

# EXTERNAL EVALUATION - SHORT REPORT

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## Alliance for Product Quality in Africa

Country/Region: Africa (supraregional)

Project number: PN 2018.2021.6 (Quality Infrastructure Fund); PN 2020.4932.8 (SI)  
Project term: 01 April 2020 – 31 March 2024 (Quality Infrastructure Fund);  
01 October 2020 – 31 December 2024 (SI)

Lead executing agency: -  
Executing agency: Various agencies in intervention countries

PTB | Section: 9.35 Sub-Saharan Africa  
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This evaluation is an independent assessment. Its contents reflect the evaluator's opinion which is not necessarily equivalent to PTB's view.

## List of abbreviations

<b>BMZ</b>	Bundesministerium für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>QI</b>	Quality infrastructure
<b>OECD/DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>SI</b>	Special Initiative “Decent Work for a Just Transition”
<b>SOAC</b>	Système Ouest Africain d'Accréditation West African Accreditation System

## 1. Executive summary of the project

This evaluation covers two PTB projects funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (*Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung*, BMZ) as part of its larger “Alliance for Product Quality in Africa” (hereafter referred to as “Alliance”), namely the “Quality Infrastructure Fund project” (hereafter referred to as “QI Fund project”) and the “Special Initiative Decent Work for a Just Transition project” (hereafter referred to as “SI project”). In addition to these PTB projects, the Alliance also comprises two projects implemented by GIZ.

The two PTB projects have budgets of 1,500,000 EUR (QI Fund) and 2,960,000 EUR (SI) respectively. While they were originally scheduled to end in 2023, they were extended until March 2024 (QI Fund) and December 2024 (SI), among others due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The projects have had the mandate to operate in Egypt, Ethiopia, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Morocco, Rwanda, Senegal and Tunisia. Due to their particular structure, they have no political partner.

Project activities have been carried out with a large number of implementing partners. They all came from the public sector, apart from Rwanda where they included a non-governmental organisation.

The main target groups have been public quality infrastructure institutions, in addition to companies in selected economic sectors and countries.

Both projects have pursued the same objective: “Product quality in selected economic sectors and business locations in Africa is increased” and have partly the same indicators at outcome level.

Each project has three outputs:

### QI Fund project

Output 1. The institutional structures for the implementation of the Alliance for Product Quality are functional.

Output 2. The relevant actors have jointly developed measures.

Output 3. The range of services offered by the quality infrastructure service providers meets the identified needs of the companies.

### SI project

Output 1. A pool of professional consultants is ready for feasible implementation concepts for complex interventions.

Output 2. Adapted human capacity development formats and quality awareness measures are developed.

Output 3. Competencies of African quality infrastructure service providers to comply with international quality requirements are improved.

From the formulation of these output objectives it becomes clear how closely related the two projects are. Yet, there are also differences. The QI Fund project started six months prior to the other project. Therefore, it was tasked with setting up the institutional structure of the Alliance jointly with GIZ (Output 1). By contrast, the SI project features an output dedicated to awareness raising activities (Output 2) – a type of intervention not foreseen in the QI Fund project. Yet, the most important difference is the size of interventions: The QI Fund project is dedicated to carrying out so-called “small scale interventions” of a value of up to 125,000 EUR. By contrast, the SI project has focused on larger interventions, i.e. those with a volume of 125,000 EUR and more. Both projects have been implemented by the same project team.

## 2. Evaluation of the project

The objective of this evaluation is to provide accountability towards BMZ as funding party and to facilitate learning. The evaluation results will inform the remaining implementation period of the project as well as the design of future PTB projects.

The evaluation methodology consisted of an analysis of documents followed by semi-structured online interviews with 25 stakeholders. The interviews focused on the countries where the bulk of project activities has been carried out, namely on Ethiopia, Ghana, Ivory Coast and Rwanda. While also Tunisia has been an important partner country, it was not covered by the interviews. The reason was that insights on PTB Alliance activities in this country had already been collected during the evaluation of the PTB bilateral Tunisia project that had been conducted by the same evaluator in the previous year. Overall, the quality of data was good.

