

Guidelines for Remote Evaluation

From practice for practice

Discussion Paper of the Subgroup on Remote Evaluation of the
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ADH: Aktion Deutschland Hilft (Germany's Relief Coalition)

AA: Federal Foreign Office

DEval: German Development Cooperation Evaluation Institute

GIZ: German Society for International Cooperation

A previous version of this paper was circulated and discussed at the spring conference of the Working Group on Development Policy and Humanitarian Aid in June 2021 and at a meeting in September 2021. To wrap up, it will be presented to the working group at the spring conference in 2022.

With approximately 600 persons and institutions, the **Working Group on Development Policy and Humanitarian Aid (AK-Epol-HuHi) of the Evaluation Society (DeGEval)** is the forum in Germany and Austria that is open to all persons and institutions involved in the evaluation of programs in the fields of development cooperation, stabilization and humanitarian aid, and serves as a knowledge-sharing platform on current developments and problems. Participants include ministries (BMZ, GFFO), governmental implementing organizations such as KfW and GIZ, NGOs, political foundations, universities, research institutions, consultancies and freelance evaluators.

The Working Group on Development Policy and Humanitarian Aid aims to build a bridge between policy, theory and practice in an ongoing dialogue and to contribute to improving evaluations in development cooperation and humanitarian aid.

Cover image: Jens Koy, Uganda, 2016. A self-help group discussion. How can such impressions be captured in remote or semi-remote evaluations? More on this in this paper.

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List of abbreviations

AK-Epol-HuHi	Working Group on Development Policy and Humanitarian Aid
CBM	Christoffel Mission for the Blind
COVID-19	Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2
DeGEval	Society for Evaluation
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für international Zusammenarbeit (German development agency)
IPDET	International Program for Development Evaluation Training
NGO	Non-governmental organization
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PTB	Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt Braunschweig and Berlin
SMS	Short Message Service
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

1 Introduction

Until 2019, remote evaluations were mainly used in countries with fragile contexts and in projects involving multiple countries and continents. With the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the number of on-site trips by international and national evaluators decreased significantly, while the number of remote evaluations in the field of development cooperation and humanitarian aid increased considerably. Since 2020, many evaluators, organizations, institutions and research institutes have been working on improving their approach to remote evaluations.

When considering the term 'remote evaluation', the word 'remote' is used "to refer to an activity that is done away from the place where it usually happens, especially by means of technology". In the context of evaluations, the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) uses the following definition: Remote and semi-remote evaluations refer to "'remote' evaluations without on-site evaluation teams, or 'semi-remote' evaluations with only national evaluators on site". The terms in the following guidelines will also be used in this sense. In principle, the term 'remote evaluation' also includes the term semi-remote evaluation. In cases where it might be unclear whether both forms, i.e. semi-remote and remote evaluation, are meant, we have used the formulation (semi-)remote evaluation.

The experience gained before and during the COVID-19 pandemic suggests that remote and semi-remote evaluations, or the techniques and procedures introduced with them, will continue to be used after the pandemic, as they do have advantages. Advantages include the integration of further digital communication and survey instruments into the standard repertoire for evaluations, greater use of national evaluators and a contribution to environmental protection due to fewer flights and business trips. Last but not least, remote evaluations demonstrated the need for well-trained evaluation competencies and systems in partner countries, as new roles had to be filled and, with this, the growing importance of Evaluation Capacity Development (ECD).

These guidelines, which were produced by the Remote Evaluation Working Group of the Working Group on Development Policy and Humanitarian Aid (AK-Epol-HuHi) of the Evaluation Society (DeGEval), summarizes new experiences with remote evaluations in the German-speaking context. This paper is intended as a practical guide for evaluators and clients, providing recommendations based on the requirements of governmental, private and civil society clients in German-speaking countries. The guide does not replace an introduction to the methodological procedure of evaluations, but supplements knowledge and experience on the procedure of remote and semi-remote evaluations. It builds on the methodological principles, i.e. the DeGEval standards for evaluation and the experience of evaluations with field visits by internationally active evaluators. The guidelines are divided into the following chapters:

Chapter 2: Prerequisites, Strengths and Weaknesses. This chapter identifies the preconditions under which remote evaluations can be conducted. Fundamental strengths and weaknesses of remote evaluation are identified.

Chapter 3: Experiences and recommendations for applications in practice. Chapter 3 describes experiences in conducting remote evaluations from the perspective of both commissioners and evaluators. The structure corresponds to the process of an evaluation, and begins with planning, then executing and continues on to reporting and finally the implementation process.

Chapter 4: Outlook. The final chapter looks in particular at how capacities can be strengthened and how the usefulness of evaluations could be increased through remote elements.

The experiences of the colleagues involved in the working group have been incorporated into the present paper (see p. 2). In addition, papers on remote evaluations conducted by international and development policy organizations (including PTB, GIZ and CBM) as well as information provided by the international professional discourse were reviewed (see the bibliography in the appendix). In view of the rapidly developing debate on remote evaluations, the working group is aware that it is not possible to provide an exhaustive summary of all the important elements. The final chapter provides an outlook on topics that are likely to come into focus in 2022.

