

WHAT IS A GOOD PROJECT?

Success factors for
international cooperation

By Julika Schmitz, Thomas Schwedersky, Anika Seidel



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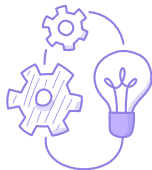
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- Strengthen the participation of key players from the outset
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- Encourage collective learning
- Give iterative learning centre stage



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FOREWORD

Dear readers,

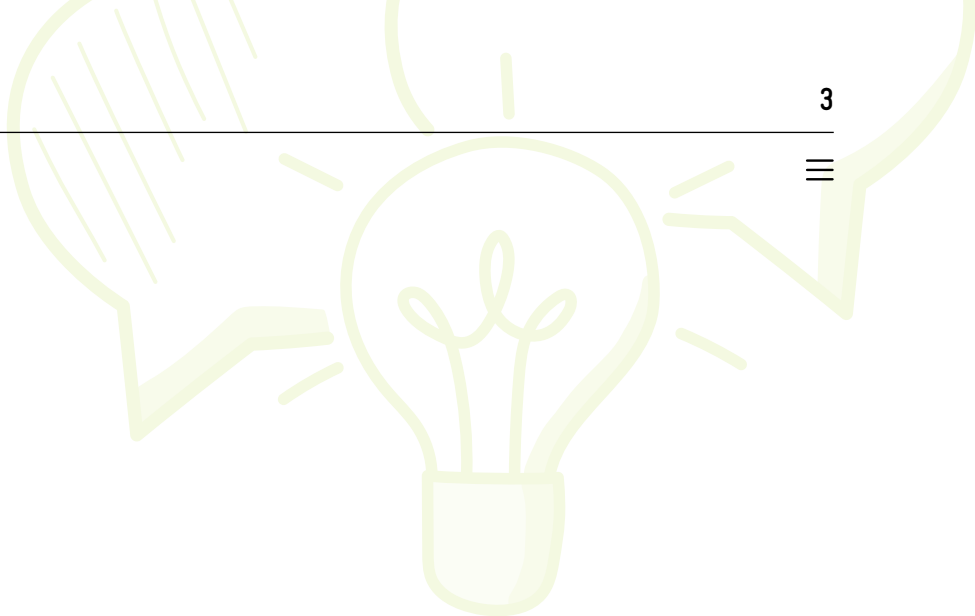
the International Climate Initiative (IKI) is one of the Federal Republic of Germany's central international climate finance instruments, and it has now supported the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Paris Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD) for 15 years. Since 2022, the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Protection (BMWK) has been responsible for implementing the IKI, in close cooperation with the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV) and the Federal Foreign Office (AA).

WHAT ACTUALLY MAKES A GOOD PROJECT?

Based on an analysis of existing approaches and results, and an extensive participatory process, the IKI has now finalised its 2030 Strategy. The strategy development process also included fruitful discussions about which mix of instruments can be used to most effectively support transformative processes. This in turn led to the very simple sounding question: "What actually makes a good project?". This publication, which draws on the broad experience of the IKI, summarises important success factors for good (transformative) project design in a structured manner.

I hope that the publication will serve as a source of inspiration for the "how?" of implementing the IKI Strategy 2030, especially for the many IKI project implementers.

Dr Philipp Behrens, Head of the International Climate Initiative (IKI),
Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Protection (BMWK)





INTRODUCTION

This study provides answers to the question: What is a good project? It identifies sustainability, the learning environment, flexibility, local organisations and structures, and partner cooperation as the five key areas for action.

The study was commissioned by the International Climate Initiative (IKI). The IKI supports measures to protect the climate and biodiversity with the aim of achieving a fundamental **transformation towards sustainable, low-emission and socially just societies**. While action is required on many levels to realize transformation at this scale, this publication focuses on the **project level** and looks at success factors for international cooperation. Although most of the project examples listed here are located in the climate sector, the results can be applied in thematic areas beyond this.

This publication is aimed at commissioning and implementing organisers and planners as well as implementers who deal with **successful, effective and adaptive project design**. The question of what characterises a 'good project' is therefore embedded in the theoretical discourse on

transformative project design (see this [interview with Daniel Kehrer](#)), without going into it in depth here.

This publication aims to focus on transformative approaches to project design throughout the entire project cycle – in planning, steering, administration, financing, implementation and evaluation. The focus is on **factors that promise success and make projects better**. In this study, 'success' is not defined as the achievement of objectives or the fulfilment of project indicators. The authors' interest was to identify factors that make international cooperation and project design 'good' and to illustrate these using practical examples. In a nutshell: More of the success factors is good, fewer is bad.

The study makes no claim to completeness, objectivity or universal applicability. Rather, success factors were selected that could be a) described as specifically as possible, b) accompanied with practical information on how to proceed and c) illustrated with examples.

The big question of "What makes a good project?" was answered through research, interviews with selected experts, dialogue with BMWK employees, and the authors' own experiences.

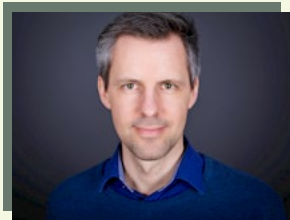
The publication is organised into **five action areas, each with two to four success factors**. However, the list of success factors is not hierarchical or chronological. The individual factors are interrelated, interdependent, contribute to each other and reflect current discussions in the specialist literature. For each of the areas, a selection of further literature and project examples are provided, which are briefly listed at the end of each chapter. These projects are assigned to the individual areas of action as examples of learning because the authors consider specific aspects to be good. However, the projects cannot be regarded as unqualified success stories per se and transferred to other project contexts in the sense of a 'blueprint approach'.

The success factors resulting from this analysis can be applied to international cooperation projects. In order to make these success factors usable, the next step is to make them concrete and transferable. This requires a coordinated process in which process owners **find specific points of contact, pass on the findings and put them into practice**. Initial ideas for this are listed in the outlook.

IF YOU WANT TO
CHANGE SOMETHING,
YOU HAVE TO DO
SOMETHING DIFFERENT.



INTERVIEW WITH DANIEL KEHRER



Daniel Kehrer develops new approaches to transformative change in the Sectoral Department (FMB) of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and advises on international cooperation projects.

Why is the question of what a 'good project' is important right now?

The question is both timeless and yet comes at just the right moment. International cooperation is facing enormous challenges. Many of the goals for sustainable development (SDGs) and the climate agenda cannot be achieved by simply scaling up previous mainstream solutions, i.e. more of the same, or by adapting them, i.e. reforms. This is why transformation agendas, which call for a fundamental change of direction (paradigm shift) with new development paths at numerous levels, are rapidly gaining momentum.

'Transformation' is a big term...

