

KNOWING WHAT WORKS



Corporate Strategic Evaluation – Quality assurance in line management (QsiL)

Corporate Strategic Evaluation – Short Report
Conducted by external evaluators commissioned by GIZ

Publishing information

As a federal enterprise, GIZ supports the German Government in achieving its objectives in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development.

GIZ's Corporate Unit Evaluation reports directly to the Management Board. It is separate from and independent of GIZ's operational business. This organisational structure strengthens its independence. The Evaluation Unit is mandated to generate evidence-based results and recommendations for decision-making, to provide credible proof of effectiveness and to increase the transparency of results.

The evaluation was conducted and the evaluation report prepared by external evaluators commissioned by the Evaluation Unit. All opinions and assessments expressed in the report are those of the evaluators. GIZ has prepared a statement on the results and a management response to the recommendations.

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Summary

This report summarises the findings of the corporate strategic evaluation on quality assurance in line management that was carried out from February 2017 to June 2018. The evaluation was commissioned by the Management Board of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. The commission was awarded to the consulting firm Como Consult GmbH, which carried out the evaluation together with GIZ's Corporate Unit Evaluation.

Quality assurance in line management (QsiL in German) is a Management Board initiative dating from 2013, and embodies GIZ's response to recurring points of criticism related to project quality. Standard requirements were developed for implementing GIZ projects in the public-benefit sector with the aim of enhancing the quality of project management and of service delivery. 'Quality in this regard was defined in terms of how well we achieve what we agreed with commissioning parties and partners, in compliance with O+R (rules, standards, Corporate Principles).' (GIZ, 2017d: 1) Since the beginning of 2014, these standards have been referred to as 'quality assurance in line management' (QsiL) and have been binding for all projects in the public-benefit sector.

The **object of the evaluation**, QsiL, comprises both minimum substantive and technical standards and minimum commercial standards. The first category relates to binding agreements between officers responsible for commissions, their line managers and directors of division concerning the use of specific tools and formats. These agreements relate both to service delivery, i.e. project implementation, and to the line management and quality dialogue. Different hierarchical levels are included in this process. Quality assurance takes place in line.

The corporate strategy evaluation **aims** to investigate the extent to which the requirements related to quality assurance in line management are being met. It also examines the extent to which they are appropriate or constructive when it comes to contributing to the goal of raising the quality of service provision through improved management

practice in the projects.' (GIZ, 2016: 4.)

The **evaluation questions** concern two basic areas: the implementation of quality assurance in line management, and its impact.

- With regard to implementation, the purpose was to identify and prove how the minimum standards are applied during service delivery and in the line management and quality dialogue.
- With regard to impact, the questions refer to how stakeholders judge the effect that quality assurance in line management has on management practice in projects.

Methodology

Different methods were used to collect data. As well as a desk study, 10 interviews were held to map the overall framework with members of the reference group (RG), an experienced country director and the provider of ideas for the corporate strategic evaluation.

In order to triangulate the methods used, two data collection phases followed on from this – one qualitative (case studies) and one quantitative (online survey). The aim of the **case studies** was to take an open approach to the object of the evaluation and to present an in-depth view of backgrounds and contexts. Eight case studies were carried out, with six countries being examined (two from each of the regional departments) and two sector programmes from the Sector and Global Programmes Department (GloBe). The countries and sector programmes were randomly selected from the relevant departmental lists. Within the countries, a random selection was again made of five projects each that were to be looked at more closely. In all, 74 interviews were held with directors of divisions, officers responsible for commissions, officers responsible for implementation, heads of section, country directors and administrative managers, as well as representatives of partner institutions and BMZ. In addition, six preliminary discussions and background talks were held. As part of a desk study, the tools from Capacity WORKS (CW) that are binding under QsiL ¹ and the results-based monitoring (RBM) system of the selected projects were examined. This analysis focused on the logic of the tools when used

¹The CW tools that are binding as part of QsiL are: map of actors, capacity development strategy, plan of operations and steering structure.

together and the question of whether they are expediently combined (for instance, whether key organisations from the analysis of actors are reflected in the plan of operations).

