



# Comments from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development on the DEval Report “Evaluation of the BMZ COVID-19 Support Programme. Lessons from the Pandemic”

## Summary

The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) welcomes the report “Evaluation of the BMZ COVID-19 Support Programme. Lessons from the Pandemic” submitted by the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval).

The COVID-19 pandemic and the measures to contain the pandemic severely impacted the **health and socio-economic situation** of the global population, including in the partner countries of the BMZ. The number of people living in extreme poverty rose by more than 70 million. **Vulnerable groups** such as women, children and displaced persons were **particularly hard hit**.

In order to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the BMZ launched its **Emergency COVID-19 Support Programme (CSP)**, which supported **766 projects with a total funding volume of 4.8 billion euros** in the period 2020-2021. The geographic focus was on sub-Saharan Africa and the MENA region. The CSP funds were disbursed and implemented primarily via bilateral government organisations (66%) and multilateral organisations (31%).

The present evaluation used quantitative and qualitative methods and complementary case studies in Jordan, Lebanon and Burkina Faso to assess if and to what extent the CSP was suited to **supporting governments in the partner countries and reaching the population**.

## Findings of the evaluation

DEval reaches a **positive overall assessment** of the CSP in terms of its **relevance, coherence, effectiveness and efficiency**. The CSP is regarded as **suited to mitigating the immediate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in the partner countries**.

The evaluation is of great strategic importance for the BMZ since the findings can also be used in the context of future crises. The recommendations will inform the future response of the BMZ to infection outbreaks, epidemics and pandemics and appropriate prevention measures.

## Recommendations by DEval and the BMZ’s conclusions

DEval has issued eight recommendations to the BMZ and its implementing organisations:

The **first (and most important) point** is DEval’s recommendation that the BMZ should appoint a specific **office to be responsible for institutionally anchoring a crisis response programme**, and for incorporating and making available the insights gained from internal and external learning and assessment processes. Reference is also made here to the development of a crisis concept, for instance by a crisis team.

**Secondly**, the BMZ and the largest implementing organisations KfW and GIZ should ensure their **organisations’ internal learning** from the CSP.

GIZ and KfW should furthermore conduct analyses of the impact and sustainability of the measures implemented.

**Recommendations 3 to 8** refer to a **possible BMZ response to future global crises of a similar nature**. One recommendation, for instance, is to consider placing a stronger focus on civil society organisations in future crises, and to examine how the vulnerability, affectedness and needs of the partner countries over the course of the crisis can be used more as funding criteria that are factored into the distribution of funding.

The BMZ would like to thank DEval for the findings and recommendations described in the report.

In the past, the BMZ made some **organisational and staff changes** following a **critical assessment of its response to various crises**. In 2023, for instance, in addition to appointing a crisis commissioner, a one-stop shop for crises was set up and the necessary staff provided. In addition, specific focal points for crisis situations were established within the BMZ to provide rapid support for crisis teams.

All measures were strategically compiled in the BMZ's internal guidelines on effective response to international crises. These guidelines focus on crisis situations in our partner countries and provide clear and quick guidance for the BMZ staff on their roles and responsibilities in the event of a crisis situation in our partner countries.

We are examining whether the existing regulations and structures can be expanded to address pandemics and epidemics.

Together with our implementing organisations, we are examining whether additional evaluations should be made on the effectiveness and sustainability of our measures, or if the implementing organisations' existing reporting and evaluation procedures are sufficient for providing this information.

Our assumption is that in future crisis situations of a similar nature a **combination of different distribution channels and distribution modalities** will be required, depending on the context, and we will examine **if and how civil society organisations can be included more extensively**.

However, DEval explicitly mentions the **rapid implementation of the CSP via existing partnerships and projects** of bilateral official development cooperation, and a substantial inclusion of multilateral organisations as key success factors of the programme. For the BMZ, involving civil society organisations more strongly in its immediate crisis response would also have entailed a certain ambivalence since regular projects of civil society organisations were severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic themselves and were facing barriers to disbursement. It also seemed likely at the time that donation revenues (which are needed to finance own contributions required under the funding laws) might decrease dramatically. Not all funding instruments under funding legislation can, due to their regulations, switch to measures that are similar to emergency support, or dispense with contributions of the civil society organisation.

The full DEval report can be downloaded at [www.deval.org/en/evaluations/our-evaluations](http://www.deval.org/en/evaluations/our-evaluations)