



Pursuing an integrated approach in education:

Promoting access and improving quality

Cross-section evaluation on education





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„Projects“ refer to all technical cooperation measures
(both programmes and projects).



1. Cross-section evaluation on education

Objective, design and database

Learning from evaluation

In cross-section evaluations, all the evaluations carried out in a selected sector over a particular period of time are analysed with regard to specific issues and are jointly assessed. They provide information on both sector-specific and cross-sectoral factors influencing the success or failure of GIZ projects and offer recommendations for future projects and GIZ as a whole. The findings are published and made available to commissioning parties and clients, professionals working in the sector and the general public. The findings of the cross-section evaluations are also integrated into GIZ's knowledge management processes via 'learning cafés' attended by all staff members responsible for technical, regional and evaluation-related issues. This way, the evaluations promote learning throughout the whole organisation.

Objective

In 2013, the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit commissioned a cross-section evaluation into the effectiveness of GIZ's engagement in the education sector. This involved analysing a synthesis of the key findings of previous evaluations of individual GIZ education projects. The objective was to identify factors influencing the success or failure of GIZ's work in the education sector and to draw up recommendations for future projects on this basis.

Cooperation with academic institutions

The Institute for International Cooperation in Education (IZB) and the Institute for the Management and Economics of Education (IBB) of the University of Teacher Education Zug, Switzerland were tasked with carrying out the cross-section evaluation.

Design

Before being included in the synthesis, the individual evaluation reports underwent close scrutiny to assess their methodological validity and the robustness of their findings. The assessment looked at the following questions: Are the findings based on reliable data? Are the success ratings plausible? Has the reasoning behind the choice of methodological approach been explained? Three of the evaluation reports that underwent this assessment were subsequently excluded as they did not meet the required quality standards.

Database

21 evaluations were selected as the database for the synthesis. These included independent, external evaluations and internal, decentralised project progress reviews commissioned in the context of education projects carried out between 2011 and 2013 by GIZ's predecessor organisations GTZ and InWEnt. They reflect a relatively up-to-date cross-section of GIZ's education portfolio. The most recent project evaluated to be included in the synthesis ended in November 2014.

Focus on basic education

The vast majority of the projects included focus on basic education and aim to improve access to education and education quality.



2. Good technical quality – insufficient evidence of results

Factors influencing the success or failure of GIZ education projects

Average rating 2.5

The team of Swiss academics gave GIZ's projects in the education sector a good overall rating. The average rating for the evaluations taken into account was 2.5, which is between 'good rating, no significant defects (2)' and 'satisfactory rating; positive results predominate (3)' on the international OECD-DAC scale*.

* The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has laid out the following five criteria for the assessment of international cooperation projects: relevance, effectiveness, impact, efficiency and sustainability. For each of these criteria, ratings were awarded on a scale from 1 to 6.

High degree of relevance

GIZ's education projects received an average rating of 1.6 for the relevance of their strategic orientation. This was the area in which they were judged to have been most successful. This rating indicates that the projects are geared towards the educational priorities and needs of their target groups and are in harmony with national sector policies.

Progress made on education quality and access to education

GIZ projects also performed well in regard to their effectiveness, receiving an average rating of 2.4. Most of the evaluated projects primarily target intermediaries such as executive-level staff at ministries, school administrations and further education institutions or teaching and management staff at schools. The majority of the projects achieved their objectives in this area, helping to strengthen the capacity of the participating educational institutions.

Room for improvement in the field of efficiency

Overall, the projects were not judged to have been quite as successful with regard to the efficiency with which they achieved their stated objectives, receiving an average rating of 2.7. The results achieved by some projects did not do justice to the amount of funding they received, and in other cases, certain envisaged results were either not achieved at all or were not sustainable. On the other hand, projects that were able to demonstrate successful harmonisation with other donors and extensive use of local resources were appraised positively. Overall, however, it proved difficult to assess efficiency accurately as, in some cases, documentation on costs was insufficiently precise to allow the outputs of the projects to be allocated to specific cost items.

Very little evidence of impact on schoolchildren

The projects were judged to have been least successful from the point of view of impact (the achievement of overarching development results) and sustainability, receiving a rating of 2.9 in each of these areas. In the majority of cases – with some exceptions – it was not possible to provide any evidence of long-term impacts on school pupils. One reason for this is that they were generally considered to be indirect beneficiaries rather than the direct target group of the measures. Another reason is that the monitoring systems used by the projects and the partners were rarely capable of identifying and providing evidence of impacts on schoolchildren in addition to results on the direct target groups.