An **online survey** was conducted among all GIZ employees in the public-benefit sector. Respondents included officers responsible for commissions and officers responsible for implementation as well as line managers of officers responsible for commissions and their line managers in turn (directors of division, cluster coordinators, heads of section, country directors, programme coordinators and programme managers). A total of 532 GIZ employees took part in the online survey. The response rates among directors of division, officers responsible for commissions, heads of section and country directors were 57% (directors of division, heads of section and country directors) and 51% (officers responsible for commissions).

In the second phase of the survey, the external quality controls (EQ) commissioned by BMZ and awarded to an independent consulting firm were analysed. EQ reports are drawn up based on desk study information plus information gained from on-site visits in relation to five criteria, each of which is further subdivided into several assessment criteria. For the corporate strategic evaluation, the assessment criteria that are relevant for assessing management practice were selected and examined.

In the final phase – **reporting** – supplementary interviews were held with three directors of department and a few more background talks were held with GIZ staff. These served to examine whether recommendations could be acted on and to clarify individual queries that came up during the final survey phase. Provisional recommendations were also subjected to a ‘reality check’ during a so-called user workshop.

As regards implementation of quality assurance in line management, the **evaluation findings** show that most respondents use some of the binding tools and formats, but that very few use all of them.

- 91% of surveyed officers responsible for commissions stated that binding CW tools and RBM are in place in their projects.
- On the other hand, only 68% of projects have complete and up-to-date tools.
- Only 11% of respondents stated that all tools and

RBM are complete and up-to-date in their projects and are also used/applied routinely.

- Differentiation by type of project showed that the tools are in place in bilateral projects and projects financed by BMZ to roughly the same extent as the average for all projects.
- All tools are in place slightly more frequently in regional projects.
- Projects of other German public sector clients apply the tools less frequently. Analyses of actors are used less often in EU-financed projects.
- A complete and up-to-date RBM system was more often in place in projects that had received cofinancing in the course of the previous year (an average of roughly 14%).
- This made it clear that there is no ‘special case’ of projects that find it easier or more difficult to use the tools than all the others. Rather it is necessary to make precise distinctions.

There is a similar picture with regard to implementation of the line management and quality dialogue. Formats are used:

- according to officers responsible for commissions, this concerns mainly the quality assurance of offers, reports and public relations (66%), meetings with partners for a specific reason (60%), addressing the subject of QsiL in staff assessment and development talks (58%) and the discussion of quality issues during country and annual planning (58%).
- In addition, 70% of the surveyed officers responsible for commissions and of their line managers signed the agreement related to QsiL, and in the majority of cases regular meetings and management team meetings take place every two to four weeks.
- Nevertheless, only 12% of the surveyed officers responsible for commissions and their line managers stated that they use all the line management and quality dialogue formats.
- It also clearly emerged from the case studies that the fact the formats are used does not automatically mean that quality issues are discussed. The main reasons for not following through with the line management and quality dialogue are a lack of resources/time and a lack of clarity about the binding nature of the respective formats and about the role of managers in connection with QsiL. It is widely

assumed that officers responsible for commissions bear sole responsibility for QsiL and that managers 'only have to keep track'.

The evaluation also showed that many staff members lack the capacities to fully implement QsiL.

- Only 53% of respondents stated that they had these capacities. The respondents above all need more time and staff in order to implement QsiL.
- It became clear that staff are confronted with numerous requirements, such as a rapid increase in funds, complex cofinancing arrangements, various demands from clients, or the pressure to use funds at short notice.

The client perspective was also mentioned in connection with the question of what respondents understand by 'quality of service delivery'. Most of them named the achievement of objectives by the projects, in line with GIZ's definition of quality. Other criteria mentioned for assessing quality were the satisfaction of commissioning parties, clients and partners.