This is sometimes referred to as a new mainstream – one that is fundamentally different and sustainable for economic activity as a whole, for production and consumption, for rural and urban development, and

for various other sectors such as energy, transport, agriculture and food systems. All of these changes are closely interlinked and ideally lead to a major socio-ecological transformation towards liveable, just and climate-neutral societies within the limits of planetary possibilities.

Are we on the right path towards this transformation?

The ambition for transformation is growing in Germany, in emerging economies and, in some cases, in low-income countries. Germany is not a pioneer everywhere. For example, the energy transition was and is subject to major fluctuations and an agricultural transition on an equivalent scale has still not been officially proclaimed in Germany, even though there is a lot to be said in favour of it from a social and environmental perspective. This changes the way we can define the 'good project'.

In what way?

In that at the very least for these kinds of uncertain and fundamental changes we as German partners will inevitably have to step out of our role as role models and become partners who also have to learn from others and change something. We are currently witnessing a coevolution of technological development, political and economic instruments, and the ambitions of transformation agendas as a whole internationally. We cannot assume that we will be able to adequately define transformation agendas if we continue to offer consultancy within the conventional frameworks for preparing projects. We have a better chance of achieving genuine 'transformation partnerships' if they are jointly designed from the outset (politically and operationally) and on an ongoing basis with partners.

What are the challenges in developing and implementing projects with partners?

Today, planning uncertainty is not the exception, but the rule. When it comes to transformation agendas, there is often insufficient social consensus on the core problem, the description of the goal and an appropriate path to the goal, i.e. the basic prerequisites for planning projects, either in the partner system or in Germany. If transformative innovations become established, they usually do so very slowly at first, with unpredictable tipping points and with a time lag at various levels (political, technological, social, etc.).

What does this mean for project planning?

Detailed project planning and regular renewal (e.g. every four years) can no longer be efficient and effective enough if there is a high degree of planning uncertainty and is therefore also less accountable.

Transaction and opportunity costs increase further if partners perceive highly planned projects to be too prescriptive or even anti- democratic and question them halfway through. All of this speaks in favour of new ideas and forms of 'good projects'. These must be flexible, adaptive and based on partnership enough to be able to 'navigate' towards solutions instead of trying to plan them too far in advance. The question of success factors for international cooperation takes us one step further in the direction of transformative project design.

This study therefore strikes the right note given the challenges of the here and now, and can make a valuable contribution towards achieving attractive, effective and sustainable international cooperation.



Author: Kehrer, D. (2020)
Transforming our work: Getting ready
for transformational projects

[READ MORE →](#)



Author: Kehrer, D. (2020)
Transformative project design
(only available in German)

[READ MORE →](#)

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Invest sufficient time and resources in analysing the specific context

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The three success factors for a sustainable project

Projects should be geared towards sustainability from the outset. A project may be deemed sustainable if the actors involved in implementing the project are willing and able to take on increasing **responsibility**. This creates the conditions for ensuring that the impact achieved with the support of the project can be **secured in the longer term** and that the **services provided by the project can be provided independently**. Sustainability is therefore also a leitmotif throughout all the other action areas (learning environment, flexibility, local organisations and structures, and partner cooperation) that make up a good project.

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SUCCESS FACTOR 1

Invest sufficient time and resources in analysing the specific context

A project should be preceded by a preliminary phase in which the specific (ecological, political, socio-cultural) conditions are analysed. This analysis should also provide an overview of **existing funding activities** and an actor map that to **identifies local and donor institutions and key actors**. This can make the potential for synergies, especially with local actors, visible and help to avoid isolated funding structures that run in parallel. By building on the knowledge of local people and existing capacities, projects can respond better to complex situations, changes and the underlying dynamics. This makes projects more adaptable and resilient and gives them the potential to have a long-term impact.

Practical steps:

- Set up and appropriately carry out focused context analyses for a better understanding of the relevant ecological, political and socio-cultural conditions.
- Identify and use local capacities (organisations, knowledge, social capital) as starting points for the project design.
- Use a wide range of participatory diagnostic tools ("participatory learning and action").
- Involve competent knowledge carriers, such as experienced practitioners, local specialists or similar, as well as institutions, such as research institutes and universities.
- Define measures and activities in liaison with the key players as appropriate to the situation.



SUCCESS FACTOR 2

Strengthen the participation of key players from the outset

Projects can only be sustainable if key players are willing and able to take part. This can only happen if the project offers appropriate opportunities, thus creating space for substantial participation, especially at the local level. **Participation goes beyond mere attendance and includes the willingness to take responsibility and contribute one's own resources.** This willingness may not necessarily go hand in hand with the required skills, meaning these should be strengthened with the support of the project if necessary. This applies in particular to structurally disadvantaged actors (e.g. women, indigenous people, smallholder farmers), whose ownership is likely to play a key role in the success of the project. Participation programmes strengthen the **trust and motivation** of the relevant actors, which is a prerequisite if the project is to have the desired impact.

Practical steps:

- Identify participation opportunities and potentials on a stakeholder-specific basis.
- Develop appropriate participation formats that encourage people to assume ownership.
- Create opportunities for structurally disadvantaged groups of stakeholders (e.g. women without secure usage rights) to strengthen their capacity and thus participation.
- Use incentives, such as start-up funding, in an appropriate manner to improve the willingness and ability of certain groups of actors to participate.



SUCCESS FACTOR 3

Develop an exit strategy

Projects should aim to become superfluous in the long term. This includes formulating an exit strategy with a consistent focus on ensuring sustainability and **concrete steps for handing over responsibility**. The term 'transition strategy' is therefore sometimes used in this context.

These concrete steps should be formulated in close coordination with the respective key actors. An exit strategy should be **developed as early as possible** and **adapted and further developed** as the project's impact increases.

Practical steps

- Create an exit strategy at an early stage in the project.
- Formulate the exit strategy in such a way that it is clear which actors will gradually take over the tasks and responsibilities that were previously the responsibility of the project and in what form.
- Adapt and further develop the exit strategy on the basis of the impact achieved by the project.
- Seek out partnerships with, for example, other donor institutions in order to shore up project successes and thus improve the conditions for implementing the exit strategy.
- Actively seek out local and, where appropriate, regional partners in order to develop networks through which learning experiences can be disseminated beyond the life of the project. Universities, for example, offer great potential here.

Examples of sustainability



©Johannes Arndt/GIZ Energising Development

ETHIOPIA

Sustainable access to climate-friendly and affordable energy (Energising Development)

The pilot project illustrates how focusing on the participation of local actors and an exit strategy from the beginning can lead to the creation of an electricity market that can function sustainably in the long term. The measures were carried out in close cooperation with the local government and the local communities managed the system themselves, attracted new customers and set the regulations and electricity prices. Based on the success of the pilot project, the regional government is expanding the concept to other localities.

