among the top six priorities for their country.

Source: Data from the AidData Listening to Leaders Survey 2017, compiled by Mengfan Cheng (AidData).

Companies in development cooperation: Partnerships with a future?

Attracting private companies and investors to finance and implement development projects is something that development cooperation has endeavoured to do for over two decades. This is also reflected in the strategies of the BMZ, one example being its Marshall Plan with Africa. The aims of the Marshall Plan can only be achieved with the support of private-sector companies and investors: fair trade, private investment in Africa, bottom-up economic development, developing entrepreneurship and promoting employment. Whatever the task, from developing an app for a mobile trading system for Ugandan coffee producers to establishing a value chain for bamboo in Ethiopia, the aim is that German or international companies will help develop sustainable solutions for the respective challenges that arise.

— Mobilising capital and innovations

Between 2015 and 2018, DEval conducted evaluations of the [BMZ's develoPPP.de programme](#) and of [cooperation with the private sector in agriculture](#), and analysed the objectives, impacts and sustainability of what are known as development partnerships. These are collaborations whose central purpose is the joint implementation of projects in partner countries.

The results of the evaluations show that development partnerships can mobilise

private funding for development policy purposes. Companies can also transfer technological innovations that local businesses and state development organisations would not otherwise be able to make available. For example, such projects can facilitate the introduction of new, environmentally beneficial products in developing and emerging countries, or the dissemination of new agricultural production methods. This is evident from the establishment of an agricultural value chain in East Africa: The participating company held trainings for small farmers in which they learnt to produce high-quality cotton while adhering to social and environmental standards. The new production methods caught on successfully – within three years, 12,000 farmers adopted the new techniques. The company granted long-term purchase guarantees, and in this way a sustainable value chain could be built up.

— Development effectiveness remains limited

Despite successes here and there, it is becoming clear that the effectiveness of the projects in development terms is limited and that the expectations regarding private sector involvement, on the model of a global partnership for sustainable development, have not as yet been fulfilled. The projects scarcely stimulate broad-scale and long-term processes

“The expectations of development cooperation regarding private sector involvement, on the model of a global partnership for sustainable development, have not as yet been fulfilled.

of change, one reason being that companies have no interest in passing on their knowledge and lessons learned to state institutions or business competitors. Also, insufficient attention is given to risks to economic and social sustainability, which may arise through distortions of the market or violations of human rights standards and principles. Against this backdrop, the achievement of goals in these programmes frequently falls short of expectations.

— Realising potentials, recognising limitations

To be in a better position to realise potentials and assess risks, German development cooperation must continue to develop its approaches for cooperating with the private sector – for example, by establishing long-term and equitable partnerships with companies whose principles and objectives are compatible with those of development cooperation. Thus far, companies have not yet acquired a distinct understanding of the goals and approaches of development cooperation, and likewise, development cooperation has not yet adjusted sufficiently to the needs of the private sector.

In conceptual terms, development cooperation must state more clearly what added value it hopes the collaboration to yield, and which activities it specifically

expects of the companies. In the process of seeking common ground, it is also necessary to speak openly about potential areas of tension. These are found, for example, in the different target groups addressed by development cooperation and by companies. While development cooperation frequently sets its sights on marginalised and extremely poor population groups, these are target groups in which companies rarely have any interest. This gives rise to tension around the 2030 Agenda demand that no one be left behind.

Particularly because many civil society organisations, not to mention some sections of official development cooperation, are sceptical about cooperating with companies, it is important to deal transparently with the tensions and limits of cooperation. This is a fundamental prerequisite in order to realise the potential synergies in a spirit of common responsibility for sustainable development and to ensure the credibility of such collaborations. ■



Kirsten Vorwerk
DEval Evaluator



Dr. Marcus Kaplan
DEval Team Leader

Blended finance for the funding of sustainable development

According to estimates by the United Nations, the annual funding gap for the achievement of the SDGs amounts to 2.5 trillion dollars. Multilateral development banks are therefore urging a shift in the debate “from billions to trillions” because official development budgets, calculated in billions, fall too far short of the sums necessary. Merely by topping up public funding this gap cannot be bridged even in the most optimistic scenarios, so “blended finance” is now pivotal to the funding debate and is continually growing in importance.

Private investments to achieve the SDGs

Blended finance, which refers to the combination of public and private funds, is not a completely new idea in development cooperation. For many years the KfW Development Bank, for example, has combined its own funds with funds from the Federal Government by issuing development loans, or by entering into public-private partnerships (PPPs). What is relatively new, however, are funds known as blended finance facilities, designed to use public funding to mobilise private investors. The support is often aimed

at private companies. According to the OECD, more than 160 blended finance facilities have been launched worldwide since 2000, which have mobilised about 81 billion dollars from the private sector between 2012 and 2015.

Economic sustainability through the use of funds

Blended finance facilities offer the prospect of promoting economic sustainability via two main channels. Firstly, the public share invested in the funds enables a revolving use of funds: Funds typically issue loans, which have to be repaid over time. The repayments in turn provide funding, which can then be put back to use for investment activities. This way, funds can reuse the same public subsidy multiple times over years or decades. Secondly, the investments have a signalling effect by showing the financial market that investing in developing and emerging countries can be profitable. In doing so, they counter the sentiment of many private investors, who often overestimate the risks of financial engagement in these countries. However, this positive signalling effect might also occur without public subsidy.

“**Blended finance facilities communicate to the financial market that investing in developing and emerging countries is profitable.**”

— Potential and risks

Blended finance is currently being regarded as the most promising approach for financing the implementation of the SDGs. Development funding can exert substantial leverage effects and mobilise urgently needed financial resources. Through the possible signalling effect, blended finance can also pave the way for more purely private investments in sectors relevant to development. However, blended finance is no panacea, given the risk that the mobilised funding will be concentrated mainly in financially attractive sectors and countries, and not directed to where it is most urgently needed. For example, an OECD survey found that blended finance facilities are heavily concentrated in the areas of economic growth and employment, infrastructure and climate change, whereas the facilities address other aspects of sustainable development only scarcely. A further risk is a weak sense of ownership for the funded projects because a large number of actors are involved in blended finance facilities and goal conflicts between development objectives and the motive of financial profit can occur. One of the greatest risks in Financial Cooperation is the crowding-out of commercial loans by subsidised loans; another is market distortion. Moreover, there is a risk that these loans might contribute to overindebtedness in developing countries.

— Challenges for evaluation practice

Evaluations of blended finance are a mandatory requirement, but due to the complexity and novelty of the approach, evaluation practice in

blended finance is still evolving and faces a range of challenges. For instance, blended finance facilities have very long results chains all the way to the target groups such as small and medium-sized enterprises, and many actors are involved along this chain: Donors, private investors and development banks invest in the funds, which are often administered by independent fund managers. The invested money is then lent at special conditions to financial institutions in the partner countries, which in turn issue loans to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. It is thus extremely difficult to trace observed results back to a fund.

Evaluations of blended finance facilities are likely to be more demanding of time and resources than the evaluation of a credit line. Furthermore, evaluation questions addressing different levels of the results chain can only be answered with a broad mix of methods, and a broad evaluation mandate is required in order to gain access to data on all these levels. Altogether these issues make such evaluations more difficult, but no less necessary. ■



Gunnar Gotz
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(until 05/2019)



Magdalena Orth
DEval Team Leader

Triangular cooperations: Three actors – one goal?

With the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, alternative forms of cooperation are of growing importance in development cooperation, as is the principle of shared responsibility. This principle is reflected in triangular cooperations (TrCs), which are mentioned in SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals) as a possible instrument for implementing the 2030 Agenda. Triangular cooperations are cooperations between actors who fulfil three different roles; usually the participants consist of a DAC donor, a southern provider and a beneficiary. Particularly so-called emerging economies such as Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Indonesia are fulfilling their regional and global responsibility in the southern provider role, in order to contribute to solving global challenges. In addition to technical expertise and financial resources, they bring to the table knowledge born of their own experience of development processes, and frequently have good rapport with the beneficiaries because of their cultural proximity. In most cases the DAC donor contributes technical expertise as well as financial resources to the cooperation. Project results should primarily occur in the beneficiary's setting. Nevertheless, the beneficiary can also contribute financial resources and technical and content knowledge to ensure the success of a TrC project.

