NIGER: THE PROCESS OF PROJECT ADVANCEMENT CONTROL OF THE GERMAN AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

CONTRIBUTION OF THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION MECHANISM IN THE CONDUCT AND USE OF RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAMME ON FIGHTING POVERTY IN NIGER

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PROJECT ADVANCEMENT CONTROL: THE CONCEPT OF MID-TERM EVALUATION OR SELF-EVALUATION

The objectives of Project Advancement Control

Implementing Project Advancement Control (PAC) is essential for monitoring and preparing projects and programmes for their next phases. The results of PAC are used jointly with initiatives' partners for later development of actions by providing information for steering the portfolio of activities and refining the German Agency for International Cooperation's (GIZ) regional and sectorial concepts. PAC also functions to promote learning by experience—including both successes and failures.

Key PAC design elements further enhance GIZ and partners' learning:

- **Assessment and conclusions:** Drawing relevant conclusions for subsequent implementation phases requires accurate measurement and assessment of results and an understanding of the reasons behind results' achievements (or non-achievements). The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development—Development Co-operation Directorate (OECD-DAC) offers five criteria to enable comparing development actions to other domestic and international initiatives (relevance, efficiency, impact, effectiveness and sustainability).

- **Trust and openness:** Learning from mistakes is only possible in a climate of trust where everyone can speak freely about their mistakes without risking criticism or sanctions; it is essential to properly separate discussions on the methods and contents of professional evaluations.

- **Knowledge Management:** PAC results must be disseminated beyond the development action considered. In addition to classifying and disseminating project progress, it is important that lessons learned are made available for exchanges among colleagues and relevant interested parties. PAC is an essential tool for refining GIZ outcomes.

Place of PAC in the GIZ evaluation system

The GIZ evaluation system consists of instruments of self- and independent evaluations. These instruments allow GIZ to assume two functions of evaluation: institutional learning and accountability. There are also external evaluations that are conducted and delivered by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development or other entities.

PAC is a self-evaluation tool. The self-evaluations are monitored by the organizational unit that is responsible for the development actions. The GIZ Office of Evaluation monitors independent evaluations, entrusting the evaluations' execution to institutes and external consulting

FIGURE 1. THE GIZ EVALUATION SYSTEM AND ITS INSTRUMENTS
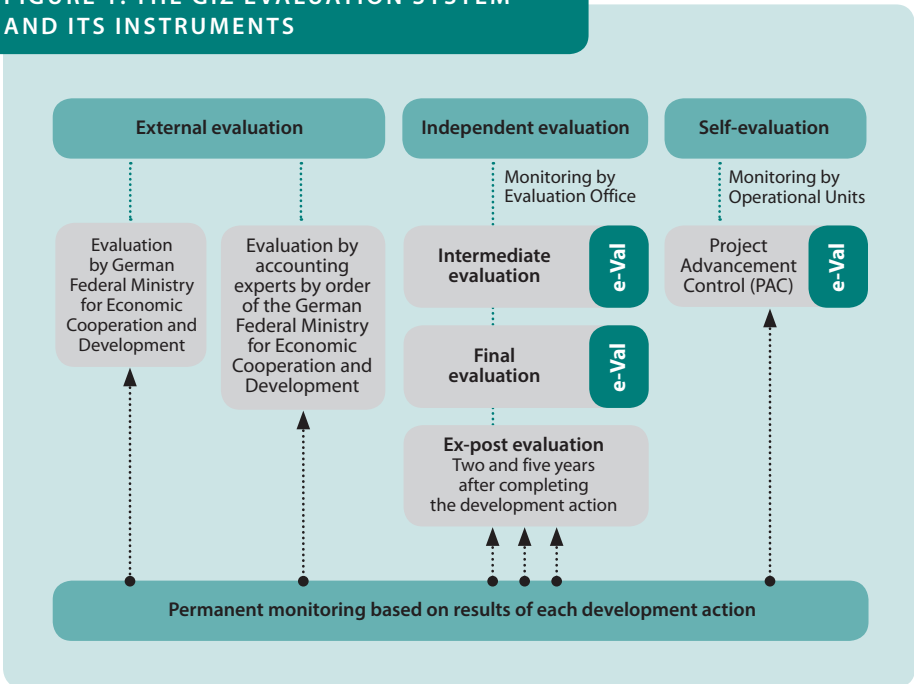
offices. The three types of evaluations include intermediate, final and ex-post evaluations.