When asked about the impact of QsiL,

- 67% stated that QsiL helps improve the management practice of officers responsible for commissions. To be more precise, they said it had an impact on the transparency of project management (42%), managing for development results (40%), steering within the cooperation system (36%) and financial management and cost-efficiency (25%).
- Only 20% of respondents saw QsiL as having any effect on HR management and partner involvement.
- The most frequently mentioned mechanism through which QsiL positively effects management practice is that QsiL provides staff with guidance as to what is expected of them (56%).
- There are no significant response clusters.

The case studies made clear that the line management and quality dialogue has different effects on how officers responsible for commissions manage projects.

- Quality is an issue frequently addressed by

officers responsible for commissions and their line managers. The line management and quality dialogue supports officers responsible for commissions, and QsiL sets priorities for the dialogue.

- These results hypotheses found little confirmation in the online survey, with response clusters of between 7 and 9%.
- Nevertheless, 41% of all respondents selected one of the three corresponding response options.

The proportion of people who see a positive link between QsiL and the achievement of objectives in projects (38%) is only slightly larger than the proportion of people who do not see such a link (30%). It also became apparent that there are many other factors besides QsiL that may affect the achievement of objectives by projects.

By interpreting these findings, the evaluator team reached a number of **conclusions**: The setting in which GIZ's projects are implemented has changed and become more complex in recent years. This also affects the implementation of QsiL. Thus, the proportion of 'traditional' bilateral projects financed by BMZ is decreasing relative to other types of project and programme that involve several commissioning parties and clients. QsiL, on the other hand, tends to assume that projects are in reality of a bilateral, BMZ-financed nature. Projects that represent 'special cases' are increasingly becoming the norm, which means the demands made on management are also changing. Further structures have emerged in connection with QsiL, e.g. cluster coordinators, officers responsible for implementation and portfolio managers. QsiL does not adequately reflect this fact; rather it assumes clear and standardised management structures. In addition to this, some of these other types of project are unclear about the requirements regarding CW tools and RBM.

The dynamic environment in which GIZ operates, which includes a diversification of clients and an increase in client numbers, calls for continuous discussion of what the organisation understands by 'quality'. This is because the various quality requirements within the commission 'triangle' – or even 'quadrangle' – are not always congruent. The common ground has shifted owing to the addition of other clients, modes of implementation and types of project. At the same time, staff often see the formal

and informal requirements of clients as conflicting with each other. QsiL provides no guidance in this respect.

The fact that binding CW tools and RBM are only partially implemented suggests that staff do not see them as having tangible benefits. Staff often lack an understanding of the issues behind the minimum technical/material standards and/or do not share the underlying approach. Instead, they see QsiL rather as a checklist. The minimum technical/material standards are often met only formally and are not actually applied in management practice.

The attitude of those involved also plays a role when it comes to implementing the management and quality dialogue. The case studies in particular showed that line management and quality dialogue formats are most helpful to the officers responsible for commissions when they provide them with support and guidance and when they do not primarily serve the purpose of monitoring or keeping tabs. This was also confirmed in the online survey. The decisive factor is how the manager designs the line management dialogue, i.e. whether an 'atmosphere of trust' is created in which challenges and mistakes can be openly discussed.

QsiL has to compete with various other objectives such as the acquisition of funding and visibility within the company when it comes to the use of employees' time. QsiL is often not among the top priorities where there are conflicting objectives and high workloads. The use of both formal and informal incentive structures within the company does not seem to be sufficiently oriented to the substantive content of QsiL. Parallel initiatives within the company and frequently changing requirements and formats (e.g. Joint Procedural Reform (GVR)) also add to workloads and increase challenges with regard to priority setting. The coherence and complementarity of these initiatives with QsiL is not always obvious to staff; a general change fatigue also arises.

These conclusions lead to 11 **recommendations**. Overall it is recommended that the minimum standards currently set out in QsiL should remain in place; further formats and more monitoring would be counterproductive.

