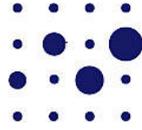




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VolkswagenStiftung

Report

„Workshop on Scientific Cooperation with Developing Countries – The Swiss Guidelines and their Implementation”

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BUHL-BÖHNERT • Partnerschaftsgesellschaft für
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1. Introduction

The two-day-workshop was initiated and financed by the Volkswagen Foundation and organized by the Centre for Development Research (ZEF). More than 90 researchers from all continents were invited to share their experience in scientific cooperation. The *Guidelines for Research in Partnership with Developing countries* (also referred to as "*The Swiss Guidelines*") served as a point of reference for the choice of the four topics that were covered in the course of the event:

1. *Project Development*
2. *Quality of Collaboration*
3. *Increase of Research and Management Capacity*
4. *Application and Dissemination of Output*

This report gives a brief overview on the results of the workshop focusing on the challenges and suggestions identified by participants.

2. Procedure

Prof. Dr. Urs Wiesmann delivered the first keynote-address on "*The Swiss Guidelines*". Prof. Dr. Misana then presented "*A Southern View*" on scientific cooperation, followed by Prof. Dr. Gerhard Glatzel who complemented the introduction with "*A Northern View*".

Two of the topics mentioned above (*Project Development* and *Quality of Collaboration*) were then introduced by speakers chosen prior to the event. The following process was facilitated by four professional moderators.

First, participants assigned themselves to one of four working groups (WGs). In each WG, researchers split up into sub-groups (SGs) that were to work on an issue (sub-item) related to *Project Development* or *Quality of Collaboration*. Their task was to identify

- experiences,
- suggestions for improvement and
- ideas for application

regarding the respective sub-items. The results were then presented in the respective WGs using pin-boards provided by the moderators. Participants were then given coloured moderation-dots and asked to rate the sub-items in respect to their importance (votes for priority) and in respect to their applicability (easy to apply vs. difficult to apply). The synthesised results of the WGs were finally presented by the moderators in the plenary, so that all participants could discuss both topics.

This process was repeated on the second day of the workshop, covering the remaining topics (*Increase of Research and Management Capacity* and *Application and Dissemination of Output*).

3. Workshop Results - Summary

According to the author's impression, WS participants generally shared the common understanding that the *Swiss Guidelines* provide a good basic orientation for scientific cooperation.

Nevertheless, discussions also revealed a need for differentiation. Experiences differed depending on the constellations of co-operating partners (north-south and west-east) and on the degree of appliance of the respective scientific approach (more or less appliance-oriented). Also, research projects may differ in their disciplinary setting (mono-, inter-, multi- or trans disciplinary) and in their duration. Different cultural, political and economic frameworks contribute to the need for differentiated advice on how to approach scientific co-operation.

In order to achieve results that are potentially helpful in future projects, the working groups focused on specific topics stemming from the *Swiss Guidelines*. Participants contributed their personal experiences and suggestions for future collaborations.

The results imply that the *beginning of a project* may be critical for success. A number of participants suggested to conduct pre-project / pre-application phases. This implies that donors may have to allocate appropriate funding to that end. Pre-project phases may foster a systematic preparation including measures such as needs-assessment (e.g. for capacity building), trust-building and acquiring relevant local knowledge.

Another set of feedback referred to the importance of *face-to-face exchange* (e.g. meetings, trainings, workshops, conferences, etc.). Personal meetings may be especially important in project development phases and boost the quality of cooperation.

Overall, participants stressed the demand for *local knowledge*. The success of scientific cooperation may heavily depend on the quality and quantity of available information on relevant local players (stakeholders, partners, etc.), on institutions (structure, networks, hierarchies) and on local expertise, needs and agendas. Last but not least, good co-operation also relies on awareness of cultural differences.

Critical voices raised during the plenary discussions mentioned that the complexity of project reality challenged the application of the *Swiss Guidelines*. They argued that basic objectives and expectations are often incompatible with partners that are unequal economically and with regards to their competence.