Shared responsibility

All three actors share joint responsibility for the project objective – expressed by means of equitable cooperation on an equal footing and

with equal rights and obligations. The idea is to strengthen trust and transparency between the partners and to establish sustainable partnerships. To this end, the three partners in a triangular cooperation should discuss, plan and coordinate all phases of the project jointly, from planning through implementation to evaluation; the partners are each expected to take their share of responsibility for the implementation of activities and bring their complementary strengths to the project. As a result the partners can develop and implement well-adapted and sustainable solutions for the beneficiary's local development challenges, and foster partnerships with one another.

Germany is one of the largest DAC donors involved in triangular cooperations, along with Japan, Norway and Spain. The geographical emphasis of cooperations supported by Germany is in Latin America and the Caribbean, followed by Asia and Africa. For most projects the beneficiary is located in the same region as the southern provider. Exceptions to this are some intercontinental triangular cooperations where the providers are from Latin America while the beneficiaries are located in Africa. In Latin America and the Caribbean there are also some dual actors. These are countries that assume different roles for different TrC projects, acting as a provider in one instance and as a beneficiary in another. Up to April 2018, the BMZ had concluded 87 triangular cooperations and had 26 ongoing measures at that time.

— Evaluation of triangular cooperations

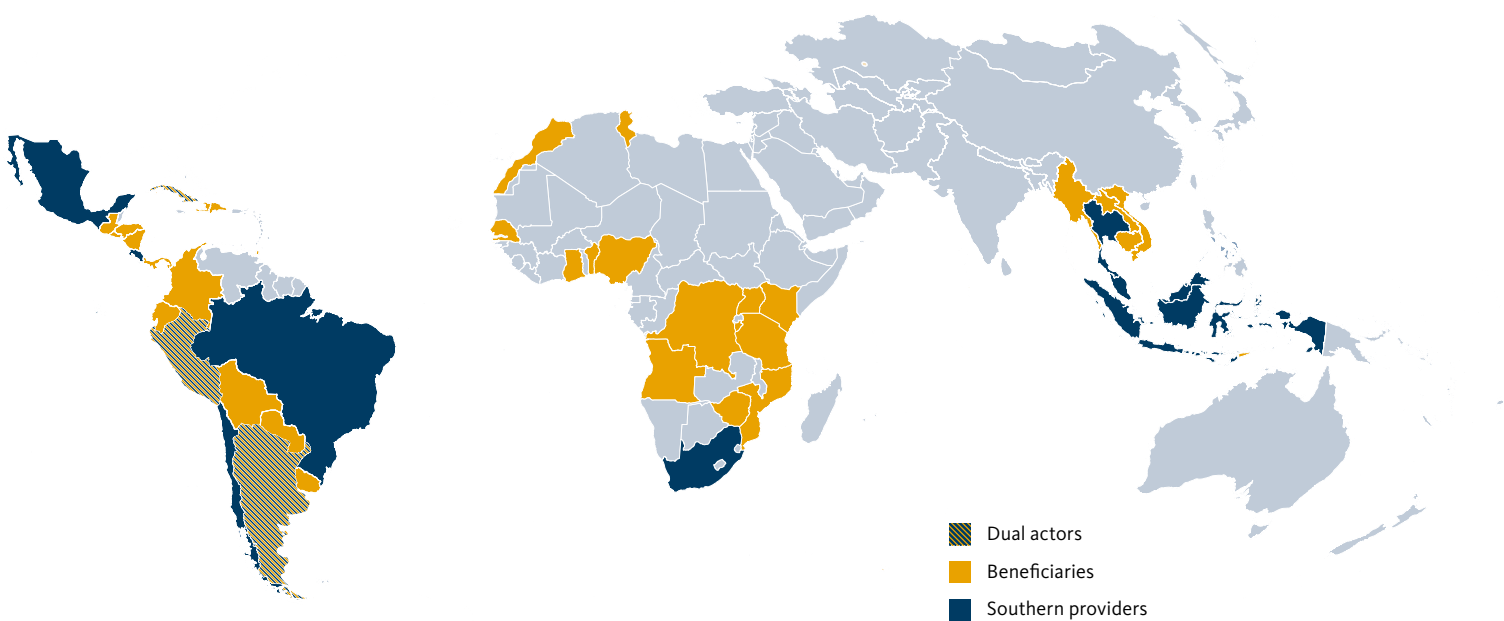
The shared responsibility within a triangular cooperation imposes different requirements both for the projects and for how they are evaluated. During the implementation of such projects, close contact and good coordination between the partners are necessary. Apart from considering the specific project results and possible challenges of implementation, such as the effect of the higher coordination overhead, evaluations should also assess the sustainability of the partnerships. They must therefore apply structured analysis to the core principles of triangular cooperations and their potential contribution on this aspect. The OECD has produced a toolkit for monitoring and evaluating TrC projects, which focuses on the partnership aspect and the potential

added value that it generates for the cooperation. The toolkit includes the suggestion not just to apply DAC criteria when assessing triangular cooperations, but also to take South-South cooperation criteria into account in order to assess the different partnership dimensions. The latter are criteria that were elaborated on the basis of the Bandung Principles and which apply to South-South cooperations. Examples of these criteria include horizontality, mutual benefits and demand-driven approaches. DEval is currently conducting an [evaluation of the triangular cooperation modality in German development cooperation](#), which incorporates the South-South cooperation criteria mentioned. The report will be published in spring 2020. ■



Kristina Wirtgen
DEval Evaluator

Geographical distribution of partner countries for BMZ-funded triangular cooperation projects worldwide (as of 2018)



Source: DEval.



Chapter 2.4

Costa Rica: Practising accountability

Costa Rica has upgraded its evaluation capacities in recent years with great commitment. Today this is paying off, not only for policy steering but more besides: The country can expertly render its accountability for implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the people are becoming the protagonists of sustainable development, says Costa Rica's planning minister in her interview.

Developing evaluation capacities – for more ownership and accountability

National evaluation capacities have long been acknowledged as a prerequisite for implementing the internationally agreed development-cooperation principles of ownership, managing for results and mutual accountability. Since its adoption in 2015, the 2030 Agenda has substantially influenced the debate about strengthening evaluation capacities, for it contains the commitment to systematically pursue and evaluate the implementation of the SDGs. It also emphasises the role of country-led evaluations and hence the necessity of evaluation capacity development (ECD) to strengthen national evaluation capacities.

Previous agreements such as the Paris Declaration from the year 2005 and the Accra Agenda for Action of 2008 had already underscored the importance of national systems for monitoring and evaluation. The United Nations similarly emphasised, in its resolution 69/237 adopted in 2014, that evaluation is an important instrument for development processes.

DEval strengthens evaluation capacities

Evaluation can provide meaningful data for policy geared towards results, accountability and transparency, and can provide recommendations to guide management decisions. To fulfil these functions, individual

evaluation capacities must be strengthened and evaluation structures institutionalised in state and non-state organisations. Ultimately an enabling environment for evaluation must also be created in wider society.

DEval's ECD approach makes use of different instruments to address these three levels. From 2015 to 2018, DEval carried out the project "[Evaluation capacity development in selected countries in Latin America](#)" (*Fomento de Capacidades en Evaluación*, FOCEVAL). Its main emphasis from 2017 was on activities in Costa Rica to ensure the long-term consolidation of evaluation as the basis for evidence-based and transparent policy design. Since the start of 2019, DEval has set a regional priority with its new project "[Competence development and networking of evaluation performers in Latin America as a contribution to the Agenda 2030](#)" (*Fomento de Capacidades y Articulación de Actores de la Evaluación en Latinoamérica*, FOCELAC) and has been working with partners in different countries in the region on strengthening their evaluation capacities.

Key elements for sustainable structures

Three key elements of the FOCEVAL project in Costa Rica contributed to greater ownership and improved accountability, to learning and to a higher quality of evaluations:

Ownership of learning and accountability for development cooperation measures are growing in significance internationally. This is reflected in increased demand for projects like FOCELAC.