These guidelines are to be updated and supplemented on a regular basis. This will be carried out by the editorial team of the 'Remote Evaluation' working group, which welcomes recommendations and constructive criticism. These can be submitted to the AK-Epol-HuHi, which will pass on information accordingly ('ak-epol-huhi@degeval.org').

2 Prerequisites, Strengths and Weaknesses

This chapter provides an overview of the requirements, strengths and weaknesses of remote evaluations. The aim of the chapter is to give commissioners and evaluators a quick overview of the possible uses of remote evaluations.

Prerequisites for conducting remote evaluations:

- It is indispensable to have access to the target groups or the relevant stakeholder groups on the ground via e-mail addresses, cell phone numbers and other digital communication channels (e.g. Skype, Facebook). This can either be a direct contact or via reachable persons who are in contact with the actual target groups (e.g. a technically skilled person who can support others in handling cell phones).
- The technical requirements must be met, e.g. Internet access, cell phone reception. These differ depending on the tools chosen (see also 3.3.6): Some require more complex technologies, others less so.
- The target groups and other stakeholders must have the necessary skills to carry out the respective survey method (e.g. a certain technical affinity and level of literacy for an online questionnaire).
- The target groups need to be willing to engage in remote data collection. This depends, among other things, on the relationship the persons have with the respective project/program (object of evaluation).
- The context and the topic must be suitable for a remote evaluation. There are very sensitive topics where personal contact seems necessary (e.g. traumatized persons). In addition, some topics are less suitable for remote investigations, such as biodiversity surveys.
- If the evaluation is semi-remote, it must be checked whether the security of the national evaluator can be guaranteed on site (e.g. in fragile contexts).

Particular **strengths** of remote evaluations:

- In the case of global, regional and national projects where not all parts of the project can or should be visited (for example, if the measures taken at the field level are too small), a remote evaluation has the advantage that several components of the project can be included on an equal footing. Compared to field visits, interviews can be conducted at a broader regional level.
- Data can still be collected in areas that cannot be visited by evaluators for security reasons (e.g. due to conflicts or epidemics).

- If the target group has good access to the internet or cell phones (survey e.g. via SMS, call center or internet-based questionnaires), more people and more diverse groups of people can be reached.
- Remote evaluations are a good complement to surveys on the ground. In programs that operate in many locations, for example, two on-site case studies and two remote case studies can be carried out and, if necessary, further questionnaire surveys and interviews can be conducted independently of location.
- Evaluators have more time flexibility to make appointments with people in the field.
- Data collection can be iterative. Compared to the data collection process in the field, which is often very compressed, the data collection period can be extended. Participants can be contacted several times as knowledge of the evaluation topic is continuously broadened and refined.
- Evaluation participants can also be continuously involved in other steps of the process, such as data analysis, interpretation of results or in the participatory development of recommendations.
- By eliminating the need to organize air travel, accommodation and local transport, logistical efforts for the evaluators and for the people involved in the project can be minimized. Travel costs are reduced or eliminated.
- Significantly reduced flights and travel translate to a contribution to CO2 reduction and environmental protection.
- National and international evaluators are able to take on more clearly defined role with a potentially higher level of responsibility in remote evaluation and can work more as an equal team. The role of national evaluators tends to be strengthened if, for example, they are solely responsible for the survey in the field.

Weaknesses and challenges of remote evaluations:

- Increased coordination of remote interviews can lead to additional work.
- The lack of personal presence can make it more difficult to establish a trusting and confidential atmosphere for discussion.
- International evaluators are not able to assess the project situation on the ground with their own eyes; it is difficult to gain an impression of the local conditions.
- If the above requirements are not met, e.g. telephone and internet connections to the survey areas are poor or do not work at all, it becomes (almost) impossible to conduct the surveys.

- Lack of access to the necessary technology can lead to the exclusion of groups and to an imbalance in the data or a one-sided presentation, which must be taken into account in the evaluation.
- The exchange of perspectives between evaluators (South and North with different professional backgrounds and perhaps different genders) may be limited. International evaluators may be less able to contribute their specific professional expertise as they do not have the opportunity to make observations in the field, ask their own questions and work with their own methods.

3 Challenges and recommendations for the practical implementation

This chapter covers experiences in conducting remote evaluations from the perspective of clients and evaluators. The content is divided into challenges and practical recommendations. The respective questions are:

- **Challenge** | What is different in each process step of conducting a remote evaluation compared to evaluations with on-site visits by international evaluators? What are the specific challenges of this process step in remote evaluations?
- **Practical recommendation** | What experiences and solutions are there for dealing with the remote challenges and special features of this process step? What practical recommendations can be given?
- **Reports from the field** | Which examples (without details of country and project) illustrate experiences and approaches particularly well? Which tools are particularly suitable?

