Guidelines for monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

In the context of the 2030 Agenda
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1. Introduction

The 2030 Agenda is designed as a universal roadmap based on the assumption that every country needs to make changes in the interest of sustainable development. It calls upon all countries to make their efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda transparent to the public and to provide the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) with regular updates on their development progress. This is done through voluntary follow-up and review mechanisms at the national, regional and global levels.

Emphasis is therefore increasingly being placed on accountability, which is an overarching principle of the 2030 Agenda. Reliable data and statistics are required to demonstrate achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems deliver the basic data needed to provide information on the way funds are used and how they contribute to achieving the SDGs and the corresponding indicators.

In this context, it is also becoming more important to build up M&E capacities in the long term, particularly in partner countries. This topic is clearly reflected in the goals of the 2030 Agenda, which explicitly promote the development of statistical capacities through measures such as targeted investments (targets 17.18 and 17.19).

These developments present a whole new set of challenges for project design and, accordingly, the M&E systems for TC measures. GIZ’s projects and programmes need to review their M&E instruments and adjust them to the 2030 Agenda. This document is intended to provide guidance to this end.
2. Our understanding of M&E in projects in the context of 2030 Agenda

Firstly, it is important to establish where and to what extent M&E systems for TC projects can actually contribute to implementation of the 2030 Agenda and, secondly, in which areas other instruments and processes can play a role.

The principle of universal applicability implies that the Federal Republic of Germany must contribute to achievement of the SDGs through both national and international policy-making. These contributions have an impact at three levels:

1. In **Germany**, through the implementation of Germany’s national sustainability strategy

2. Through Germany in other countries and with respect to global public goods

3. In **partner countries**, by supporting them in implementing their own development strategies in the context of development cooperation

The Federal Statistical Office (DESTATIS) is responsible for collecting data and monitoring national and global indicators (levels 1. and 2.) to meet the German Government’s reporting obligations to the HLPF. For the M&E requirements of GIZ’s projects, the focus is exclusively on the third level, i.e. developments in partner countries.

Here, too, it is important to clearly define which functions can and should be fulfilled by the project’s M&E systems: projects carried out jointly by GIZ and its partners should be geared to the partners’ national strategies for implementing the 2030 Agenda. As temporary cooperation systems, they are expected to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals and the relevant indicators defined in those strategies. This aspiration must be reflected in the orientation of projects’ M&E systems by ensuring that these demonstrate:

- the extent to which commissioned projects and programmes (at module level) contribute to national implementation of the 2030 Agenda; and
- the extent to which projects and programmes are designed and implemented on the basis of the 2030 Agenda.

With regard to the second point, in particular, not only the sectoral alignment of projects with the 17 **SDGs**, which are mainly divided along sectoral lines, but also all implementation principles of the 2030 Agenda that are relevant to results play a role for GIZ. In other words, both (nationally relevant) targets and the principles
of the 2030 Agenda must be taken into account consistently in the design, monitoring and evaluation of GIZ’s projects and programmes.

By contrast, adaptation of projects’ M&E systems does not automatically involve directly supporting national review processes in partner countries, nor does it involve any obligation to exchange data with partners for the purpose of meeting the partner country’s national reporting requirements at the global or regional level. Even if a review of possible synergies and links should be carried out in this context, it is still important to distinguish between:

- **M&E at the project level** (= temporary cooperation system) on the one hand, which establishes links to the national 2030 Agenda strategy and the implementation principles; and
- **national review processes** developed specifically for the 2030 Agenda as a means of monitoring implementation of the 2030 Agenda by partners (= permanent cooperation system).

In the case of the latter, support can be provided through specifically designed projects (e.g. the Partners for Review global project) that aim to strengthen the M&E of partner systems.

The **centralised capture of all German TC projects** that contribute to individual SDGs cannot be realised through the M&E systems of projects.
3. M&E-related content of the 2030 Agenda

The content and goals of the 2030 Agenda provide an all-encompassing frame of reference for the work carried out in partner countries by GIZ and its partners. The services provided by projects and programmes and the underlying processes for planning, monitoring and evaluating measures are aligned with this frame of reference.

This applies to the specific objectives and indicators of national implementation strategies in partner countries to which GIZ’s projects contribute. It also means that the principles anchored in the Agenda must be taken into account explicitly in project design and implementation as well.