1. National Platform for Evaluation: The Costa Rican National Platform for Evaluation was founded as part of FOCEVAL and enables representatives of public institutions, universities and civil society to participate in regular exchange about evaluation processes, organise joint activities and conference inputs, and officially monitor the implementation of the National Evaluation Policy. The inter-institutional cooperation generates synergies, new cooperations and better communication, and thus strengthens the sustainability of evaluation processes as well as the evaluation culture within the country. For example, the Planning Ministry (*Ministerio de Planificación Nacional y Política Económica*, MIDEPLAN) involved civil society organisations in the drafting of guidelines for participation in evaluation processes. As a result of the positive experiences in Costa Rica, key actors from other countries in the region approached DEval to request support in setting up similar forums.
2. National Evaluation Policy: With advisory support from FOCEVAL, a National Evaluation Policy was drawn up by state evaluation actors with civil society involvement and was adopted in November 2018. This was possible thanks to the close cooperation between the stakeholders facilitated by the National Platform for Evaluation. The policy defines four pillars:

FOCELAC strengthens evaluation capacities in Latin America

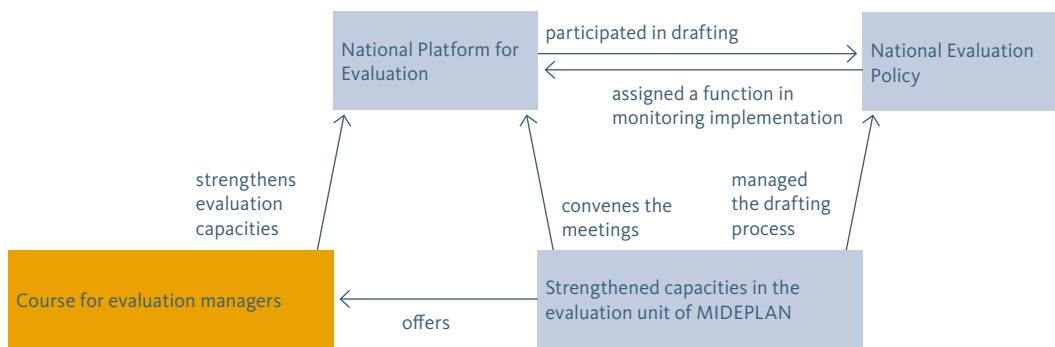
Based on the experiences and ECD formats of FOCEVAL and its networking with regional evaluation stakeholders, DEval has been implementing the regional ECD project FOCELAC since January 2019. Its aim is to strengthen the capacities of stakeholders in selected Latin American countries so that they can more actively fulfil their evaluation role in the context of the 2030 Agenda. With the Costa Rican Planning Ministry as an intermediary and reference example, FOCELAC jointly supports the development of evaluation capacities in the region by means of five strands of activity. It promotes

1. evaluation structures and functions in state institutions,
2. practice-relevant training offers by education and research institutions,
3. practical and methodological capacities of evaluation experts with an emphasis on young and emerging evaluators,
4. the participation of civil society in evaluation processes, and
5. networking and exchange among relevant stakeholders in the field of evaluation.

The strategic orientation follows the

systemic approach successfully implemented in the FOCEVAL project – the strengthening of individual, institutional and societal capacities. For this work the project assigns actors who are already equipped with the relevant expertise and skills to act as intermediaries and multipliers, and makes use of formalised working relationships with regional initiatives and with the Latin American evaluation network *Red Latinoamericana de Sistematización, Seguimiento y Evaluación* (ReLAC). This strengthens ownership, which contributes to a shift in society as a whole towards embedding an evaluation culture. Ownership of learning and accountability for development cooperation measures are growing in significance internationally. This is reflected in increased demand for projects like FOCELAC. Since developing evaluation capacities is one of DEval's strategic functions, in the next few years with support from the BMZ it will continue to strengthen ownership in partner countries – not only in Latin America but also, looking to the future, in Africa for example.

Costa Rica's national evaluation system



Source: DEval.

- establishing evaluation as an integral component of the results-based management cycle for development processes,
 - institutionalising the use of evaluation for evidence-based decisions,
 - strengthening national competences pertaining to the design, management, implementation and use of evaluations, and
 - intensifying the participation of diverse stakeholders in evaluation processes.
- Costa Rica's National Evaluation Policy has gained recognition in the meantime as an international model of good practice. Since the beginning of 2019, DEval and MIDEPLAN have been working on disseminating their experience to other countries in the region.

3. Strengthened evaluation capacities for the 2030 Agenda: MIDEPLAN established a course for around 50 evaluation managers per year with support from FOCEVAL. As

participants complete the six modules, they improve their understanding of evaluation processes, approaches and methods in different public institutions – an important prerequisite for an independent review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This course is being revised between now and 2020 and will then also be usable for training in other countries. In addition to existing partnerships, cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is envisaged.

All these measures at individual, institutional and societal levels serve to embed and consolidate project results. The combination of the three key elements – the National Platform for Evaluation, the National Evaluation Policy and the strengthening of evaluation capacities – results in self-reliant evaluation structures and processes in the country, which are likely to endure even without external support. ■



Erwin Geuder-Jilg
Team Leader of FOCEVAL
(until 12/2018)



Helena Stadtmüller
FOCELAC Evaluator



Dr Sven Harten
Head of Competence
Centre for Methods/
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DEval

➔ Participatory evaluations can strengthen sustainability

Alongside professional evaluators, participatory evaluations involve other people in the evaluation process, such as the stakeholders who play a part in the programme being evaluated. These are mainly local staff and members of the target groups. They are not just sources of information or simple observers but become active participants and protagonists in the evaluations.

Since 2014 DEval has carried out various participatory pilot evaluations within the scope of its project “Evaluation capacity development in selected countries in Latin America” (*Fomento de Capacidades en Evaluación, FOCEVAL*). During this process it identified three areas in which participatory evaluations can contribute to the sustainability of international cooperation.

Better individual capacities

Participatory evaluations improve the individual capacities of those involved because during the course of an evaluation they develop their analytical skills and adopt a critical perspective towards identifying and solving problems. For instance, one participatory evaluation undertaken as part of the FOCEVAL project incorporated an intensive training programme, during which the participants could enhance their evaluation expertise and soft skills. Another participatory evaluation on local health providers in Costa Rica empowered

community representatives to put critical questions to the expert medical staff, propose solutions to problems and exert pressure on decision-makers.

Greater ownership and engagement

The stakeholders in participatory evaluations develop a better understanding of the programme being evaluated, and hence greater ownership and engagement in how it is implemented. As an example, when the local staff of a programme and the target group jointly construct an impact logic in the course of a participatory evaluation, it strengthens their shared responsibility and makes it possible to develop a concept which all the participating stakeholders support.

Evaluations close to the context

Direct involvement of the local actors in the evaluation gives access to types of evidence that are specific to that immediate context. Moreover, it increases the probability that the stakeholders participating in the programmes will accept the evaluation results, adopt the recommendations and thus improve the programme in the long term. For example, the actors involved in the evaluation in Costa Rica drew up recommendations for local health staff which could be implemented rapidly, while proposals for longer-term implementation were addressed to national political decision-makers.



Workshop on participatory evaluation in Costa Rica



Juan Carlos Sanz
Deputy Team Leader
FOCELAC

Interview

Costa Rica's evaluation policy sets high standards for stakeholder participation

In November 2018, Costa Rica's Minister of National Planning and Economic Policy, María del Pilar Garrido Gonzalo, unveiled the country's National Evaluation Policy. As Latin America's most comprehensive evaluation policy to date, it is a milestone in strengthening evidence-based policy making in Costa Rica and the region.

How has the 2030 Agenda been integrated into Costa Rica's National Evaluation Policy?

María del Pilar Garrido Gonzalo: The 2030 Agenda is not very different from what we do already. We have incorporated it into our national, institutional and sectoral strategic planning.

We regard the National Evaluation Policy as one of our key instruments for implementing the 2030 Agenda, because evaluation ensures that strategic interventions are effective. Our national SDG Consultative Council with a broad variety of governmental, civil society, private sector and international representatives has now been added to the National Evaluation Platform to ensure that there is greater coherence and exchange of ideas among people with expertise in evaluation and those with expertise in the 2030 Agenda.

Costa Rica focuses on three priority areas to implement the 2030 Agenda: poverty reduction, sustainable production and consumption, and sustainable infrastructure and communities. How do you monitor progress in these priority areas?

Garrido Gonzalo: We identified a baseline, which reflected the status quo, and established a good set of indicators. Then we generated

panel data to find out how each indicator in the three priority areas has developed over time. The indicators were incorporated into the National Plan for Development and Public Investment (2019 - 2022).

Our National Evaluation System is crucial for monitoring the plan and other important policies such as *Puente al Desarrollo*, our strategic programme to tackle poverty and inequality. We also help other institutions to formulate indicators for their programmes and policies and to put mechanisms in place to trace these indicators. In cooperation with the National Institute of Statistics and Census, we use scorecards to show how the SDG indicators develop over time and to check whether we are achieving the desired results.