1. Quick wins can be achieved if QsiL is firstly made more user-friendly. This includes, among other things, revising and translating the

explanations on QsiL and the provision of IT applications.

2. Communication about QsiL should be changed so as to highlight the benefits QsiL offers for project management and explain them to users. For this, the 'correct' application of the minimum standards must also be communicated, i.e. regarding tools and formats. The focus should be placed on examining the underlying questions in dialogue with the actors involved, not on the dutiful ticking-off of tools and formats. The requirements for using the CW tools and RBM as well as the line management and quality dialogue formats should be clearly communicated, i.e. it should be clearly stated which tools and formats are binding for which actors. Coherence and complementarity between QsiL and other corporate processes (Joint Procedural Reform, O+R, etc.) should be clarified and explained to staff members.
3. Support should be offered in the form of backstopping and mentoring between officers responsible for commissions with different levels of experience, and QsiL should be mainstreamed in existing training courses.
4. Handling of the tools should be made more flexible, e.g. for different project types and contexts. Making minimum standards less binding in general is risky, but the situations in which exceptions can in principle be made should nevertheless be identified. Decisions on making exceptions should be taken on a case-to-case basis and should be consciously taken and transparently presented in the dialogue between the officer responsible for the commission and the manager.
5. It is recommended that a way be found to reduce workloads and enable some of the responsibility for implementing QsiL to be delegated. For this, incumbents of the corresponding job categories who then assume responsibility for the minimum standards for the first time should be given an introduction to QsiL. The transfer of responsibility should also be formalised.

These quick wins are followed by long-term recommendations. It is recommended that

6. officers responsible for commissions be seen as project and cooperation managers, and receive

guidance on their role as project managers. The values that apply to (internal) project management must be made clear, especially if there is a conflict of objectives and competition for time and resources.

7. Managers should use QsiL to provide their staff with a space in which they can discuss challenges, risks and mistakes.
8. GIZ's understanding of quality should be renegotiated. GIZ can continue to embody quality and set itself apart from other implementing organisations if it succeeds in applying an understanding of quality that focuses on the joint implementation of projects with partners, despite the different interests that different commissioning parties and clients have.
9. Existing incentive systems should assess the contribution made by the individual to project quality, i.e. successful service delivery. It is in projects that the benefits of GIZ's work are generated. An awareness of this fact must be created so that informal incentives structures also come to reflect it.
10. QsiL should be integrated into a holistic quality management system. The dialogue on quality or the understanding thereof may serve as a vehicle for guiding GIZ and its staff with regard to the plethora of requirements and challenges, and for making the company's corporate identity more tangible.
11. Ultimately, most of these issues are related to corporate culture. Understanding and practicing high-quality service delivery as a vision may be the starting point for a discussion of GIZ's understanding of quality and its consequences in practice. This may be part of a process of corporate cultural change or take the form of minor adjustments that have an impact on corporate culture.

*The main report (German version only) can be found online on GIZ's website:
<https://mia.giz.de/qlink/ID=245376000>*

Statement

In February 2018, GIZ commissioned Como Consult GmbH to carry out a corporate strategic evaluation on quality assurance in line management.

Following a Management Board decision, the Evaluation Unit is responsible for carrying out corporate strategic evaluations. These address needs for decision-making and change processes within the company that may concern both service delivery and corporate strategies. Corporate strategic evaluations serve to support evidence-based decisions, organisational learning and accountability.

To encourage people to use evaluation findings, when designing strategic evaluations it is important to focus on the information to be obtained, the information requirements and the implementation capacities of the actors involved. This is done among other things by involving all key stakeholders in the evaluation process through reference groups.