Little impact at system level

Although the projects helped to bring about reforms to the education systems in the respective partner countries, these reforms were rarely sustainable due to a lack of continuity within the partner organisations and the instability of political frameworks. The limited impact on national education systems can also be attributed to the fact that some of the projects, e.g. in Pakistan and the DR Congo, were operating in a fragile and unpredictable context. In many cases, however, predictions made at the planning stage regarding the expected success of reform processes proved to have been overly optimistic.

DAC criteria	Education	Health	Crisis management and peacebuilding	Vocational education
Relevance	1,6	1,9	2,0	2,2
Effectiveness	2,4	2,4	2,4	2,3
Impact	2,9	2,6	2,5	2,7
Efficiency	2,7	2,5	2,1	2,6
Sustainability	2,9	2,5	2,5	2,8
Overall	2,5	2,4	2,3	2,7

RECURRENT FACTORS INFLUENCING SUCCESS OR FAILURE

GIZ's education projects were considered to have performed well from the point of view of their technical quality, be it in their pursuance of a systemic, multilevel approach, their use of participatory methods or their promotion of gender equality. In the cross-section evaluation, the Swiss team of experts also identified which approaches and instruments regularly influenced the success (or failure) of projects. Recurring success factors included technical aspects, the organisation of cooperation arrangements and the quality of monitoring and evaluation systems.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

An integrated approach to promoting access to education and improving the quality of education

In order to improve their education systems in a sustainable fashion, partner countries must guarantee access to education for all their citizens while also increasing the quality of the educational content and services they provide. These goals are mutually reinforcing. When school pupils have the feeling that the content of what they are taught in schools is genuinely relevant to their futures, not only do they themselves become more motivated to participate in lessons, but their families and communities also become more receptive to education and more willing to support education. The cross-section evaluation confirmed that GIZ's projects in the education sector were not addressing access to education and education quality as two distinct issues, but rather were taking an integrated approach.



Initial and in-service teacher training and innovative teaching and learning materials

Ensuring an adequate supply of well-trained teachers is the most important factor in improving access to education and education quality. All GIZ's projects in the field of basic education therefore include initial and in-service teacher training components. These frequently focus on moving away from a teacher-centred approach and towards student-centred learning. A further key instrument in GIZ's education projects is the development of new teaching and learning materials. The evaluations show that it is difficult for projects to achieve success if they are restricted to pursuing a single approach in isolation. Measures to improve education quality can only take full effect when they are appropriately combined. In this case, combining the development and introduction of new teaching materials with teacher training – and bringing the training institutions on board – proved successful.

INNOVATIVE TEACHING MATERIALS – COMPETENT TEACHERS

An example from Ghana

A GIZ project in Ghana provides a particularly notable example of success. The aim of the project was to develop teaching materials and teacher training methods in cooperation with the education department at district level and local teacher training institutions. This work also involved carrying out measures to improve organisational structures and build networks. This approach allowed the project to gain valuable support in the development of materials and also enabled individuals in key positions to expand their own knowledge. This resulted in genuinely innovative teaching materials. These take into account the realities of the students' lives, facilitate student-oriented learning, are based on active teaching methods and are designed to promote gender equality. The materials are written in simple language and are appealingly designed and illustrated. In addition to the teaching materials, manuals were also developed, which help to reduce preparation time for teachers.

Conflict-sensitive and innovative approaches

Some of the projects evaluated operated in fragile conflict or post-conflict situations. In these cases, the approach taken was tailored to the context. In the DR Congo, for example, this meant combining basic education measures with non-formal vocational education. In Pakistan, support was given to 'home schools' for Afghan refugees.

BETTER RESULTS IN HOME SCHOOLS

An example from Pakistan

As the GIZ-funded home schools for Afghan refugees in Pakistan demonstrate, teachers do not necessarily need to be highly qualified to be effective. The approach mainly involves mothers teaching children at home having first undergone an appropriate course of training. The content taught in the six primary grades corresponds to that taught in the formal primary schools in the refugee villages. However, the curricula are more flexible and, on average, there are only 25 students per class. The students are taught in their own native language. Students attending home schools have consistently been found to achieve significantly better learning outcomes than students of the same age attending other schools. One of the reasons for this is the informal and more student-friendly setting, which has proved to be especially beneficial to girls.