3.1 Preparation and tendering

Challenge | The commissioning party often expects that evaluators can uncover critical situations in remote evaluations to the same extent as in evaluations involving field visits. For example, it is assumed that evaluators can also check the thoroughness, accuracy and consistency of monitoring data remotely. However, this is only possible to a limited extent or with a great deal of effort in the case of non-digital data.

Practical recommendation | During the preparatory phase, the commissioning parties should clarify internally in more detail which critical points in particular they would like to be focused on in the remote evaluation (e.g. a separate analysis of the monitoring data) and take this into account accordingly in the time allotted.

Challenge | During the preparation and tendering phase, communication between the tendering body and other stakeholders in the evaluation (project staff, target groups) is often insufficient when it comes to the possibilities and limitations of digital tools. There are often unrealistic expectations. It is expected that the evaluators will arrive at the same findings as in face-to-face evaluations, despite the geographical distance to the object of evaluation and to the evaluation participants. However, the same sharp-eyed analytical and critical approach is not always possible. The digital tools allow for conversations, but these often cannot be conducted with the same openness and intensity as an interaction in a shared physical space; many informal communication channels are missing.

Practical recommendation | The tendering body should clearly communicate to all stakeholders that a remote evaluation has its limitations: informal side conversations are hardly possible; participatory observation can only be carried out to a very limited extent; some target groups cannot be reached.

Challenge | The tendering body often expects that the elimination of travel time means that such costs can be subtracted from the evaluator's fee. In reality, though, the evaluator is confronted with additional logistics in terms of organizing online interviews, focus group discussions and online surveys that amount to an increased number of working days.

Practical recommendation | The tendering bodies should plan in sufficient evaluator days for the coordination and organization of interviews.

Challenge | "International", "national", "local" evaluators, regional evaluators, local evaluators ... the terms are broad and are used and understood differently in the various institutions. Consequently, there are also different demands on the individual evaluators or teams. What at first seems self-evident based on experience with other evaluations or even organizations is often not the case for the other participants. In some organizations, the evaluators have already been working together for a long time on the entire evaluation process; in others, evaluators located in the field only take on partial tasks under the leadership of an international evaluator.

Practical recommendation | The roles of the individual evaluators should already be clearly defined and described in the preparation and tendering phase. Expectations should be formulated and agreed upon bilaterally or trilaterally.

Challenge | The more the field of remote evaluation develops, the broader the possibilities for the composition of evaluation teams become. Teams can also work together across countries and continents, tasks can now be distributed among several people, in a smaller, more selective way. This results in new requirements, e.g. for contractual relationships.

Practical recommendation | Some organizations advertise separately for individual evaluators, others address teams. Working in teams that have already collaborated together and have built up a trusting relationship (also in the field) can be an advantage when working virtually. It is important to determine in advance which forms of tendering are appropriate and adhere to public procurement laws.

Practical recommendation | During the preparation phase it should be clarified transparently who is in a contractual relationship with whom (client in Germany, partner organization, consultancy), how tenders are invited and whether this entails particular challenges in the context of a remote evaluation. Consultancies and individual evaluators should consider the possibilities, but also the requirements, of contracting other evaluators or interviewers.

Challenge | The selection of national evaluators is of particular importance in (semi-) remote evaluations, as they are in many cases now the only ones conducting the field phase. Often, the acquisition of national evaluators is difficult due to the specific qualifications required. It should also be borne in mind that many clients pursue this approach at the same time, which means that it is not always possible to recruit evaluators in sufficient numbers or find those who have the best profile for the assignment.

Practical recommendation | Despite the difficulties presented in recruiting local experts suitable for the assignment in a remote situation, national evaluators should be given priority in being deployed in order to utilize and strengthen existing local expertise. In particular, younger local colleagues - who are often adept at negotiating cyberspace as a matter of course, thus bringing important competencies with them - should be given the chance to prove themselves.

Practical recommendation | Terms of Reference (ToR) can be shared by contacting national and/or regional evaluation networks, including networks for young evaluators (EvalYouth). Developing practical evaluation competencies among junior evaluators in the field is an important prerequisite in order to build up expertise for future evaluation projects.

3.2 Planning

3.2.1 Planning the methodological design

Deploying national evaluators in the project region to carry out semi-remote evaluations makes it possible for methodological approaches to be selected that are comparable with those used in an evaluation involving on-site visits by international evaluators. In contrast, remote evaluations pose the following challenges:

Challenge | Direct impressions cannot be made and evaluators cannot get a "picture" of the project environment and project results on the ground.

Practical recommendation | Limitations resulting from this should be made clear in the clarification of the assignment and in the Inception Report.

Practical recommendation | Digital tools for data collection and analysis must be accessed in order to carry out remote evaluations, such as:

- Video Conferencing: MS Teams, Zoom, BigBluebutton, GoToMeeting, WebEx, Jitsi, Kudo, Google-Meet, QiquChat
- Electronic pinboard: Mural, Miro, padlet, nexboard
- <https://www.xmind.net/embed/yuAk/> provides an overview of other free collaboration software
- Short surveys: Slido, Mentimeter
- Online surveys: LimeSurvey, KoboToolBox, EvaSys, Momentive (formerly SurveyMonkey), MS-Forms, Sosci-Survey, SurveyCTO, Magpi
- Satellite data and high-resolution images of project areas

3.2.2 Communication between commissioners and evaluators

Challenge | Communication between commissioners and evaluators is particularly important during the planning phase of remote evaluations.