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ETHIOPIA, UGANDA, MOZAMBIQUE

The Africa Climate Change Resilience Alliance Programme (ACCRA)

This example shows how inclusive participation processes have created the conditions for strengthening participation and ownership, particularly at local level. Civil society organisations played a key role as intermediaries between the government and local communities. This was manifested in a cooperation network between local and national government, as well as local and international civil society organisations.

[READ MORE →](#)

Examples of sustainability

VIETNAM

Public Service Provision Improvement Programme in Agriculture and Rural Development (PSARD)

The programme illustrates how an early exit strategy and the broad participation of key stakeholders can ensure the sustainability of a project. With a focus on achieving breadth rather than depth, the project aimed to ensure its approach was accepted and adopted by the authorities and citizens from the beginning. This led to the joint development of processes and instruments that could be continued beyond the life of the project. After the end of the project, the provincial governments decided to independently finance and implement the established approach from then on.

[READ MORE](#) →

PHILIPPINES

Scaling Up Risk Transfer Mechanisms for Climate Vulnerable Agriculture Based Communities in Mindanao

The project illustrates how comprehensive analysis at the outset can result in local needs being better recognised and activities being better targeted and strengthened. The project team involved key stakeholders using participatory approaches, particularly at national, subnational and municipal level during the planning phase. At the same time, the project is an example of effective data communication: Climate data was passed on in a transparent manner and was thus able to reach interest groups such as agricultural communities.

[READ MORE](#) →

GHANA

Climate Information Services for Community-Based Adaptation to Climate Change

This example of community-based adaptation to climate change shows how well-developed participatory processes can strengthen participation and ownership at the local community level. These efforts crystallised in a 'participatory scenario planning' process, which enabled the early and substantial participation of local communities and served as a prerequisite for the climate information centres that established during the project to provide services in line with demand.

[READ MORE](#) →

Further reading



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (2021)

CBA [Community Based Adaptation] – local solutions inspiring global action



HOU-JONES, X., ROE, D., & HOLLAND, E. (2021)

Nature-based Solutions in Action: Lessons from the Frontline



INDRIUNAITE, I., OCHS, A., & WANGOMBE, E. (2018)

Local Ownership and Engagement for NDC Implementation – Concept idea by the NDC Support Cluster



MAYNE, R., & GUIJT, I. (2020)

Inspiring Radically Better Futures – Evidence and Hope for Impact at Scale in a Time of Crisis



THE FORESTS DIALOGUE & IUCN (2020)

Land Use Dialogue Guide – Dialogue as a tool for landscape approaches to environmental challenges

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The four success factors for a good learning environment

A 'good project' should be seen as part of a global landscape of activities, knowledge and capacities that need to be built upon. It is therefore important to embed projects in a learning environment, as this allows **synergies to emerge and at the same time avoids parallel processes**. As a basic building block, the ambition to learn should be firmly anchored at the centre of every project. Appropriate resources are required to develop this kind of overarching learning architecture – for example, opportunities to gain one's own learning experiences, to network, to engage in peer-to-peer dialogue and ultimately to make knowledge and learning experiences transparent and available to external parties.

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SUCCESS FACTOR 1

Make learning experiences transparent and easily accessible

In a 'good project', **existing knowledge about good practices and lessons learned** is **integrated into guidelines, requirements and administrative processes**, so that the knowledge becomes transparent and is not lost.

Steps should be taken to ensure that the knowledge acquired is also available to other projects, and is easy to find in a usable format. In this way, learning effects can ripple beyond the project.

Practical steps:

- Describe how the project will develop its specific approach to knowledge management in the project proposal.
- Analyse knowledge flows so that the learning environment can be developed in line with existing needs. The aim is to understand how demand for knowledge can be reconciled with the potential supply of knowledge. This applies to both the project level and the donor institution.
- The donor institution provides the financial resources for the project to set up a structure with suitable tools. For the project, this means moving away from static formats like project flyers and websites towards more organic structures that absorb and pass on knowledge.
- Regularly develop good practices and lessons learned from the project with the aim of making project decisions comprehensible and, if necessary, replicable for external parties.



SUCCESS FACTOR 2

Give learning space and opportunity

Learning needs space. A 'good project' therefore creates a safe place where, in addition to everyday project work, there is also the opportunity to test, validate and, if necessary, discard measures or assumptions that guide the project design. In line with the **principle of 'learning by doing'**, this is where the greatest learning effect can be achieved. The experience gained in these kinds of spaces can also make a valuable **contribution to increasing innovation** and exploring the **potential for project growth**. In this way, a project can actively develop knowledge that can also be useful beyond the project itself.

Practical steps:

- Plan capacities for learning during the project planning phase, e.g., by allocating proportionate phases for learning experiences in staff workplans.
- Support regional and cross-project coordination on innovative approaches, e.g., through ideas workshops. This offers great potential for both the project level and the donor institution.
- Promote experimental fields, e.g. in the form of pilot projects.
- Design learning experiences within the project – e.g. from pilot projects – in a way that they can be incorporated into exchange formats as lessons learned.



SUCCESS FACTOR 3

Encourage collective learning

In order to better disseminate learning experiences and make them more interactive, it is important to bring people together and give them the opportunity to exchange ideas. A culture of collective learning can emerge through regular event formats, which create both the framework for joint learning within the project and promote **cross- project net-working**. This strengthens the commitment of those involved to actively participate in the exchange and the further development of learning experiences.

At the same time, such events can promote the development of both a **horizontal learning architecture**, which strengthens local knowledge, capacities and synergies across projects, and a **vertical learning architecture**, which creates opportunities for exchange between donors and project organisers. This learning exchange not only improves network-ing, but also creates an **important basis for trust**.

Practical steps:

- Promote and utilise existing regional and local knowledge networks. The aim here is to strengthen South-South learning formats in particular.
- Promote regular learning formats, e.g. through regional net-working meetings and dialogue events. Document the knowl-edge gained transparently. This offers significant potential for both the project level and the donor institution.
- Clearly communicate learning with local stakeholders as an objective at project level and adequately fund it.
- The donor institution is located in the learning architecture and ensures that it achieves qualitative learning experiences for the projects. Lessons learned can thus be incorporated into decision-making processes.



SUCCESS FACTOR 4

Give iterative learning centre stage

Iterative learning makes continuous learning processes possible. This means that **learning takes place on an ongoing basis during management and implementation** and is always taken into account. This also means that project activities not only serve the purpose of achieving a goal, but also represent opportunities for new learning experiences. Processing the experience of missing a target and incorporating the learnings into the further project design and, if necessary, making them accessible to outsiders can also be valuable beyond the project.

- Practical steps:
- Actively value the function of learning at work. Learning does not remain a mere work package, but is integrated into everyday working life.
 - Agree on needs and objectives for a learning structure and clearly define responsibilities.
 - The donor institution provides sufficient resources and time for the process of collecting and exchanging information.