Success in promoting gender equality

GlZ's projects in sub-Saharan African countries were deemed to have been particularly successful in their promotion of gender equality. The commitment of these projects to raising awareness has helped to increase school enrolment rates and lower drop-out rates among girls. Approaches that embraced cooperation with traditional councils of elders, religious leaders, parents' associations and local education structures proved especially effective. Small class sizes, special classes for girls, well-trained female teachers and the active involvement of mothers were further success factors.

EDUCATED GIRLS ARE SUCCESSFUL

FIERE – An example from Guinea

The project 'Filles éduquées réussissent' (FIERE) achieved its goal of providing socially disadvantaged girls and girls with learning difficulties with increased access to education. The evaluation confirmed that the majority of participants had changed their personal attitudes and behaviour as a result of the project. For example, the girls surveyed stated that they were now more self-confident and enjoyed going to school. HIV/AIDS prevention was also a key element of the programme. As cooperation at national level was not an option due to the political crisis in Guinea, the decentralised nature of the programme proved to be advantageous.

COOPERATION ARRANGEMENTS

The political will and capacities of government partners at national level are considered to have been a decisive factor in whether or not projects were successful. Wherever there were deficits in this regard, projects found it difficult to achieve their objectives. Projects that were unable to involve relevant actors sufficiently in planning and implementation or failed to fully understand their partners' motivation and objectives also struggled to achieve their goals.

On the other hand, cooperation at local level was deemed to have been a key success factor. Those projects that built on existing processes and structures were most successful in bringing partners on board. In Chad, for example, GlZ cooperated closely with existing parents' associations, who also remained active after the programme had come to an end.

Multilevel approach shown to be particularly effective

As the cross-section evaluation clearly demonstrated, even where measures were successful at certain levels, this often did not translate into a meaningful impact on the education system as a whole due to issues of compatibility between the various levels of the system. However, where projects took a conscious decision to pursue a multilevel approach (ideally at local, provincial and national level), their activities were more successful.



LEARNING FOR A BETTER FUTURE

An example from Central Asia: Working at all levels to improve the quality of education

Transnational education projects in Central Asia have the goal of achieving sustainable improvements in the quality of education. In concrete terms, this means ensuring that schoolchildren's learning is relevant to their own futures and useful in their later working lives. With this aim in mind, new, vocationally relevant technology courses and innovative student-oriented teaching methods for use in science classes have been introduced at teacher training institutions across the region. The curricula have been designed to meet existing demand and tailored to the sociocultural contexts in the partner countries. All of GIZ's proposals were discussed with the partners to ensure sustainability. The project advised the teacher training institutions on the implementation of the new curricula and provided assistance in the capacity development process. The project also received political support for the scaling up of the pilot projects at the national level in order to achieve broad impact. For this purpose, a regional education dialogue was initiated, which looked at the political viability of rolling out the project at national level. As a result, a number of the innovative models, concepts and procedures tested by the project are now being integrated into national education strategies and reforms.

No exit strategy/premature completion of projects

The criticism was voiced a number of times that projects ended too early, and sometimes unexpectedly from the point of view of the partners, making it difficult to ensure that the results achieved would yield long-term benefits. Some projects did not have an exit strategy in place, which meant that partners were unable to prepare themselves adequately for the end of the project. This had an adverse effect on the sustainability of these projects.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The cross-section evaluation revealed monitoring deficits in the majority of the projects. However, the projects in Mauritania and especially in Mozambique were praised for their complex and detailed monitoring processes. These processes involved collecting, discussing and documenting data in a hands-on manner.

Anticipated results often overly ambitious

The cross-section evaluation revealed the overly ambitious formulation of results as a general methodological weakness in project management, especially for projects operating in countries affected by crises and conflict.

Better indicators of education quality needed

The synthesis also showed that there was room for improvement in the provision of evidence of results. Among other things, the projects base their results in the field of education quality on school-leaving degrees and the number of children entering into secondary education or other forms of further training or education. However, this information is not always sufficient to deduce that the students have developed skills that will help them lead a safe, healthy and productive life or that they have built up knowledge that will help them complete a course of vocational training or an apprenticeship.



