

Central project evaluation – executive summary

Food Security and Water Supply, Sudan

Title	Food Security and Water Supply for Refugees and Host Communities in Gedaref and Kassala State		
Country/region/global	Sudan		
Sector and CRS code	72012 – Education in emergency situations, 43040 – Rural development		
Project number	2017.4048.9		
Commissioning party	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), European Union (EU)		
Lead executing agency/partner organisations	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MoFEP)/Deutsche Welthungerhilfe e. V., CARE Deutschland, Key other institutional partners: Ministry of Production and Economic Resources (MoPER)/Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, Commission on Refugees (COR)		
Project value	EUR 17,900,000 (of which EUR 8,000,000 is co-financed by EU)		
Project term	November 2017 – December 2022		
Reporting year CPE	2021	Sample year CPE	2019

Context of the project

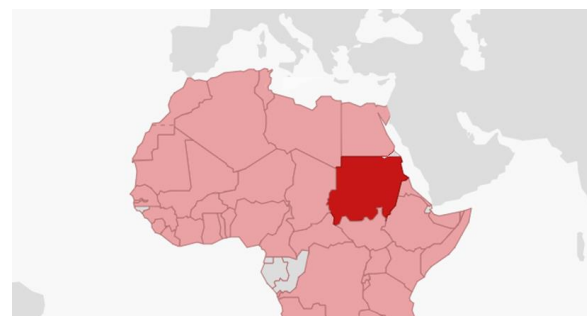
Sudan is considered a low-income and fragile country. It is characterised by high poverty levels and has suffered multiple economic shocks in the last decade. Sudan's economic fragility is coupled with political instability, illustrated by recent government overthrows as well as intrastate conflicts. Surrounded by unstable countries, it is also marked by migration, one of the largest populations of IDPs in Africa and regularly witnesses new refugee influxes. As a result of this politically uncertain and economically challenging context, 4 million people are food insecure, primarily in rural, poor and conflict-affected areas. They lack sufficient food, but especially vitamin-rich food for proper nutrition. Additionally, only around 30% of the population use clean water and hygiene facilities. In this context, the project addresses food security, nutrition, as well as water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

Its approach focuses on the agricultural sector as most poor households depend on agriculture for their livelihood. In the absence of a national development strategy for agriculture, the project's sectoral-political context is provided by Sudan's Quarter Centennial Strategy 2007–2031 targeting the increase of agricultural revenue, the promotion of food security and the reduction of poverty. It is

also guided by the National Nutrition Strategic Plan 2014–2025 aiming to prevent malnutrition and undernutrition, and includes WASH.

Within the German development assistance, the project's strategic framework includes BMZ's special initiative 'Tackling the root causes of displacement, reintegrating refugees'.

Figure 1: Project region Sudan (Quelle: GIZ 2022).



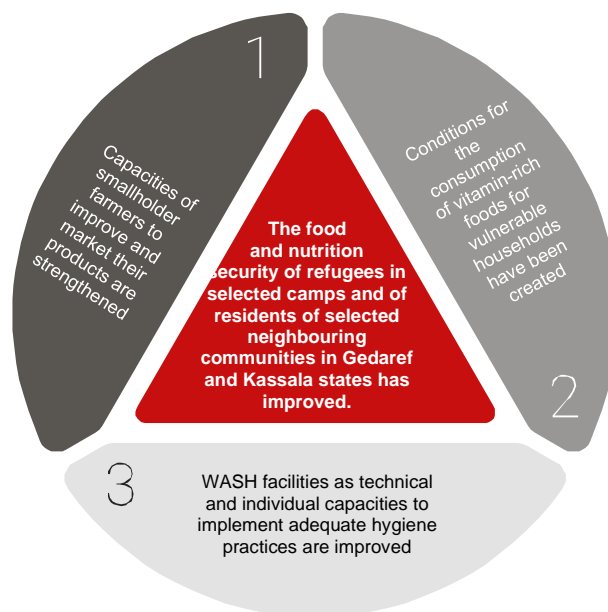
Brief description of the project

The project aimed to improve the food and nutrition security of refugees in selected camps and of residents of selected host communities in Gedaref and Kassala states. It sought to do this through the improvement of smallholder's agricultural production; of the conditions for the consumption of vitamin-rich foods for vulnerable households; and of WASH facilities and capacities for refugees and host communities. The project was implemented in the refugee camps of Um Gargour in Gedaref, and Shagarab and Abuda in Kassala, as well as their neighbouring host communities.

