

EXTERNAL EVALUATION – SHORT REPORT

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Supporting the national quality infrastructure

Country | Region: Palestinian Territories

Project number: PN: 2015.2185.5
Project term: 01. February 2016 until June 2020

Political partner: Ministry of National Economy (MoNE)
Implementing agencies: Ministry of Health (MoH); Palestine Standards Institution (PSI); Center for Quality in Medical Laboratories (CQML) of Al-Quds University

PTB | Working Group: PTB working group 9.34 (North Africa and Middle East)
PTB | Project Coordinator: Saida Bunk
Date: April 07, 2020

This evaluation is an independent assessment. Its contents reflect the assessor's opinion which is not necessarily equivalent to PTB's view.

List of abbreviations

CQML	Center for Quality in Medical Laboratories
IMC-QP	Inter-Ministerial Committee – Quality Policy
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoNE	Ministry of National Economy
NQP	National Quality Policy
OECD DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
PA	Palestinian National Authority
PSI	Palestine Standards Institution
PTB	Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt
PT	Proficiency Testing
QI	Quality Infrastructure
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TTR	Team Technical Regulations

1. Project description

The object of the evaluation is the project 'Supporting the national quality infrastructure' in the Palestinian Territories. The project has a budget of up to 1,500,000 EUR and is planned to operate from 02/2016 until 06/2020. The evaluation covers the time period from 02/2016 until 02/2020 and has been conducted from 01/2020 until 02/2020 applying document study, sample-based checks, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and a validation workshop.

The project has been mandated by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and is jointly implemented by the Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB) and the governmental partner Ministry of Economics (MoNE) of the Palestinian National Authority (PA). The key implementing partner organizations are the Ministry of Health (MoH), the Palestine Standards Institution (PSI) for metrology, and the Centre for quality in medical labs (CQML) of Al-Quds University for proficiency tests (comparison measurements) in medical laboratories, among other governmental and non-governmental partners that are instrumental for reaching the project objectives.

The lack of compliance with international requirements of the institutional network of the Palestinian quality infrastructure and the individual quality assurance services was identified as the core problem to be addressed by the project. The capacities especially for implementing the existing international trade rules, must be established or enhanced in order to gain the best possible benefit for the domestic economy and to achieve sustainable development. The project is designed to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), specifically SDG 3 Health and Wellbeing; SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth; SDG 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; SDG 12 Sustainable Consumption and Production; and SDG 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

On outcome level, the objective of the project ("The National Quality Policy is being implemented and quality assuring services are delivered according to international good practices") is tackled with project activities in the following three output areas:

- (1) Implementing the national quality policy (output A).
- (2) Promotion of metrology (output B)
- (3) Quality assurance in medical laboratory analyses (outputs C + D).

With these priority areas, the project addresses root causes and principal threats of quality assurance issues in the Palestinian Territories. The target group consists of private and corporate consumers and producers, who depend on the availability and utilization of quality assurance services.

2. Assessment of the project

It is a standard procedure of PTB to conduct an independent evaluation during the duration of a project. Reasons for conducting the evaluation are accountability towards the BMZ, quality assurance as well as support for PTB's internal learning processes. The purpose of the evaluation is to make an assessment of the project's performance, including the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency of related interventions, the sustainability of positive results, and the likelihood of overall impact in the near to longer term future.

Specifically, the evaluation addressed the following issues:

- (i) Assess the achievement of the project according to the international evaluation criteria set out by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC). The criteria of the OECD DAC, or short 'DAC criteria' include relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, coherence and sustainability.
- (ii) The evaluation did also evaluate the five Capacity WORKS success factors: Strategy, Cooperation, Steering Structure, Processes as well as Learning and Innovation.
- (iii) Provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements.
- (iv) Promote learning, feedback and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among key stakeholders of the project and within PTB; and
- (v) Articulate lessons learned on the strategic direction of the project (operational and technical aspects), so as to improve future project activities.

The evaluation covered the full range of activities and scope of the project over the last four years, from its inception in February 2016 until today. It included a thorough desk study, a field trip to the Palestinian Territories as well as an in-depth analysis of the findings to prepare the evaluation report and the presentation at PTB.