Learning environment examples



©GIZ/Global Project Digital Transformation Centres
©iStock/shironosov

WORLDWIDE

Digital Transformation Centres

Digital Transformation Centres are physical and virtual hubs and illustrate how (digital) knowledge can be prepared in line with requirements and how space can be provided for sharing and learning at the same time. A modular structure makes it possible to adapt the respective digital centre to local needs and thus build on existing activities. From creative workshops to exchanges between start-ups, the approaches are flexible. Digital Transformation Centres operate locally and regionally, but also share their experiences in a global network.

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GERMANY

AnpassBAR

The example shows how landscape framework planning can be understood and utilised as a communication and design process. This allows stakeholders and citizens to be much more closely involved in the planning process for a series of workshops, and for existing knowledge and wishes to be directly incorporated before a plan is drafted. This, in combination with an ecosystem-based approach and the inclusion of necessary climate adaptation measures, lays the foundation both for a sustainable impact of the planning and for increased commitment and trust on the part of the population.

[READ MORE →](#)

Learning environment examples

ANDES

Andean Forest and Climate Change Programme (ANFOR)

In the first phase, the ANFOR programme strengthened regional research and knowledge networks to raise awareness about the important role of forest ecosystems in the Andes. Building on this, the second phase focused on national and international networking for science and policy and the formation of national and regional interest groups in which scientists, civil society and interested members of the public could exchange their knowledge and experiences. This creates space to recognise possible synergies, promote innovations and initiate broad learning processes.

[READ MORE →](#)

NEPAL

Nepal's National Adaptation Plan Formulation Process

Nepal's NAP formulation process illustrates how broad, cross-sectoral stakeholder involvement from the outset both stimulates a greater exchange of knowledge and learning, and strengthens the overall ownership of the NAP process by stakeholders. Several multi-stakeholder dialogues provided space for exchange and consideration of different perspectives during the NAP process.

[READ MORE →](#)



Nepal's inclusive, integrative, participatory and informed NAP process.

Further reading



COLOMBO, G. (2020)

Knowledge management – from bottleneck to success factor. Concepts & practical guidance for co-learning systems in international development cooperation



SMITH, B. (2020)

Closing the learning loop in locally led adaptation

FLEXIBILITY

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The three success factors for a flexible project

Why should management be flexible and agile? Flexible structures and procedures can make it possible to respond to complex challenges and new experiences without losing sight of the goal. This requires donor institutions and project sponsors to **regularly review their programmes and – if necessary – adapt them**. By continuously reflecting on the processes, learning experiences can be better integrated into the project and the project remains capable of acting even in the face of complexity.

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SUCCESS FACTOR 1

Adapt and further develop project structures over the course of the project

A flexible project pursues clear overarching goals without having a fixed path to achieving these goals. The how, i.e. the activities to achieve these goals, is not fixed from the outset, but are developed and can be changed and adapted. This allows activities to be better tailored to the situation and adapted to different needs. **Indicators for measuring impact** should be **open** and allow the project space to develop. In this way, for example, an initial phase in the project can be made possible that leaves **room for uncertainty and a co-evolution of activities**.

Practical steps:

- The donor institution adapts selection and evaluation criteria to a tendering practice that is open to more flexible approaches to achieving objectives.
- Pilot projects with fewer and more open indicators. How much actually has to be verifiable to ensure accountability, and where is there room to manoeuvre?
- Jointly develop a catalogue of objectives with the funded organisations (and through them with the affected communities).
- To achieve greater transformation, the donor institution should fund long-term programmes that have built-in systems and processes for joint learning, problem solving and restructuring in response to crises and challenges. The combination of longevity and adaptability strengthens the resilience of the project.



SUCCESS FACTOR 2

Ensure regular monitoring, evaluation and learning takes place with local partners

In order for a project to recognise needs and opportunities, it needs iterative approaches and regular feedback loops. **Monitoring and evaluation cycles should be as short and concise as possible**, so that projects can react to lessons learned during implementation and remain capable of acting in changing contexts. If M&E cycles take place in **dialogue with local partners**, there are more opportunities for feedback and the creation of more diverse learning experiences for all participants. Open formats that promote dialogue on findings and project development can provide the necessary platform for this.

Practical steps:

- Specify regular, short and concise monitoring and evaluation cycles for the project level.
- Embed M&E in an internal learning system with feedback loops that allow for project activities to be changed on the basis of lessons learned.
- Create exchange formats for project feedback, so that local partners can also be more closely involved.
- Introduce a flexible, results-orientated reporting system to track progress and processes – and not get lost in linear, planned activities.



SUCCESS FACTOR 3

Create flexible administrative and financial procedures to enable flexible projects

Introducing flexible administrative and financial procedures provides the project with the necessary framework to be able to **react more quickly, integrate lessons learned and – if necessary – adapt activities**.

In order to achieve this in the least bureaucratic way possible and at the right time for the project, the donor institution needs to provide support capacities. In general, a strong relationship of trust on both sides is necessary to make the procedures more flexible.

Practical steps:

- Strengthen support capacities on the side of the donor institution in the form of:
 - More or more efficient use of human resources for flexible management;
 - Piloting of innovative financial procedures, e.g. flexible budget, funds or minimum sums for applications instead of maximum sums, so that smaller projects are also incentivised.
- Strengthen the relationship of trust between the donor organisation and the agency executing the project. This can be achieved if the donor institution organises communication with the project executing agency in such a way that challenges and adaptation needs are seen as the rule and not the exception and can be addressed constructively.
- The donor institution reviews (preferably in dialogue with the implementers) how amendment requests can be avoided (e.g. through lump sums) and, in cases where they are necessary, how they can be simplified. Here, too, it is important to reflect on iterative learning and experiences with partners.

Examples of flexibility



©Practical Action
©Philippine Red Cross

WORLDWIDE

Learning and adaptation structure of the Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance

The Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance is a cross-sectoral partnership that brings together community programmes, new research and shared knowledge to strengthen the resilience of communities to flooding in developed and developing countries. It stands out as a “good project” due to three factors that characterise its adaptive management:

1. Reporting system: This, in combination with the theory of change, allows the Alliance to absorb and experiment with change with a minimum of effort to achieve results – rather than focusing solely on the delivery of specific activities. For monitoring, progress in relation to the target is the most important factor.
2. Budget flexibility: Partner organisations are funded to achieve certain results, and it is up to the partners to decide which staff and activities they want to invest in for this purpose.
3. Learning environment: By making knowledge transparent and preparing learning experiences, by facilitating peer-to-peer learning for better practice and innovation, and by encouraging bottom-up learning to identify new needs, the Alliance creates an overall learning environment that forms the basis for flexible projects.