There were also different views on responsibilities, outcomes and results. Who are the beneficiaries of the research and who takes care of managing responsibilities? Some of these questions highlighted the importance of an ongoing dialog within the scientific community. Participants were thankful that the *Workshop on Scientific Co-operation* provided an opportunity for exchange, reducing the isolation of scientific communities.

The Workshop reminded everyone that all sides contribute to the success of scientific co-operation. Researchers contribute with the immense effort joint proposals imply, donors and their referees contribute with a state-of-the-art selection process.

4. Working Group Results

4.1 Project Development (WG 1a and 1b)

Speaker: Dr. Andrea Behrends

Moderators: Dr. Elke Böhnert, Thomas Buhl-Böhnert

Priority	Sub-Item	Votes
1	Joint Project Planning	18
2	Decision on Objectives	7
3	Contacting / Selection of Partners	6
4	Identification and Inclusion of Stakeholders	3
5	Project monitoring	2
Total		36

There are issues that were raised in both WGs (1a and 1b), and mentioned throughout almost all of the respective sub-items:

- The importance of planning and funding of pre-project phases
- The need for improvement of personal exchange (e.g. meetings, trainings, workshops)
- A demand for local knowledge (on institutions, networks, people, expertise, agendas, culture)

4.1.1 Joint Project Planning (Ownership)

Even so participants reported "basically good experiences", they also identified several challenges when trying to plan projects jointly:

- Differing expectations and assumptions regarding the process, depending on the regional and disciplinary background of partners
- Lack of funds before the project begins
- Handling high expectations in the face of limited funds
- A lack of transparency and differing interests regarding the distribution of funds

Many participants (14) rated providing full transparency regarding funds as being *difficult to apply*, whereas defining roles through MoU were considered to be easy to apply.

Challenge		Suggestion
differing expectations / assumptions	... regarding the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoU defining responsibilities, aiming at equitable sharing • standardized agreements
	... regarding funds: (lack of transparency)	Provide funds for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pre-proposal mechanism • early stage joint meeting between partners + partners / partners + donors • ongoing donor + project coordination

4.1.2 Decision on Objectives

Decide on objectives together – that is the first principle of the *Swiss Guidelines*. The participant's experience on the ground suggests that there may be difficulties in implementing this ideal principle due to a set of obstacles:

- The donor's agenda determine the objectives
- Decision making is biased by hierarchy (e.g. professors, political agendas)
- There is an asymmetry between the partners (regarding the fit of interests / motivation and calls for proposal, resources such as time and money, knowledge of "project lyrics")

Nevertheless, some raised the question whether or not deciding together is of high importance. According to some voices, the origin of a proposal is not important as long as it's content is acceptable. The challenge may be to identify agendas that are meaningful to all sides.

Challenge		Suggestion
identifying a meaningful agenda	donors determine agenda	involve <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local expertise, • local scholars, • local government at an early stage
	lack of know-how concerning proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide longer call periods • provide training (professional application) • fund pilot phases

4.1.3 Contacting / Selecting Partners

Participant's experience seems to be that it is difficult to identify potential partners due to

- the lack of time,
- the lack of possibilities for face-to-face contact,
- the lack of knowledge on institutions and
- fluctuating personnel.

The issue of partners being imposed was also raised and participants discussed the advantages and disadvantages of alumni-networks as means of identifying potential partners. One SG stated that "western" science networks seem to be neglecting the "southern" networks. The impression that scientific communities are isolated from each other was also shared in WG3 (*Increase of Research / Management Capacity*, see 3.3) and may be the overall challenge when trying to identify partners for international research projects.