2.1 Status of the Change Process

Relevance

The project addresses key quality infrastructure issues, including the implementation of the National Quality Policy and the promotion of industrial and legal metrology, and raises them to a very high political level. All interviewees expressed high demand and appreciation for the project.

The project is in line with the priority area of the Palestinian 'National Policy Agenda 2017-2022' as well as the 'Sectorial strategy for the development of the national economy 2017-2022' as well as with the focal area of German-Palestinian cooperation. Regarding the latter, the PTB project is part of the future programme structure "Sustainable economic development, employment, education". The PTB-project has undertaken great efforts to emphasize the importance of quality infrastructure issues for achieving the objectives of the National Policy Agenda and the Sectorial Strategy.

Effectiveness

The project has been very effective in achieving its intended objectives and positive changes. Decisive factors for the achievement of the project objectives include the following: the long-standing and fruitful cooperation with the project partners; the continuation of several activities based on achievements of the previous project; the political relevance of the project and the commitment by project partners and by high-level political organs. It should be emphasised that despite the challenging political situation in the Palestinian Territories, the project has been very successful and has achieved important impacts.

The project's logic is realistic and plausible for the PTB module. The outputs feed well into the outcome level, namely each output is assigned to contribute to one of the outcome level indicators. In general, some indicators could be adapted in their wording to become more relevant, particularly in the area of implementation of the National Quality Policy (NQP) and metrology. The indicators as such do not reflect the aim of the project. While one project aim is "Implementing the national quality policy", the indicator is not measuring the implementation and progress of it.

Besides module indicator 3, there are two output indicators (A2, B2) which have not been fully achieved. Although the project partners expect to achieve them, the remaining project time is now rather short.

Impact

The interventions of the project contribute to an improved quality infrastructure system in the Palestinian Territories.

The perceived positive changes of the project include increased general awareness of quality assurance issues and political commitment to quality, as well as improved technical skills acquired through the specific measures to develop capacities in the areas of (legal) metrology, quality management systems for laboratories, proficiency testing and preparation for accreditation. The strengthening of medical laboratories in the field of quality assurance and diagnostics will contribute to better results in the public health system in the long term.

The project has successfully contributed to the development of an implementation plan of the national quality policy. Still, the implementation is essentially still outstanding. The planned establishment of an independent "Team Technical Regulations" outside of the Palestinian Standard Institution has not yet been achieved, because of political reasons.

Efficiency

With regard to the efficiency of the project, the available human and financial resources were used appropriately, and the results were produced cost-effectively. PTB's personal concept to coach development measures without locally stationed long-term experts adds to the project's good efficiency.

The relation between resources allocated and project performance is in balance, however after 42 of the total 53 months term (as of 08/2019), just about 57 % of the budget were spent, and eventually not all indicators might be reached. The spectrum of modes of delivery cover training courses, seminars and workshops, international and local/regional short-term consultants, procurement of equipment and materials, etc. The resources used were perceived as

adequate by the interviewees. The project planning has been conducted in close coordination with an EU project. Draft project proposals by PTB and the EU are being exchanged and discussed to avoid duplications and to make best use of synergy opportunities.

Sustainability

It is expected that the positive results of the collaboration on a personal level will be sustainable. Individual participants of trainings apply their newly acquired knowledge and spread it within their respective organisations. At the organisational level, stakeholders have a clear understanding of the necessary changes to achieve sustainable results.

There is a strong interest in continuing the Proficiency Testing (PT) schemes beyond the end of the support. There is a good incentive structure for medical laboratories to participate in the inter-comparisons, as they are a prerequisite for accreditation as well as for obtaining and keeping the licence as a medical laboratory.

There is room for improvement in mentoring and exchange, which should be further strengthened as there is a high interest by the stakeholders. Furthermore, the project should extend the scope to involve qualified local/regional experts in the training courses, e.g. in a tandem approach with international experts. As regards the sustainable implementation of the national quality policy, awareness of the importance of the quality infrastructure needs to be continued.