[READ MORE →](#)

Examples of flexibility

<p>PERU</p> <p><u>Practical Action Peru</u></p> <p>Practical Action Peru illustrates how a project was able to adapt quickly and well to changes in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given that the effects of COVID-19 were very different in the various project areas, activities had to be postponed and adapted to meet the new needs. It became necessary to quickly adapt the work plans and change the national theory of change. These project adjustments were made possible by the budget flexibility of the Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance.</p> <p>READ MORE →</p>	<p>BANGLADESH</p> <p><u>Concern Bangladesh in cooperation with the Assistance for Social Organisation and Development (ASOD)</u></p> <p>In their response to COVID-19, Concern Bangladesh and local implementing partner ASOD illustrated how an unforeseen challenge can be turned into an opportunity, thanks to a flexible budget to build community capacity and better understand the functioning of government systems. Concern and ASOD re-directed the Alliance's funds to, for example, distributing personal protective equipment and mobilising volunteers from the Community Resilience Action Group. At the same time, clear information was provided on the COVID-19 risk and risk mitigation measures.</p> <p>READ MORE →</p>	<p>SOMALIA</p> <p><u>Horn of Africa: Framework for Risk Governance and Adaptive Programming (FRAP)</u></p> <p>The project illustrates how an innovative monitoring and accountability tool can enable adaptive programming. Especially in the difficult local context, FRAP promotes better risk management and effectiveness of the portfolio, as well as strengthening the capacities of local partners through access to qualitative data and information for Somalia.</p> <p>READ MORE →</p>
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Further reading



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Unleashing the Potential of Capacity Development for Climate Action - Fixing a Broken Link on the Pathway to Transformational Change



TESKEY, G., & TYRREL, L. (2021)

The Governance & Development Practice – Implementing adaptive management: A front-line effort. Is there an emerging practice?



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Foundations for Change: Using adaptive management to navigate uncertainty – Lessons from Year 3



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How bottom-up M&E insights can inform national adaptation planning and reporting



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Governance and Action: Design Criteria for Transformational Climate Finance



ZIMMERMANN, A., & ENGLER, M. (1996)

Process Monitoring (ProM): Work Document for project staff

LOCAL ORGANISATIONS AND STRUCTURES

Intro

SUCCESS FACTOR 1

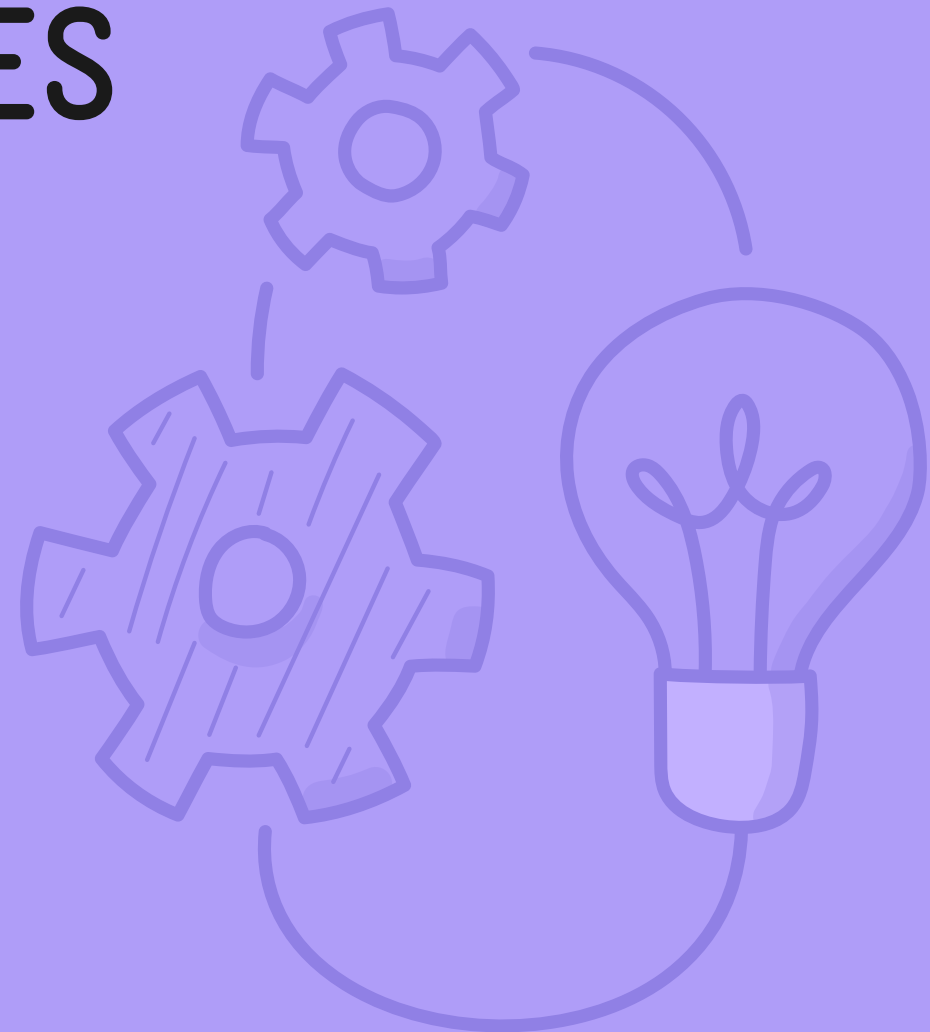
Strengthen local organisations and their capacities

SUCCESS FACTOR 2

Promote cooperation mechanisms that bring together various stakeholders, particularly at local level

Examples

Further links





The two success factors for local organisations and structures

Good projects depend on local actors developing a sense of ownership and thus a **willingness to take over responsibility for the project’s achievements**. In this context, local organisations and local cooperation structures, in which different actors (state, civil society, private sector) work together, are of particular importance.

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SUCCESS FACTOR 1

Strengthen local organisations and their capacities

Local organisations play an important role in the implementation of projects. They pool interests, enable the participation and involvement of the project's beneficiaries, and play a decisive role in the development of sustainable, situation-specific solutions to problems. However, they can only fulfil this role if they are adequately supported by the respective project. This should not only strengthen their capacities in terms of **effective internal organisation**, but also their **cooperation skills**. This will enable them to fulfil their role in cooperation with other actors (e.g. the government, the private sector, civil society). Local organisational development should build on existing organisations and their practices as much as possible, rather than introducing new structures.

Practical steps:

- Gain an overview of the potential and scope for action by local organisations.
- Identify needs in terms of strengthening local organisations.
- Clarify responsibilities in cooperation with local organisations, e.g. through formalised cooperation agreements, depending on the context.
- Support local organisations via tailored capacity development and process support and strengthen their ownership of project-related activities.