Practical recommendation | From the outset, there should be precise coordination between the evaluation stakeholders regarding the evaluation questions and the methodology. The commissioning parties should clearly communicate their specific interest in knowledge and openly address the strengths and weaknesses of the object of evaluation.

Challenge | Remote evaluations require the use of specific software and digital tools. Their selection, financing and use should be coordinated with the client.

Practical recommendation | When preparing and tendering for a remote evaluation, tools should be considered that support digital communication by landline phone, cell phone or video conference. It should be checked to what extent they are available in the project region, what costs they imply for the participants, whether or to which extent they are barrier-free and whether the necessary data protection is guaranteed.

Challenges | The sheer amount of information, documents, notes shared between clients and evaluators both in the planning phase and during implementation is often overwhelming. Since they are often sent more easily as attachments, e-mail boxes quickly overflow. At the same time, carrying out the evaluation requires a high degree of flexibility from both sides (keyword "adaptive evaluation management") as well as a clear overview of all open questions.

Practical recommendation | Suitable for transparent evaluation management are tools that can be accessed by all participants, e.g. a shared meeting logbook or a ("living") work plan, a shared library with relevant documents and links, a list of planned or conducted interviews. Collaboration software could be used for this, such as GoogleSuite, Sharepoint, Egnyte, Teams-Channel, Nextcloud and others.

Challenge | Not all clients accept all available digital tools for data collection. The data protection regulations of the commissioning parties can vary.

Practical recommendation | It is advisable to clarify with the commissioning parties which tools (e.g. social media, messenger groups, survey software) can be used and which data protection requirements must be complied with.

3.2.3 Communication between international and national evaluators

Challenge | The planning phase can involve the following challenges:

- *Getting to know each other in the team.* While on-site visits involve getting to know each other at the beginning of the face-to-face collaboration, (semi-)remote evaluations involve developing trust in each other via a tool such as a video conference.

Whether or not this succeeds depends on the experience, approach and personality of the individual participants.

- *Clarification of responsibilities and roles* within the evaluation team. In (semi-) remote evaluations, the role of the national evaluators can be strengthened so that certain tasks can be implemented directly by them. In this way, field surveys primarily become the responsibility of national evaluators.
- *Close coordination of the methodological approach*. The common understanding of the evaluation questions and the design of the methodology (e.g. coding of the questions and recording of the answers by the regional evaluator) is often discussed "in passing" during on-site assignments of international evaluators. In the case of (semi-)remote evaluations, extra time must be planned in for this.
- *Close coordination of the evaluation criteria*: This is relevant in order to apply the same standards and a comprehensible, context-appropriate and fair evaluation across subjects takes place.
- *Communication of the picture in the field*: There is no field phase for the international evaluators; they cannot form their own view of the situation.
- *Cooperation on equal footing*: Although responsibilities are shifting in favor of the national evaluators, cooperation is unfortunately not always on an equal footing; often the national evaluator continues to be seen as the "assistant". As a rule, the overall responsibility remains with the international evaluator.

Practical recommendation | (Semi-)remote evaluations should contribute to strengthening the role of national evaluators by giving them a higher degree of responsibility and more tasks: e.g. conveying the "picture" on site, independent project visits, implementing observations independently, taking on the responsibility of conducting and documenting interviews more frequently and presenting part of the results. This should be agreed in the role clarification. Even if the overall responsibility lies with the international evaluator, attention should be paid to empowering the national evaluator. For this purpose, these individuals should be involved in the process as early on as possible and participate in all process steps of the evaluation up to the reporting phases.

Practical recommendation | The distribution of roles should be precisely clarified and adjusted during the process: Does the international evaluator participate in all interviews or only in one part or not at all? Will he/she be included by the national evaluators? In addition to an introductory video conference between international and national evaluators, interviews can also be discussed before and after in order to strengthen bonds and common understanding. Related tasks and times should also be contractually agreed upon.

3.2.4 Communication between the evaluators and the partner organization

Challenge | Compared to surveys involving field visits there is a tendency in remote evaluations towards less informal and more formalized exchange. This is expressed, among other things, by more emails with many questions to the on-site partner and long video conferences. The informal moments of exchange, such as during a break or waiting for an interview partner, are lacking. As a result, observations are missing that can also provide important information about the project situation (What does the office look like? Is the training center well maintained? What is the mood like?).

Practical recommendation | Communication with the partner should be well prepared. Evaluators should find out in advance what possibilities and opportunities there are for an informal exchange. This can be done, for example, by having the evaluators and project partners give a detailed introduction in video interviews. In this context, the content and the research objectives of the evaluation should also be addressed.