The project aimed to improve smallholder farmers' production and entrepreneurial capacities, adopting the farmer field school (FFS) approach combined with a value chain approach. It focused on training farmers on technical solutions and innovations for improved, climate-smart and market-adapted solutions. It also provided them with inputs and machinery and aimed to support formed farmers' associations and link them with private sector actors. The project also provided capacity building to its direct target groups – extension agents of the Ministry of Agriculture – for them to facilitate the FFS. The project also sought to improve the availability and appropriate use of vitamin-rich food to improve vulnerable households' nutrition. To do so, it mainly provided training, seeds and equipment for households to establish and manage household vegetable gardens. It involved extension agents of the Ministry of Health and of the Ministry of Agriculture to support with trainings. Complementarily, nutrition awareness-raising was provided, and self-help groups were created to share knowledge.

Finally, the project aimed to improve sanitation and hygiene as well as access to sufficient clean water. In this regard, it targeted the construction or renovation of water supply facilities, and the training of WASH committees and hygiene promotion groups. Latrines and hand-washing stations were also to be built in schools and households to improve sanitation, and sensitisation on appropriate hygiene practices would be conducted.

Figure 2: Project objective/areas of intervention



Assessment according to DAC criteria

Relevance

The relevance of the project is rated as successful, with 89 out of 100 points. The project contributes to SDG 2 and 6 of the Agenda 2030 and is relevant to the, albeit limited, existing national policies and priorities. Furthermore, the project aligns with all dimensions of BMZ's special initiative 'Tackling the root causes of displacement, reintegrating refugees' and, more generally, with German government development priorities on food security, sustainable agriculture and rural development, water, as well as peace and security.

Additionally, overall, the project is aligned with the needs and capacities of the beneficiaries and stakeholders. Furthermore, the project design mostly addresses the needs of its direct target groups. It is in line with the capacity-building needs of the ministries' agents, although they require more. In addition, the project is aligned with the needs of the WASH committees, but issues resulting from implementation challenges should be solved for the needs to be met in practice. However, the project design addresses the smallholder farmers' needs in terms of support to improve their production, productivity and marketing of their production. It also addressed vulnerable households' requirements to grow their own nutritious vegetables and acquire nutrition

knowledge, as well as the those of refugees and host communities in terms of access to water, sanitation and hygiene. Furthermore, the project design is aligned with the leave no one behind principle, but the political and cultural framework sometimes makes it difficult to include most vulnerable groups.

The project design is overall appropriate and realistic. Its theory of change is comprehensive and considered plausible and logical. The project targets the right sectors of intervention based on the context, namely agriculture and household gardening, to achieve the module objective. It is also based on a holistic approach towards food security, combining a systems-level component, a household-level component, as well as a nexus (WASH) component which feeds into the first two. One shortcoming of the project's design is however its adaptation to the cultural setting and framework conditions. Although several risks and assumptions were considered in the project design, it faced many more risks and challenges relating to the cultural and framework conditions during implementation, which were not factored in at the time. These risks, threaten the potential of success of an even well-thought project design.

Finally, the project adapted successfully to changes, as it took adequate measures to proceed with implementation when facing major changes in the economic situation which were heavily impacting the project. Moreover, the project also appropriately adapted to the significant changes through the COVID-19 pandemic, but remote work and remote monitoring still led to major implementation issues, which the project team and its implementing partners are attempting to remedy.

Coherence

The coherence of the project is rated as moderately successful, with 70 out of 100 points. The potential for complementarity and coordination between BMZ-funded GIZ initiatives is weakened by the fact that there is still no BMZ country strategy for Sudan. Nevertheless, the project has been designed in a complementary manner with the only other relevant project implemented by GIZ in Eastern Sudan, namely 'Vocational Training for

Refugees and Host Communities in Eastern Sudan' (PN. 2015.2142.6). The two projects adopted complementary approaches towards common objectives and measures were taken in the design to avoid duplications. The two projects also coordinated on an operational level.

In contrast, coordination with other donors shows room for improvement. There are examples of good coordination mechanisms sound coordination practices such as working groups and shared innovations taken up by other actors; but there are also significant gaps in the coordination system. Moreover, coordination was further complicated by logistical restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, external coherence is weakened by the lack of coordination which exists between development actors and those working in the field of emergency response, opening up possibilities for duplications.

