

IKI Management Response upon Conclusion of the 2nd IKI Evaluation Cycle (2017–2022)

Evaluations are essential tools for accountability, project management and learning within the International Climate Initiative (IKI). These evaluations support the IKI’s strategic development. The 2nd IKI evaluation cycle, comprising nearly 200 project evaluations, several summary reviews of the project evaluations and two strategic evaluations, was completed in March 2022.

When compared to the project evaluations from the 1st IKI evaluation cycle, there has been a slight improvement in the assessment of all criteria evaluated, reflecting the steady progress made towards greater impact and sustainability within the IKI since its founding in 2008. In that regard, the strategic evaluations confirm the IKI is having a good impact in supporting institutional frameworks for forest and landscape restoration in El Salvador and catalytic impact of IKI ecosystem-based adaptation projects.

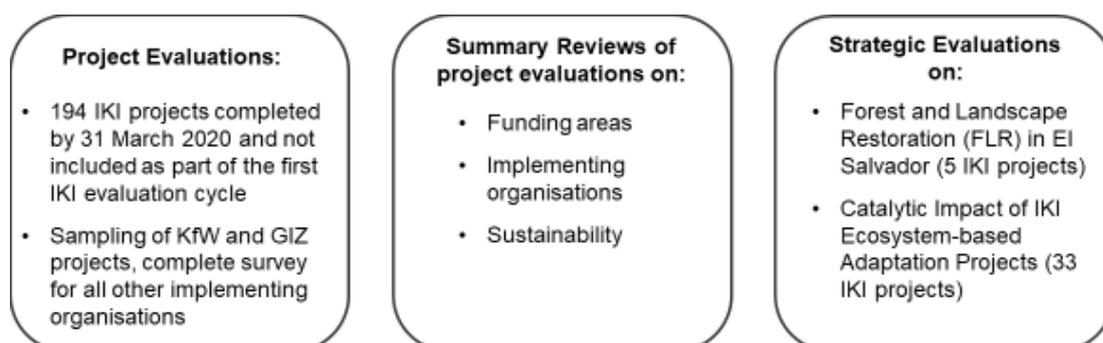
The various analyses conducted also demonstrate there is potential for improvement. The IKI takes up the corresponding recommendations for action and seeks to include these aspects as it continues its work. It should be noted that nearly every project evaluated here was approved between 2008 and 2015. Since then, the IKI’s focus, strategy and project planning and implementation requirements have evolved. The findings of the 2nd IKI evaluation cycle are nevertheless instrumental in reflecting the current status of the IKI, and in identifying fields of actions.

The 2nd IKI evaluation cycle was conducted by independent evaluators. **This independent status means that the opinions expressed in the evaluation reports are those of the individual evaluators, and not necessarily those of the respective ministries of the German government responsible for the IKI.** It also means that the respective ministries may assess individual reports differently than the evaluators, e.g. with respect to the political situation or project impact.

The 2nd IKI evaluation cycle in the IKI evaluation system

The 2nd IKI evaluation cycle was conducted between 2017 and 2022, following up on the 1st IKI evaluation cycle (2010 to 2013), which included 115 project evaluations and a programme evaluation.

The figure below shows the evaluation tools used during the second IKI evaluation cycle:



The 3rd IKI evaluation cycle began in the autumn of 2021, and is analysing all projects completed between 2020 and 2024 year by year using short, desktop-based final reviews. A new evaluation system is now used for large-scale joint projects set up since the IKI's 2017 reform. The new system uses mid-term evaluations and accompanying impact evaluations to supplement final reviews and strategic evaluations.

Independence and transparency

By appointing external evaluators to conduct the 2nd IKI evaluation cycle, the IKI aimed to maximise the independence of the IKI project evaluations. The GFA Consulting Group GmbH was appointed to manage the evaluation process. The majority of project evaluations were conducted by an appointed consortium. Evaluations of KfW projects were conducted by the KfW's independent evaluation unit. Due diligence was conducted to ensure the evaluators appointed to conduct evaluations were not involved in the planning and/or implementation of the project(s) being evaluated.

The publication of evaluation findings is greatly important to the IKI. This provides for transparent accountability to the Bundestag and the public, and provides opportunities to develop shared knowledge for all project planners and implementing organisations. As part of the 2nd IKI evaluation cycle, project evaluation reports are posted on each project page on the IKI website, and the executive summaries of the two strategic evaluations and the summary reviews will be posted in the publications section of the IKI website.