The six OECD/DAC criteria were used as an evaluation basis for this evaluation:

- Relevance: Is the project doing the right things?
- Coherence: How well does the project fit?
- Effectiveness: Is the project achieving its objectives?
- Impact (higher-level development results): What difference does the project make?
- Efficiency: How well are resources being used?
- Sustainability: Will the results last?

The following marking scale was used for the evaluation:

1	2	3	4	5	6
very successful	successful	successful to a limited extent	rather unsuccessful	mainly unsuccessful	entirely unsuccessful

Overall, the project received the mark “successful” (1.8).

### Relevance

The two projects and its interventions seem to have been well geared towards African and German priorities. The aim of the Alliance to support African countries in keeping up with rising standards and technical regulations can be regarded as a contribution to creating a fair and sustainable global trading system.

The projects’ logframes provided a relatively flexible structure through which support could be designed and carried out in a demand-driven way. All interventions seem relevant to the projects’ direct partner structures. By contrast, the fact that the projects operate from the global level and outside development cooperation frameworks formally negotiated with partner countries means that it cannot be taken for granted that they are also fully embedded in the overall partner country context. However, through its contacts to bilateral PTB and GIZ projects and its good partner relations, the project team successfully managed to mitigate this risk.

The design of the overall Alliance proved not to be fully realistic. Originally, the process of selecting interventions should have been anchored in a multi-stakeholder partnership between BMZ, GIZ, PTB and the private sector. However, the level of interest of companies turned out to be lower than expected. A possible reason is that measures for improving quality infrastructure usually refer to certain economic sectors and, hence, have positive impacts on a relatively concise group of companies, reducing the incentives for companies from different sectors to collaborate. Moreover, companies turned out to be reluctant to identify quality challenges within their supply chain, possibly due to fears of shedding light on their internal problems.

Hence, the original set-up of the Alliance was modified. The secretariat of the Alliance, which was foreseen as a joint office between PTB and GIZ, was set up in a simplified version. Without the tight involvement of companies, interventions were selected in a logic that is very close to that of a typical bilateral PTB project.

Overall, the criterion received the mark “successful” (2.0).

### Coherence

The projects’ interventions have been intertwined with bilateral PTB activities in various ways. In Tunisia, PTB Alliance served as additional source of funding both for partners supported by the bilateral project and for institutions from other sectors. Activities from a bilateral project in Ghana that had ended without direct follow-

up project were taken over by the Alliance projects. In Rwanda and Ivory Coast, there are currently no bilateral PTB projects with which the Alliance projects could have collaborated. In the other four countries, there has been no direct collaboration despite the existence of bilateral PTB projects. Reasons are that bilateral projects either started significantly later, that they have operated in sectors that are not linked to exports and/or because no need for additional support from the Alliance projects was identified. Overall, it appears that the Alliance interventions were fully complementary to bilateral PTB activities. At the same time, the potential for creating real synergies was arguably limited since the types of interventions from Alliance and bilateral projects were, in the end, rather similar.

Collaboration with GIZ turned out to be less than initially foreseen, yet more than is typically the case among PTB and GIZ projects. PTB and GIZ engaged in regular exchanges, both as part of formal regular meetings with BMZ and in the day-to-day context of project implementation. For example, requests for support were on several occasions forwarded. Missions were partly conducted jointly. Yet, the extent to which this coordination led to real collaboration was limited. In the evaluation interviews, the different types of support were mentioned as one reason. While PTB has mainly strengthened the capacities of public institutions, GIZ has focused on supporting companies in getting certifications for voluntary standards. The former certainly facilitates the latter, e.g. when public laboratories are supported in introducing services required for proving compliance with a voluntary standard. Moreover, a company that is certified for voluntary standards also has to comply with technical regulations to be able to effectively access export markets. Still, one can argue that in order to receive certification for voluntary standards (focus of GIZ Alliance), quality infrastructure capacities of public sector institutions (focus of PTB Alliance) are not always needed. Moreover, the timeframe for supporting public quality infrastructure capacities is significantly longer than that of getting companies certified. Therefore, while there certainly is a strong theoretic link between PTB and GIZ support, the potential to collaborate on concrete measures has been less apparent.