Using a computer-assisted evaluation tool by e-VAL is mandatory to prepare and focus a PAC. It allows systematic identification and makes available the subjective views of actors. Results orientation is at the forefront of PAC. This is why the evaluation consultant does not proceed to a detailed comparative status of forecasts-achievements at the level of activities and services. However, the consultant must analyse the extent to which development actions are focused on the five success factors (strategy, cooperation, steering structure, process and learning and innovation) of Capacity WORKS (a GIZ management model for sustainable development).

PAC use promotes institutional learning, third-party dialogue and PAC-results interpretation, which ensures comparability within the enterprise and with other national and international organizations. During each process, regular monitoring based on the results of the programme provides information to serve as a basis of information for the evaluation (see Figure 1).

The elements of the approach

The three major phases that define the approach implementing a PAC mission—preparation, implementation and completion—are detailed in Table 1.

THE PAC PROCESS IN THE NIGERIAN-GERMAN PROGRAMME TO FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY PROGRAMME

Preparation

Administrative arrangements: deciding to conduct the process
Analysis of opportunities for joint evaluation with other organizations

In line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, joint evaluations of all kinds are performed. The Paris Declaration calls for (among other things and whenever possible), performing joint evaluations, harmonizing procedures and reducing field mission redundancies. It is convenient to decide on a case-by-case whether or not—and how—a PAC can be achieved jointly with one or more cooperation partners. If there is a formal mesh of services and objectives of development actions with other organizations (e.g. joint programme proposals, chains of results or common logical framework, and/or joint services), a collaborative approach is necessary.

In the Nigerian-German Programme to Fight against Poverty (LUCOP) process, development partners in Niger were informed of the evaluation. However, there was no agreement regarding co-financing. Nevertheless, the PAC process was conducted as a joint evaluation between various German development organizations intervening in the programme (in particular the ex-GIZ, ex-German Development Service and KfW Development Bank).

Informal solicitation of the advice of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the partner for the development of the next phase

It was necessary to clarify with the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and partners if it was convenient to promote development actions and, if the

TABLE 1. IMPLEMENTATION PHASES OF PROJECT ADVANCEMENT CONTROL

PHASE	STAGE	PERIOD
Preparation	1. Analysis of opportunities of joint evaluations with other organizations	Approximately 12 months before the end of the phase
	2. Informal solicitation of the advice of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the partner regarding the development of the next phase	12 months before the end of the phase
	3. Coordination with the stakeholders	9 to 12 months before the end of the phase
	4. e-VAL for the preparation of the PAC	Approximately 3 to 12 months before the end of the phase
	5. Development of the terms of reference for the consultants responsible for the PAC	Approximately 8 months before the end of the phase
	6. Selection and commitment under contract of the consultant	Approximately 8 months before the end of the phase
	7. Compilation of documents, data and information relevant to the monitoring	Approximately 8 months before the end of the phase
	8. Organization on site	Approximately 6 to 7 months before the end of the phase
Implementation	9. Start-up meeting	Approximately 6 months before the end of phase
	10. Analyses on site	Approximately 6 months before the end of the phase
	11. PAC workshop	Approximately 6 months before the end of phase
	12. Aide memoires (proposed text informally circulated for discussion)	Approximately 6 months before the end of the phase
	13. Preparation of the PAC report and other documents	Approximately 5 months before the end of the phase
Completion	14. Preparation of an offer for the next phase	5 months before the end of the phase
	15. Use of the PAC results	Approximately 3 to 4 months before the end of the phase
	16. Communication of the lessons learned	Continuous

issue was not sufficiently clear after intergovernmental negotiations, whether to pursue government consultations or other types of proceedings.