Practical recommendation | Agreements on regular communication (jour fixe) should be made in the planning phase. There should also be room for informal exchange.

Practical recommendation | Smalltalk is also possible online. National evaluators can be invited to informal meetings such as online celebrations to build mutual trust. However, bonding can also occur in the interview, when the interlocutors notice that the evaluators have a genuine interest in understanding their situation.

Challenge | A remote evaluation usually requires less logistical effort for the project-executing organization. This can lead to the project continuing with the project work as usual, with little availability to support the evaluation, for example in scheduling online interviews. This risk is exacerbated by the fact that evaluators do not attend the office in person, creating some support pressure. Also, their need for support can easily be overlooked.

Practical recommendation | In the preparatory meetings for the evaluation, the role, tasks and time availability of those involved in the project should be explicitly discussed and recorded in writing. It must be made clear to all participants that a remote evaluation also requires the active participation of the partner organization.

3.2.5 Communication between the evaluators and the target groups

Challenge | Organizing communication between evaluators and target groups is more time-consuming - especially if support from the project team is not possible or not desired by the evaluators. In evaluations with face-to-face interviews, the partners organize the interview program in accordance with an agreement. In remote evaluations, it often happens that only the contacts are passed on and the evaluators have to organize the appointments themselves. This requires additional effort.

Practical recommendation | If desired, support from the project team or other reference persons should be requested when appointments are made by the evaluators. In principle, all appointments can be made as if they were face-to-face meetings on the ground.

Practical recommendation | If the appointments are organized by the participants themselves, placing a calendar online can be useful in which the interlocutors can register. In order to ensure confidentiality, only free dates can be displayed, with the interviewees then selecting one by e-mail. In this case, the evaluation team must constantly update the online calendar.

Challenges | The technical possibilities vary depending on the region and locality. Not all target groups have access to digital formats.

Practical recommendation | Before concrete planning can take place, the technical possibilities for online interviews and online focus group discussions should be carefully outlined. At a global level, communications are continuously improving worldwide, but stable internet connections should not be taken for granted. Although COVID-19 has increased the affinity for virtual formats and online interviews are welcomed, they sometimes have to be conducted without video transmission for technical reasons.

Video conferencing platforms can provide dial-in numbers for many countries. In addition, project staff based in remote locations with poor internet connections can be invited to a more centrally based project office that enjoys a better internet connection.

Report from the field: Create a video with information about the evaluators

On one occasion, the team of evaluators commissioned assistants to conduct telephone interviews with people at the village level. In order to facilitate their work and at the same time to increase the willingness of the selected interviewees to participate in an interview, the team recorded a short joint video introducing the evaluation and the team. This video was then sent to the target groups via WhatsApp prior to the interviews.

Challenge | Not every identified interviewee is open for an interview or can be interviewed. In contrast, especially with younger interviewees - and in particular the so-called "*digital natives*" - the threshold for an open interview is sometimes even lower if it takes place in a remote setting than in a face-to-face meeting. Other interviewees may not be familiar with computers and/or have no access to the internet.

Practical recommendation | Before selecting the survey methods, the accessibility and digital literacy of the target group for online tools should be assessed.

- For the "*digital natives*", the medium should be used that these individuals also use in everyday life. For example, this is often a messenger service (e.g. Signal, Telegram, WhatsApp). However, with regard to data protection, some commissioning parties do not always allow the use of such a service. This situation must be clarified in advance.

The advantage of such messengers when internet connections are poor is that audio messages can be sent. Thus, after a verbal introduction via video or audio call, it may be possible to switch to this form of communication and ask and answer questions one by one.

- For people who are reluctant to communicate via video, ways should be sought to conduct face-to-face interviews in a protected space, e.g. by telephone, without video.
- People who do not have access to telephones and the internet and/or have few computer skills can hardly be included in the evaluation. No current data or opinions can be obtained from individuals who cannot be reached remotely at all, either by one of the aforementioned digital means or by telephone, telegram or letter. In this case, it may be possible to include existing data from monitoring.

3.2.6 Planning the course of surveys

Remote evaluations have the advantage that not all appointments have to take place within the predefined fixed framework of the field visit. This gives greater flexibility in terms of time to arrange meetings with people in the field or to observe project activities online.

Challenge | There is no self-contained phase of data collection as in a field visit. This means that the data collection period is stretched. Beware! The greater flexibility of time also brings with it the risk of dispersal, as more and more interesting interlocutors are identified in the field. In the case of on-site visits, there is usually a defined number of days available for the surveys. After that the survey is finished. For remote evaluations, days are also limited, but the limit is not as clearly defined as there is no real departure date.

Practical recommendation | The design and calculation of the number of interviews should be carried out in advance and documented in the Inception Report. Follow-up interviews should also be taken into account. The number of interviews per day depends strongly on the type of interviews and the time it takes to process them directly afterwards. In principle, no more interviews should be conducted daily in remote evaluations than in evaluations with face-to-face interviews. From the point of view of most evaluators, three to five individual interviews per day have proved successful, although experience is increasingly showing that in a remote situation some people conduct more interviews and others fewer than face-to-face. Evaluators can also clearly limit the interview number or time for themselves and negotiate an agreement to increase the time budget if needed.