While PTB and GIZ Alliance projects have had partly the same indicators, there are no clear indications that this set-up facilitated or incentivized collaborations. The relatively high impact level at which these indicators were formulated might have been one reason.

As global project operating in several countries, the project team did not have the resources to coordinate its interventions directly with other donors. Generally, the project team had to rely on its partners and on knowledge of its consultants and other contacts (esp. bilateral PTB and GIZ projects) for ensuring that its interventions are well aligned with those of other donors.

Overall, the criterion received the mark “successful” (2.0).

## Effectiveness

### I. QI Fund project

Outcome indicator	Justification
1. 10 technical foundations are used for decisions on implementation measures (base value: 0).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current value: 11 (PTB/Worldbank QI-toolkit in Ghana, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Tunisia and Ivory Coast; Study on natural cosmetics &amp; organic cotton; Demand analysis Morocco/Rwanda automotive industry; Demand analysis Ghana heavy metals; Study on textiles in Tunisia; Study on solar sector Tunisia; Demand analysis of cacao testing in Ivory Coast (1).</li> <li>• Expected degree of fulfilment: 100%</li> </ul>
2. 80% of the proposed micro measures have been implemented (base value: 0; target value: 16 of 20).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current value: 15 (QI toolkit in Rwanda, Tunisia and Ivory Coast; E-learning course on pharmaceutical products in Tunisia &amp; Ghana; Pesticide trainings in Ghana and Rwanda; hazardous substances in electrical products in Tunisia; Cable testing for electrical products and CE marking in Tunisia; Certification of East African organic standard and development of the organic</li> </ul>

	<p>market in Rwanda; 3x consulting and accreditation of conformity assessment bodies Ivory Coast.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least one more measure likely be still implemented</li> <li>• Expected degree of fulfilment: 100%</li> </ul>
3. 24 out of 30 European companies confirm, with two examples each, that the product quality of their African suppliers has improved (base value: 0).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current value: 6 of 6 (survey in 12/2023)</li> <li>• Slight objection: indicator is shared among all Alliance projects and, hence, not fully within the sphere of influence of this particular project.</li> <li>• Current degree of fulfilment: 25%; This percentage is expected to increase as companies will be added to the survey by 12/2024, the end date of all projects with this shared indicator.</li> </ul>

## II. SI project

Outcome indicator	Justification
1. Representatives of national product and process conformity assessment bodies confirm that the conformity of African products with standards and mandatory technical regulations has increased by 20%.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current value: increase by 37.5% (survey in 12/2023)</li> <li>• Expected degree of fulfilment: 100%</li> </ul>
2. 80% of complex interventions are implemented in different SI countries and economic sectors (target value: 7 of 9 interventions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current value: 1 (Accreditation of textile testing laboratory in Ethiopia)</li> <li>• 6 ongoing interventions likely to be finalised (Support of the West African accreditation system; Market surveillance of plant protection products Ghana; National accreditation office Rwanda; Testing laboratory for wood and furniture Rwanda; Textile testing laboratory Tunisia; Ecotoxicology and food safety Senegal)</li> <li>• Expected degree of fulfilment: 100%</li> </ul>
3. 24 out of 30 European companies confirm, with one example each, that the product quality of their African suppliers has improved.	See above under QI project

A wider range of interventions were successfully carried out in most countries. In the interviews, partners repeatedly emphasized their high degree of satisfaction. Some external factors (Covid-19; political challenges in Morocco and Egypt) had a negative influence, in particular during the beginning of the projects.