Why is evaluation capacity development so important?

Garrido Gonzalo: A country's most important investment is in its people. Our National Evaluation Policy calls for broad participation throughout the entire evaluation process. Participation has to go beyond compiling an evaluation's findings; it must also extend to defining the issue to be evaluated and developing the key questions. This participatory approach is absolutely critical to guarantee citizen empowerment, ensuring that the people are the protagonists of public policy.

How can Costa Rica's evaluation system serve as a model for other countries in the region?

Garrido Gonzalo: Evaluation shows us whether our policies are being implemented successfully. Today, our work is closely linked to the 2030 Agenda.

We offer to share our experience and advice with other countries. South-South cooperation and peer exchange are enriching horizontal processes that benefit both sides.

Similarly, we can benefit from the experience of other countries with higher levels of institutionalisation, such as Mexico, Uruguay and Colombia, which have given us peer support in evaluation design.

What are the main lessons learned from drawing up the National Evaluation Policy?

Garrido Gonzalo: It was important to define each stakeholder's role. What is each ministry's responsibility and how do other public institutions contribute?

Part of our success was that we decided to look beyond state institutions – which are still of fundamental importance – and approached other stakeholders in society that have a key role to play in meeting citizens' increasingly complex demands.

However, our work has not finished yet. The greatest challenge is implementing the National Evaluation Policy and ensuring that the culture of evaluation is embedded within the relevant institutions. We still have to convince stakeholders who are somewhat oblivious to evaluation, such as the private sector and parts of the political system.



María del Pilar Garrido Gonzalo

What has to be done to increase the National Evaluation System's sustainability?

Garrido Gonzalo: We have to reinterpret our evaluation standards and consider not only results in certain areas, but also impacts in terms of the 2030 Agenda's social, economic and environmental dimensions. We have to analyse synergies and impacts on particular parts of society. Therefore, it makes sense to start conducting evaluations differentiated by gender, other demographic factors, and issues such as human rights.

Public policy has to be based on evidence, which is more reliable and more valuable when it is backed by evaluation. The challenge is to embed evaluation in existing policy processes and make it part of institutional routines.

Evaluation must always be a response to citizens' demands for evidence-based results that can be used in developing, managing and assessing public policy. ■

Interview:



Nataly Salas-Rodríguez
FOCELAC Evaluator



Chapter 2.5

Achieving lasting results

The persistence of a development measure's results does not depend solely on its activities but on many other factors as well. In order to ensure that development results continue over time, actors must adjust the right levers, be capable of measuring sustainability and have the right expertise at their disposal.

Success factors: How do we achieve persistent results?

Sustainability – in the sense of development results that persist over time – is a key success criterion, not just for individual development projects and programmes but for development cooperation as a whole. The question is, how are persistent results achieved?

Considering what a highly relevant issue this is for development policy, it is astonishing that for a long time no empirical studies existed which systematically analysed the factors influencing the continuation of positive development results over time. In the context of its [evaluation synthesis on sustainability in development cooperation](#) and an [evaluation of a technical approach for comprehensive land-use planning in the Philippines](#), DEval has now undertaken empirical research on this theme.

The continuation over time of the positive results of development projects can depend on many factors. Some can be influenced by development cooperation; others cannot. The good news is that projects have many important levers within their direct sphere of influence. The main influencing factors are situated in project contexts, in project implementation, at the level of project results, and in the capacities of development partners and implementing organisations.

Context factors

Although context factors are normally beyond the influence of development cooperation, they potentially play an important role and

projects should therefore give them due consideration. According to the results of the evaluation synthesis, there is a positive correlation between economic development status and the sustainability of projects, whereas other higher-order factors like the extent of rule of law or democracy scarcely influence sustainability at all.

DEval's evaluation on land-use planning in the Philippines also finds evidence of an influence from sector-specific context factors. On the one hand, comprehensive land-use planning was hampered by the poorly coordinated mandates of public authorities. On the other hand, unresolved questions regarding land-use rights and ownership issues stood in the way of the development goals. Furthermore, it was found that local power elites can undermine development results, such as by obstructing the implementation of plans.

Implementation factors

By contrast, factors relating to the implementation of projects are in close correlation generally with the persistence of development results. This applies particularly to the adaptation of projects to the partners' national policies, the participation of partners and implementing organisations in project planning and implementation, and to management by those responsible for implementation. The relevant management aspects include the use of institutional

” **Persistent results evidently take a certain amount of time to develop; however, there also comes a time when they cannot be boosted any further.**

structures locally (as the DEval evaluation on agricultural value chains also observed), learning-oriented monitoring and evaluation systems, and upscaling and exit strategies. These correlations were also evidenced in DEval’s evaluation on land-use planning in the Philippines. This is highly fragmented and falls within the remit of several different authorities. The development measure therefore set itself the objectives of

1. making it possible for the districts to plan the whole of their territories, including their various ecosystems,
2. standardising disparate plans, and
3. coordinating these better with each other.

On the first objective, the project achieved substantial improvements. Because official mandates were largely unalterable, however, plans could only be minimally standardised. Progress was made on the third objective, because important approaches from the project on land-use planning were carried over into national guidelines, and were thus consolidated and extended to other parts of the country.

The comparison of different projects for the purposes of the evaluation synthesis showed that projects with a term of 13 years are most likely to be assessed positively for persistence of results over time; in longer-running projects the persistence value declines again. Persistent results evidently take a certain amount of time to develop; however, there also comes a time when they cannot be boosted any further.

— Factors on the level of project results

Factors on the level of project results also have an identifiable influence on persistence. Relevant parameters are that partners and implementing organisations assume responsibility for the project (ownership), target groups make use of the outputs delivered by projects and undergo a change in awareness, and impacts are broadly diffused. These global findings also apply to the local level: Capacity building, participatory planning and the involvement of different stakeholders at provincial and regional level brought about changes in awareness among land-use planning authorities in the Philippines that led to the integration of all district ecosystems (“from ridge to reef”) and to evidence-based planning. Close cooperation with the national planning authority and the involvement of all affected authorities in formulating the national guidelines were indispensable for ownership and for embedding the results in national processes and regulations. Both this case example and the results of the evaluation synthesis show that intensive capacity building measures on multiple levels and close cooperation with national authorities can enhance the persistence of results.

The financial, human and institutional capacities of partners and implementing organisations substantially influence the persistence of project results over time.

Capacities of partners and implementing organisations

Another strong influence on the persistence of project results over time are the financial, human and institutional capacities of the partners and implementing organisations. Once projects have ended, they are responsible for maintaining the outputs and results over time. The findings of the DEval evaluation synthesis also show a consistent relationship with the analysis time-frame: the statistical significance of partner capacities is strongest in evaluations carried out some considerable time after projects have ended. In the Philippines, the transfer of essential points of the development project into national guidelines led to consolidation of the measure. However, partners had to manage with fewer resources by comparison. Project coordinators should therefore try to integrate projects into the partners' structures at an early stage of planning and implementation, keeping a watchful eye on partners' capacities and developing them appropriately.

Conclusions

Firstly, the persistence of the results of development projects is subject to diverse influences. However, the majority of these can be influenced (to some extent) by projects. It follows that persistent project results do not happen by chance, but can be worked towards with good management and implementation. At the same time, all projects are subject to conditions of the context that are unalterable or near-unalterable. These can exert an important influence at times and should therefore be incorporated into the project's expectations regarding sustainability. In view of increasing (political) uncertainty in the partner countries of German development cooperation, overambitious expectations of sustainability should always be scrutinised critically.

Secondly, the results of projects should consistently be geared towards goals that are especially sustainable. Ownership and diffusion of impact should be firm components of intervention logics and duly promoted as priorities.

In order to maximise the potential for projects to achieve persistent results wherever possible, all relevant stakeholders must continuously attend to the factors that influence sustainability, the constantly changing contextual conditions and new development-policy approaches. ■



Dr Martin Noltze
DEval Team Leader



Dr Gerald Leppert
DEval Team Leader

➔ Measuring sustainability using geodata

Repeated data collection over an extended period of time can be used to measure the sustainability of a development intervention. The larger the geographical region being analysed and the higher the number of measurement time-points, the more complex and cost-intensive it becomes to verify the sustainability of results. Because geodata are often available at no cost, they offer a cost-effective option to measure sustainability.