The subject of quality assurance in line management was selected for this evaluation because of its great relevance to corporate policy. Quality assurance in line management is a Management Board initiative dating from 2013, and embodies GIZ's response to recurring points of criticism related to project quality. Standard requirements were developed for implementing GIZ projects in the public-benefit sector with the aim of enhancing the quality of project management and of service delivery. 'Quality in this regard was defined in terms of how well we achieve what we agreed with commissioning parties and partners, in compliance with O+R (rules, standards, Corporate Principles).' (GIZ, 2017d: 1). Since the beginning of 2014, these standards have been referred to as 'quality assurance in line management' (QsiL) and have been binding for all projects in the public-benefit sector. Different donor modalities, dynamic contexts and complex problems place special demands on project design and implementation, and sometimes lead to minimum standards being neglected.

The corporate strategic evaluation on quality assurance in line management aims to 'investigate

ex-durante the extent to which the company's minimum quality assurance standards are being implemented. It also examines the extent to which they are appropriate or constructive when it comes to contributing to the goal of raising the quality of service provision through improved management practice in the projects.' (GIZ, 2016: 4.)

The evaluation was not designed to evaluate individual projects, nor did it apply the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria to structure the evaluation.

Different qualitative and quantitative methods were used to collect data; these were triangulated with each other wherever possible. Eight randomly selected case studies were carried out, with six countries (two from each of the regional departments) and two sector programmes from the Sector and Global Programmes Department (GloBe) being examined. A total of 90 interviews were carried out with directors of department, directors of division, officers responsible for commissions, officers responsible for implementation, heads of section, country directors and administrative directors as well as representatives of partner institutions and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). As part of a desk study, the tools from Capacity WORKS (CW) that are binding in connection with QsiL and the results-based monitoring (RBM) system of the evaluated projects were also examined. An online survey was conducted among all the GIZ employees in the public-benefit sector. The survey included officers responsible for commissions, officers responsible for implementation, heads of section and line managers of officers responsible for commissions and their managers (directors of division, cluster coordinators, heads of section, country directors, programme coordinators and programme managers). A total of 532 GIZ employees – slightly more than half of those contacted – took part in the online survey.

Provisional recommendations were also subjected to a 'reality check' during a so-called user workshop to ensure that the evaluation findings could be put to the best possible use.

This report was produced by the commissioned external consultants. From GIZ's viewpoint, the evaluation was conducted using sound methodology and was user-oriented. The evaluation matrix in Annex V shows how the individual evaluation

questions were handled in methodological terms, which data sources were used, and which conclusions and recommendations were reached.

Generally speaking, the evaluation findings are valid and useful for GIZ.

Management response

The following management response shows the extent to which GIZ's management endorses the recommendations and how relevant and useful they are judged to be. Following the evaluation, GIZ will develop an implementation plan that sets out the improvement measures to be taken in response to the endorsed recommendations, indicating which organisational unit will implement them, and using what resources. Implementation of these measures will be monitored one year later by the Corporate Unit Evaluation.

The corporate strategic evaluation made the following overarching recommendations:

1. Make QsiL more user-friendly
2. Change communication on QsiL
3. Offer support
4. Enable flexibility in the use of tools
5. Reduce workloads by delegating responsibility for QsiL
6. Provide guidance for project management
7. Develop space in QsiL for a no-blame culture
8. Renegotiate the understanding of quality
9. Align incentive systems with project quality
10. Integrate QsiL into a holistic quality management system
11. Introduce changes to the corporate culture

The first five recommendations relate to quality assurance in line management as a tool and can be operationalised fairly quickly. The next recommendations on the list are considered as medium-term to long-term change processes that can be presumed to have far-reaching implications owing to their high level of abstraction, and probably

cannot be achieved by specific individual measures within the limited period of two years. The structure of this management response is aligned with these levels.

The findings of the corporate strategic evaluation reveal basic deficits, particularly as regards the correct application and binding nature of the minimum standards, the way in which officers responsible for commissions and their line managers understand their roles and tasks, and in the line management and quality dialogue. GIZ's Management Board considers quality assurance in line management to be extremely important, and sees a corresponding need for action. It therefore endorses the content of most of the recommendations. The identified deficits are reason for GIZ to take substantial measures to improve the binding use of quality assurance in line management. Some of these measures even go beyond the stated recommendations. The minimum standards for quality assurance in line management that are currently in place remain in force, but entry points for improvements are seen regarding the communication formats and incentives structures. Upon closer scrutiny, it becomes clear that some of the recommendations are not measures that can be implemented but aspects that should be taken into account when implementing other measures. The measures identified under recommendation 1.1 (Revise formats) and 3.4 (Mainstream in existing training courses) were identified as key implementation measures.