The quality of project management was excellent. The core project team consists of one full-time project coordinator, one part-time project coordinator, two project assistants and one longer-term international consultant. The project coordinators were praised repeatedly by interviewees for their very competent and reliable way in which they have implemented the projects. Numerous other consultants were contracted to implement the activities in the various countries. In Rwanda and Tunisia, local longer-term consultants have coordinated implementation.

The projects have not had a formal steering structure. This was replaced by workshops and other meetings between BMZ, PTB and GIZ. While partner organisations have shown full ownership, they have not had a full

understanding of the overall Alliance, for example of its strategy or of the other interventions. Higher transparency might have given the partner more certainty about the setting in which PTB operates.

Partly, more interlinkages between similar interventions could have been fruitful to strengthen communication and cooperation relationships, both at the level of partners and PTB consultants (e.g. Ghana on testing for pesticide residual and market surveillance for plant protection). To some extent, this is understandable due to the already complex setting which the project coordinators had to manage. However, a first, relatively easy step could have been to bring into contact the different PTB consultants that share the country and/or the sector of intervention.

Only selected Capacity WORKS tools - standard instruments of German Development Cooperation for project management - were used (e.g. stakeholder maps). While this appears appropriate considering the particular features of the projects, it points to the incremental challenges associated with global, fund-like projects. These generally have the advantage of being able to provide additional funding for certain topics (e.g. product quality) or certain countries (e.g. SI countries) relatively quickly. At the same time, such projects are not necessary fully in line with the best practices of development cooperation as set out, for example, in the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. These drawbacks could be mitigated through a participative governance mechanism at the global level. Here, the Alliance had its particular challenges since its multi-stakeholder mechanisms could not be implemented as foreseen (see above under "Relevance"). Hence, the limited relevance of Capacity WORKS tools could also be interpreted critically, as a sign of a certain lack of compatibility with international best practices of development cooperation.

Overall, the criterion received the mark "successful" (1.5).

### **Efficiency**

All in all, the use of financial resources appears very good. The project team has been small, as has been the budget spent on personnel in Germany. While this is laudable in terms of cost savings, it also entails certain risks. Given the complexities of implementing two parallel projects in several countries with numerous partners, reflecting whether more resources should be spent on personnel in Germany seems advisable.

Some delays were encountered. Partly, they were caused by factors outside the project's sphere of influence, especially Covid-19 related delays in identifying interventions towards the beginning of the projects. Partly, the reason for the delays can be found within PTB (lengthy processes for purchasing equipment).

The question of what could have been done differently to improve efficiency is closely related to the overall setting of the Alliance. In some countries, the achieved outputs could possibly have been delivered with fewer resources, if they had been part of regular bilateral PTB activities. This could have improved the so-called "production efficiency". However, the downside of such an approach might have been that such bilateral projects might not have been as flexible and fast to respond to partner needs as the Alliance was.

Allocation efficiency seems very good, too. Their flexibility has allowed the projects to choose the most promising interventions. At the same time, this creates the risk of spreading scarce resources over multiple partners and sectors. Hence, the selection of interventions is very important. While the project team did an excellent job in identifying and selecting interventions, it is interesting to look at alternative selection procedures. One could argue that the results at outcome level could have been further maximized using the same financial resources, if a fund structure with more formal and transparent application procedures had been set up. That way, a bigger pool of potential partners could have been reached. However, given that the PTB field of intervention is relatively small and, in many cases, well known to PTB, the informal selection procedures that have been employed might have been more appropriate.

Overall, the criterion received the mark "successful" (1.5).