SUCCESS FACTOR 2

Promote cooperation mechanisms that bring together various stakeholders, particularly at local level

To find locally adapted solutions, strengthening cooperation between different actors at a decentralised level is crucial – whether for the sustainable management of natural resources or for the design and implementation of action plans for adaptation to climate change, for example. **Understanding the relevant landscape of organisations** is central to a project. This includes an assessment of the various actors in terms of their similarities and differences. Effective cooperation mechanisms and mechanisms bring together different actors from the state, civil society and the private sector with organisations representing the respective beneficiaries. When promoting cooperation mechanisms, as with success factor 1, it is important for the project to build on **existing structures and practices** as far as possible before initiating and establishing any cooperation mechanisms on its own initiative.

Practical steps:

- Gain an overview of the potential and scope for action of local cooperation mechanisms and the actors involved.
- Clarify the distribution of roles between the project and the actors involved in local cooperation mechanisms.
- Agree tasks and responsibilities with the parties involved.
- Support cooperation mechanisms with appropriate capacity development and process guidance.
- Take into account power imbalances and support structurally disadvantaged actors in a targeted manner.

Examples of local organisations and structures



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KENYA

The Kenya Conservancy Movement

In this programme, the Maliasili Foundation is working with the Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association. The programme is placing the management of “conservancies” as a type of protected area more and more in the hands of organisations at the grassroots level, such as the Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association. A prerequisite for this is the active involvement of the various groups of beneficiaries in the vicinity of a conservancy in order to ensure sustainable management of the protected area.

[READ MORE →](#)

VANUATU

Vanuatu NGO Climate Change Adaptation Program

The aim of this project was to strengthen the capacities of local communities to prevent disasters and adapt to climate change. Committees at municipal and provincial level, which were supported by the project, played a key role in this respect. A key feature of the project structure was the cooperation between the Vanuatu government and international civil society organisations. The project also contributed to the 'Vanuatu Climate Action Network' as a central civil society actor for climate policy.

[READ MORE →](#)

Examples of local organisations and structures

PHILIPPINES

Empowering Poor Women and Men in Building Resilient and Adaptative Communities in Mindanao (EMBRACE)

The aim of the project was to improve the living conditions and social status of poorly resourced smallholder farming families. This was linked to the development of partnerships between smallholder farmers and local government agencies to promote agricultural practices adapted to climate change. OXFAM worked with various local organisations in this project. In this way, the project also helped to strengthen these local organisations.

[READ MORE](#) →

INDIA

From Watershed Development to Ecosystem-based Adaptation

The work of the Watershed Organisation Trust in Maharashtra has strengthened smallholder farming systems in terms of their climate resilience. It was crucial to strengthen organisations and democratic processes in the village communities and to promote constructive cooperation between these organisations and various actors (government, civil society, private sector, donors).

[READ MORE](#) →



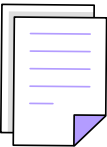
©iStock/Arjun Sunil

Further reading



TOULMIN, C., ET AL. (2020)

Local institutions: Resilient in the face of change?



CARE INTERNATIONAL (2015)

ALP Adaptation Strategies Compendium



STERRETT, C. L. (2016)

Bringing Innovation to Scale: Resilience to Climate Change. Synthesis of learning from four CARE Community-based adaptation projects



MALIASILI INITIATIVES & WELL GROUNDED (2015)

Strengthening African Civil Society Organizations for Improved Natural Resource Governance and Conservation

PARTNER COOPERATION

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SUCCESS FACTOR 1

Internally select the appropriate type of cooperation to achieve the objectives

SUCCESS FACTOR 2

Strengthen partner dialogues at an early stage

SUCCESS FACTOR 3

Support multi-stakeholder formats in partner countries

Examples

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The three success factors for good partner collaborations

Cooperation is at the heart of international collaboration. This may sound trivial and not surprising, but experience shows that a deeper examination of the nature and type of cooperation often does not take place. However, **actively shaping the form of cooperation or partnership, reflecting on it and adapting it**, is both a basic requirement and a promising factor for the success of projects, especially in times of increasing planning uncertainty and complexity. As regards this chapter, it should be noted that the factors listed here are more closely or more specifically related to the International Climate Initiative (IKI) than the previous factors, but are also transferable to other contexts. The factors listed here therefore mainly relate to donor institutions.

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For cooperation and partnership to be successful, there needs to be **space for developing dialogue and understanding, a long-term framework and trust**. Cooperation and partnerships are also essential in order to contribute to political dialogue with partner governments and other local actors and to strengthen local ownership. The involvement of different groups of stakeholders is particularly necessary when it comes to complex global challenges such as climate change, and the **potential of multi-stakeholder partnerships** is explicitly emphasised in target 17.16¹ of the 2030 Agenda.

Who co-operates with whom, in what form and at what level, and where long-term partnerships bring the greatest possible added value, should be determined on the basis of the specific objectives and local opportunities. For example, cooperation between donor institutions is fundamentally different from a multi-stakeholder partnership that is formed at a local level in order to achieve a goal during implementation.

¹ Page 26-7 of the English version: "Goal 17 – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development." Further: "Multi- stakeholder partnerships 17.16 – Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technologies and financial resources to support the achievement of sustainable development goals in all countries, particularly developing countries."



SUCCESS FACTOR 1

Internally select the appropriate type of cooperation to achieve the objectives

In order for cooperation to be profitable and sustainable for the actors involved, it is important to select the appropriate form of cooperation – from informal exchange to long-term partnerships. A first step towards this is an internal discussion within the (donor) institution and a **common understanding of the various forms of cooperation and partnerships with the respective principles and values**. Here it is important to recognise potential power imbalances.ck zu nehmen.

When selecting the type of cooperation **'form follows function'** – the focus should be on which format offers the greatest added value for the respective challenge.

If promising, the transition could be made from sporadic cooperation to a long-term partnership. This would mean the organisation becoming an active partner and systematically investing time and resources in building sustainable and effective partnerships.

Practical steps:

- Various forms of cooperation and partnerships and their principles, values and formats are defined internally (within the donor organisation). This is the cornerstone for an exchange and a possible potential analysis with implementing organisations.
- Conduct internal discussions on the following questions: What kind of partners do we want to be and what are the right partners for us? What is the meaning, purpose and goal of the partnership?
- Take an inventory: What forms of cooperation do we currently have? Is there a partner strategy? And if not – how can this be set up?



SUCCESS FACTOR 2

Strengthen partner dialogues at an early stage

Establishing dialogue formats with potential partners at an early stage helps to identify the 'right' partners and the appropriate form of cooperation. This applies both to the donor institution and to the implementing organisation and projects. Partners can be political partners as well as important actors who may not be the focus at first glance. Creating opportunities for partners **to express their competences, skills and needs at an early stage** can strengthen mutual understanding and trust and lay the foundation for **cooperation on an equal footing**.