Quick wins

1. Make QsiL more user-friendly

1.1. Revise formats

This recommendation is wholeheartedly endorsed. The explanations of the minimum standards for implementing commissions in the public-benefit sector and instructions on tools and formats will be updated and adjusted, taking into consideration the needs of users, clients and partners: new project types and hierarchical structures will be taken into account. In particular, the explanations on the minimum standards for the large and growing number of non-German-speaking employees in GIZ's field structure will be translated into all four of GIZ's

standard languages, and instructions on tools and formats as well as other documents that are relevant to QsiL will be made readily available and retrievable in a structured manner at a central location.

1.2. Provide IT applications

This recommendation is endorsed in part. This is largely because the provision of special IT applications related to commercial requirements first needs to be systematically examined. This examination will identify the extent to which requirements for potential IT solutions can be acted on and are coherent, and possible interfaces with other ongoing processes will be ensured. The Sectoral Department is already working on various approaches in order to enhance the benefit of the tools (CW goes digital, tools in MindManager) and their use.

An IT application for the plan of operations is already in place (On-Site Operations), and the Sectoral Department is currently elaborating formats for visualising the CW tools in MindManager.

No further need for action is seen beyond these measures.

2. Change communication on QsiL

2.1. Change the name

Since the evaluation concerned cooperation management in the context of QsiL, this recommendation is not endorsed, because it goes too far at present. Changing the name may make sense in future if the recommendations that go beyond QsiL for the further development of project management are strategically addressed.

2.2. Communicate the benefits

This recommendation is endorsed. The responsible officers do recognise the fundamental benefits of the binding minimum standards for technical/material quality assurance in the implementation of commissions. The correct use of quality assurance in line management furthermore often depends on other external limiting factors that result from the specific context of the project (such as excessive workloads).

Nevertheless, the various benefits of quality assurance in line management must be determined and communicated in relation to both service delivery and the line management and quality dialogue, to ensure that the minimum standards retain their priority even when there is pressure to perform. (1) benefits for transparent communication and accountability vis-à-vis commissioning parties, clients and the public; (2) benefits for successful implementation of the project and the achievement of its objectives together with the partner; (3) harnessing of potentials within the partner system; (4) compatibility with the requirements of other clients by flexible handling of the Capacity WORKS tools, and (5) improved documentation and communication for new employees and handovers, for instance. Various channels should be used to ensure that such practical information is visible, for example when onboarding new employees, in the line management dialogue, at regional management conferences and other communication platforms that foster information sharing and cross-organisational learning. The implementation of quality assurance and of high-quality projects is GIZ's core business. Especially in view of increasingly high standards among commissioning parties regarding effectiveness and value for money, it is not acceptable to neglect QsiL due to time constraints or alternative incentives.

2.3. Communicate correct use

This recommendation is endorsed. The importance of addressing the substantive content of QsiL in a dialogue with all stakeholders is emphasised in connection with the user-oriented revision of the instructions on tools and formats and other documents of relevance to QsiL. This includes linking up the tools and the underlying questions in an expedient manner on the one hand, and on the other, engaging in a quality-oriented learning process and ensuring transparency and accountability vis-à-vis commissioning parties and clients. Over and above this, GIZ sets store not just by better communicating the requirements and standards related to quality assurance in line management, but also by linking this up with improved communication of the minimum standards in commercial processes and HR management in projects.