Effectiveness

The effectiveness of the project is rated as moderately unsuccessful, with 50 out of 100 points.

The prognosis of this interim evaluation regarding the achievement of project results and contributions on impact level (analysis as well as assessment) is based on what can be achieved until the project end (31 December 2022) as it was formally defined during the evaluation phase (third quarter 2021). Project extensions that were formally approved after the evaluation phase could not be considered in the analysis and assessment and might influence the achievement of results and the overall performance of the project.

The 'moderately unsuccessful' rating of the project's effectiveness is due to it facing challenges and delays during implementation, which affected its achievement of indicators at both output and outcome levels. Activities of its agricultural component were particularly impacted by the pandemic, as well as the economic circumstances, so that achievement is low, and the plausibility of further achievements overall remains dubious. By comparison, achievements under its WASH component were impacted by implementation challenges and quality issues regarding the WASH

facilities. However, in contrast, the project's nutrition component shows higher levels of achievement. Although also here, these achievements are partial, and the plausibility of further achievements remains uncertain.

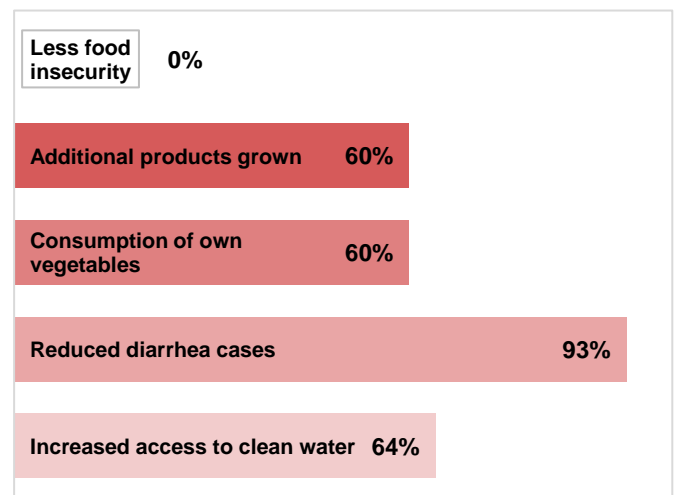
The contribution of the project to the achievement of its outcomes seems partly plausible because the different hypotheses linking the project's outputs and activities to the module objective were partly assessed as realistic and plausible. Conceptually, technical solutions and innovations for improved production should enable surplus produce for farmers; however, this is also influenced by several external factors. As the project could not implement all activities of the FFS approach yet, it remains to be seen whether these factors can be mitigated, and the hypothesis proven in practice. Regarding vulnerable households, the support and training they receive to establish their own gardens and the constitution of self-help groups improve their food and nutrition security. Furthermore, it could be demonstrated that access to water and hygiene training is needed, as a complement to nutrition trainings, to improve food utilisation and preparation as well as food and nutrition security. However, because the WASH activities have only been partly implemented so far, this last hypothesis could only be partially verified.

Looking at the quality of implementation, it becomes obvious from the evaluation results that the project has not only been hindered, in the realisation of its outputs, by external framework conditions, but also by its steering structure. The existing steering structure led to coordination challenges with the partners as well as to delays in approvals. The latter, together with delays in GIZ's procurement processes, particularly impacted activities that were constrained by the agricultural calendar. Finally, the challenging communication between GIZ and BMZ affected the way the project dealt with these delays and issues, making it difficult to reach a shared understanding and finding solutions to challenging framework conditions that impact the project.

In addition, the project experienced both positive and negative unintended results during its implementation. On the one hand, the project contributed to closing the gender gap and fostering

women's empowerment through the greater role given to women in their families through the kitchen gardens, the involvement of female farmers to develop their agricultural activity, and the change of mindset within the ministries regarding female facilitators' involvement in the activities. On the other hand, the low-quality outputs and challenges regarding the water systems and latrines which were built as part of the project led to high dissatisfaction and distrust among beneficiaries regarding the implementing organisation, and further put beneficiaries at risk. At the time of the evaluation, measures had been taken both by the GIZ and its subcontractor to draw consequences and start remedying the issues.

