



Comment from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development on the DEval Evaluation Report “BMZ’s support for protected areas”

Topic and time frame of the evaluation

The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) welcomes the report “*BMZ’s support for protected areas*” submitted by the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval).

Protected areas are nature-based solutions that contribute significantly to maintaining global biodiversity, bolster natural climate protection and create development opportunities for the local population. Germany supports Action Target 3 of the 2022 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, namely to effectively conserve 30 per cent of land, waters and seas worldwide by 2030. Particular emphasis is put on the rights and territories of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in this process.

According to current information from regular monitoring by BMZ and the implementing organisations GIZ and KfW, as at 31 December 2023 BMZ was supporting over 900 protected areas in over 40 countries via Financial and Technical Cooperation. These current figures lie outside of the evaluation time frame of the DEval report at hand (2016-2021). For BMZ, the current data collected by BMZ and the implementing organisations is always the decisive reference when it comes to reporting on activities relating to protected areas.

Nine representative countries were selected for the evaluation and were assessed in depth in terms of the evaluation questions and the OECD evaluation criteria (Brazil, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Indonesia, Cameroon, Madagascar, Namibia, Tanzania and Viet Nam). These country studies were examined in depth by case studies which were carried out on site in Ecuador, Indonesia and Cameroon.

The evaluation also addresses the question of how far BMZ’s support for protected areas succeeds in navigating possible tensions between ecological and socio-economic objectives.

Findings of the evaluation

The report concludes that BMZ’s support for protected areas is largely effective and coherent. The criteria of relevance and sustainability were partially met. The criteria of impact and efficiency could not be assessed due to insufficient data. The evaluation is relevant for BMZ as its findings can be applied in regard to BMZ’s future approach to funding protected areas and their management. At the same time, however, DEval’s reconstructed theory of change can represent only an approximation of the strategy papers that have since been published, in particular Core Area Strategy 5 “Conserving nature and natural resources, protecting life on Earth”. In addition, the tensions between socio-economic and ecological development targets mentioned in the evaluation cannot be assumed for all types of protected areas and for each individual case. Protected areas in which sustainable use is allowed, for example, only play

a limited role in the evaluation. Furthermore, while bilateral projects are represented, approaches such as regional or global nature protection projects, conservation trust funds and foundations are not although they already take increased account of the evaluation criteria and recommendations.

DEval recommendations and BMZ conclusions

DEval has issued six recommendations to the BMZ and its implementing organisations.

Firstly, DEval recommends that BMZ maintains its support of **protected areas at least at its existing level** and that it **continues to advocate for financing for protected areas at the international level**. Secondly, DEval recommends BMZ to emphasise the **importance of socio-economic activities** more systematically and to root this in strategic planning processes across sectors. Thirdly, DEval recommends the implementing organisations to expand the **socio-economic dimensions of their support for protected areas**, and in doing so to involve all the relevant stakeholders in order to identify the key factors for reducing use pressure in the specific country context.

The fourth recommendation is to **expand the implementing organisations’ existing cooperation mechanisms** with partner governments and other donors.

Fifthly, DEval recommends BMZ and the implementing organisations to expand their shared understanding of **indicators for assessing the impact of support for protected areas** and to improve the availability and use of data.

The sixth recommendation for BMZ and the implementing organisations concerns a stronger application and operationalisation of a **human rights-based approach**, fostering more **active participation by rights holders** and employing participatory approaches.

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

BMZ will strive to continue its extensive support for protected areas in future. Due to unpredictabilities with regard to future developments of the BMZ budget, however, it is not possible to make any definitive statements. Germany will continue to actively promote financing for protected areas at the international level. BMZ shares the view of the importance of socio-economic activities in the context of support for protected areas. This topic plays a prominent role in Core Area Strategy 5 which was published after the period of the DEval evaluation ended.

Core Area Strategy 5 also addresses the topic of a human rights-based approach and the active participation of rights holders such as Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the BMZ’s activities relating to biodiversity and protected areas.

BMZ welcomes DEval’s emphasis on the relevance of human rights and participatory approaches in the context of support for protected areas. The BMZ will continue to implement Core Area Strategy 5, although the scope for action may be restricted in some areas by the national legislation of the partner countries. In such cases, BMZ stresses the importance of human rights through political dialogue. In addition, BMZ remains in ongoing dialogue with the implementing organisations when it comes to participatory practices and instruments for promoting these practices. BMZ is also in regular dialogue with the implementing organisations regarding indicators and data for measuring development impacts. While comparable data is welcome, individual programmes and measures work with tailored, context-specific indicators. In terms of the availability of data, including data relating to support for protected areas, KfW is currently working with GIZ on projects such as a joint open data platform, which is expressly supported by BMZ.