3. Learning from the evaluation process and taking appropriate action

Conclusions drawn for future education projects

At GIZ, the evaluation process is primarily seen as an opportunity to learn for the future. To ensure that findings are taken on board and that recommendations are turned into concrete measures, the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit has discussed the findings of the cross-section evaluation on education at an internal 'learning café' meeting attended by staff responsible for technical, regional and evaluation-related issues. Following up on this meeting, the company management has developed and approved a binding action plan for measures in three areas: 'Technical aspects', 'Cooperation' and 'Monitoring and Evaluation in the Education Sector'.

FURTHER INTEGRATE TECHNICAL ASPECTS

The cross-section evaluation has confirmed the benefits of taking an integrated approach to promoting better access to education and better-quality education. With this aim in mind, 'mobile learning' and new information and communications technology should be integrated to a greater extent into the design of teaching approaches/curricula, initial and in-service teacher training, as well as at all levels of the education system.

Promote participatory approaches

The Swiss evaluation team also concluded that participatory approaches should be pursued even more vigorously. It is recommended, for instance, that parents or representatives of the local community be involved more closely in school life. The most important thing, they state, is to ensure that all the relevant actors are involved, as this allows better results to be achieved both in terms of quality and sustainability. In order to support this aim, good practices used in previous and existing participatory and systemic approaches are currently being documented and activities are under way to further promote the sharing of ideas and information among GIZ professionals.

Step up cooperation with academic institutions

One of the key findings of the cross-section evaluation is that 'context matters', in that the degree of success achieved was strongly dependent on the political and social context in the partner countries. In order to effectively replicate successful approaches, the recommendation is to gain a better understanding of the influence of contextual factors on the effectiveness of measures carried out in the education sector. With this aim in mind, GIZ's education division is currently stepping up its cooperation with academic institutions.

IMPROVE COOPERATION MANAGEMENT

Plan exit strategies at an early stage

The cross-section evaluation revealed a correlation between the disappointing sustainability rating of GIZ's education projects and the lack of exit strategies for the transfer of responsibilities to the project partners. It was shown, for instance, that the results achieved were often insufficiently integrated into partner systems following the completion of the projects. In future, consideration will be given at the initial planning stage to the issue of how exit strategies can be incorporated into GIZ's offer to the commissioning party.



Ensure continuity

A further negative factor brought to light by the cross-section evaluation was the fact that predictions regarding the expected success of reform processes often proved to have been overly optimistic and that project terms were therefore too short to achieve the desired results. To address this issue, GIZ's education division is now drawing up model concepts for ensuring an appropriate degree of continuity and long-term thinking. The aim here is not to extend project terms per se, but to ensure that the anticipated results are in line with the long-term sectoral planning of the partner country, plan specific measures on this basis, and then allocate these to standard modules to be implemented by GIZ on behalf of BMZ in a three-year cycle.

Ascertain the precise motives and needs of all actors

In order to establish a productive working relationship, it is essential that the motivation and needs of all those participating in a project are fully understood from the outset. To ensure that cooperation becomes an even more significant success factor in projects, minimum standards for commission management have already been introduced and existing manuals revised.

OPTIMISE MONITORING AND EVALUATION IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

To provide better evidence of the results of education projects for the target groups, the evaluation team recommends that GIZ's own monitoring and evaluation systems be further optimised and that the M&E capacities of GIZ's partners also be strengthened.