Figure 3: Achievement of the project's objective indicators



Impact

The impact of the project is rated as moderately unsuccessful, with 60 out of 100 points. The project was partly successful in reaching impact. While it achieved partial impact on some of its impact areas, it could not reach impact in other areas due to the challenging external frameworks conditions. One should note that the collection of robust evidence at the impact level was limited by the significant implementation challenges, the nature of an interim evaluation, as well as the long-term nature of expected impacts. Therefore, the evaluation partly relied on a plausibility analysis of the impacts. The plausibility prognosis of this interim evaluation regarding the achievement of project results and contributions (analysis as well as assessment) is based on what can be achieved

by the end of the project (31 December 2022) as it was formally defined during the evaluation phase (third quarter 2021). Project extensions formally approved after the evaluation phase could not be considered in the analysis and assessment and might influence the achievement of results and the project's overall performance.

The project achieved impact regarding households' production and consumption of vitamin-rich food, thus contributing to the SDG 2. Furthermore, it could achieve impact by addressing water scarcity for the kitchen gardens in a sustainable manner. In other areas, however, impact is less clearly visible. The project was only able to achieve some impact concerning the strengthening of the food system and improvement of beneficiaries' livelihoods. However, the plausibility of this impact is threatened by the existing challenging economic conditions. Moreover, the project contributed to some extent to the enhancement of environment and soil protection through improved water management and agricultural production. Nevertheless, further impact is dependent on farmers consistently applying the techniques introduced by the project which, in turn, depends on factors such as fuel prices.

In addition, the project achieved no visible impact regarding the improvement of the availability and quality of water or hygiene practices due to the implementation challenges and low-quality outputs faced in the WASH component. For this component, the plausibility of impact by the end of the project mainly depends on the project's and its implementing partner's capacity to remedy the issues. Nonetheless, the project achieved some impact regarding the reduction of tensions over resources and the promotion of social cohesion. Further impacts in this area will, however, depend on the project's capacity to further increase food production and improve water availability.

Finally, it is plausible that the project achieved some impact regarding the reduction of irreversible damages resulting from malnutrition and under-nourishment in infancy and early childhood, if impact on the food system, access to water and hygiene practices, and consumption of vitamin-rich food are further achieved by the end of the project.

The contribution of the project to the achieved changes based on selected outcome-impact hypotheses is partly verified. First, while the evaluation verified that surplus production by farmers leads to more food in local markets, whether this extra food leads to improved food security is influenced by external factors such as additional refugees' influx or inflation. Second, evaluation results show that surplus production leads to an increase in income for only a small percentage of farmers. Yet for these farmers, this increase is a direct result of the project.

The project did not lead to any unintended positive result at impact level, but it led to two unintended negative results. Because the latrines built by the project's implementing partner are of low quality and unsafe, the beneficiaries are at risk and could influence them to go back to open defecation rather than using latrines. Both options are negative unintended results, which go against the 'Do No Harm' principle as well as against the project's intended objectives. However, measures have been taken by the GIZ to remedy the issues.

Efficiency

The efficiency of the project is rated as moderately unsuccessful, with 65 out of 100 points. Regarding production efficiency, the shares of the project budget allocated to its different outputs as well as the share of overarching costs are considered plausible. The allocation of costs between the different outputs is justified in terms of both approach and indicator achievement. Money was also spent sensibly within the outputs. The overall successful production efficiency was, however, affected by delays in approval and procurement processes as well as by the measures taken to adapt (adequately) to external circumstances. These included for instance a decrease of some of the targets due to the economic situation and the request for an extension of the project duration.

In contrast, the project's allocation efficiency is difficult to assess because the project has not been able so far to reach its intended outcomes. External circumstances such as high inflation, fuel prices, currency rates and the pandemic also negatively affected its efficiency because they led

to delays in implementation and the prolongation of the project. However, the project was able to leverage co-funding from the European Union and adopted a synergetic and holistic strategy through the combination of the BMZ and EU approaches. In contrast, harmonisation with other donors could be improved to achieve efficiency gains.

Sustainability

Project sustainability is rated as unsuccessful, with 35 out of 100 points. The project was successful in enabling its direct and indirect target groups to acquire sustainable knowledge and skills. However, the sustainability of the utilisation of these knowledge and skills is unlikely, because these groups lack the financial and material resources to apply the acquired knowledge and skills in the future. At the ministry just as within the community, further support would be needed so that acquired knowledge and skills can be put into practice, activities continued and results sustained. This is the case for all groups, except for those vulnerable households whose activities (kitchen gardens) do not require additional support (however, water scarcity issue needs to be addressed in a sustainable manner).