### **Impact (higher-level development results)**

Some higher-level development changes can be observed at the level of beneficiaries. Compared to the situation at the start of the project, companies now have an increased range of quality infrastructure services at their disposal (e.g. for textile in Ethiopia; electrical products in Tunisia; pesticide residuals in Ghana). Some of these testing procedures are likely to be also used by companies from other African countries, e.g. the testing for pesticide residuals in Ghana. Laboratories in several West African countries are now able to receive international accreditation through the West African Accreditation System (*Système Ouest Africain d'Accréditation*, SOAC).

Internal factors which have been decisive for achieving the positive impact were the highly competent project coordinators and the already long-standing good relations with some of the partner institutions. Interventions seem to have been well chosen, after thorough analyses of needs and potentials. All partner institutions have shown high ownership for their intervention during the evaluation interviews.

There are no indications that the project contributed to unintended higher-level development changes. It, for example, did not support quality infrastructure service that would benefit only one company, and did not collaborate with private laboratories. By doing so, it did not distort competition.

Overall, the criterion received the mark “successful” (1.8).

### Sustainability

In most interventions, partners have shown clear ownership and have the capacities and structures in place to sustain the results. In a few cases, sustainability seems less clear, mostly due to political risks.

The project team has continuously paid attention to the sustainability of their actions. For example, in the case of accreditation in West Africa, it not only strengthened the capacities of SOAC but also organised trainings for conformity assessment bodies as potential future clients. In Rwanda, it both supported the certification for organic standards and partnered with a local non-governmental organisation to strengthen market demand.

In some cases, collaboration with GIZ could ensure that the capacities of different parts of the quality infrastructure system were strengthened. For example, in the organic cotton process in Ethiopia, GIZ was brought on board in the implementation of an action plan.

Overall, the criterion received the mark “successful” (1.7).

### 3. Learning processes and experiences

Learning processes have been stimulated within each intervention. They were usually steered by a technical expert (international or regional consultant) under supervision of the PTB project team. The project gathered experiences on implementing a fund-like global project that operates flexibly within several countries. This was rather new for PTB. Other (new) experiences include the management of two very similar projects (SI and QI Fund) and the related duplication of certain project management procedures. Moreover, more-in depth collaboration with GIZ has been pursued from which lessons can be drawn for other PTB projects.

### 4. Recommendations

#### Recommendations to the project team:

Even though partners seem to have been very satisfied with their intervention, not all were fully informed about the basics of the projects. To prepare for the approaching end of the projects in full transparency, **discuss with partners the results achieved, the remaining activities and the schedule for the coming months.**

The quality of project management was generally excellent. The only room for improvement concerns the interlinkages among interventions. To fully harness the potentials that a global project has in terms of cross-

country learning and exchanges and to the extent that this is still relevant for the few remaining months, **promote exchanges among partners and experts who work in similar interventions.**

Recommendations to the International Cooperation Department (9.3):

The large number of interventions in different countries and sectors meant that project management was highly complex. In similar future projects, **consider these complexities when allocating personnel resources.** The aim should be to avoid overstressing staff which could, in turn, endanger the quality of project implementation.

**Lengthy processes for purchasing equipment** were repeatedly mentioned by partners as the only negative aspect of project implementation. This appears to be a more systematic challenge within PTB and should **receive attention from the appropriate PTB management level** to further improve the quality of its technical cooperation, of which equipment is an essential part.

**On a possible follow-up project:** Critically evaluate the challenges linked to managing a global project (complex project management; similarities to implementation mode of bilateral PTB projects; operate outside the formal development cooperation framework) in relation to its added value (flexibility; additional budget; collaboration with GIZ). **Together with BMZ and GIZ, reflect what the overall function of a future Alliance should be** (e.g. demand-based and flexible mechanism to respond to partner needs; comprehensive German offer for supporting product quality, or multi-stakeholder mechanism with involvement of companies) and, depending on the outcome of these discussions, **identify an alternative structure** (e.g. fully-fledged fund with formal procedures; PTB internal fund form which bilateral projects could apply for additional funding; closely intertwined bilateral GIZ and PTB projects, etc.).