Improve the way education quality is measured

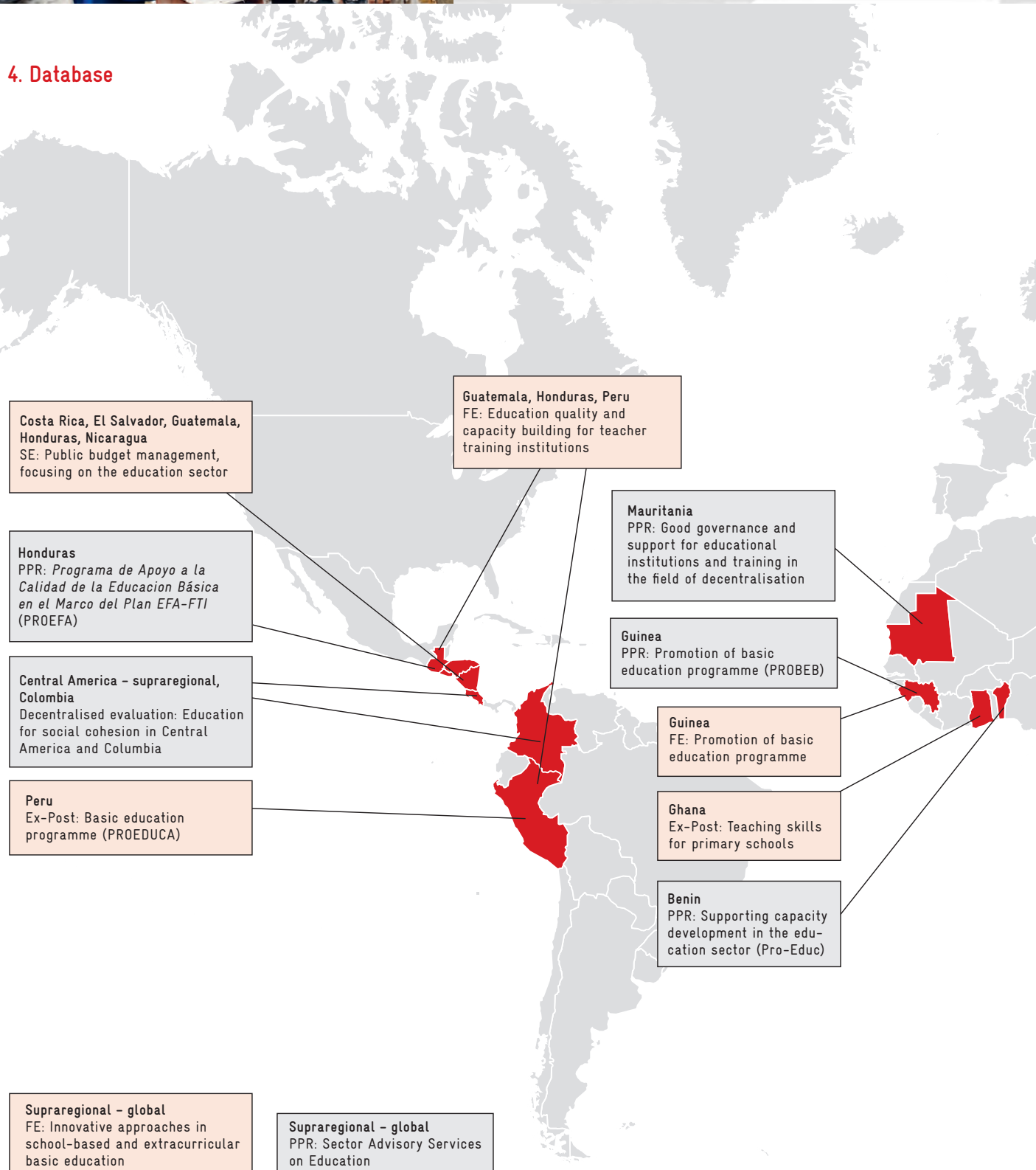
When measuring the results of projects, it is important to gain accurate data not only on quantity (access to education) but also on the quality of education. The latter can represent a particular challenge. Improving education quality is one of the key topics being discussed in the context of the post-2015 development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. In this context, it is not enough simply to measure primary and secondary school enrolment rates. The most important variables to measure are the actual learning of the students and the degree to which the knowledge and skills they have acquired can be applied in their everyday lives. With this in mind, GIZ's experiences using innovative methods to measure learning outcomes are currently being systematically examined, summarised and discussed within the company.