Challenge | Evaluations always mean an interruption of the daily routine in the project on site. For example, nursing staff in a hospital cannot perform their nursing duties during an interview. If the evaluator intervenes in daily operations from a distance, he/she will be less aware than on site that the moment for an interview may be inappropriate and perhaps should be rescheduled.

Practical recommendation | It can already be pointed out when making the appointment that the working day should be disturbed as little as possible by the surveys and

interviews. The start of the interview should be designed in such a way that disruptions can be mentioned.

3.2.7 Planning of resources (budget, time, equipment)

Time- and cost-intensive logistics and travel are not necessary (e.g. long travel and waiting times, costs for accommodation, transport and catering). Thus, remote evaluations could potentially be more time-saving and cost-effective than evaluations involving on-site visits by evaluators.

Challenge | However, practical experience shows that the cost and time advantage is partially or even completely used up again in other ways. Reasons for this include the following:

- The organizational effort for arranging interviews can be higher than in an evaluation involving on-site visits by international evaluators, and the responsibilities involved can also be different. In particular, arranging and in some cases conducting interviews is significantly more time-consuming (cf. previous section 3.2.5). In addition, some interview partners do not respond promptly to interview requests. Agreed interview dates are not always kept.
- Often several attempts are necessary for the interviews themselves (mainly due to technical faults or poor connections); interview partners are distracted during the interviews, so that questions have to be asked repeatedly.
- There is the possibility of follow-up, i.e. an iterative approach to interviews. This can provide more - and more detailed - information. However, more time is needed for this.
- The documentation of interviews is time-consuming because precision is vital in order for co-evaluators to understand and comprehend the statements of the interviewees. A lot of time has to be planned in for follow-up to ensure that the documentation is complete.
- Communication with the national evaluators cannot take place "on the side" during the car journey or in the evening at the hotel, but must be planned separately.
- Depending on the evaluation context, the use of paid internet tools and SIM cards may be required to get in touch with all those involved in the evaluation.

Practical recommendation | The additional time and financial effort for evaluators should be planned in - rather generously - from the beginning and agreed upon between client and evaluators.

Practical recommendation | For remote evaluations, it can also be contractually stipulated that the project team is completely responsible for the scheduling.

Practical recommendation | In order to save costs the client can, if necessary, provide the technical equipment for the period of the evaluation, including SIM cards that are used exclusively for communication within the framework of the evaluation.

Practical recommendation | The evaluators should plan in more time for interviews and conversations than is the case in face-to-face interviews (e.g. focus group interviews), as incomprehensibility due to technical malfunctions, "disappearance" of participants due to missing/adequate technology, different internet speeds and power outages must always be taken into account.

Practical recommendation | If no more time is available, then the questions must be reduced to the essentials. But: This also eliminates methods of analysis through approximation and probing and thus the possibility of going into depth and inquiring about the causes that might lie behind specific issues.

Practical recommendation | Video conference interviews are strenuous because, among other things, the sound quality fluctuates and people can be difficult to understand. Experience shows that sufficient time, breaks and buffers have to be planned in. Many evaluators are of the opinion that four to five videoconferences a day, each 30 to 60 minutes long, are a maximum daily workload.

3.2.8 Kick-off workshop/clarification meeting with the commissioning parties

In principle, there is no difference in content between this kind of task clarification meeting and those for on-site evaluations, as this also focuses on the introduction to the organization, the evaluation topic, the Theory of Change, evaluation questions and the methodological procedure. The decisive difference is the extent to which the participants in an online meeting succeed in conducting a trusting and open discussion about the planned evaluation.

Challenge | Experience shows that, in addition to the Terms of Reference, the commissioning party often conveys other important information to facilitate an understanding of the evaluation. Depending on the participants' familiarity with remote evaluation techniques and online tools, this can be done in face-to-face meetings or conveyed in video conferences. However, such meetings lack the important coffee and lunch breaks to create more open communication.

Practical recommendation | Clients should - if it is not already a matter of course - pay more attention to providing evaluators with important information in advance. Evaluators should pro-actively inquire about the reason for the evaluation.

3.3 Implementation

3.3.1 Review of documents

Challenge | Reviewing the documentation, especially context analysis, can take on greater importance in remote evaluations if it is assumed that, compared to presence evaluations, less data can be collected and fewer own observations can be made, especially in particularly sensitive contexts. It could prove particularly problematic if the available documents are incomplete or of little significance.

Practical recommendation | Evaluators could request additional documents from partners (e.g. internal project reports, documentation of events with lists of participants/clients) and make greater use of secondary data.

3.3.2 Kick-off and final workshop with the local partner organization

In principle, the same considerations apply here as for the assignment clarification meeting (see 3.2.8). The central task of these workshops is to hold trusting and open discussions about the planned evaluation or the evaluation results. For this purpose, the central contents of the evaluation should also be presented in writing at the kick-off meeting, e.g. by presenting the plans of the Inception Report. For the final workshop, a presentation should be available which can be discussed, for example, in the context of a video conference.