More satellites, more accurate images

The geographical resolution of satellite images has improved drastically over the years, and even local phenomena can now be measured and monitored with increasing accuracy. Moreover, the number of available satellites has increased and revisit periods have grown shorter. Satellite data is thus becoming useful for monitoring changes over long periods of time.

Capturing results directly and indirectly

One precondition for the usability of geodata, however, is that the programme effects and impacts to be measured can be detected physically. For example, geodata are ideally suited to measuring the sustainability of reforestation or infrastructure development projects. If development interventions are concerned with political changes, enhancing

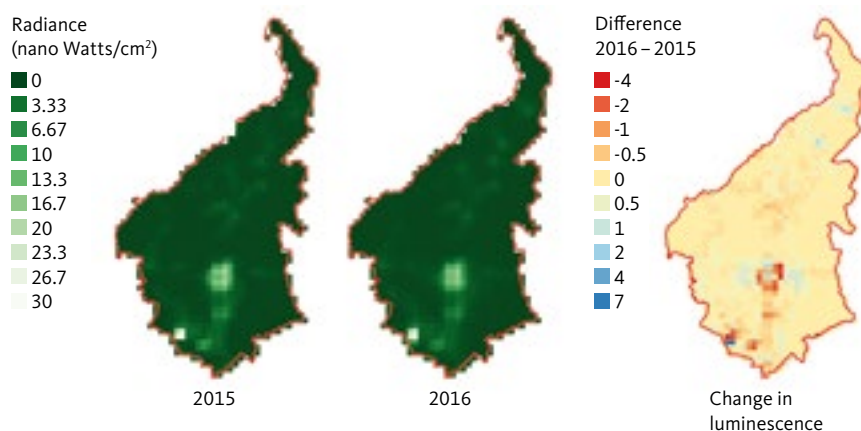
knowledge, or socio-economic improvements, it is harder to measure sustainable results with geodata. Nevertheless, innovative solutions are being developed even here, such as monitoring certain physical changes as proxy indicators of socio-economic transformation.

Night-time lights: an indicator for development

One such example are night-time lights. Sustainable changes in the socio-economic status of the population can be gauged from satellite images of night-time luminescence. This is based on the underlying assumption that a rise in light intensity indicates higher energy consumption, greater industrial activity, and consequently better living conditions. Part of good evaluation practice is to use additional qualitative and quantitative procedures to validate such assumptions and adjust them accordingly if needed.

The maps below show the night-time luminescence of the canton of Montes de Oro in Costa Rica. From 2015 to 2016 the annual luminescence here rose by 1.1 per cent. This can be seen as an indicator for an improvement in living conditions. The graphic presentation makes it possible to determine the precise geographical spread of year-on-year changes in luminescence.

Night-time luminescence of the canton of Montes de Oro, Costa Rica



Source: Earth Observation Group (EOG) of the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) (own presentation).



Dr Raphael Nawrotzki
DEval Evaluator

Budget support: Persistence of development results through stronger ownership

At the start of the millennium, budget support developed into a preferred aid modality for many donors. Also actors within German development cooperation appreciated its integrated and participatory character and considered it a promising instrument for the implementation of key principles of aid effectiveness, which are also anchored in the 2030 Agenda. These are

1. ownership by the partner-country governments,
2. alignment of donor programmes with partner governments' strategies and procedures,
3. harmonisation of programmes and procedures among donors,
4. results orientation, and
5. mutual accountability.

Along with the effective implementation of the aid effectiveness principles, above all the use of budget support and the associated donor harmonisation promised to lessen the fragmentation of development cooperation, thereby reducing transaction costs.

What is budget support?

According to the OECD, general budget support is “a method of financing a partner country's budget through a transfer of resources from an external financing agency to the partner government's national treasury”. To enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of measures, the donors combined their financial support with policy dialogue, conditionality, technical assistance and capacity development.

Following various scandals in the beneficiary countries, however, numerous donor countries came under accountability pressure in the 2000s, suspended their

budget support and eventually terminated almost all their general budget support programmes by 2013. Germany was no exception. Having provided budget support to various countries for around ten years, it withdrew from general budget support in its partner countries. Nevertheless, modalities similar to budget support are currently taking on renewed importance in the debate about the financing of reform partnerships.

Persistence of results through stronger ownership?

In view of the ongoing debate about budget support and its effects, DEval carried out an [evaluation on the effectiveness of budget support programmes](#) and – building on this first evaluation – an [evaluation looking at the robustness of the effects after exiting from the modality](#). The first evaluation showed that budget support achieved positive effects in many areas and thereby contributed to fulfilling the aid effectiveness principles – for example by increasing donor harmonisation and partner-government ownership and better aligning the programmes to the strategies and procedures of the partner countries.

On this basis, in a second evaluation DEval analysed whether the effects achieved persisted when individual donors or the entire group of donors withdrew from budget support in a country. The results of the evaluation reveal a mixed picture. While the exit from budget support undid its positive effects on policy dialogue and donor harmonisation, effects in the areas of internal accountability, provision of public services and non-income poverty persisted post-exit. Within these findings there were variations between the case study countries, which in many cases can be traced back to the partner government's

degree of ownership. The persistence of the effects of budget support is higher in partner countries whose governments are vigorously driving forward reforms.

A mostly unplanned exit threatens sustainability

The broad and mostly unplanned exit from budget support went beyond the loss of individual effects in many areas and affected the quality of development cooperation as a whole. In particular, it reduced harmonisation among donors and added to the fragmentation of donor portfolios.

This increasing fragmentation as well as the re-bilateralisation of cooperation are challenging for the sustainability and effectiveness of development cooperation, because from the donor perspective they reduce the options for influencing strategic policy making, exerting an influence on overarching questions of governance in the partner country, and for promoting

partner-government ownership. The resultant loss of mutual accountability leads, in turn, to a decline in the partner government’s will to reform.

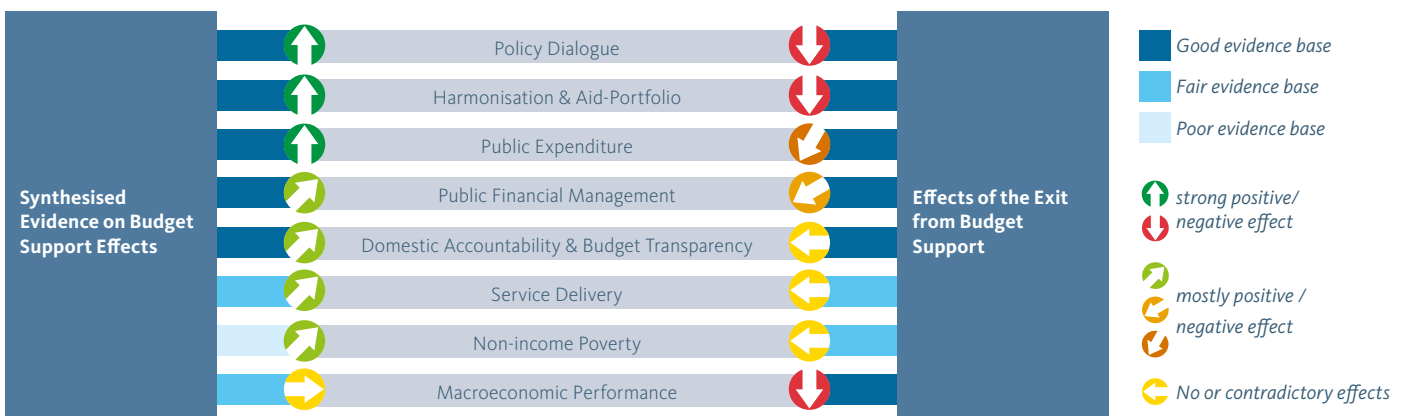
(Re)engage in integrated policy-based approaches

With regard to sustainability, development donors should jointly (re)engage in integrated policy-based approaches like budget support, which support the partners’ development strategies and ensure joint, coordinated implementation of development-policy goals. Moreover, donor and partner governments should develop strategies right at the outset for a coordinated and carefully managed exit from such modalities, with a view to ensuring that the effects achieved are maintained and negative impacts minimised as far as possible. ■



Magdalena Orth
DEval Team Leader

Persistence of the effects of budget support



Source: Orth, M., M. Birsan and G. Gotz (2018), *The Future of Integrated Policy-Based Development Cooperation. Lessons from the Exit from General Budget Support in Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia*, DEval, Bonn, p. xii.

➔ How can the persistence of effects be measured?