Participants made several suggestions on how to improve the process of contacting and selecting partners:

Challenge		Suggestion
isolation of science communities	lack of knowledge on institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide information on potential partners / associations / alumnia / networks (e.g. database) • involve local institutions in the selection procedure • go beyond science networks (e.g. embassies, GTZ, ...) • offer mentoring programs
	lack of possibilities for contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offer short term-grants for pilot phases • organize workshops involving institutions in needs assessment and theme development

4.1.4 Identification and Inclusion of Stakeholders

Overall, this sub-item seems to raise a number of questions:

- What exactly is meant by "stakeholders"? (scientific and academic partners and / or beneficiaries of the research?)
- What is to be done when partner's interests and expectations concerning stakeholders differ?
- How can relevant stakeholders be identified?
- (How) can / must stakeholders be motivated?
- What if they emerge in the process?

Challenge		Suggestion
inclusion of stakeholders	differing expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-country intermediaries • Cultural brokers
	identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide funds for pre-project phase • Identification in the life of the project
	motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stakeholder workshops + meetings • MoU between project and stakeholders
	unexpected emergence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • include space for "hidden" stakeholders

Participants of one SG suggested to "recognize power-relations" and to consider "the primacy of democratic / accountable power". The other SG added the aims of "maximal stakeholder involvement" and "demand-driven" projects. All of these suggestions were clearly rated as being difficult to apply.

4.1.5 Project Monitoring

Participants identified "capacity building in project management" as a major issue. Overall, the output of the WGs may suggest that the implementation of project monitoring could be improved.

Challenge		Suggestion
improvement of monitoring	balancing Monitoring and Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assure manageable project size • provide funds for monitoring
	consistency in project evaluation (beginning → end)	<p>Improve communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • framework / standards for monitoring including clear evaluation criteria • training of reporting system • improvement of infrastructure • in-country monitoring • Joint reports

4.2 Quality of Collaboration (WG 2a and 2b)

Speaker: Prof. Dr. Paul Vlek

Moderators: Renate Tonecker-Bös, Matthieu Kollig

Priority	Sub-Item	Votes
1	Building up Trust / Personal Relations	27 + 8 = 35
2	Organization of Communication	14 + 3 = 17
3	Transparency in project management	10 + 5 = 15
Total		67

There are issues that were raised in both WGs (2a and 2b), and mentioned throughout almost all of the respective sub-items: Hierarchies and cultural differences seem to regularly challenge the quality of collaboration. Face-to-face meetings are considered vital agents for success.

4.2.1 Building up Trust / Personal Relations

The respective SGs independently found that personal relations are of high importance when it comes to establishing and sustaining mutual trust. One SG suggested building on already existing relationships by sequencing projects into partnership programs. If trust has yet to be established, however, it may be advisable to first build personal trust and then move on to institutional trust. The SGs also pointed at possible challenges of building personal relations:

- hierarchies ("easier to trust if on the same level in institutions")
- differing interests
- cultural differences
- institutional instability
- resources for regular face-to-face meetings

Challenge		Suggestion
build trust	hierarchies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify key persons
	differing interests, cultural differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impose a proper communication strategy* • understand and respect cultural background* • use workshops creatively • create a private atmosphere • let ideas drive partnerships, not donors
	instability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ?
	resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plan and fund 3 face-to-face meetings of core-partners per year (workshops, conferences, private meetings, ...) • guarantee financial and administrative procedures

* this suggestion was rated as being difficult to apply by many participants

4.2.2 Organization of Communication

One SG stated that "communication is key". The foundation of effective communication may be mutual trust. SGs pointed at possible challenges of organizing communication:

- hierarchies (both vertical and horizontal)
- language
- differing skills and capacities
- technology (e.g. internet access)
- cultural difference and potential conflicts

Challenge		Suggestion
effective communication	hierarchies*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify decision makers • allocate responsibility for flow of communication
	language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify appropriate project language • offer language courses
	skills, capacities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop strategy for information management • donor should require such a strategy • provide space for discussion of internal project matters
	technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • funding • cell-phones as an alternative / supplement to internet • improvement of internet access
	cultural difference, conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • external moderators, coaches, mediators • face-to-face meetings • extensive preparation • neutral meeting ground

* this issue was rated as being particularly challenging

4.2.3 Transparency in project management

The results may allow the conclusion that transparency depends on

- personal contact,
- rules and regulations and
- on the participation of all relevant parties.