The trick here is to fill the usual buzz words and phrases with meaning, and reflect on them in order to then transfer them to your own work processes. For example: What does 'cooperation on an equal footing' mean to us and what are the steps to get there?

Practical steps:

- Build and, if possible, expand existing dialogues with partners. Ask where and how can more exchange take place? How can we create more opportunities for cooperation?
- Create opportunities to discuss goals and ways forward with partners and, if necessary, set this up as an ongoing, moderated dialogue from which interventions can result.
- Establish a learning environment / knowledge management system for partner dialogues. This could also include compiling stakeholder maps from various projects at a higher level and adding to them on an ongoing basis.
- Examine whether future projects can focus more strongly on strengthening relationships and networks, and develop activities that contribute to this.
- Draw up stakeholder maps with partners and the target group in order to identify any relevant stakeholders that are not yet in focus. A stakeholder map should form part of the project proposal, and this can then be developed further with local partners during the course of implementation.
- The stakeholder map, including existing collaborations and partnerships, will also form part of the exit strategy. See also: [Stakeholder identification tool](#).



SUCCESS FACTOR 3

Support multi-stakeholder formats in partner countries

Multi-stakeholder formats offer significant potential for international cooperation. Multi-stakeholder cooperation formats – especially multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) – **bring people from different sectors together to work on an equal footing in an organised and long-term manner towards a common goal** that serves the common good (see definition of Partnerships 2030, GIZ). Bringing together different interest groups, which are crucial to understanding the challenges and thus to finding sustainable solutions, **promotes participation and ownership, favours learning, and strengthens the building of trust.**

The great added value of consolidated partnerships is that they can last beyond the life of a project and beyond political changes and crises. They can be both **knowledge networks** and **drivers of change**.

Practical steps:

- Donor institutions can play different roles in MSPs, depending on the respective levels: If a MSPs is sought at global level, donor institutions can become involved as active partners. In the partner country, the task for implementing organisations could be to support partners in setting up and facilitating an MSP.
- Explore possibilities for multi-actor formats in general and MSPs in particular. The key questions are:
 - Are there any partnerships that are suitable for an MSP?
 - For new processes: Is an MSP the right method to achieve the goal? (An MSP is not an end in itself).
 - What role should the implementing organisations play?

Examples of partner cooperation



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LATIN AMERICA

EUROCLIMA+

EUROCLIMA+ is an EU programme for cooperation with the Latin American region in the area of environmental sustainability and climate change. Particularly noteworthy here is that the specific needs and areas of intervention are identified in the start-up phase, together with 'national focal points' in the region, and measures for implementing the NDCs are carried out in a participatory manner. Checks are also carried out to ensure synergies, coherence and complementarity with other initiatives. One of the six lines of action is cross-sectoral, multi-level and multi-stakeholder coordination, which also supports intra-regional dialogue and cooperation on climate issues within Latin America.

[READ MORE →](#)

WORLDWIDE

Multi-Actor Partnership on Climate and Disaster Risk Financing and Preparedness in the Context of the InsuResilience Global Partnership

The project aims to develop MAPs for climate and disaster risk financing and insurance at international and national (or regional) level in selected countries and regions. In order to create a demand-orientated range of risk financing solutions, the partnership aims to establish effective cooperation between civil society, governments, science and the insurance industry. The target group is civil society organisations and think tanks from the Caribbean, Africa and Southeast Asia, as well as their local networks. At an international level, the project contributes to the InsuResilience Global Partnership.

[READ MORE →](#)

Examples of partner cooperation

WORLDWIDE

Multi-stakeholder partnership and diversity at the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA)

The multi-stakeholder partnership IRMA comprehensively integrates gender and diversity aspects in its 'Standard for Responsible Mining 001' (2018). Gender was included in all relevant standard requirements. The MSP's vision is a mining industry that respects human rights, accepts the aspirations of affected communities, provides safe, healthy and respectful workplaces, avoids or minimises harm to the environment, and leaves a positive impact after mining operations are completed.

[READ MORE →](#)

MYANMAR

Myanmar Agriculture Network (MAN)

The Myanmar Agriculture Network (MAN) is a multi-stakeholder partnership platform with more than 60 organisations, including businesses, government agencies, civil society organisations, farmer groups and financial institutions, with the objectives of (1) improving the competitiveness of the agricultural sector in Myanmar and (2) increasing the profitability, productivity and environmental sustainability of farmers in Myanmar. MAN is part of Grow Asia, a multi-stakeholder partnership platform for inclusive and sustainable agricultural development in Southeast Asia, convened by the World Economic Forum and the ASEAN Secretariat.

[READ MORE →](#)

KENYA

Stakeholder Engagement im Climate Change Act in Kenia

In Kenya, local participation and multi-stakeholder engagement are mandated by the Climate Change Act of 2016. The Act forms the basis for the government's ongoing efforts to institutionalise the coordination of climate change action and provides support through the establishment of climate change coordination units in ministries, departments and agencies at the federal level and in county governments. The Climate Change Directorate (CCD) has also developed a framework to ensure the participation of the private sector in the implementation of the measures.

[READ MORE →](#)

Further reading

Several organisations are able to advise on the establishment of **MSPss and other multi-actor approaches**. They include:

- [Partnerships2030, GIZ](#)
- [Bengo/Engagement Global](#)
- [Collective Leadership Institute](#)

In addition to the advice provided by these organisations, the following publications on MSPs provide **clear and concrete tips on how to proceed**, as well as numerous examples



PARTNERSHIPS2030

MSP success factors



COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE (2016)

Frame of reference for successfully shaping multi-stakeholder partnerships to implement the 2030 Agenda (only available in German).



KUENKEL, P., ET AL. (2020)

Leading Transformative Change Collectively. A Practitioner Guide to Realizing the SDGs



BROUWER, H., ET AL. (2015)

The MSP Guide und The MSP Tool Guide



HEMMATI, M., & HOLTHAUS, A. (2019)