3.3.3 Individual interviews - planning, conducting, documenting and recording

Challenge | Individual interviews are more time-consuming to plan. Evaluators often arrange the interview appointments themselves. In remote settings it happens more easily that interview appointments are not kept or cancelled at short notice; new appointments must then be made.

Practical recommendation | It is advisable to point out the binding compliance with deadlines. Flexibility regarding changing deadlines is limited, especially if all workflows have to be designed virtually/digitally. In addition, the following steps are recommended:

- If necessary, send a few key questions to the interview partners in advance by e-mail or messenger service.
- Clarify data connection costs for the interviewees in advance; if necessary, the evaluation team can also transfer money to the interviewees via SMS to compensate them.

Report from the field: Preparing interviewees for the interview

One non-governmental organization (NGO) reported on its practice of transmitting the contents of an information sheet on data protection in the form of bullet points to the interviewees by telephone and then explicitly asking for consent at the beginning of the interview. Consent is either recorded in writing (in the notes) or documented in the video/audio recording.

Another NGO reported positive experiences with the procedure of reminding the interviewee of the appointment one hour before the interview. The evaluation procedure was supported by an intern who sent the link to the interview, established the connection and left the interview after a short introduction. He/she could be contacted during the interview, kept in touch via WhatsApp and re-established the connection if necessary.

Challenge | Individual interviews can be more stressful for the evaluators. Sometimes interviewees do not take online interviews as seriously as face-to-face interviews and are distracted or combine interview time with other activities and parallel conversations.

Practical recommendation | When conducting individual interviews (but also group interviews), the following practices have proven effective:

- Do not schedule too many interviews per day. There should be at least 30 minutes between interviews to allow for delays, connection problems, and other issues, as well as to allow for transcripts, revision of notes, and necessary rest breaks.
- If the screen is split, turn off notifications in the pop-up (or use second screen), and do not have personal windows open (Appointment Calendar, Windows Explorer).
- Provide information on the use of data and obtain informed consent - especially when using video recordings. The interviewees should be informed verbally, at the latest at the beginning of the interview, about the reasons for the interview and how their data will be used and stored in the further course of the evaluation. They should give their consent to this either in writing or, in the case of telephone and video conferences, at least verbally.
- Keep a sense of humor. If interlocutors are distracted by activities in their environment, this may be an opportunity to establish a familiar conversational climate. It is a chance to get to know each other better.

Report from the field: Facing imponderables with humor

One evaluator reported on an interview with a young African person who, in order to have a good internet connection, went to a youth club to participate in the interview via WhatsApp. The quality of the connection was excellent. Unfortunately, the conversation was partly drowned out by very loud background music playing in the club. According to the evaluator, such conditions should be taken calmly, because in this case the pleasure of having a chance to capture authentic voices outweighed the difficulties in the transmission.

There are different procedures as well as the individual ideas of various evaluators in how to go about the **documentation** of the interview contents, which can be used for both evaluators' field visits as well as for remote evaluations:

- Live transcription during the interview. Usually one evaluator can ask questions and take notes at the same time if he/she has prepared interview guidelines beforehand. If two evaluators are present, e.g. international and national evaluators, it is sometimes helpful if one person takes notes and the other asks questions. Unclear aspects can be discussed by two people directly afterwards.
- Documenting the interview content after the interview; only very few notes are taken during the interview as a reminder, which are then added to afterwards.
- Electronic recording of the interview with the consent of the interviewee and subsequent listening and recording. This method is comprehensive and accurate, but time-consuming. Software is available that transcribes conversations on the fly; however, this requires a good internet connection. The transcripts usually have to be corrected afterwards.

The evaluator can then use the documentation as a basis for the evaluation, for synthesizing the results or for answering the key questions and, if necessary, it be forwarded to the commissioning parties (important: observe promises of confidentiality!)

Challenge | The live transcript during the interview enables the documentation of a relatively large number of details and also of quotations. This allows for a high degree of accuracy in the coding of responses. The challenge in a video interview is to maintain a good conversational atmosphere, to keep eye contact with the interviewee as much as possible and to look as little as possible at one's own transcript on a pad of paper or the screen.

Practical recommendation | Typing freely on the keyboard without looking at it makes it possible to stay in contact with the interviewee. However, the keyboard noises should not be heard and the focus should be on the interviewee.

Practical recommendation | The evaluators should explain to the interviewees that they are taking notes so that the answers can be included in the evaluation as accurately as possible. Get small laughs by saying that the next question is coming soon, but that the sentence has to be finished quickly.

Practical recommendation | Consent can be given in writing or verbally. If possible, this should be done in writing. For this purpose, it is best for evaluators to prepare a form that covers all circumstances (including special cases), so that no further documents are needed for individual cases. The interviewee must explicitly agree and feel informed about the contents of the form (read through beforehand, include a question in the form that asks the interview partner to confirm that he/she feels sufficiently informed). The person should be informed that he/she can withdraw his/her consent at any time without giving reasons. The form can be digitally imaged and signed (e.g. DocuSign, Adobe Sign).