Obviously, all measures need appropriate funding (overheads) that should be considered when planning a project. One SG pointed at hierarchies possibly hampering transparency. Transparency may include information on

- funds,
- processes,
- regulations,
- responsibilities (e.g. authorship) and
- (institutional) structures.

Challenge		Suggestion
assure transparency	participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> involve donor (e.g. transmit donor's rules to all project members, participation in meetings, workshops etc.) involve shareholders involve institutions be aware of possible influence of hierarchies
	rules and regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establish rules and regulations early write protocols training / information on rules and regulations
	personal contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish personal trust early appoint double co-ordinators run pre-projects regular meetings

4.3 Increase of Research and Management Capacity (WG 3a and 3b)

Speaker: Prof. Ute Fischer-Zujkov

Moderators: Renate Tonecker-Bös, Matthieu Kollig

Priority	Sub-Item	Votes
1	Sustainability of Research Capacity	16
2	Education and Capacity Building as Part of the Project	12
3	Knowledge Management	6
Total		34

There are issues that were raised in several independent SGs and mentioned throughout almost all of the respective sub-items:

- the need infra-structural capacity building seems to often be encountered
- human capacity building is challenged by brain-drain
- capacity building should be considered at an early stage (proposal)

4.3.1 Sustainability of Research Capacity

Participants suggested to differentiate three kinds of capacity building:

- human
- infra-structural
- institutional

They also discussed the difference between capacity building and application. Both SGs working on this item identified brain-drain as a challenge – underlining the relevance of this issue. The table below depicts both SG's suggestions regarding brain-

drain. Knowledge on the local framework was identified as a condition for sustainability of research capacity.

Challenge		Suggestion
assure sustainability	funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider capacity building in application
	infra-structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve access to internet establish regional institutional networks
	brain-drain, scientist's status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> offer return fellowship establish alumni-networks* provide sabbaticals increase scientist's status

* this suggestion was rated as being easy to apply

4.3.2 Education and Capacity Building as Part of the Project

Participant's experience pointed mainly at challenges to education and capacity building as part of research projects.

- language (especially English in the New Independent States)
- isolation of and differences between scientific communities
- brain-drain
- lack of funding

Challenge		Suggestion
incorporate education and capacity building	language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> language courses
	isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve access to online-sources long-term commitment create opportunity for interaction respect different research traditions*
	brain-drain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sandwich-programs re-integration* follow-up programs*
	funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> apply for / provide funds aimed at education and capacity building needs assessment and capacity building plans for target insitutions

* this suggestion was rated as being difficult to apply

4.3.3 Knowledge Management

The SGs independently identified property and privacy rights as a major challenge. Participants raised questions such as

- who profits from sharing knowledge?
- how may results be transferred into manageable amounts of data?
- what are the target groups of results (academia / public)?

The major obstacles to efficient knowledge-management seemed to be

- a lack of funding
- a lack of time
- legal questions

The discussion focused mainly on the handling of data (process, infra-structure, legal issues) as depicted in the table below.

Challenge		Suggestion
data-handling	process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agree on rules and regulations • systematic consideration of data management from project-onset • regular research briefings
	infra-structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify appropriate language • mirror-storage of data • include dissemination issues in proposals • Training courses in data-handling* • provide more (research) resources (time, funding)*
	legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • legal questions must be cleared from project-onset*

* this suggestion was rated as being difficult to apply

4.4 Application and Dissemination of Output (WG 4a and 4b)

Speaker: Bettina Koelle

Moderators: Dr. Elke Böhnert, Thomas Buhl-Böhnert

Priority	Sub-Item	Votes	
1	Sustainability of Research Output	3 + 9 =	12
2	Identification and Inclusion of Stakeholders	4 + 4 =	8
3	Identification of Output in a Policy-relevant Fashion	4 + 1 =	5
4	Joint Publishing	1 + 1 =	1
Total			26

One issue was raised in both WGs (4a and 4b), and mentioned throughout almost all of the respective sub-items: The identification and inclusion of stakeholders. Even so participants exchanged many ideas regarding this issue, it may be worthwhile assessing if there is a need for further elaboration.