2.4. Communicate binding nature

This recommendation is endorsed. The minimum standards for technical/material quality assurance in the implementation of commissions are binding for all public-benefit projects from a commission value of EUR 250,000 upwards, irrespective of the commissioning party or client. This includes service delivery and the line management and quality dialogue, as well as commercial standards.

The binding nature of existing standards must be made clear and communicated as such unequivocally. To achieve this, GIZ will step up the introduction of informative formats, e.g. when onboarding new employees or holding training courses, and will do more to mainstream this topic across existing dialogue platforms at country level. In order to do this, there is a need to clarify beforehand what the binding core of QsiL actually is, and what can be flexibly handled depending on the context (see recommendation 4.1).

2.5. Define and communicate management responsibility

This recommendation is endorsed. GIZ considers its managers in particular to be responsible for assuring the quality of technical/material service delivery in line, according to the established and binding agreed standards, in order to comply with the established minimum standards for technical/material quality assurance. The conditions under which responsibility for the line management and quality dialogue can be delegated and appropriately documented, and clarification of the descriptions of roles and duties, especially of new job categories (officers responsible for implementation, cluster coordinators), will be included and further developed in ongoing corporate processes (corporate objectives). As well as taking stock of existing best practices and generally clarifying the framework conditions (such as the role and duties of country directors in connection with QsiL in general), the need for action at project level needs to be clarified for each country office.

2.6. Reduce complexity and 'disentangle the threads'

The recommendation to ensure and communicate coherence and complementarity between quality assurance in line management and other corporate processes is endorsed in principle. This was also the

tenor of feedback from the company-wide quality workshop in May 2017. However, it has to be further operationalised. During implementation planning, GIZ will address deficits in the expedient dovetailing of quality requirements and other change processes. The intended professionalisation of project management (see recommendation 6) might create a further suitable framework for promoting the complementarity and coherence of different quality objectives and dimensions.

3. Offer support

3.1. Name contacts

This recommendation is endorsed in part. Although technical contacts might make sense for managers, in the final analysis it is the managers who must be competent contacts for officers responsible for commissions. Little benefit is seen in introducing parallel structures. GIZ therefore essentially sees a need for action to ensure that line managers of officers responsible for commissions and their managers in turn are able to provide support and guidance.

3.2. Offer support for managers

This recommendation is endorsed in principle. Managers assume key responsibility for implementing quality assurance in line management. Introducing short but focused advisory formats is therefore considered expedient and has already proved very useful in practice. Beyond this, the proposal is to organise regular exchange platforms and communities of practice at working level, and to use regional management conferences more intensively for sharing experience and new ideas for possible platforms.

3.3. Mentoring models

The recommendation to establish flexible peer learning and models for mentoring between more experienced and less experienced officers responsible for commissions is endorsed wholeheartedly. GIZ sees peer-to-peer advice and the sharing of lessons learned at operational level as a key element for speeding up processes and

reducing effort for everyone concerned. It is up to managers to provide a space for cross-project learning at country and divisional level.

3.4. Mainstream in existing training courses

This recommendation is endorsed. QsiL is already integrated into the Capacity WORKS and commission management training courses updated in 2017, and only requires further updating of the content. Training and exchange platforms should be reflected on in a cross-departmental working group in order to identify needs not yet being met and alternative offerings such as webinars and online training in several languages, management workshops or platforms related to project management issues.

4. Enable flexibility in the use of tools

4.1. Tools can be adapted to project types and project requirements

This recommendation is endorsed in principle. The existing minimum standard tools already enable and reinforce the flexibility recommended by the evaluators and can be adjusted to different types of project and different project requirements. However, to support the user-friendly revision of quality assurance in line management, examples from practice should be provided and the flexible use of tools should be communicated more proactively both in guidelines and in training courses and other formats. This does not affect the documentation requirements. If minimum standard tools cannot be meaningfully used in specific project constellations, this must also be documented.

4.2. Enhance compatibility

This recommendation is endorsed. GIZ's quality management should be guided by its own quality standards, but also by those of the individual commissioning party or client. That means the tools to be used first need to be identified during clarification of the commission. In the medium term, these quality standards could be agreed across the company with key commissioning parties and clients. Beyond this, their application can be tailored to the

particular context, given the possibility of flexibly adjusting the tools.