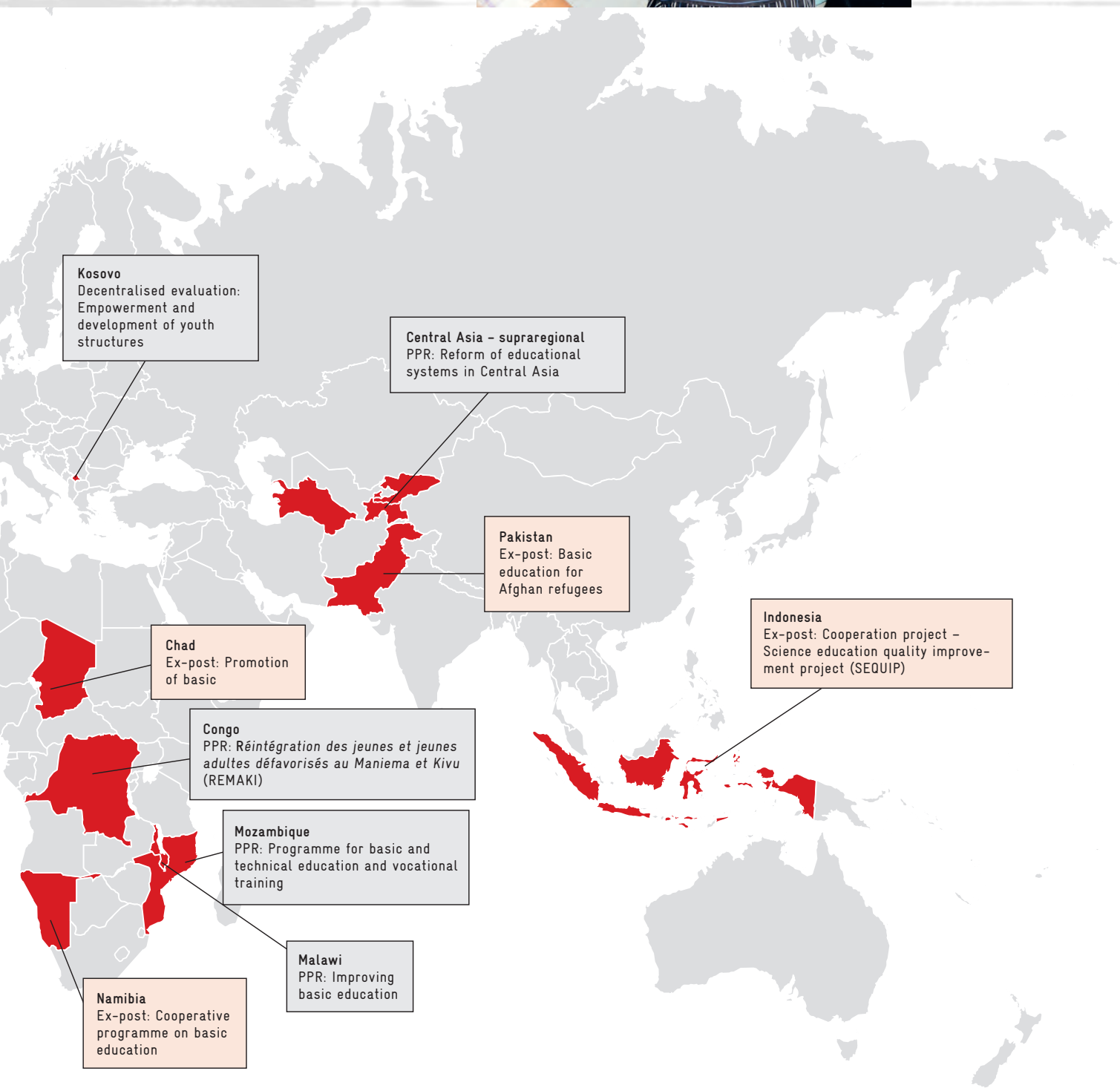
Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation capacities of partner institutions

When planning projects in the education sector, greater consideration will be given to strengthening the monitoring and evaluation capacities of partner institutions and improving the mechanisms for generating evidence on impact of reforms through national monitoring systems.



4. Database





<p> Independent evaluation</p> <p> Decentralised evaluation</p>	<p>Ex-Post: Ex-post evaluation (independent evaluation)</p> <p>FE: final Evaluation</p> <p>PPR: Project Progress Review (decentralised evaluation)</p>
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Published by
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
(GIZ) GmbH

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Layout
Iris Christmann; cmuk, Wiesbaden

Photo credits

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Litho
Andreas Groß, Frankfurt am Main

Duplication
GIZ

Paper
Printed on 100% recycled paper, FSC-certified

As at
February 2015

As a federal enterprise, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH supports the German Government in achieving its objectives in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development.

The projects evaluated were implemented by GIZ's predecessor organisations GTZ and InWEnt. They are referred to in the report as GIZ projects.

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