As a result, the capacity-building approaches and exit strategies adopted by the project do not sufficiently ensure its sustainability. In its approach towards sustainability, the project has not yet adopted a comprehensive, institutional capacity development strategy as it did not have the mandate to do so. This is due to the fact that it was designed before bilateral cooperation was re-initiated in Sudan. However, such a strategy would have been needed to ensure financial, technical and organisational sustainability at the level of the partner ministries. Furthermore, the project did not establish a strong enough steering structure to ensure sustainability, as there is still insufficient coordination between the relevant partners. Moreover, the project adopted a sustainability and exit strategy regarding its target groups which faces a significant limitation: committees created in all project components to ensure sustainability do not have the necessary resources to play this role. In the WASH component, the lack of ownership and reliance on aid characterising some of the committees even further jeopardises the likelihood of its sustainability.

Against this background the project also scores low on the third dimension of sustainability as the forecast of durability of the project's results is threatened by the highly fragile political and economic context in which it is implemented. Contextual factors such as high inflation, rise in fuel prices, unstable political situation and restrictive political framework question the permanence, stability and long-term resilience of the results.

Overall rating

Overall, the project is rated as 'moderately unsuccessful' (62 out of 100 points).

Table 1: Rating of OECD/DAC evaluation criteria

Criteria	Score Points / 100	Rating 1 (highly successful) to 6 (highly unsuccessful)
Relevance	89	Level 2: successful
Coherence	70	Level 3: moderately successful
Effectiveness	50	Level 4: moderately unsuccessful
Impact	60	Level 4: moderately unsuccessful
Efficiency	65	Level 4: moderately unsuccessful
Sustainability	35	Level 5: unsuccessful
Overall	62	Level 4: moderately unsuccessful

Conclusions and factors of success and failure

The project is overall moderately unsuccessful because of the very challenging framework conditions in which it has been implemented. Contextual factors such as the political instability, the inflation, fuel prices and currency rates as well as the COVID-19 pandemic jeopardised the project's success. Due to the implementation challenges resulting from these circumstances, the project only achieved a few of its indicators and the plausibility of further achievements remains dubious.

- The challenging external conditions in which the project has been implemented also make it only partly successful in reaching impact. While the project achieved partial impact on some of its impact areas, it could not reach any impact in others. The area in which the project has, however, achieved visible impact is households' production and consumption of vitamin-rich food, whereby the project contributes to the SDG 2. For most other impact areas, the plausibility of further impact is often threatened by external factors.
- Moreover, these economic framework conditions affect the project's sustainability. While the project has enabled both its direct and indirect target groups to acquire significant knowledge and skills, economic factors threaten the sustainability of the utilisation of these capacities. This is the case for all groups except for the vulnerable households. Ministries' extension agents and WASH committees lack resources to continue utilising knowledge and skills gained, and farmers' utilisation of their capacities is threatened by high fuel prices impacting their activity. Furthermore, relying on beneficiaries' committees to ensure sustainability, such as on the WASH committees to ensure facilities' maintenance, does not prove a viable sustainability strategy in a context where committees lack resources to play this role.
- However, the strength of the project despite its low performance lies in its strong design. By putting the emphasis on agriculture to improve food security, it targets the right sector of intervention to achieve its module objective in the Sudanese context. It adopts a coherent and holistic approach towards food security,

combining a system component (agriculture), a household-level component (nutrition) and a nexus component (WASH). Each of the components also adopt a coherent and comprehensive approach combining soft and hard elements.

- Another success of the project has been its capacity to take adaptive measures enabling it to proceed with implementation despite the external challenges. For instance, the project showed flexibility in decreasing some of its target to adapt to inflation or replacing international tender processes with local ones to overcome the currency rate issues.

Recommendations

- The GIZ project team should renew its attempts to obtain an extension of the project duration to give it, and particularly its agriculture component, a chance to achieve its objectives. This is necessary as many activities could not be implemented due to framework conditions and the pandemic.
- The GIZ project should closely coordinate with the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) project to foster synergies, e.g. by linking up the planned farmers associations with the private sector. In this regard, the GIZ project could benefit from RVO project's already existing contacts to private stakeholders involved in the agricultural sector. As a result, it could embed the farmers' associations more thoroughly within the market.
- Regarding international donor harmonisation, the GIZ project team should work closely with BMZ to monitor ongoing projects in eastern Sudan. Thus, it could identify possible complementarities to avoid duplications and facilitate potential synergies between the GIZ project and (future) projects by other donors in the development and emergency response sector. A stronger mandate for the GIZ project to improve the coordination in the working groups is needed.
- The GIZ project should engage BMZ to develop a strategy for a better steering structure for the project. The objective of this strategy should be to give the implementing ministries more decision-making power while not losing its current political partner. Only then will it be

possible to make the project's results more sustainable by anchoring achieved outcomes in the partner structure.

