

JOINT LEARNING FORUM

Evidence That Matters: Evidence-based Development Cooperation in Strategy and Practice

Date and place: November 20, 2025 (all day) at WZB Berlin Social Science Center, Berlin

Organizers: German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA), RWI – Leibniz Institute for Economic Research, German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval), KfW Development Bank with the support of: Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation, WZB Berlin Social Science Center

Background

German development cooperation has a unique opportunity to make every euro count – even in the face of today's global challenges and limited public resources. By grounding decisions on solid scientific evidence, we can consistently maximize effectiveness (“do the right things”) and efficiency (“do things right”). An impact-oriented mindset goes beyond counting participants or tracking their progress. It asks: How would people's lives differ without this intervention? How might alternative designs perform? Counterfactual thinking and scenario analysis help us uncover those insights.

Rigorous impact evaluations create these “what-if” or “no-action” scenarios needed to assess what would happen without an intervention. Together with cost-benefit considerations they can guide scarce resources to the initiatives that deliver the greatest, most sustainable benefits. Together with other forms of scientific evidence, this evidence-based approach informs the setting of political priorities and their implementation by shedding light on potential trade-offs, enabling smarter, more transparent decision-making. Germany already employs valuable evidence-based practices. The next step is to integrate these into a fully systematic, coherent strategy to unlock even greater impact for sustainable development, and to contribute to the reform of German development policy at the nexus of economic development, security, health and environmental challenges, and global partnerships.

Objectives and Format of the Learning Forum

Against this backdrop, GIGA, RWI and Deval invite to a one-day Learning Forum on the use of evidence in German development cooperation. The forum aims to firmly establish evidence-based approaches on the agenda of political decision-makers and to strengthen the dialogue between research and practice. Using concrete examples and current development policy challenges, the event will demonstrate how evidence can be systematically applied to inform and improve decision-making processes.

The day will begin with short impulses from academia and practitioners on the systematic use of evidence and the role of rigorous impact evaluations in German development cooperation. This will be followed by thematic workshops in which policymakers, practitioners, and researchers will exchange ideas based on concrete examples of evidence use in specific sectors including contributions from both research and practice.

The day will conclude with a panel discussion about how evidence can be applied more systematically and effectively in the design and implementation of development cooperation using tangible cases and sectoral examples.

Detailed Program

08.30 – 09.00

Registration

09.00 – 09.15

Opening Remarks

Nicola Fuchs-Schündeln (WZB), Jörg Faust (DEval), Uwe Gehlen (BMZ)
Event moderation: Angelika König (DEval)

09.15 – 09.45

Setting the Scene: Short Impulses from Science and Practice

- Impulses from policy: Katharina Spieß (BMZ), practice: Jochen Kluve (KfW), science: Jann Lay (GIGA)

10.00 – 10.45

Parallel Workshops I

Topic 1: Job Creation and Decent Work

- Lessons learned from rigorous impact evaluations (RIEs) in the Special Initiative “Decent Work for a Just Transition”
- Bernd Beber (RWI), Katharina Fietz (GIGA) and Peter Anti Partey (University of Cape Coast) – Presentation of key findings (15 min)
- Philipp Peters (GIZ), Kirsten Schüttler (GIZ) – Reflections from practice & outlook (15 min)
- Discussion (15 min)
- Chair: Cillian Nolan (J-PAL)

Topic 2: Climate Change and Biodiversity

- Lessons learned from the RIE “Ecological and Socioeconomic Effects of the Forest Restoration Program PLAE in Madagascar”
- Krisztina Kis-Katos (University of Göttingen) – Presentation of key findings (15 min)
- Sebastian Prediger (KfW), Katja Albrecht (GIZ) – Reflections from practice & outlook (15 min)
- Discussion (15 min)
- Chair: Friederike Lenel (PIK)

10.45 – 11.30

Coffee Break with Poster Presentations

11.30 – 12.15

Parallel Workshops II

Topic 3: Digital Education

- Lessons learned from the RIE “Evaluation of a Digital Skills Program for TVET Teachers in Rwanda”
- Rajshri Jayaraman (ESMT) – Presentation of key findings (15 min)
- Katia Halabi (GIZ Rwanda), Salif Jaiteh (IDinsight) – Reflections from practice & outlook (15 min)
- Discussion (15 min)
- Chair: Alisa Buchstab (DEval)