Coherence

The project is well coordinated within the German Development Cooperation as well as with other donors. Synergies with the regional PTB project "Quality Infrastructure in support to sustainable economic development and trade capacities" have been used, in particular in the field of metrology. Good efforts have been made to avoid duplications, use synergies and share the work with the EU project "EU Modernization Programme for the Palestinian Quality Infrastructure" also with regard to the planning of the new project. Coordination with other agencies such as GIZ is going well. The PTB project exists in the framework of the future German Development Cooperation Programme. Regular meetings are held with GIZ, KfW and the German representative office in the Palestinian Territories.

OECD-DAC Summary

The analysis based on the OECD DAC criteria shows that the project achieved positive ratings especially for relevance, efficiency and coherence, whereas some assessment aspects regarding the effectiveness were rated below average of the project assessment. Owing to the average number of points (1.6), the project is given the overall rating: "successful".

Criterion	Criterion assessment
1. Relevance	1.3 (highly successful)
2. Effectiveness	2 (successful)
3. Impact	2 (successful)
4. Efficiency	1.3 (highly successful)
5. Sustainability	2 (successful)
6. Coherence	1 (highly successful)
Global assessment	1.6 (successful)

2.2 Success factors for the observed results and change processes

Strategy

The strategy for applying the methodological approach is well suited, coherent and logical, and leads to the expected results and impacts. While the political buy-in is crucial for the success of the project, the tailor-made capacity building measures and institutional support are moving towards the expected results.

The analysis of the situation and the development of the strategy was largely carried out by PTB. The indicators were developed by the project team and submitted to the cooperation partners for approval and input.

For strategy development (and all other Capacity Works factors) no tools of the CW management model have been applied by the project.

The success factor strategy is assumed to be 100 % achievable and is rated as 73 % achieved.

Cooperation

The right stakeholders are involved in the project and the project partners are clearly defined. A well-functioning communication and coordination structure between the project coordinator, the local liaison person and its partners at the partner institutions is established. Regular visits to the political and implementing partners are made by the PTB project team to discuss the work plan as well as progress made. There is a close and trusting working relationship with the contact persons in the ministries. With its approach to facilitate dialogue between ministries, institutions and other project partners, the project promotes the creation of networks among individuals and their organizations.

The success factor cooperation is assumed to be 100 % achievable and is rated as 87,5 % achieved.

Steering structure

Due to the three different areas of intervention, the formal steering structure involves 1-2 focal persons from each of these areas. A key mechanism for steering is a joint steering meeting with the relevant partners. The focal point for each component reports on progress and challenges. However, strategic planning and decisions on the operational plan are done in small meetings with the focal point for each output areas. This allows to react flexibly to the requirements of the individual partners, but it does not promote a holistic approach to achieve the project objectives and better networking and coherence between the partners and the three project areas. The results-oriented monitoring was carried out by the project coordinator at PTB headquarters with the support of the local coordinator.

The success factor steering structure is assumed to be 100 % achievable and is rated as 72,5% achieved

Processes

Many processes were already established in the previous project and are continuously used as they are very efficient. Some new processes have been established within the scope of the project in particular towards higher political commitment with implementation of the NQP

(regular reporting, implementation via the Inter-Ministerial Committee – Quality Policy (IMC-QP)). In the area of improving the capacities for PSI, CQML and medical laboratory staff (outputs B, C and D), the processes required to reach the projects' outputs and outcomes, are defined more precisely than in intervention field A (national quality policy). The core inputs of the project and the areas of intervention were defined and documented (operational planning/activity planning; responsibilities of the partners). Processes with regard to learning and knowledge management could have been considered in more depths. There is no regular feedback about trainings and only few documented recommendations on further training needs. The knowledge management could include aspects like development of fact sheets, success stories or lessons learned.

The success factor processes structure is assumed to be 100 % achievable and is rated as 75°% achieved.

Learning and innovation

The high willingness and motivation of the project partners to learn and engage was crucial for the project. A high degree of flexibility allowed targeted support of specific needs. On individual level, there is a good understanding of what the staff can learn from the project. Tandem trainings including international and local experts have started but the scope could be expanded. On institutional level, the participation in PT-schemes is used as benchmarking for the laboratories. Networking between medical laboratories for supervision and exchange of experience is underway, but could still be improved. On political level, the establishment of a committee to implement the NQP including several ministries was an important learning experience. Documentation of lessons learned and general knowledge management can be further improved. This includes dissemination of the main results, lessons learned and success stories of the project to the relevant stakeholders and also within PTB. Aggregated findings of all trainings in the three areas of cooperation, have not yet been elaborated. New ways of cooperation and innovative approaches to cooperation have not yet been considered by the project as the project follows a more classical approach.