Within the framework of the LUCOP programme, a decision was made during the inter-governmental negotiations of 2008 to reinforce the programme by subdividing it into two programmes in Niger. This phase of the process has not been implemented as a result of clarifications made during negotiations.

Stakeholder coordination

Several stages of consultation with key persons that must be associated with the preparation and realization of PAC are being conducted, in particular with:

- **Senior management of the Regional Cooperation Council:** In the key stages of the PAC process, the principle of dual control must be respected. Therefore, regardless of the global responsibility of the Regional Cooperation Council, the senior manager is in charge of the terms of reference approval, the selection of the consultant, the signing of the *aide memoire* at the end of the PAC, the approval of the evaluation report and the follow-up of recommendations' implementation.

- **The Research and Development Department:** The participation of the Research and Development Department is recommended, particularly for preparing and designing the PAC (e.g. for the formulation of the key issues of the PAC and the iden-tification of appropriate consultants). Moreover, it is up to this department to ensure compliance with the methodological and technical standards of GIZ.

- **Partners:** The PAC process is conducted jointly with partners. The Regional Cooperation Council must ensure that partners are widely involved in the PAC, particularly with regard to the following activities:
  - Formulating the terms of reference for the consultants responsible for the PAC;
  - Selecting consultants;
  - Coordinating surveys with e-VAL and presenting its results;
  - Conducting the analysis and interviews necessary to achieve the PAC;
  - Participating in the PAC workshop;
  - Signing *aide memoires* at the end of the PAC;
  - Approving of the report on project advancement; and
  - Monitoring of the recommendations' implementation.

  During the PAC-LUCOP process the Ministry of Economy and Finance (through the Commission on Development) has been involved in the e-VAL survey, analyses and discussions, in the PAC workshop, and in report approval.

- **Target groups and intermediaries:** It is essential to consider the evaluations and concepts of the target groups. Whether or not the design of development activities is conducted close to the target group will influence the degree and mode of direct implication on these groups, and will effect decisions to utilize representatives of the target groups or intermediaries.

Completing the first e-VAL evaluation to prepare the PAC

The Regional Cooperation Council must ensure that an e-VAL survey is conducted before the PAC. The results of the e-VAL survey provide valuable information on the strengths and gaps of development activities as emphasized by survey respondents, on respondents' perceptions of stakeholder contributions, on similar or differing conceptions regarding the objectives that should be pursued and whether or not the evaluations are perceived as favourable. These results help identify the issues to be considered during the PAC, and contribute valuable elements for further processing of the issues.

E-VAL implies organizing and implementing surveys with all groups of stakeholders, submitting an evaluation to the e-VAL server and interpreting the data. The evaluation is recorded in a summarised interpretation report that is made available to the consultant before the start of the PAC and must be annexed to the report on project progress. The monitoring and evaluation mechanism provides information on the implementation, which enables a better understanding of the programme by the e-VAL evaluators.

The e-VAL process at LUCOP identified four categories of interviewees: political and implementation partners, other participants, the target group and the GIZ group (largely composed of staff working within LUCOP programme). This process has helped to assess the quality of the current situation and evolution, success criteria, activities, services and results achieved, the qualification of the design of the LUCOP, the framework conditions, the special themes of the GIZ, the OECD-DAC criteria, the themes and principles of quality of the GIZ, and the crosscutting themes. Recommendations that were made at the end of the interpretation reports were sent to the selected consultants. The monitoring and evaluation mechanism also brings forward important questions raised by e-VAL.

Preparing the terms of reference

Questions for examination during the PAC are based on information provided by monitoring e-VAL survey results, preliminary individual interviews and discussions within the project or programme team. The questions to be addressed are outlined in the terms of reference for the consultants responsible for the PAC.

Preliminary terms of reference should be developed in conjunction with the project team, partners, other stakeholders and potential target groups or their representatives. Coordination with the research and development department is also recommended. The Regional Cooperation Council submits this first version of the terms of reference to its hierarchical superiors for advice and consultation.

