

S Y S
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ZUKUNFT-UMWELT-GESELLSCHAFT

**MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE
PROJECT
“BIODIVERSITY ECONOMY IN
SELECTED LANDSCAPES IN NAMIBIA”**



**Executive Summary of the
Evaluation Report**

27.09.2022

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Executive Summary

Background: Syspons GmbH was commissioned by Zukunft – Umwelt – Gesellschaft gGmbH (ZUG) to carry out the mid-term evaluation of the project “Biodiversity economy in selected landscapes” (hereinafter “the project”), which is implemented in Namibia in the context of the International Climate Initiative (IKI). The project is a joint project implemented by a consortium led by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) as joint programme coordinator, in partnership with its main political partner the Namibian Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT).

Purpose: This mid-term evaluation serves three purposes: (1) Facilitating project-specific learning for the project implementers, as well as for the ZUG team and the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV). Learnings are also relevant for the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs (AA) and the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK), who since 2021 have joint BMUV in funding and steering IKI; (2) Contributing to evidence-based decision-making for the project implementers. (3) Providing a basis for transparency and accountability by completing an external assessment along the standardised evaluation criteria and questions.

Evaluation Design: To fulfil the objectives of this mid-term evaluation, the evaluation team conducted a contribution analysis to assess the plausibility of hypotheses and the achievement of (intended) changes and effects by the project. This analysis allowed the evaluation team to measure the project’s contribution to intended changes and analyse the extent to which the observed (positive and negative) changes can or could plausibly be traced back to the project. The contribution analysis was based on the Theory of Change (ToC) of the project, which was developed during the mid-term evaluation. In the ToC the causal relationship between inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts was visualised. To test this ToC, the evaluation team collected data from various sources during the data collection phase (individual interviews, group interviews, document analysis).

Main Evaluation Results: The evaluation team concludes that the project’s objectives are aligned with current and upcoming country strategies (NBSAP, NDP 5 and 6 and others) and relevant for the government partners. Regarding global priorities, the project’s objectives and implementation are aligned with the Strategic Plan of the CBD. In particular, the project is addressing strategic goals B and D of the CBD Strategic Plan. The landscape approach and the biodiversity economy are two highly relevant approaches embedded in the project’s design and implementation. The urgency of biodiversity-based livelihood gains stated by the government partners amplifies the relevance of strong value chains to generate income increases for the rural populations in the targeted landscapes. The evaluation moreover shows that the project’s landscape approach is relevant for addressing core problems on the ground. Particularly, on the ecosystem level, the integration of different land-use areas into a larger connected landscape is a key precondition for the migration of larger species and thus for their protection and resilience to climate change. Nevertheless, some critical points with relation to the needs-orientation of the project exist: the project is not yet sufficiently capturing the reprioritisation on biodiversity-based livelihood support in the landscape communities stated by all the government partners that evolved due to the economic difficulties that Namibia is facing. Also, the project is currently covering a wide range of different target groups, which leads to increased requirements for the (expectation) management of these groups. This has started to negatively affect the needs-orientation of the project and has created expectation management challenges with regards to some target groups.

The evaluation team also identified difficulties related to the planning and steering of the project. The project has only recently secured - from an evaluation team perspective - an appropriate implementing consortium and has faced important communication and coordination challenges in the past. Other than foreseen, the involvement of some locally embedded consortium partner organisations (NNF, NCE, FFI) at the start of the project implementation was not pursued or efforts to involve them were not successful. The evaluation team assesses this as a missed opportunity, as the project did not benefit from the experience, local knowledge, access to target groups and synergies with running initiatives of these partners. From the evaluators perspective therefore, the quality of the cooperation illustrated in the project’s proposal is only slowly starting to emerge as the project intensified its cooperation with new partners, such as IRDNC. Moreover, though there is close coordination with the government partners, and they provide overall strategic guidance in the

existing and suitable steering structure of the Project Steering Committee, their role is not strongly attached to the operational level, although opportunities for this level of involvement exist. Finally, the evaluation team concludes that the quality and suitability of the project design is acceptable. The results chain has been developing according to changing conditions in the context in a suitable manner. However, the changes are not defined yet along adapted output and outcome objectives, and the corresponding indicators. The results-based management approach, including the need for a proper monitoring system of the project, could be improved.