4.3. Enable exceptions

This recommendation is endorsed. All stakeholders agree that each project always needs to address the substantive questions behind the minimum standard tools. In exceptional cases, a conscious decision can be made during the line management and quality dialogue not to use selected tools in a given context. This decision must also be documented. It may make sense to provide guidance at company level for such exceptions, but this guidance should not be understood as a set of standardised instructions that preclude implementation in specific cases.

5. Establish ways of lightening the load – Enable delegation of responsibility for QsiL

This recommendation is endorsed in part. Formal responsibility for implementing quality assurance in line management lies with managers; responsibility for applying the minimum standards lies with officers responsible for commissions, since the standards are mainly used to steer the project. The formal and transparent delegation of parts of tasks (not of general responsibility for their implementation), especially bearing in mind new job categories, is endorsed and is currently being clarified as a top-level measure at corporate level. Specimen agreements should be drawn up for cases where partial responsibility is delegated to officers responsible for implementation. These agreements should document transparently the responsibilities for quality assurance in line management where responsibility is shared.

Medium and long-term change processes

6. Provide guidance for project management

The recommendation to provide guidance to officers responsible for commissions for the key components and tasks of cooperation management *and* project management is wholeheartedly endorsed. GIZ sees

the need to develop a guide for officers responsible for commissions that unites various existing standards and closes any remaining gaps: commercial/administrative quality standards, HR management, quality of service delivery, cooperation management (CW), and project planning, monitoring and evaluation.

In this connection, the company's own quality requirements for project management should be communicated, especially with regard to the transparent documentation of steering decisions, also in training measures for officers responsible for commissions.

7. Develop space in QsiL for a no-blame culture

This recommendation is not endorsed. It is considered fundamentally desirable to continue enabling an open and trusting culture of learning and error management, and to use quality assurance in line management as a learning instrument. However, in view of recommendation 9 to align incentive systems with project quality, a discussion is needed on the extent to which quality assurance in line management is really suitable for promoting a culture of learning and error management that is actually practiced.

8. Renegotiate the understanding of quality

This recommendation was the subject of controversial debate. While it is endorsed in principle, it is not considered entirely expedient to the extent formulated in the recommendation. This is mainly because the recommended basic discussion of quality standards with commissioning parties, clients and partners usually takes place at project level, even though cross-cutting quality standards have been agreed with BMZ and in part also with BMUB. GIZ will examine the need to reach an overarching, company-wide agreement on the understanding of quality, if necessary also with other clients, and take action to meet the identified needs.

9. *Align incentive systems with project quality*

This recommendation is endorsed. It should be examined how incentive systems that are aligned with project quality can be put in place for individual employees without coming into conflict with the culture of learning and error management that is advocated in recommendation 7. The contribution made to project quality as part of service delivery, or compliance with the binding minimum standards, should be assessed in the staff assessment and development talk and in the line management and quality dialogue, based on the agreement reached by officers responsible for commissions and their line managers when responsibility for the commission is handed over/assumed.

10. *Integrate QsiL into a holistic quality management system*

This recommendation is not endorsed, as stated in the comments on recommendation 8 (Renegotiate the understanding of quality). GIZ believes it makes much more sense to integrate quality management into project management in the further course of implementation planning. The line management and quality dialogue should perform this function in-house. No need is seen for an overarching agreement with external stakeholders and the establishment of a quality process in parallel to existing project management.

11. *Introduce changes to the corporate culture*

The analysis on which the recommendation is based is sound. The recommendation itself would need to be further operationalised and flanked by a number of further-reaching change processes within the company. It is considered difficult to realise a major reform process that goes beyond 'minor tweaks' at the present time, hence the recommendation is not endorsed. This issue should be followed up in the corporate strategic evaluation of corporate culture.

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