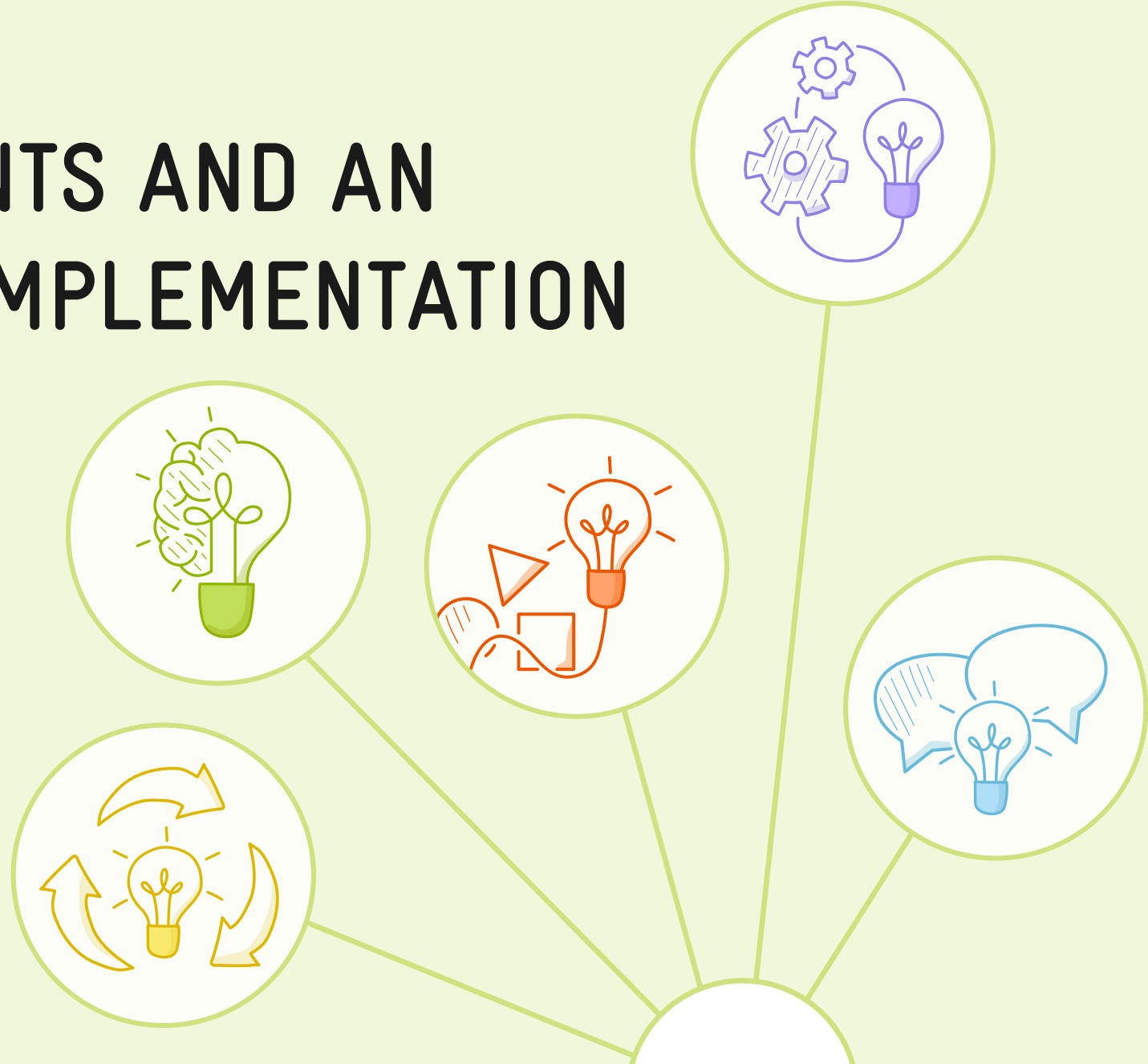
Gender in Multi-Akteurs-Partnerschaften (MAP). Practice examples



KURDZIEL, M., & EMMRICH, J. (2020)

Good Practice Database Summary Report

OUTLOOK – ENTRY POINTS AND AN EXAMPLE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS





Implementing the success factors requires a process, the assignment of responsibilities, and specific entry points.

We see the success factors, tips and examples presented here as guidance, and not as a package that can only be tackled in its entirety. It is not necessary to act on all points at the same time; **even small steps in selected areas can bring about great change and impact.**

The success factors defined here should be understood as providing a **basis for reflection and discussion, and as a compass for a transformative process.** If a project steers more in the direction of the coordinates of sustainability, learning environment, flexibility, local organisations and structures, and partner cooperation, it is good. How the path and the individual steps towards this transformation are organised depends on the specific context and actors.

This publication is not a universal handbook. In order to remain capable of acting in the face of complex challenges and to put the success factors into practice, it is important to identify the **specific entry points**

for the relevant context. Each context will differ in the timing of the project cycle, the circle of actors involved, the objectives and target groups, as well as in their possibilities for action and impact.

In order to make the success factors and examples listed here manageable for your own institution – in your programme or project – a **coordinated process** should be set up (see possible implementation structure on the following pages). Once this internal process is underway and internal participants have been found, goals have been defined, time and resources have been made available and structures have been established, other stakeholders can be involved.

TRANSFORMATION AND CHANGE REQUIRE
ATTENTION, COURAGE, PERSEVERANCE AND
COORDINATED PROCESSES.

Example process for implementing the success factors

1

Find stakeholders for change

- Identify stakeholders in your own institution for individual contexts and find 'allies' for change processes:
Who do we need to change something?

2

Start the process

- Assign responsibilities for promoting the success factors and define the next steps, as well as the objectives, steps and stakeholders involved:
 - Clarify who is responsible for 'organisational development'
 - What structures are needed to bring about change?

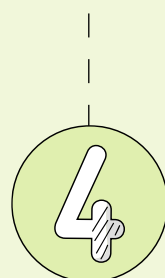
3

Organise a kick-off workshop series

- In order to become more concrete, a short, goal-orientated series of workshops is a good idea. Make sure to clarify in advance what the outcome of the process should be and who should be involved.

Workshop blocks could include, for example:

- Presenting and analysing the success factors in-depth
 - Input on success factors and identification of entry points from the relevant context.
 - Comparison with existing visions and processes: What is realistically attainable?
- Generating ideas for application and implementation
- Developing an action plan
 - Bring together entry points – what is already there and what can be deepened? kann.
 - Draw up an action plan with specific responsibilities and concrete steps for implementation.



Create a learning environment

- Create a basis, structures and capacities for learning, and thus for sustainability and upscaling. This is important both within the donor institution and in exchange with implementing organisations and projects. Consider how they learn by themselves and from each other.
 - In future, these learning structures can serve to systematically incorporate and feed in good and innovative approaches.
 - Creating a learning environment is an essential part of organisational development. A 'learning organisation' needs appropriate structures.
 - Review and strengthen the learning channels between the actors involved so that knowledge can also be utilised for other processes, e.g. for scaling projects.



Establish a series of formats for developing 'good projects'

- Find interactive formats to discuss the topic (e.g. 'brown bag lunches' or existing exchange formats of the organisation).
- The selected format should be embedded in the learning environment.
- Here, selected success factors and/or examples can be explored in greater depth, generalised and discussed.



Experiment

- Identify opportunities for experimentation – areas or elements in which steps and processes can be tried out. Determine:
 - Which existing processes and financing programmes are suitable for trying out new things?
 - Under what conditions can change be successful and how can it be achieved?
- Iterate: Feed these experiences into the learning environment.



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