Topic 4: Resilience and Insurance

- Lessons learned on willingness-to-pay for weather insurance and from the RIE “Trigger-based Agricultural Micro Insurance in Vietnam (InsureVietnam)”
- Lukas Mogge (RWI), Kati Krähnert (RWI & Ruhr University Bochum) – Presentation of key insights (15 min)
- Simon Lange (KfW), Pranav Prashad (ILO) – Reflections from practice & outlook (15 min)

- Discussion (15 min)
- Chair: Wiebke Stein (DAAD)

12:15 – 13:15

Lunch Break (posters still on)

13:15 – 14:00

Parallel Workshops III

Topic 5: Peace and Social Cohesion

- RIE designs to promote social cohesion in Lebanon
- Nora Chirikure (WZB), Alex Scacco (WZB) – Presentation of key insights (15 min)
- Lara Azzam (Berghof Foundation, Lebanon), Sheree Kullenberg (IRC) – Reflections from practice & outlook (15 min)
- Discussion (15 min)
- Chair: Tilman Brück (ISDC)

Topic 6: Migration

- Lessons learned from RIEs to address the root causes of migration through development cooperation
- Bernd Beber (RWI) – Presentation of key findings (15 min)
- Marina Manke (Senior Global Advisor on Human Mobility, IOM Staff on Special Leave), Benjamin Wösten (GIZ) – Reflections from practice & outlook (15 min)
- Discussion (15 min)
- Chair: Tobias Heidland (Kiel Institute)

14:00 – 14:30

Coffee Break with Poster Presentations

14:30 – 15:30

Panel Discussion: Systematic Use of Evidence in Development Policy

Panelists will discuss concrete examples of evidence use and reflect on the following guiding questions:

- What are examples of how scientific evidence has informed development policy and practice?
- What role do different forms of evidence play, in particular rigorous impact evaluations?
- How is German development policy positioned? What progress has been made, and how can findings on effectiveness and efficiency be applied more systematically across different decision-making levels?

Panelists:

- Uwe Gehlen (BMZ)
- Macartan Humphreys (WZB)
- Jochen Kluve (KfW)
- Sheree Kullenberg (IRC)
- Maxie Sievert (RWI)

Moderator:

- Angelika König (DEval)

15:30 – 15:45

Concluding Remarks

- Martin Bruder (DEval)
- Jann Lay (GIGA)

This event is supported by the



Federal Ministry
for Economic Cooperation
and Development

Poster Presentations

- The SME Loop to unlock SME's potential? Evidence from a randomised controlled trial in Benin, Thomas Eekhout, C4ED
- Amidst Sahel's Unrest : Malian refugees and rural households in Niger, Fatou Fall, RWI-Leibniz Institute for Economic Research
- When Humanitarian Assistance Fades Out: Experimental Evidence from a Nationwide Program in Lebanon, Jonathan Garcia, Humboldt University of Berlin, IGZ
- Measuring Reforestation Success with Very-High-Resolution Satellite Imagery: Evidence from the PLAE Project in Madagascar, Tobias Hellmundt, Georg-August Universität Göttingen
- Designing Effective Reforestation Projects: Evidence from a Discrete Choice Experiment in Madagascar, Nicolas Klas, Georg-August Universität Göttingen
- Land certification and forest restoration. Evidence from the PLAE program in Madagascar, Zaneta Kubik, Georg-August Universität Göttingen
- Is proximity to aid projects shaping individual borrowing activity? Insights from Mali, Anna Mader, Georg-August Universität Göttingen, Humboldt Universität Berlin
- Barriers to the effectiveness of Farmer Field Schools in a challenging context: evidence from Madagascar, Giulia Malevolti, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK)
- Role of EdTech on foundational numeracy and literacy for children with functional difficulties: Experimental evidence from Kenya, Frank Odhiambo, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen
- Examining the impact of inclusive TVET classes as a tool to enhance social cohesion among refugee and host communities: Evidence from Ethiopia, Armin von Schiller, IDOS- German Institute of Development and Sustainability
- Rigorous Impact Evaluation of Business Games in Zambia, Regina Schnars, German Institute for Global and Area Studies
- The Local Impact of Global Assistance: Sub-national Evidence linking Aid and FDI, Laura Wedemeyer, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen
- Wrong Fit, Missed Gains? Evidence from Skill Training Choices in Liberia, Juliane Zenker, DIW Berlin