In order to measure how persistent the effects of budget support are, in an evaluation on the exit from budget support, DEval compared the effects of the modality prior to the exit with the consequences post-exit, and analysed whether the changes observed after the exit were actually attributable to it. The starting point for this research was a previous evaluation synthesis by DEval, which systematically analysed the available literature on the effects of budget support achieved during the budget support programmes.

A second evaluation studied the effects after the exit from the modality. On this basis, the persistence of the effects achieved during the budget support programmes was analysed in relation to the period after the exit. When comparing the effects pre- and post-exit, the question is whether the effects observed after the exit are really attributable to budget support, so that conclusions can safely be drawn about their persistence following its withdrawal. This matters when measuring the persistence of effects because it excludes other possible causes of the effects such as a general improvement in the socio-economic situation, for example.

To measure whether the effects were caused by the exit from budget support, the evaluation made use of a comparative case study design. It analysed the consequences of the exit from budget support in Malawi, Rwanda, Zambia and Uganda. This approach was supplemented with an approach called process tracing, for which causal mechanisms are hypothesised on the basis of existing literature and documentation, and their existence subsequently tested by means of interviews. While comparative case study designs are most appropriate for the comprehensive analysis of complex interventions, the process tracing approach can determine causal links with a high level of reliability. The combination of both methods made it possible to make comparisons between cases and, at the same time, ensured the internal validity of the results so that evidence-based conclusions could be drawn about the persistence of the effects achieved by budget support programmes.



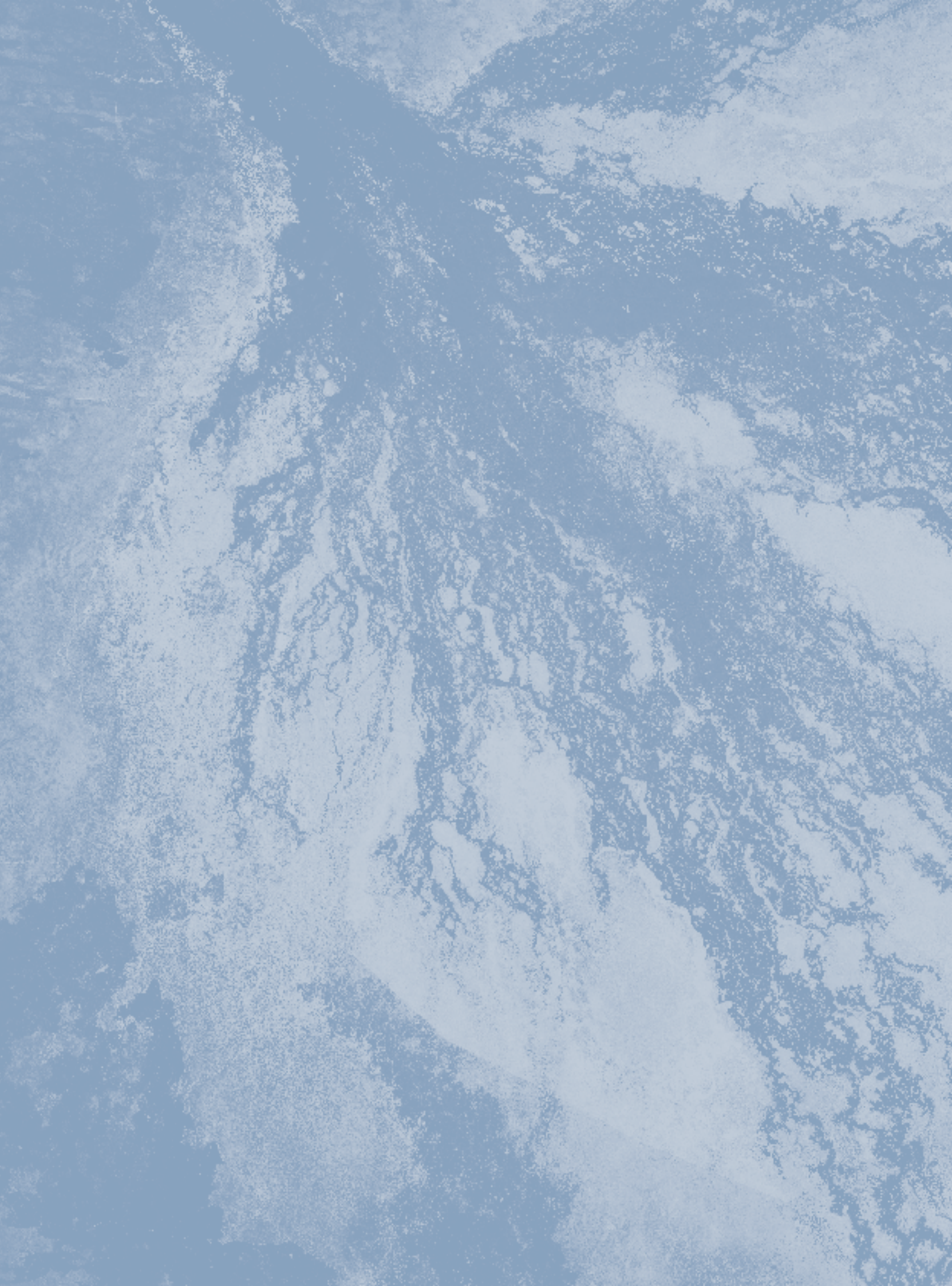
Magdalena Orth
DEval Team Leader

Components of the methodology

Method	Content	Objective
Comparative case studies	Criteria-based case selection, adaptation of the intervention logic based on the recognised theory of change for budget support (OECD DAC, 2012)	maximum possible external validity
Process tracing	Testing of hypothesised mechanisms in case studies by means of interviews	maximum possible internal validity
Quasi-counterfactual	Before-after comparison between results of the evaluation synthesis and this evaluation	increases the reliability of results

Methodology	Malawi	Uganda	Rwanda	Zambia
Comparative case study in ...	✓	✓	✓	✓
Process tracing for additional review of attribution in ...	✓			✓

Source: own presentation.



Part 3

Outlook

THERE IS NO
PLANET B



Socialist Worker

SYSTEM
CHANGE
NOT

*One solution:
revolution*

CLIMATE
CHANGE

Chapter 3

Outlook

In drawing up the 2030 Agenda, the international community set itself an ambitious reference framework. Despite serious efforts to put the 2030 Agenda into practice, in development policy and development cooperation there is still too much of a gap between the high strategic ambitions of the Agenda and its implementation on the ground. In order to bridge this, development cooperation must increase its efforts to turn its 2030 Agenda strategies into reality in its programmes and projects. Evaluation must become even more interdisciplinary and make better use of the diversity of methods available. Only this way can it perform its key role for the delivery of the 2030 Agenda.

What needs to be done now

The 2030 Agenda elevated sustainability to the guiding principle for global development. From the starting point of a vision of development which combines economic growth with social justice and environmental sustainability, the Agenda sets out an overarching framework for action which applies to all countries in the world and presents the international community, and particularly development cooperation, with major challenges.

These are becoming all the more obvious now that implementation of the Agenda must be tackled at a time when the international community is caught up in global political and economic dynamics which run counter to the Agenda's development aspirations. The majority of the German population supports the basic idea of global justice (→ Chapter 2.3), nevertheless the recent rise of nationalist movements in many countries and the attendant crisis of multilateralism hamper the global actions envisaged by the Agenda.

Furthermore, many donor countries are again foregrounding their national self-interests in development cooperation, which makes harmonisation and division of labour between countries more difficult. While development policy has never been understood solely as an instrument for advancing global sustainable development, its use to serve national objectives is currently back on the increase. This is especially evident in the context of the migration debate, which is heavily influencing development policy in Germany as in other countries.

Four years after the 2030 Agenda entered into force, some initial findings indicate how international and German development cooperation is dealing with the new demands and challenges while advancing sustainability in accordance with the Agenda. Against this background, the question to be considered is not only whether and how the international community is achieving the 17 SDGs, but also to what extent it is respecting the Agenda's underlying principles of action, and what role evaluation is performing in this context. From the articles in this report, three central mandates for action can be derived for development cooperation and the evaluation of its contribution to sustainable development.