This was done during the process undertaken within the LUCOP. The programme team met to identify key issues to which responses were expected from the PAC process. Those responsible for monitoring and evaluating the programme were at the centre of all discussions; their participation ensured that the terms of reference were consistent with the evaluations of results-based monitoring.

Selecting and contracting the consultant

For PAC, selecting and contracting a consultant involves at least one independent person (a local or international expert). For complex development actions, it may be useful to call

upon several consultants. For the LUCOP, four experts were contracted, including an expert provided by the national level of the Niger Ministry of Economy and Finance. A team leader was appointed to ensure the coordination of the self-evaluation.

Compilation of documents, data and relevant information

Because consultants are not responsible for collecting data or information, the Regional Cooperation Council and other partners should provide consultants with relevant information and data prior to field missions. Doing so considerably reduces consultants' on-site work and increases efficiency. Nevertheless, it is generally useful for consultants to verify and supplement the information available to them and form their own ideas.

Within the framework of the LUCOP process, digital and hard-copy documents were provided to the consultant at the start of activities. Much of the information collection was done under regular follow-up activities based on the results, which ensured the provision of information at the level of each of the programme results indicators.

Organization on site

The Regional Cooperation Council ensures that all organizational conditions and logistics required for the optimal conduct of the mission are met before the execution of the PAC. In addition to coordinating with relevant parties and compiling relevant documents, the Regional Cooperation Council ensures that the following activities have been completed:

- Preparation of a provisional programme for the PAC, with a schedule of individual interviews, proposed meetings with groups, and project team meetings;
- Provision of transport facilities and, if necessary, appropriate accommodations;
- Organization of PAC workshops, including providing instructors and results documentation; and
- Delineation of the stages of preparation and ex-post processing to be coordinated with other actors.

Implementation

Start-up meeting and onsite analysis

The consultants' team leader is responsible for ensuring that stakeholders concerned are informed of the outcome of their preliminary analysis of the project documents, of follow-up data based on the results and of the e-VAL data interpretation report. This can be done during stakeholder meetings that validate the mission programme.

During the implementation of the LUCOP process, some questions were dealt with more in-depth during team discussions. For a better triangulation of data, the consultants opted for a combination of different data sources (e.g. more in-depth interviews, meetings, document analysis, onsite visits, interviews with the beneficiaries and their representatives and data collection from state institutions). Further, within the of LUCOP process consultants organized several meetings with officials from the Monitoring-Evaluation Programme in order to evaluate the data of monitoring results and on programming questions. The mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation provided data and analysis of methods and approaches used to collect data.

PAC workshop

Within the framework of an evaluation workshop, all actors analysed results and drew up conclusions for future work and planning of subsequent phases (if pursued). The LUCOP evaluation team designed this step with flexibility. The workshop was supervised by the representative of the ministry supervising the programme and allowed discussion of the consultants' analyses of results. The Monitoring and Evaluation Unit was commissioned to prepare and act as secretariat of the PAC workshop.

Preparing the *aide memoire*, the PAC report and other documents

The main results of the PAC have been documented in the form of a brief *aide memoire* written in French (following a requirement to use the language of the country concerned). The document was signed by the Head of the PAC, the Director Resident of GIZ and representatives of the Ministry of Economy and Finance (the oversight body of LUCOP).

The *aide memoire* addressed the following points: the theme of the PAC; proceedings and actors; evaluation of the current phase; recommendations for the current phase; and lessons and inputs. The Monitoring and Evaluation Unit received a copy of the *aide memoire* for comments and verification of accuracy. It also ensured that the *aide memoire* was disseminated to the team and stakeholders.

The consultants developed an interim PAC report in accordance with the plan provided by GIZ and made it available to partners.

Completion

Validation, dissemination and use of the results of the evaluation

The process of finalizing the PAC at LUCOP began after receiving the draft report of the evaluation. Those responsible for the programme distributed it to all stakeholders for their input. The Monitoring-Evaluation unit was mandated to consolidate remarks and observations and provide them to the consultants. Following several exchanges, a final report was submitted to the LUCOP programme, which was responsible for its dissemination at all levels. Summaries in French, English and German were prepared in order to contribute to knowledge management within GIZ.