Links to partner’s national implementation strategies (objectives and indicators)

With its detailed targets and principles, the 2030 Agenda sets out a vision for a global transformation towards the achievement of sustainable development that applies to all countries equally (universality).

Governments are called upon to formulate national implementation strategies on the basis of the global targets for sustainable development and in line with their own realities and levels of development. These national targets and indicators
form the basis for policies and planning processes in partner countries. German development cooperation must align its measures and programmes accordingly and demonstrate its effective contribution to implementing the 2030 Agenda.

The development objectives set by partners in their national implementation strategies are usually anchored at the impact level, while the objectives systems of projects are anchored at the outcome and output levels. The contribution to the national 2030 Agenda objectives must therefore be planned by describing plausible and comprehensible cause-and-effect relationships, and measured and evidenced during the course of project implementation.

**Integrated approach and interactions**

The 2030 Agenda underlines the importance of an integrated approach to achieving sustainable development. This means that the individual development goals can never be pursued individually but are interlinked and interdependent with other goals and targets. Cross-policy and cross-sector approaches hence play an increasingly important role and must be used to an (even) greater extent.

In addition, the goals must always take into account all three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) to avoid negative interactions and conflict of objectives (trade-offs) between the different dimensions. Only by understanding and capturing possible interactions, positive synergies can be strengthened and negative conflicting goals limited at the same time.
'Leave no one behind’ (LNOB)

A key demand of the 2030 Agenda is that the corresponding goals and targets must be met for all sections of society – and first and foremost for those groups who have hitherto been ‘left farthest behind’. It describes a global, inclusive approach in which policies and programmes focus explicitly on disadvantaged groups such as children and young people, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples, people with HIV/AIDS, the elderly, refugees, IDPs and migrants, with a view to counteracting their marginalisation. This can be achieved only when those affected by (multiple) discrimination are included in both planning and implementation by means of context-specific target group analyses and disaggregated data, and when existing inequalities are systematically measured and analysed. This enables the corroboration of the effectiveness of new methodological approaches to combat structural disadvantages and strengthens participation opportunities for marginalised groups.

Shared responsibility (including MSPs)

The achievement of sustainable development cannot be the responsibility of the state alone; it is a shared responsibility of a variety of actors from the public (international organisations, governments, administrations, subordinated authorities and local governments) and private spheres (civil society, the formal and informal economy, academia and foundations). This calls for new forms of cooperation. One possible approach is multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs), which enable the broad involvement of stakeholder groups that are relevant to a specific topic in order to achieve specific development goals. Adequate instruments and information are required to ensure effective cooperation between stakeholder groups and to develop joint learning processes. M&E offers hints what kind of positive impacts MSPs can unfold that could not have been achieved through conventional partnerships.
4. Adapting M&E systems at the project level

As outlined above, the 2030 Agenda provides a universally applicable frame of reference for the design and implementation of GIZ’s projects and programmes. It is important to stress that meeting the demands of the 2030 Agenda should not be seen as a separate task, but rather as an integral part of the planning, monitoring and evaluation of measures. Questions and issues relevant to the Agenda must be incorporated into existing instruments, tools and other commission management processes in an appropriate manner. In many cases, only small adjustments are needed to meet the demands.

The groundwork for mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda in M&E instruments should be laid as early as in the strategic project planning phase. Factoring the 2030 Agenda into the formulation of the target system, results and indicators defines the basis for the monitoring system and has a decisive impact on the evaluability of the project or programme. The basis for this is BMZ’s specifications for the design of projects under the joint procedural reform. GIZ’s internal working manuals on methodological procedures for brief assessments and appraisals contain specific analysis questions to ensure the mainstreaming of the 2030 Agenda in the design of GIZ projects and programmes.

The following chapter provides guidance on where it may be useful or necessary to make additions or adjustments to monitoring and evaluation, and how these can be implemented.

4.a. Monitoring

Results-based monitoring is the main steering instrument for managing cooperation, providing the information required for successful project implementation. As such, it must also provide information on whether a project is being implemented on the basis of the 2030 Agenda and whether it meets the corresponding demands for the project. This applies to both the objectives and indicators of the national implementation strategy and the principles of the Agenda. The established steps and processes within GIZ remain as a general specification for impact-oriented monitoring (see guidelines on designing and using a results-based monitoring system).