The success factor 'learning and innovation' is assumed to be 100 % achievable and is rated as 76,7 % achieved

3. Learning processes and experiences

As confirmed by all project partners, the high degree of flexibility of this PTB project is a comparative advantage to other projects in the Palestinian Territories. Moreover, the multi-stakeholder approach involving various ministries and institutions has proven to be an important success factor. In addition, peer learning in workshops and study trips / technical exchange with other international institutions and laboratories as well as participation in PT programs was an important and successful learning process for the stakeholders. The implementation of activities at a higher political level proved to be even more time consuming than originally expected, especially aspects related to the NQP, the Team Technical Regulation (TTR) and the move to new PSI laboratories. An improved knowledge management and the exchange of experiences and success stories of the project with relevant stakeholders and within PTB could further increase the visibility of the project.

A significant experience at political level was the cooperation of several ministries in the inter-ministerial committee IMC-QP. The committee was established to prepare the Palestinian quality policy (in the previous project); currently at least four ministries are represented. The IMC-QP also serves as a central instrument for the implementation of the quality policy and inter-ministerial steering. Greater awareness of the public and private sectors could have been raised, e.g. in the form of fact sheets or video clips, to inform about the relevance of the quality infrastructure (QI) system for the public and private sectors.

4. Recommendations

Recommendations to partners

There could be more information and awareness raising to inform the public and private sector about the importance of an adequate quality infrastructure for competitive and safe products on the market and to increase trade and export potentials.

Recommendations to the project team

General aspects:

- Appraisal report to be mandatory for all projects, including SWOT-analysis, stakeholder mapping and process mapping (even if it is a 2nd project)
- An independent person should be part of the appraisal mission to bring in new insights and ideas.
- Include the evaluators in the development of the impact matrix and the project proposal or – if the evaluation takes place before development of the short proposal – to include evaluators in the preparation of the short proposal.
- Recommendations with regard to indicators have been given under 5.1.2 of the long report. In general future project indicators should focus more on the SMART-criterium of “R=relevance”.

Project specific:

The evaluation team highly recommends continuing the approach of the current project.

For specific recommendations for the project by intervention areas see chapter eight of the full evaluation report.

New potential working areas:

- Support QI development of specific sectors in Palestinian Territories. During the interviews examples were given such as pharmaceutical/health sector, food, construction.
- Support of PT schemes in microbiology and chemical aspects (also encompassing the food and pharmaceutical sector), if no other donor is supporting this area.

Recommendations to the "International Cooperation" department

It is recommended to explore through which channels and mechanism lessons learned and success stories of this and other projects could be further shared with stakeholders and within PTB. This is an important aspect for improved knowledge management as well as to improve visibility of important PTB projects to the wider audience.

Further on, the evaluation team recommends to

- Carry out the evaluation before the preparation of the short proposal, to be able to incorporate findings of the evaluation into the design of the new project.
- Include evaluators in preparation of short proposal and/or impact matrix
- Appraisal report to be mandatory for all projects, including SWOT-analysis, stakeholder mapping and process mapping (even if it is the 2nd project)
- Moreover, an independent person should be part of the appraisal mission to bring in new insights and ideas.

Recommendations to the team from department 9.3 in charge of the evaluation.

- An agreement between evaluators and project team should be sought on the separation between the evaluation and appraisal mission interviews during the preparation meeting of the evaluation.
- Excluding the following capacity work factors from the evaluation, as they do not provide any further meaningful insights in addition to the DAC criteria: 1 Strategy, 2 Cooperation (covered by coherence), 3 Process and keep the CW factors: 4 Steering structure, 5 Learning and innovation.
- In the final evaluation report, it is recommended to delete chapter 6, as there is a strong repetition between chapters 1 and 6. Delete the part on learnings in chapter 7 as it is already part of the Capacity Works factor.



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