



Comments from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development on the DEval Evaluation Report "German Development Cooperation in Fragile Contexts"

The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) welcomes the detailed report submitted by the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval) entitled "German Development Cooperation in Fragile Contexts".

Germany has been pursuing development activities in fragile contexts for many years, and it takes state fragility aspects into account in all its partner countries. Germany's development policy in this context pursues the goal of addressing the structural, political and social causes of conflicts (including inequality and weak state institutions) and strengthening mechanisms for nonviolent conflict resolution. Germany carries out its related efforts on the basis of concerted action by the relevant Federal Ministries in line with the German government's *Guidelines on Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace*, which were adopted in 2017.

The evaluation looks at four self-contained topics that are very pertinent to the BMZ's work in fragile states: (1) defining and measuring state fragility; (2) strategies for dealing with fragility and how these strategies translate into resource allocation in fragile states; (3) the quality of evaluation in fragile contexts; and (4) the results of development interventions in fragile states. The evaluation is a desk-top study based on the analysis of secondary data, an allocation analysis, and the analysis of evaluation reports on 471 separate interventions in 85 partner countries from the years 2006 to 2015.

Relevance of the findings and BMZ conclusions

Defining and measuring state fragility

In a first step, the evaluation presents four different tools to measure fragility, compares their respective approaches to the phenomenon of fragility, and highlights ways of further refining these tools in terms of methodology.

The BMZ welcomes the fact that DEval shares its understanding of state fragility as a multidimensional phenomenon. This approach is vital for context-specific, effective development cooperation interventions.

The BMZ also shares the view that the definition and measurement of fragility has to be continuously developed further and improved on the basis of clearly defined criteria.

As early as in 2018, the BMZ adjusted the methodology of its crisis early warning system and launched its new "ESKA" system (*Eskalationspotentialanalyse* – escalation potential measurement). ESKA is not a tool to measure fragility but an analysis that is carried out annually to assess the potential for violence in all the countries that are partner countries for German official development cooperation.

The BMZ uses ESKA to complement the DIE/GDI and OECD tools (CSF and SFR) that have been assessed as part of the evaluation. Depending on a given country's ESKA score, specific stipulations apply to the commissioning and management of projects in that country, including with regard to compliance

with conflict sensitivity principles, risk management, and (preventive) peacebuilding. All BMZ staff members have access to the ESKA methodology.

The BMZ will be pleased to take up DEval's recommendation to provide a visual presentation.

Strategies and allocation

The evaluation shows that the BMZ strategy papers on governance (2007 and 2009), on peace and security (2005 and 2013) and on transitional development assistance (2013) have brought about a measurable increase in allocations for fragile states and an increase in the number of interventions in the areas of civilian crisis prevention, conflict transformation and peacebuilding and in the field of building democratic state institutions. With every strategy, the BMZ has further refined its principles for working in fragile contexts.

The BMZ considers that the DEval study encourages the Ministry to continue its current practice of adjusting strategies continuously in light of the increasing knowledge on successful development cooperation in fragile contexts.

The evaluation also identifies some partial aspects that are not yet reflected so clearly in implementation and allocation. It mentions, among other things, support for nongovernmental players.

When it comes to implementing the said strategies, the BMZ is vitally dependent on support from nongovernmental players – both as direct implementation partners and as local partners, and also as contractors for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities. In settings of severe crisis and when it comes to addressing the humanitarian-development-peace nexus (HDP), nongovernmental players are particularly important as providers of experience and reliable partners that enjoy confidence among people

¹ OECD (2012), Evaluating Peacebuilding Activities in Settings of Conflict and Fragility: Improving Learning for Results, DAC

on the ground. Cooperation in such contexts has been close and based on mutual trust, and the BMZ will continue its work along these lines.

The BMZ agrees with the finding of the evaluation that one key challenge for the strategic outlook of German (and international) development cooperation will continue to be the identification of suitable local partners (both governments and nongovernmental players) for successful development cooperation in fragile contexts.

Evaluation in fragile contexts

The BMZ welcomes the analysis of the quality of evaluation in fragile states, which shows on the basis of empirical data that the quality of evaluation in such contexts is at the same level as in non-fragile states. Notwithstanding difficult circumstances, especially restricted travel options for evaluators due to security concerns, the recognized procedures for evaluation in fragile contexts¹ are carried out successfully. Such procedures include (local) third-party monitoring and digital methods. The BMZ will play an active part in the international efforts to further develop such procedures.

The BMZ takes note with interest of the DEval recommendation of using a separate budget for M&E and will take up this matter (and the pros and cons of such an approach) with its implementing organizations, in addition to its ongoing exchange with KfW and GIZ on quality-assured results frameworks.

Results of interventions in fragile contexts

The findings of the DEval study show that the BMZ's development interventions in fragile contexts are just as successful as those in non-fragile contexts. When taking into account the individual dimensions of fragility, it is evident that projects in countries

with greater state capacity are more successful on average than in countries with less capacity – as is to be expected. This means that strengthening state capacity serves two purposes: overcoming fragility in the partner country in question, and ensuring that the results achieved through BMZ projects will be sustainable.

The ambition to overcome fragility and help shape processes of social transformation applies to both fragile and non-fragile contexts, but in fragile contexts it is often only possible to help put in place a basis for long-term change, and progress is made

through small steps. In severe crisis situations, tiny improvements in people's living conditions can make a big difference.

The BMZ is thus very actively working to adjust its procedures for the commissioning of interventions to the specific challenges of fragile contexts and low levels of state capacity, and it gives priority to the principle of avoiding, by all means, any actions that may exacerbate a conflict. This is done, among other things, through mandatory peace and conflict assessments and through risk analyses.

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