



Zentrum für Entwicklungsforschung
Center for Development Research
University of Bonn

Introduction to working group 2:
Quality of collaboration
- ZEF's perspective -

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Workshop on
Scientific Cooperation with Developing Countries –
The Swiss Guidelines and their Implementation
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The Uzbekistan Project:
Economic and Ecological
Restructuring of Land- and
Water Use in the Khorezm
Region

The GLOWA Volta Project:
Sustainable Water Use under
Changing Land Use, Rainfall
Reliability, and Water
Demands in the Volta Basin

The CoCE Project:
Conservation and Use of
Wild Populations of *Coffea
arabica* in the Montane
Rainforests of Ethiopia



Quality of collaboration

1. General prerequisites for improving the quality of collaboration
2. Transparency in project management
3. Building of mutual trust
4. Organization of communication



1. General prerequisites for improving the quality of collaboration

Mental

- Mutual understanding that project partners (incl. project coordinators/leaders) are in the same playing field and on the same stage
- There has to be chemistry between the project partners
- Partners develop ownership of the project



1. General prerequisites for improving the quality of collaboration

Organizational

- Appointment of a German and a local project coordinator
- Long-term commitments (ZEF's major projects: 7-12 years)



1. General prerequisites for improving the quality of collaboration

Conceptual

- Interaction with stakeholders also improves the understanding of the needs and requirements of research partners
- Building of a network of potential partners (e.g. ZEF alumni network)

Transparency in project management



2. Transparency in project management

Management issues

- Project plan as common platform for all project members
- Project proposal and annual reports are available for everybody (on web page).
- Binding agreements (Memorandum of Understanding)
- Important management decisions are made involving all partners
- Management decisions are explained to make sure that they are understood by all project members



2. Transparency in project management

Financial issues

- Budgets are transparent to leading project members
- Distribution of financial resources according to the project plan
- Budget decisions are NOT taken by all project partners, but by the project leader and the main collaborating party in the developing country
- Demand-driven financial transparency: justification of spendings on demand



2. Transparency in project management

Communication

- Regular staff meetings are held in Germany and in the study region
- Meeting protocols are shared
- Meeting of working groups to outline project goals and time line

Building of mutual trust

3. Building of mutual trust

Project preparation and planning

- Mutual trust depends on "advance investment" (already funded preparatory phase)
- Planning and realizing the project with former partners or ex-students (trust emerges from the experienced quality of collaboration)
- Visit of project partners in the study region during initial planning phase
- Project goals were defined together (writing is trustfully in one hand)



3. Building of mutual trust

Project implementation

- Permanent presence of a full-time German project coordinator in the study region
- Frequent visits of the German project coordinator to offices of partners
- Continuous presence of German scientist in the study region (no “safari-science”)
- Short and long-term stays of partners in Germany (exchange of scientists)
- Training of project members

3. Building of mutual trust

Research

- Strong focus on doing research with doctoral students from the study region
- "Tandem system" for doctoral students (one from Germany / one from cooperating institute in the study region)

Organization of communication



4. Organization of communication

Individual

- Face-to-face contacts
- (German) project coordinator promotes communication
- (German) project coordinator asks for feedback from partners
- Regular extended visits of senior project members



4. Organization of communication

Meetings

- Regular staff meetings are held in Germany and in the study region
- Meeting protocols are shared
- Workshops, conferences and status seminars conducted alternately in Germany and in the study region



4. Organization of communication

Infrastructure

- Establishment of communication infrastructure (telephone, fax, and computers with email and internet access) in the local project office
- All project partners have access to central data bases



4. Organization of communication

External

- Writing of joint papers
- Web page, flyers, events, etc. (with professional support and input: good researchers are not necessarily good communicators!)

Questions



1. Transparency in project management

Questions

- Should all partners have the same rights (and duties) in decision making regarding project management and budget?
- What are efficient ways to make project issues transparent?



2. Building of mutual trust

Questions

- How should potential project partners be approached?
- What can be done to build up mutual trust in the preparatory phase of the project?
- What can be done to build up mutual trust during project implementation?
- Which formal structures in a project help to build up mutual trust?



3. Organization of communication

Questions

- Are there cultural differences in how to communicate project issues?
- Are there cultural differences in what should be communicated?
- Which formal rules in a project facilitate communication?



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Thank you for your attention!