The project is currently fully in motion after important delays that took place in the context of the pandemic. Most of the project activities and achievement of objectives are nevertheless at this point delayed. Overall, it is likely that the project will not be able to achieve the outcome-level objectives and all its proposed objectives at the output level in its given time frame until April 2024 if the project design is not further developed. Based on the analysis, the evaluation team concludes that the project's strategy of how to achieve the project outcome is not entirely clear yet and is still evolving. The work on value chains in the landscapes is spread thin among several targets and value chains and a clarity on strategy is needed to avoid a missed opportunity to actively assist the communities in value addition and market access. The evaluation team concludes moreover that the plausibility of objective achievement varies by landscape. While the prospects are more promising in the Omboende Hoanib People's Landscape, Brandberg and Etosha West and South, the prospects for success are less promising in Waterberg. The connection of output IV (capacity development of selected stakeholders) moreover to the outcome achievement is moreover not strategic enough and it is currently not clear, how it will contribute to outcome achievement. It is likely that a second project extension will be needed to increase probabilities of achieving outcome and outputs. If an extension is not feasible, the project's need to prioritise and increase its focus becomes even more essential.

With regards to the plausibility of selected intended transformational changes a mixed picture emerged. On the one hand, the plausibility of landscapes having a transformative character in Namibia was confirmed in this mid-term evaluation. The landscape approach, though not introduced in the country by the project, can still be regarded as a disruptive innovation that has the potential to transform the system for conservation governance and restore the connectivity of large ecosystems. On the other hand, the evaluation team also concludes that the data does not point out to the digital value chains having a particularly high plausibility of being transformational in terms of higher-level impacts. While innovative, the supported digital business models still have a long way to plausibly prove they have the potential of being transformational for the landscapes, selected target groups or the tourism sector in the country at large.

Concerning the impact on biodiversity conservation, the plausibility was mostly confirmed in the view of the evaluation team, while at the same time pointing towards relevant preconditions, such as the creation of an institutional home for each landscape, and the enactment of the Protected Areas and Wildlife Management Bill. Concerning the desired economic impact on the biodiversity-based livelihood of the local population the plausibility of project contributions is more conditional to limitations. Mostly, these limitations are related to peculiarities of the current project approach, such as access to finance, having many different value chains and having to address various target groups. Finally, the analysis of the project's sustainability showed that the durability with regards to the institutionalisation of the landscapes is plausibly highest in those landscapes where (1) the involved local stakeholders are themselves willing and show initiative for collaboration, (2) where the project supports processes that are already strong and ongoing and (3) where plausible funding sources exist that can fuel and reflect to stakeholders that benefits of working together, which at this point in time seems especially plausible for OHPL and Brandberg.

Overall, the evaluation team concludes that several opportunities for improvement exist to increase the project's performance. To use this potential, the evaluation team has derived seven recommendations for the IKI project at the strategic/steering and conceptual level, and two recommendations addressed to BMUV and ZUG. The detailed recommendations are described in chapter 5 of the evaluation report.

Strategic and Steering Recommendations

1. The project should request an extension to increase the plausibility of achieving its output and outcome objectives and therefore transformational impact. This extension request should go hand in hand with a further development of a cost-effective project design, especially to ensure objectives can be achieved should an extension not be granted.

2. To strengthen the project's focus on results, the project should establish a results-oriented monitoring system that reflects the adapted results chains on an amended proposal and is used to strategically steer the project with the Steering Committee members.
3. The project should strengthen the quality of its stakeholder engagement and communication, particularly to avoid expectation management challenges when re-adjusting the project design.

Recommendations for the Project Design

4. When prioritising objectives and activities, the project should focus on those value chains that promise to have the most promising impact on the biodiversity-based livelihood of its target groups.
5. The objective to create landscape associations that can effectively manage their respective landscape is too ambitious and needs to be re-defined to focus more on the local rather than the national level.
6. To ensure embeddedness in the local context, further strengthen local capacities, ensure ownership and work on sustainability, the project should strengthen its relationship with local partners.
7. The project should explore options to further benefit from specific activities that are being funded but do not yet plausibly enough contribute to project objectives.

Recommendations for BMUV and ZUG

8. BMUV and ZUG should more clearly communicate their understanding and define requirements related to building, sustaining, and working within a consortium in Joint Projects, for example, on shared ownership of the project within the consortium.
9. The success of mid-term evaluations as a standardised tool depends on some crucial factors that should be taken into consideration for future mid-term evaluations, such as team composition, logistical support from implementing partners and the definition of transformational impact.

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