Methodology

All evaluations are conducted using the principles and quality standards of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC). Project evaluations were assessed using a standardised assessment matrix with key questions on the following criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, coherence & complementarity & coordination, and planning & steering. The use of this standardised assessment matrix aims to facilitate the comparable evaluation of developments for the IKI's entire project portfolio, and to develop overarching lessons learned based on the findings. Strategic evaluations and summary reviews of project evaluations were conducted according to overarching questions using different methodological approaches.

Challenges

Because a significant proportion of IKI projects had already been completed for several years, it proved very difficult in some cases to collect data and reach involved actors. The COVID-19 pandemic meant scheduled site visits had to be replaced with desk studies and remote evaluations. Due to the pandemic-related delays, not all projects could be included in the summary reviews. Lessons were learned from these experiences, and these lessons are now being taken into account in the design of current and future evaluations. The IKI endeavours to continuously adapt the IKI evaluation system to better align with the purpose of evaluations, and to make the process as efficient as possible.

How findings are used

Evaluations are intended to be used as a tool to conduct a specific analysis of the immense wealth of knowledge within the IKI. As such, they form a solid base of evidence for best practice approaches, or help to expand knowledge about certain barriers or misconceptions.

Projects that receive a poor rating often have great potential for learning, especially for the actors involved. The IKI takes these findings seriously and has already responded to lessons learned in recent years. Recommendations will be incorporated in the IKI's continued growth and development. These recommendations will be reviewed to determine the feasibility of their implementation, e.g. whether they can be incorporated into specific thematic and/or country calls or in the preparation phase of IKI projects. In this way, evaluations help make the IKI even more effective and sustainable. Publishing findings also facilitates transparent accountability and collective learning among interested members of the public.

Conclusions and recommendations

Due to the large number of findings, the focus here is on the most important recommendations based on summary reviews of project evaluations and the way the IKI has responded thus far.

Relevance and impact on target groups and participation

These fields of action are important levers for a stronger long-term impact of the IKI. Since 2008, project applications must include information on the relevance of the project to the target group and plans for a stringent results chain with respect to output, outcome and impact level. To ensure projects are even more relevant to target groups and to maximise participation among local and other stakeholders in implementing IKI projects, the IKI has drafted new selection criteria in recent years, including the project's contribution to economic and social development in the partner country, and cooperation with national, local or regional partners to anchor the project in the target region. Additional benefits have been included in the IKI monitoring process since 2015. The introduction of country calls strengthens partner country ownership and helps identify areas of their need. The newer, larger joint projects also facilitate more in-depth collaboration.

Stringent results chain and SMART indicators

Since the IKI was founded, project-specific indicators have gradually been introduced to individual funding areas. In addition, monitoring guidelines were drafted beginning in 2013 in response to the findings of the 1st IKI evaluation cycle, and published for the first time in 2015. Continuously working towards a stringent results chain with readily measurable indicators has now shown improvement in the average values for effectiveness and project planning and management. The aim is to continue to modify the IKI monitoring system to adapt to current needs and methodological developments to provide optimal support for the project's progress and impact.

Risk mitigation strategies and exit strategies

The IKI has already provided several responses as regards these two points as well. The selection criterion on ecological impact established in 2009 was supplemented in 2017 by environmental and social standards. In addition, an independent complaint mechanism has been set up to allow people to anonymously voice their concerns regarding (potential) risks resulting from IKI projects and provide a remedy. Since 2019, the selection criterion on exit strategy has been used to determine the extent to which the results and impacts of IKI projects can be self-sustaining (financially) in the medium and long term after the end of the project and thus make a lasting contribution to climate action and biodiversity conservation. In addition, longer project durations are now permitted to facilitate greater flexibility and adaptive project management.

Management Response, 2nd IKI evaluation cycle

Overall, it is clear that the IKI has always responded to changing conditions and new findings since its founding in 2008, and it will continue to do so. The IKI's quality guarantee means it will continuously endeavour to optimise the impact of its projects for effective, sustainable climate action and biodiversity conservation. The IKI's evaluations help identify crucial fields of action, put them to the test and refine them through IKI implementation.