Objectives and indicators

The basis for results-based monitoring is always the objectives system of the project, which is developed in the planning phase and described in the results
model. Links to and overlaps with the partner country’s national implementation strategy and its indicators should be reviewed and documented once again during the initial stages of developing the monitoring system.

The national objectives to which the results of TC measures contribute (indirectly), which are usually anchored at the impact level, should be included in the monitoring format as fields of observation or superordinate results, and marked accordingly. This enables the contribution to the national 2030 Agenda objectives to be continuously monitored and assessed.

When formulating indicators, it should be reviewed whether indicators for measuring the achievement of project’s objectives can be adapted to national indicators. Depending on the level at which the national indicators are anchored, it may be possible for changes initiated by the project to contribute directly to national indicators. If the partner has a functioning national M&E system, the adaptation of indicators can generate useful synergies and prevent duplicate data collection for the projects. In the event of capacity bottlenecks on the partner side, the data provided by the projects can strengthen the partner systems and thus support their review processes. Even if this is not an explicit part of the commission, this can help to strengthen statistical capacities in partner countries, which is a clear goal of the 2030 Agenda.

Further specific requirements of national review processes – such as time frames, content and formats – should also be taken into account when developing monitoring systems and, where appropriate, be used to guide the preparation of a time schedule for the monitoring processes and activities in projects.

**Implementation principles**

**Integrated approach and interactions**

A detailed ex ante analysis of interactions between the three dimensions of sustainability or between different sectors should be carried out already in the planning phase to enable timely monitoring of trade-offs in the further course of project implementation. However, even if potential conflicting objectives are anticipated at the planning stage, this does not guarantee that all types of trade-offs can always be avoided. To effectively counteract negative effects, a good monitoring system must be able to identify interactions in the implementation phase that were not anticipated in the planning phase.

Because the indicators formulated in the initial stages can only measure planned developments, additional qualitative, open monitoring tools capable of identifying unanticipated developments (such as unintended negative effects) are needed. By
the same token, unintended positive interactions should also be recognised and, for example, harnessed for learning processes and cross-sector dialogue.

GIZ’s qualitative approach to monitoring, which provides for the open documentation of the perspectives of relevant actors and stakeholders within the project environment (KOMPASS) at least once during the project cycle, provides a sound basis for measuring interactions and, above all, unintended positive or negative changes. For this purpose, the instruments used – including interview guidelines and open questionnaires – must be supplemented by corresponding key questions that are suitable for enquiring about and comparing changes, especially in relation to the three dimensions of sustainable development. As a source of orientation serve the questions of analysis regarding the 2030 Agenda from the toolbox for methodical action concerning brief assessments and appraisals or rather the questions of analysis for central project evaluations. Other sources can, of course, also be used (e.g. data from other projects/programmes of GIZ or other donors and partner information). The latter applies to cross-sectoral results in particular. This requires taking a closer look at developments in other sectors, which can be done on the basis of defined fields of observation for all sectors relevant to the project or programme.

What is important is to reflect on interactions at regular intervals, e.g. at monitoring meetings. An exchange of information between different projects within a country and/or region can also be useful in this regard in order to identify interactions between different interventions and adopt counter-measures.

‘Leave no one behind’ (LNOB)

To comply with the ‘leave no one behind’ principle, socio-cultural diversity must be taken into account when gauging development progress, and intrasocietal differences must be explicitly examined. To achieve this, a more comprehensive target group analysis must be carried out in the planning phase or by no later than at the start of project implementation in order to identify marginalised groups, including the specific categories that influence inequality in the respective partner country (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, regional affiliation, etc.). Building on this, baseline data differentiated by group affiliation should be collected, and baseline and target values for indicators set, taking into account the level of disadvantage of the respective group.

Because it is often difficult to access data, particularly on disadvantaged social groups (e.g. in conflict regions), innovative approaches to developing new data sources – such as the use of digital tools or the use of proxy indicators – are required. Partners should also be given the support they need to collect disaggregated data that provides a sound basis for political decision-making processes. It is important in this context to ensure that the systematic collection of
disaggregated data on disadvantaged groups does not create any disadvantages for these groups (do no harm). This can be relevant in countries where, for example, the understanding of human rights is not consistent with the values generally upheld by GIZ and German DC. In other words, it is important to ensure that data are always handled in a sensitive manner.