4.4.1 Sustainability of Research Output

The results of WG4 suggests that this sub-item is closely linked to project-management and to the inclusion of stakeholders (see 4.2 and 1.4). All the same, some participants stated that the "duration of [a] project depends on [the] needs for sustainability". Also, five participants agreed that reflecting "one's own incentives" and trying to find a "common ground with colleagues and stakeholders" may be easy to achieve. One SG suggested to differentiate three kinds of output:

- academic
- applied
- public

Fostering sustainability of research output may thus depend on the fit of the respective strategies.

Challenge		Suggestion
Sustainability of Output	project-management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define indicators • Reflect early on long-term perspective • Provide for long-term monitoring (e.g. ex-post monitoring by peers) • establish follow-up projects
	Inclusion of stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on benefits for beneficiaries • Bring outputs into institutions or into outcomes • Pay attention to local governance structures

4.4.2 Identification and Inclusion of Stakeholders

Participants of WG4 considered this sub-item quite important when it comes to the application and dissemination of output. They also reported experiences with different ways of identification. The appropriate method may depend on the respective project and on the local context (culture, politics, economy).

Challenge		Suggestion
Inclusion of stakeholders*	<i>Differing expectations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>In-country intermediaries</i> - <i>Cultural brokers</i>
	<i>Identification</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Provide funds for pre-project phase</i> - <i>Identification in the life of the project</i> • Stakeholder Analysis (review of involvement, relationship, documentation) • "inherit" • public administration • personal relationship • mono / multi-level
	<i>Motivation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>stakeholder workshops + meetings</i> - <i>MoU between project and stakeholders</i> - <i>payment</i> - <i>participation in defining deliverables</i>
	<i>Unexpected emergence</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>include space for "hidden" stakeholders</i> - <i>provide opportunities for changing stakeholders</i>

* - *italic output = from WG1*

4.4.3 Identification of Output in a Policy-relevant Fashion

SG4b discussed the title of this sub-item and agreed to add: "for Decision-makers". This may reflect the finding that it is not always the objective of a project to identify output in a policy-relevant fashion. One SG reported that research objectives often determine policy impact. Another SG pointed at the risk of project over-flooding and therefore suggested to improve communication between projects. Participants identified two issues that they considered hard to change:

- Informing policy-makers internationally ("North – South")
- The co-ordination of funding agencies and development agencies

The suggestions put forward by WG4 can be divided into two categories: Suggestions concerning the identification of policy makers and suggestions concerning policy-relevant skills.

Challenge		Suggestion
Policy-relevant Output	identification of policy makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> involve policy makers in the process of stakeholder identification and monitoring Assure early knowledge on institutional landscape and necessary resources (time, funds) Get in contact with intermediaries (media, civil society, senior scientists, NGOs)
	policy-relevant skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide adequate resources (funds, time, training, workshops, policy-briefs) Select key-recommendations Raise curiosity through not-problem-oriented outputs

4.4.4 Joint Publishing

Participants mentioned the benefits of joint publishing such as the "enhanced quality through synthesis of results" and reaching a wider audience. One issue raised was that the science community may not place enough value on joint authorship. A range of obstacles seem to hinder joint publishing. They can be separated into two major themes:

- The need for co-ordination with researchers from other disciplines and countries (e.g. choice of journal, 1st authorship, timing, format, copyright)
- The lack of publishing infrastructure (e.g. number and value of interdisciplinary journals, number of qualified reviewers).

Challenge		Suggestion
Joint Publishing	need for co-ordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training in writing provide information on publishers <p>Agree on guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> journal envisaged regulations for 1st authorship? (e.g. primary researcher) clear timeline responsibilities
	publishing infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise scoring system (promotion) Establish interdisciplinary journals Establish networks of peer reviewers