1. Continue to strengthen positive dynamics for sustainable development

The 2030 Agenda has stimulated a broad debate in politics, research and civil society about how development cooperation must be designed in future to promote sustainable development in all its multidimensionality. There is unanimity, in particular, about the necessity to take action across borders and to establish global partnerships to attain the ambitious goals. The goals and principles of the Agenda have increasingly been incorporated into political strategies and concept papers. One focus of German development policy is on fostering the principle of joint responsibility, which is carried across into the design of new forms of cooperation and partnerships with both state and non-state actors. Examples of these are trilateral cooperations and blended finance, both of

which are being promoted more vigorously (→ Chapter 2.3). Interdependencies between the dimensions of sustainability and between the individual goals are now being acknowledged, with the result that research findings from different disciplines are feeding into the debate. Consequently, themes previously neglected in development cooperation, such as the measurement of natural capital, are increasingly appearing in the international discourse (→ Chapter 2.2).

The commitment to review the progress of goal achievement regularly has reinforced the significance of evaluation, both internationally and in German development cooperation. Important measures on the international level are the Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) on implementation of the SDGs under the auspices of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) of the United Nations. In the German context, the BMZ is endeavouring to develop its monitoring and evaluation systems internally, make its policy design more evidence-based and support its partner countries in their efforts towards mutual accountability (→ Chapter 1.1). DEval supports these processes as part of its development of standards and methods, contributing for instance to the introduction of country portfolio reviews and the revision of the evaluation criteria (→ Chapters 1.1 and 1.2), and with its work in the field of evaluation capacity development (→ Chapter 2.4).

Within the evaluation community, too, the strategic upgrading of evaluation that has accompanied the Agenda is resulting in

far-reaching changes. This is evident from the revision of the OECD DAC evaluation criteria, which are being adapted to the requirements of the Agenda, and from more intense debates about methods, which are growing more interdisciplinary and, thanks not least to technological progress, are notably broadening what used to be the standard spectrum of methods (→ Chapter 1.2). Rather than focusing on one specific method, the combination and integration of various methods along with interdisciplinary, theory-based evaluation and knowledge-sharing are considered especially promising approaches.

2. Reduce discrepancies between strategic aspirations and implementation

The growing commitment fostered by the 2030 Agenda to future-oriented sustainable development should not mask the reality that the Agenda is not a blueprint for attaining sustainable development, and that development cooperation itself can only exert a limited influence. There is a clear discrepancy between aspirations and implementation, which is evident for example in the implementation of the “leaving no one behind” principle (→ Chapter 2.1). While strategic processes have been initiated, so far implementation has been limited, partly because there is often a lack of political will or resources to set the necessary steps in motion. Two aspects of this need to be emphasised:

First, the 2030 Agenda reveals some weaknesses even though it sets out a powerful vision of sustainable development and, by aspiring to be universal, takes up important

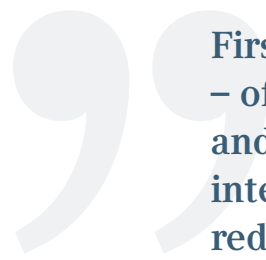
aspects of global interdependencies which have previously been neglected. Both the goals and the principles of the 2030 Agenda contain inherent trade-offs which cannot easily be overcome. The requirement that no goal should be achieved at the expense of another does not seem wholly viable. This is demonstrated, for instance, when innovative technologies for renewable energy generation or food security have negative consequences for global ecosystems (↔ Chapter 2.2.). Or when cooperations with new private-sector actors concentrate on economically more attractive sectors and countries while tending to neglect poorer regions and marginalised population groups (↔ Chapter 2.3). To be able to deal adequately with these trade-offs, put the principles into practice and address complexities and tensions appropriately, there is a need for more thorough conceptual engagement with the principles, and for innovative concepts and more flexible approaches.

Furthermore, with its aspiration to do justice to complexity, the Agenda sets out a comprehensive framework for action without laying down concrete objectives for implementation. This allows for considerable leeway: Particular countries can concentrate on the SDGs that they can best reconcile with their national interests. At the same time, it is apparent that the priorities of political decision-makers, civil society, the private sector and development policy donors diverge substantially in many cases (↔ Chapter 2.3). Against this backdrop, rational division of labour and donor coordination – among

themselves and with other countries and non-state actors – is difficult to realise, and relies on the assumption that donors will defer their own interests. Finally, important aspects such as global changes due to digitalisation and the valorisation of global public goods have been neglected in the Agenda as it stands (↔ Chapters 1.1 and 2.1).

Secondly, while development cooperation is assigned an important role in the implementation of the Agenda, its scope for action is limited. Many challenges ensuing from the 2030 Agenda for development cooperation are long-known issues. Nevertheless, appropriate solutions remain to be found, and in recent years some of the challenges have intensified. In the past, as now, development policy did not operate independently from other fields of policy, and despite good intentions, coordination and consultation processes fell short of expectations because national interests often took precedence. This is seen, for instance, in the choice of partner countries, which does not depend solely on where the need is greatest, but frequently also on strategic, geopolitical and economic interests of the donor countries.

Similarly, the demand for greater policy coherence and harmonisation is not new. As a result of the aid effectiveness debate, it became common knowledge from the beginning of the 2000s that a coordinated approach by donors is highly significant for the effectiveness of development cooperation. However, the measures introduced in this context to increase harmonisation and to reduce proliferation and fragmentation largely



First and foremost, governments – of traditional donor countries and partner countries – and international organisations must redefine the role of development cooperation while continuing to evolve their development cooperation instruments and funding modalities.

underperformed expectations and now carry less weight in the development policy debate. Examples of this are the numerous failed efforts in the direction of joint programming, the declining number of joint evaluations, and the withdrawal of many donors from programme-based approaches like budget support even though the latter frequently resulted in stronger partner ownership and ultimately also improved the sustainability of development measures (↔ Chapters 1.2 and 2.5).

3. Further develop evaluation and use diversity of methods to review sustainability

Evaluation fulfils a key function for the implementation of sustainable development. In light of the 2030 Agenda's complex system of targets, limited financial resources, and a growing legitimisation pressure on development cooperation, the task it faces is to provide evidence to support sustainable policy making, and to assess how far lasting changes have been achieved towards a development trajectory that combines economic growth with environmental and social development. In particular, this includes analysing the factors which influence sustainability and critically questioning over-ambitious expectations of sustainability (↔ Chapter 2.5).

To fulfil this purpose and to capture and evaluate sustainability in its multidimensionality, evaluation must become much more interdisciplinary and make greater use of the diversity of methods available. In this way it can provide more robust and useful evidence on the impacts and sustainability of

development cooperation. The use of geodata in combination with social media data or machine-learning approaches is just the beginning of a development that will become increasingly important in future. The aim is to combine appropriate methods rationally and refine them continuously. This encompasses the use of systemic approaches and network analyses as well as experimental and quasi-experimental impact evaluations and participatory evaluations involving local actors (↔ Chapter 2.4). The foundations for continuous methodological development are knowledge transfer and networking with science and research in other disciplines.

The growing complexity of development cooperation makes high demands in terms of global action, division of labour and harmonisation, and consequently for mutual accountability of the participating actors. In view of this complexity, conducting evaluations across policy areas and joint evaluations with partners on the international level has become all the more important. Such approaches were not very successful in the past, not least because of the high coordination overhead and high transaction costs. In this area, new avenues and opportunities for cooperation need to be found.

Evaluation can and must provide the policy sphere and society with pertinent and scientifically validated information as to what progress is being achieved towards sustainable development.

Evaluation should be broadly anchored in all countries – industrialised as well as developing and emerging countries – so as to promote evidence-based policy making. Developing evaluation capacities is a central function in order to strengthen the countries' ownership and improve their mutual accountability. This is possible in spite of the many structural challenges for evidence-based policy design and accountability, as the marked progress made in countries like Costa Rica and Mexico shows (→ Chapter 2.4).

Conclusion

The message of the 2030 Agenda is clear: Only when individuals, governments and non-state actors play their part in implementing the Agenda can sustainable development be achieved. The mandates for action stated above underline the challenges for development cooperation and development evaluation.

Development cooperation is well equipped to promote positive dynamics for sustainable development. Not only can it directly support sustainable development in partner countries in the Global South, but it also contributes to addressing global challenges like climate change or pollution of the oceans. In view of the changed framework of global cooperation for sustainable development, however, the responsible actors – governments and international organisations first and foremost – must redefine the role of development cooperation. At the same time they must continue to evolve the existing development cooperation instruments and funding modalities, and thereby promote the

implementation of the 2030 Agenda – particularly its guiding principles – across policy areas. An important task is to support transnational networks and cooperations, in line with the 2030 Agenda, so as to foster collective action for sustainable development and develop cross-border approaches for solving global challenges.