Use of the results of the PAC

In order to learn from the results of the PAC, it is essential that the Regional Cooperation Council creates the conditions required for a systematic use of the reports and results of the PAC, including:

- Transmitting the PAC report to the persons or bodies involved in the PAC, in particular to partners under the responsibility of the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit commissioned by the head of the programme;

- Filing the PAC report and its summary with the GIZ document management system;

- Ensuring that the GIZ Office, the regional division or competent sectorial office, the evaluation office and the heads of products concerned at the research and development department are informed that the documents are available in the document management system;

- Ensuring that Regional Cooperation Council comments on lessons learned documented in the PAC report;

- Facilitating negotiations between the Regional Cooperation Council and the hierarchical management for implementing PAC recommendations;

- Ensuring that the LUCOP Monitoring and Evaluation Unit introduces questions raised by the PAC in internal and external programme discussions; and

- Assessing whether the meta-evaluation of LUCOP processes were in accordance with the guiding principles of the African evaluation.

Communication of the lessons learned and inputs

Knowledge dissemination is done through the documentation of acquisitions, transmission, their use by information technology systems and direct communications between staff members. This can take place during exchanges at country-level meetings between GIZ staff, workshops with partners, networking with other development cooperation institutions and donors, or by exchanging lessons learned through integrated GIZ sectorial networks.

When visiting GIZ headquarters, the Regional Cooperation Council should keep colleagues in the research and development department (e.g. coordinators of areas for priority action, product managers) and the regional department (e.g. geographical coordinators at headquarters) informed by holding meetings on lessons learned. The Regional Cooperation Council may also suggest using a symposium to make achievements accessible to a wider circle of participants.

TABLE 2. EXAMPLES OF RECOMMENDATIONS LUCOP TOOK INTO ACCOUNT

RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE PAC	DECISIONS TAKEN TO DATE
Transform the LUCOP into two programmes in order to better target the axes of support of German cooperation in Niger	Finalization of the programme scheduled for late 2011; preparation of two documents of projects on productive agriculture and support to decentralization.
Support decentralization and ensure the presence of the programme at the macro level in addition to the micro (municipal) level	Creation of the position of technical advisor on decentralization at the level of the headquarters of programme departments
For the communal infrastructure component, ensure the poor's access to basic socio-economic infrastructure	Lowering of the counterpart rate from 20 percent to 15 percent according to municipalities' financial capabilities
	Authorization to start work before payments are made

THE INPUT OF THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION IN THE USE OF THE EVALUATION OF LUCOP

Before conducting the PAC evaluation mission, the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit was commissioned to prepare data allowing it to input all indicators of the programme and to conduct a diachronic analysis of the programme's performance.

In addition, the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit is mandated to ensure the monitoring of recommendations of the PAC mission. The Unit schedules the meetings needed in order to make the necessary decisions regarding the evaluation's recommendations. The Monitoring and Evaluation Unit is also responsible for disseminating results to all stakeholders involved and presenting and explaining results to the monitoring and regional technical teams. The Monitoring and Evaluation unit presents the diachronics of the results from regular indicator monitoring, the results of the triangulation made by the evaluation, and then proposes guidance to either continue with the PAC or, for unsatisfactory results, to change the strategy for achieving results.

CONCLUSION

The role of a Monitoring and Evaluation Unit in conducting an evaluation and disseminating its results is not limited to producing information relevant to the evaluation. The units or individuals in charge of monitoring and evaluation functions ensure the:

- Consistency of the evaluation process;
- Analysis and the provision of vital information for the evaluation;
- Involvement of stakeholders and actions of development;
- Dissemination of the results of the evaluations to all stakeholders;
- Debate of the issues raised by the evaluation; and
- Conduct of the meta-evaluations to strengthen learning and innovation to improve subsequent processes.

The processes conducted by LUCOP gave good results due, among other factors, to the involvement and accountability of the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit.

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