The indicators presented in monitoring formats should be disaggregated by target group to reflect changes and progress separately for each of the respective groups. This is the only way to regularly monitor whether the different population groups are benefiting equally from positive developments and thus determine whether there has been any improvement in participation opportunities for disadvantaged groups.

Shared responsibility through multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs)

MSPs generate a form of service provision that takes into account all relevant perspectives with a view to generating long-term solutions to complex challenges.

Because the principle of consensus usually applies in MSPs, i.e. (management) decisions must be negotiated and carried by all stakeholders, the processes for coordinating service implementation can sometimes be lengthy and complicated. It is therefore important that the jointly defined objectives are clear, realistic and not too ambitious.

GIZ can take on various roles and functions in the context of MSPs. It is usually a service provider and acts as a kind of secretariat for the MSP. However, GIZ projects can also perform advisory services on, for example, sectoral/technical or methodological issues, either for a specific stakeholder in the MSP or for the stakeholder group as a whole. GIZ can also be a stakeholder within a MSP, with equal rights as well as corresponding powers and decision-making authority. This distinction of roles is relevant, too, in terms of GIZ’s specific monitoring tasks concerning MSPs: With regard to its function, it is important to distinguish between the monitoring system of the GIZ project supporting the MSP itself and the monitoring of the partnership. The basis for this is always the respective objectives system. Nonetheless, possible links and synergies should always be examined and, where possible, exploited. Services rendered by GIZ projects can also include supporting or facilitating the MSP in developing and using its monitoring system so as to strengthen the target-oriented management of MSP activities and to facilitate innovation and learning processes within the stakeholder group on the basis of adequate feedback systems.
4.b. Evaluation

In line with the requirements of the joint procedural reform, central project evaluations must also analyse and evaluate the project’s contribution to both the programme objective and to the national implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The evaluation of the module’s contribution to the programme objective is based on the programme indicators and the underlying theory of change.

When assessing the 2030 Agenda in the context of central project evaluations, it is important to establish to what extent the 2030 Agenda (individual SDGs and principles) has been taken into account in project design and implementation (including the monitoring system) and whether the project evaluation therefore need ‘only’ document, analyse and evaluate this, or whether the relation to the 2030 Agenda first needs to be ‘reconstructed’ in the context of the project evaluation.

In general, the principles of the 2030 Agenda could be integrated into the operationalisation of the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria or could serve as additional aspects. If the relation to the 2030 Agenda is integrated into the OECD/DAC criteria, it is also relevant to evaluations and incorporated into the assessment of projects based on the OECD/DAC criteria. In future, central project evaluations will address the following demands of the 2030 Agenda where possible and appropriate:

- Description of the contributions to the SDGs and principles set out in the country strategies and programme design.
- Description of the (intended and unintended) results relating to the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and analysis of interactions (synergies, trade-offs).
- Implementation of the ‘leave no one behind’ principle, e.g. by means of a human rights-based approach to evaluations and disaggregated data collection and reporting by different population groups, taking into account marginalised groups.
- Reflection on learning approaches arising from the implementation of MSP approaches, integrated approaches and approaches based on the LNOB principle.

The specification of a theory-based approach as standard in central project evaluations facilitates the documentation of contributions to programme objectives and implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The characteristics of, for example, a contribution analysis approach (e.g. focusing on answering the questions ‘how’ and ‘in what circumstances’; consideration of other causal factors/alternative explanations; participation of various stakeholders) could be useful for providing
robust information on contributions to programme objectives and the 2030 Agenda, while taking into account contextual factors.

Based on available project evaluation reports, a subsequent **evaluation synthesis** could be used as part of a **cross-cutting evaluation** to assess how many and how effectively projects are contributing to implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in partner countries.
Overview of 2030 Agenda-related analysis questions for central project evaluations:

Evaluation matrix with detailed evaluation questions according to DAC criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relevance</th>
<th>Effectiveness have the objectives of the development intervention been achieved?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dimension</td>
<td>The occurrence of additional not formally agreed positive results and unintended negative results was assessed and adequately addressed where required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Analysis questions | - Which positive or negative unintended results (econometric, social, ecological) does the project produce?  
- How were negative unintended results and interactions counteracted and synergies exploited? |

| Impact | Does the development intervention contribute to the achievement of overall development objectives? |
| Dimension | The announced superordinate long-term results have occurred or are foreseen (should be plausible explained) |
| Analysis questions | - To what extent will the project contribute to the implementation of the partner country's national strategy for implementing Agenda 2030 for the SDGs?  
- Which dimensions of sustainability (economic, ecological, social) does the project affect at impact level? How were positive synergies on the three levels?  
- To what extent have targeted disadvantaged groups (women, youth, disabled persons, refugees, IDPs and migrants, people living with HIV/AIDS) been reached and do they ensure the existence of the results achieved at target group level? |
| Dimension | The project contributed to the intended superordinate long-term results |
| Analysis questions | - To what extent is the effectiveness of the development measures positively or negatively influenced by other policy areas, strategies or interests (German ministries, bilateral and multilateral development partners)? What are the consequences of the project?  
- Referring to the three dimensions of sustainability (economic, ecological, social), was it ensured that synergies were exploited in the three dimensions? What measures were taken? (> discussion of interactions in the sense of trade-offs for unintended results) |
| Dimension | Untended superordinate long-term (positive or negative) results have occurred |
| Analysis questions | Which unintended positive and/or negative results/changes at the level of superordinate results can be observed in the sectoral and regional environment of the development measure (e.g. cross-cutting issues, interactions between the three dimensions of sustainability)? |
| Dimension | No project-related negative results have been observed - and the project responded adequately if any negative results were determined at any time |
| Analysis questions | - What were the risks of negative, unintended, superordinate results identified and assessed in the monitoring system?  
- To what extent were these negative results in the sense of (negative) interactions or trade-offs in the ecological, economical and social dimensions already known during the conception of the project and reflected (e.g. in the module or programme proposal)?  
- To what extent have the project's services caused negative (unintended) results (economic, social, ecological)? Is there any identifiable tension between the ecological, economic and social dimensions?  
- Economically: Impairment of competitiveness, employability, etc.  
- Socially: How should the impact be assessed in terms of distributive results, non-discrimination and universal access to social services and social security systems? To what extent can particularly disadvantaged population groups benefit from the results or have negative results for particularly disadvantaged population groups been created?  
- Ecologically: What are the positive or negative environmental impacts of the project?  
- What measures have been taken by the project to counteract the risks/negative interactions? |

| Sustainability | Are the positive effects sustainable? |
| Dimension | Prerequisites for ensuring the long-term success of the project: results are entrenched in (partner) structures |
| Analysis questions | - To what extent are (organisational, personnel, financial, economic) resources and capacities in the partner country (longer-term) available to ensure the continuation of the results achieved (e.g. multi-stakeholder partnerships)?  
- To what extent are national structures and accountability mechanisms in place to ensure the results are continued (e.g. for the implementation and review of Agenda 2030)? |
| Dimension | Are positive synergies between the three dimensions of sustainability identifiable? |
| Analysis questions | - Evaluation of the outcome results with regard to interactions between the economic, social and ecological dimensions of sustainability?  
- Which positive or negative intended and unintended results do the project produce? (Design intended and unintended results from the effectiveness evaluation to the three sustainability dimensions)  
- Is there an identifiable tension between the ecological, economic and social dimensions?  
- Economically: Impairment of competitiveness, employability, etc.  
- Socially: How should the impact be assessed in terms of distributive results, non-discrimination and universal access to social services and social security systems? To what extent can particularly disadvantaged population groups benefit from the results or have negative results for particularly disadvantaged population groups been created?  
- Ecologically: What are the positive or negative environmental impacts of the project?  
- If negative interactions have been avoided and synergies exploited, how was this ensured? What measures |
| Dimension | Forecast of duration. Results of the project are permanent, stable and long-term relevant |
| Analysis questions | - To what extent are the results of the project durable, stabilised and relevant in the longer-term under the given conditions?  
- What risks and potentials are emerging for the long-term protection of the results and how likely are these factors to occur?  
- (Example: Adaptability of target groups and institutions regarding economic dynamics & climate change; particularly disadvantaged groups are able to represent themselves in the long-term and their individual countries have the capacity for their participation; changes in behaviour, attitudes and awareness among target groups and institutions that support the sustainability of the project's results, etc.)  
- What has the project done to reduce these risks and exploit potentials? |

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