Evaluation can and must play its part in the implementation of the Agenda by providing the policy sphere and society with pertinent and scientifically validated information as to what progress is being achieved towards sustainable development, and which factors and interrelationships influence the different dimensions of sustainability. Furthermore, evaluation is an important instrument for systematic and strategic analysis and reflection on the experience of implementing the 2030 Agenda, so as to facilitate collective learning. Its aim is not only to identify suitable ways of implementing (development) measures, but also to draw attention to unforeseen trade-offs and limitations governing what can or cannot be influenced.

DEval participates in this process by generating comprehensive, publicly accessible knowledge in the form of its strategic evaluations. In this way it helps German development cooperation to align its measures more rigorously with the promotion of sustainable development in keeping with the 2030 Agenda. ■

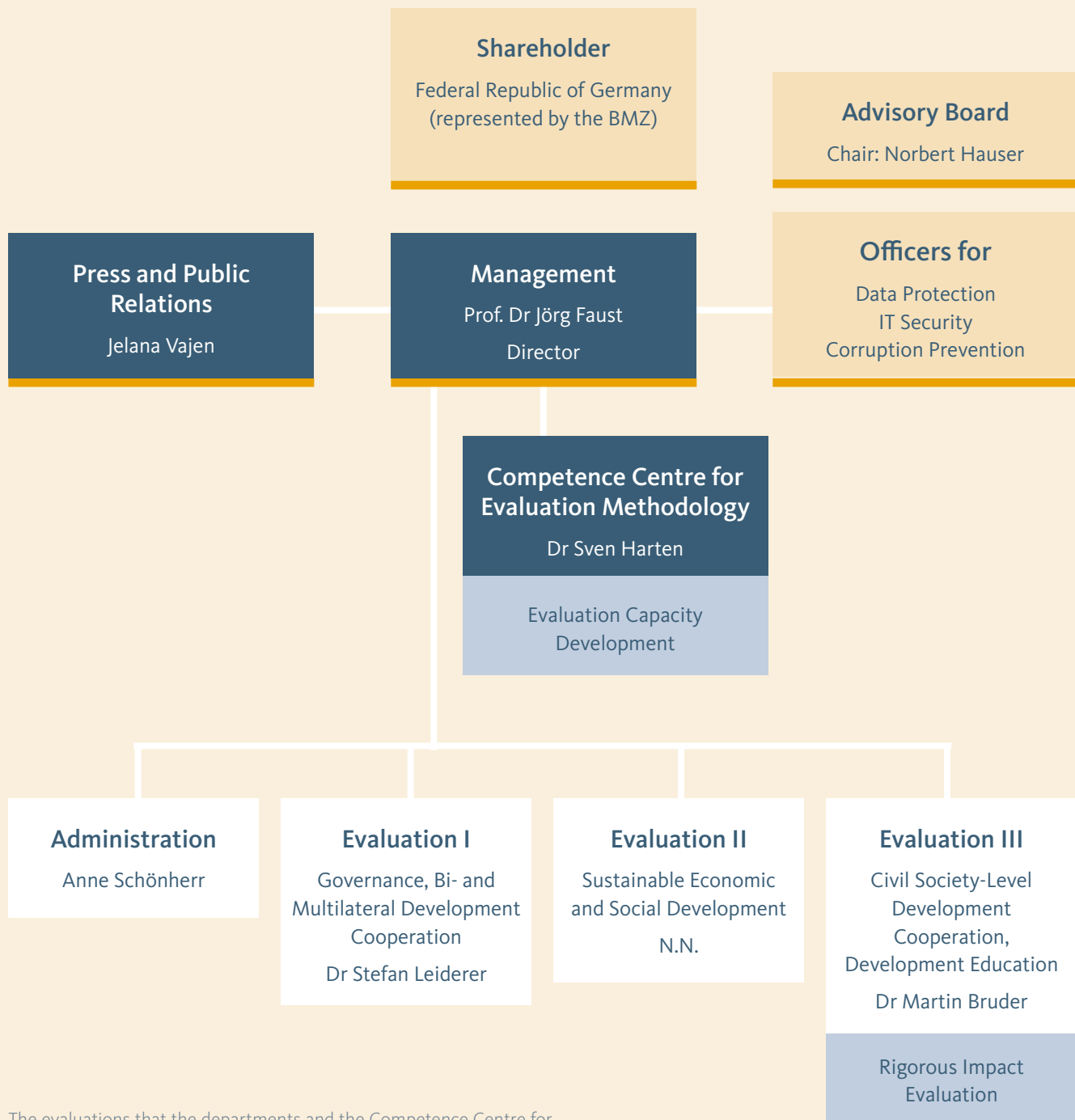


Kirsten Vorwerk
DEval Evaluator



Dr Marcus Kaplan
DEval Team Leader

➤ DEval organisational chart



The evaluations that the departments and the Competence Centre for Evaluation Methodology are currently working on are listed on the detailed DEval organisational chart at www.DEval.org/en/structure.html

➔ Facts and figures

Norbert Hauser, Chair

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Uwe Kekeritz

Vice Chair of the Committee for Economic Cooperation and Development, Member of the German Parliament (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen)

Prof. Dr Stephan Klasen

Professor of Development Economics and Empirical Economic Research, University of Göttingen

Dorothee Mack

Head of Evaluation and Quality Management, Misereor

Till Mansmann

Member of the German Parliament (FDP)

Prof. Dr Katharina Michaelowa

Professor of Political Economy and Development, University of Zurich

Dr Sabine Müller

Director General Africa, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

Ulrich Oehme

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Roland Siller

Member of the Management Committee, KfW Development Bank

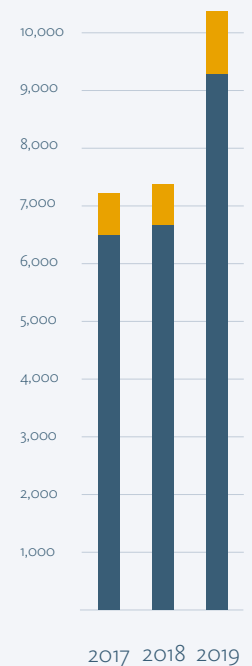
Helin Evrim Sommer

Member of the German Parliament (DIE LINKE)

Financial support (in euros, thousands)

2017	2018	2019 (budgeted)
Institutional support		
6,612	6,777	9,444
Project support*		
729	734	1,102

* Evaluation Capacity Development (2017 – 2019)
Rigorous Impact Evaluation (2018 – 2019)



Staff members

including project staff, excluding students, assistants and interns*:

	12/2017	12/2018	06/2019
Management and heads of departments	6	5	5
Academic and research staff	35.8	37.1	36.6
Project administration	4.8	5.35	4.6
Central units and administration	13.35	15.35	15.2
Total	59.95	62.8	61.4

*in full-time equivalents

➔ DEval publications 2017 – 2019

The publications emphasised in colour are referred to in this report on the page numbers cited.

Reports

2019 (to 9/2019)

Shaping Sustainability. The 2030 Agenda in Development Cooperation. Focus Report
DEval

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Lutz Meyer

2018

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The Future of Integrated Policy-Based Development Cooperation: Lessons from the Exit from General Budget Support in Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia

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Christoph Hartmann, Kirsten Vorwerk

Impacts for Rural Development – Land-use Planning in the Philippines

Gerald Leppert, Malte Lech

The Geodata Decision Tree. Using Geodata for Evaluations

Raphael J. Nawrotzki

Text Mining in Evaluation

Andreas Niekler, Thomas Wencker

2018

Cooperation with the Private Sector - a Suitable Means for Supporting Development in the Agricultural Sector?

Marcus Kaplan, Nico Herforth, Sabine Brüntrup-Seidemann

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Martin Noltze, Gerald Leppert

No More Black Boxes. Working with Causal Mechanisms in Evaluations

Johannes Schmitt

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Jörg Faust, Ida Verspohl

On the Future of Integrated Policy-based Development Cooperation

Magdalena Orth, Gunnar Gotz

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Stefanie Krapp, Erwin Geuder-Jilg

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Does weltwärts Work? How Volunteers Change, and How They Contribute to Global Learning in Germany

Jan Tobias Polak, Laura Scheinert, Kerstin Guffler, Martin Bruder

How Effective is Budget Support as an Aid Modality?

Magdalena Orth, Johannes Schmitt

Current Issues of the Philippine Land Use Planning and Management System

Malte Lech, Gerald Leppert

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