



Comments from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development on the DEval Evaluation Report “Institutional Evaluation of Engagement Global”

The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) welcomes the report from the German Institute for Development Evaluation (Deval), “Institutional Evaluation of Engagement Global”.

The evaluation of Engagement Global was undertaken with the aim of helping the organisation to move forward strategically. It focused on the organisation as a whole rather than on individual programmes or organisational units. Its recommendations are intended to help boost the organisation’s effectiveness and improve the services it offers.

Relevance of the findings

When Engagement Global was founded in 2012, it brought together under one roof for the first time in the history of German development policy all the various BMZ institutions and programmes that support civil society and municipal involvement in development policy. Until then, the system had been fragmented and spread across various organisations. This marked a significant step towards more and better civil society and municipal involvement as a priority goal of the BMZ.

Engagement Global’s main job is to promote and strengthen civic engagement in and for development policy. It does this by offering advice, training and financial support. With public awareness of how issues hang together in a global context having been heightened by the refugee crisis and the climate crisis in particular, the organisation’s work has recently grown considerably in political relevance. The figures reflect this: programme funding has increased almost fivefold in recent years, rising from 82.4 million euros in 2012 to 389 million euros in 2019. Over that same period, the organisation’s

staff has grown more than threefold. In fact between 2017 and 2019, the period covered by the evaluation, programme funding doubled.

Given this rapid growth, the institutional evaluation comes at a good time. It offers an opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved and to identify areas that could potentially be developed in future. It also, fortuitously, coincides with the BMZ 2030 reform process, allowing the ideas outlined in the evaluation to be combined with the outcome of the BMZ 2030 process and implemented simultaneously. The evaluation also provides a sound basis for the planned organisational study of Engagement Global.

Conclusions

The evaluation stresses that, during the start-up and growth phase of Engagement Global, it had to integrate a range of very diverse programmes with different identities and histories at the same time as managing the considerable increase in funding and, consequently, staff. The report confirms that this dual task placed very high demands on the organisation, both in terms of administration and in terms of its content. It also confirms that Engagement Global delivers what is demanded of it and masters the challenges facing it, partly thanks to the steering role played by the BMZ. For the BMZ, this is valuable testament to the work that went into building up the organisation over recent years and shows that Engagement Global is well equipped to meet the challenges of the future.

The evaluation report also confirms that Engagement Global has achieved most of the substantive goals that prompted its foundation in 2012. It has successfully established itself as a relevant player in

a complex field, operating in areas of considerable significance. Based on this analysis, the report makes recommendations on how Engagement Global can consolidate its past successes and equip itself for the future.

For the BMZ, the following points are particularly worth emphasising and should be tackled as priorities:

- Engagement Global provides the BMZ with an important interface with civil society. It is crucial for this interface to function as smoothly as possible. It is important that there is transparency for applicants regarding the main steps involved in the process, the eligibility criteria and the funding decisions and equally important that the advice services offered by Engagement Global be of consistent quality. The BMZ therefore takes on board the report's comments on this subject with the aim of making the services offered by Engagement Global more transparent and matching its advice services better with the needs of civil society. Quite independently of the evaluation, the BMZ and Engagement Global have already implemented, or started implementing, a number of measures concerning the technical aspects of procedures applied within Engagement Global in particular.
- The report notes that a coherent overall strategy for Engagement Global is lacking and that such a strategy would be desirable. Prompted by this finding, the BMZ plans to rework its existing strategy papers in the light both of the evaluation and of the results of the BMZ 2030 process and combine them within one document. This, it is hoped, will create more clarity and heighten awareness of Engagement Global's strategy. It is vital, at the same time, to acknowledge the limits of a coherent overall strategy. Given the diverse nature of civil society, Engagement Global has a very heterogeneous portfolio. Indeed, Engagement Global's strength lies in its being able to respond to the specific programmes of the various agencies and organisations. Any coherent overall

strategy should not go so far as to risk compromising the principle of subsidiarity. This would, for example, happen if such a strategy prevented Engagement Global from being able to take account of the specific features of the various agencies and programmes.

- The BMZ is pleased that the report concludes that Engagement Global upholds the principle of subsidiarity and the right of initiative in its work. The BMZ also believes that the existing system of checks works well; any contravention of the aforementioned principles is spotted and a solution sought. The BMZ will continue to ensure that the principle of subsidiarity and the right of initiative are respected and support the existing monitoring bodies in their work.

Particularly when organisations have expanded rapidly within a short space of time, it is important to re-examine how efficient and effective existing processes and practices are and adjust them where necessary. Engagement Global has now grown to such an extent, both in terms of funding administered and the resultant number of staff, that it would appear advisable to call on the advice of external experts. Even before publication of the evaluation report, the BMZ had therefore been planning to conduct an organisational review of Engagement Global. Based on the findings of the evaluation, the organisational review can also be used to flesh out some of the individual recommendations and develop possible solutions.