- In line with the 'Leave No One Behind' principle, the project team should continue its efforts to increasingly involve disabled people in the project activities.
- The GIZ project should organise a workshop with WASH committees in the Shagarab camp to address the distrust which resulted from the implementation challenges and the low quality of the established facilities. As part of this workshop, the GIZ project should consider the setting up of a feedback and complaint mechanism as a solution to restore trust.
- The GIZ project should engage its implementing partner under its WASH component to develop community engagement plans to contribute to tackling the lack of ownership shown by beneficiaries, particularly relating to WASH facilities. These plans should provide for the engagement of WASH committees in the definition of activities and decision-making for the remaining duration of the project. These committees should be made responsible for presenting the results of the activities to foster ownership and accountability to their communities as well as to sensitising communities regarding the value of the achievements to increase ownership.
- The GIZ should adopt a participatory community engagement approach throughout the remaining duration of the project with the aim to identify solutions to the lack of resources of the committees constituted during the project (hubs, WASH committees).
- In the next project, recently submitted to BMZ, the project team should include a significant capacity-building component for the government. Any project conducted in partnership with the government in Sudan, and which aims to be sustainable, will require significant, structural and institutional-level support to the partner ministries and transitional government overall.
- For the next project, recently submitted to BMZ, the project team should highlight the uncertainties relating to the context in a clearer manner. This not only entails how the context could affect project implementation, but also how some factors could possibly not be

overcome, how achievement of results impact cannot be guaranteed under the framework conditions.

Overall, BMZ and GIZ should always consider starting projects in highly volatile contexts with a pilot phase. The aim would be to first test activities in given framework conditions to ensure that they are feasible in the context. In addition, the pilot phase can be used to identify factors that possibly affect the project's implementation and achievement, which may not have been foreseen during project design. Thus, such a pilot phase would allow for an adjustment of activities, the provision of context-tailored mitigation strategies, and a clear delimitation of feasibility, risks and limitations.

Approach and methods of the evaluation

The project was evaluated on the basis of a theory-based evaluation design and a contribution analysis. Due to the extension of the project, a midterm-evaluation approach was adopted. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic-related travel restrictions as well as the security situation, the evaluation was conducted semi-remotely. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected through interviews, focus group discussions and a survey targeting the final beneficiaries. The combination of the different empirical methods served to counterbalance their individual limitations. The qualitative interviews offered the strength of analysing causal relationships and their explanations in great depth, and helped to interpret the quantitative survey results. The quantitative survey as well as the various forms of triangulation therefore counterbalanced the risk of biases of qualitative data collection. Researcher, data and method triangulation took place. The evaluation team followed a participatory approach that included sharing the purpose of the evaluation with the interview partners and taking the stakeholders' knowledge interest and feedback into account.

Rating system

Projects are rated based on the OECD/DAC criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and efficiency. Each of the six criteria is rated on a scale of 1 to 100 (percentage system).

The project's overall score is derived from the average points awarded for the individual DAC criteria. The average value for the overall score is rounded according to mathematical convention. All DAC criteria are equally weighted for the overall score. Compared with the predecessor systems (6-point scale, 16-point scale), a 100-point scale has a number of advantages in that it allows differentiation, is commonly used internationally, is easy to understand and can readily be converted into other assessment systems.

Table 2: Rating and score scales

100-point scale (score)	6-level scale (rating)
92–100	Level 1: highly successful
81–91	Level 2: successful
67–80	Level 3: moderately successful
50–66	Level 4: moderately unsuccessful
30–49	Level 5: unsuccessful
0–29	Level 6: highly unsuccessful
Overall rating: The criteria of effectiveness, impact and sustainability are knock-out criteria: If one of the criteria is rated at level 4 or lower, the overall rating cannot go beyond level 4 although the mean score may be higher.	

Both the assessment dimensions within the OECD/DAC criteria and the determination of the overall score using a points system serve to increase the transparency of ratings while enabling better comparability between individual projects.

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