If consent is obtained verbally, the points on the form should be read out and the consent recorded. A template for a consent form is available here: <https://sozmethode.hypotheses.org/292>

3.3.4 Group interviews

Challenge | Online group interviews with a larger number of people usually require even more attention than real meetings. They are time-consuming to conduct, especially with beneficiaries. Delays are likely:

- Some interlocutors are less punctual during group discussions in a video conference than during meetings on the ground, or they leave the discussion room earlier;
- Time is lost due to technical problems that often need to be solved at the beginning or during the session; the introduction to the videoconferencing technology and the rules of the conversation should also be carried out at the beginning ("at the bottom left is the unmute button").

Practical recommendation | The following practices have proven effective for conducting group interviews and focus group discussions:

- Limit the number of people in the group interview. If the persons are individually connected to the video conference, all participants should be displayed on one screen if possible. This applies to each person individually connected to a video-conference. If the participants are in one room, the number should be between three and a maximum of five persons, as they sometimes all have to speak into the microphone of a Notebook or into a cell phone that is passed around.
- Ideally, all participants are seated at their own devices and have headsets on.
- Involve support for moderation and documentation. This applies in particular to groups of ten or more people.
- Video conferences should be well prepared (technology, procedure, way of speaking, visualization). Online tools offered in video conferencing programs, such as whiteboards, should be used and briefly explained at the beginning. It is very important to agree on a system to signal requests to speak, e.g. a show of hands in the image or in the tool, or a sign in the chat. This ensures that the order of speakers can be guaranteed. The system in which participants who want to make a contri-

bution simply send their name to everyone in the chat usually takes a lot of pressure off the moderator. In addition, it should be possible to make comments and ask questions in the chat. The form of moderation is different from live discussion, and everyone must engage with it.

- When moderating, make sure that the participants' contributions are balanced. If necessary, address silent participants directly, as they can contribute valuable information.
- If the internet connection is poor, the quality of the connection can be improved by switching off the video function. However, it is nicer and more engaged if the participants of a discussion can see each other.
- A contact should be provided for participants to turn to if they are unable to attend the conference due to poor connectivity.

Report from the field: Live protocols during group interviews

In a semi-remote evaluation, the national evaluator used a projector to beam the core questions of the group interview onto a wall for the interviewees to see. The questions were then answered together by the group during the discussion and documented together. This procedure was very helpful for answering clear questions. It provided the international evaluator, who was not physically present, with very useful primary data.

3.3.5 Virtual workshops for data collection

Challenge | Virtual workshops with project partners and target groups require careful planning to enable a high level of participation of all participants. Observations of the interaction among the participants, non-verbal communication and moods are only possible to a limited extent. Likewise, there are only limited possibilities for spontaneous reactions and questions.

Practical recommendation | A moderator who has experience in online tools, online communication management and the design of virtual events should be involved. If this competence is not available in the evaluation team, another person can be involved if necessary; confidentiality and data protection should be taken into account here.

Practical recommendation | If required, additional resources (e.g. links, documents, further sources) can be shared immediately. Likewise, joint editing is possible with the help of online tools.

Practical recommendation | The following practices have proven effective for conducting virtual workshops:

- Prepare virtual voting tools;
- Set up moderated group work (breakout rooms);
- Use whiteboards (e.g. Miro, Mural);
- Use the mind map function;

- Use the chat function for spontaneous questions and comments.
- When using whiteboards and mind maps, it is important to ensure that the questions within the format are clear and can be briefly answered. This means that the questions should not be too complex when using these tools. It is a good idea to share the results on the boards at the end.
- Keep it simple. The multitude of online tools that now exist make it tempting to use many of these applications in the workshops. Since this is often accompanied by technical incidents or application problems it should be carefully considered what benefit the tool might bring.

Practical recommendation | For workshop formats, three to four hours (with breaks) should not be exceeded.

3.3.6 "Site visits", participatory videos, online observations

Challenge | The evaluators are not on site. They can therefore not gain a personal "picture" of the local situation, the atmosphere, possible disagreements and conflicts, the working circumstances and distances between the places.

Practical recommendation | The project partner or also the groups to be evaluated can be asked to submit video snippets on specific topics or issues. In addition to videos, the supplementary submission of photos should also be considered. They are less costly to create and can be easily shared. Here, for example, impressions of laboratory equipment or machines could be gained. However, particular attention must be paid here to data protection issues: Are people visible in the photographs? Which rooms and equipment that are otherwise not accessible to the public are shown? What permits are required to be able to make the necessary recordings?

Practical recommendation | Young people in particular might be interested in recording videos themselves to provide insight into their everyday world, which can then be evaluated using qualitative methods.

Practical recommendation | If the partner organization itself organizes virtual events and other measures such as seminars, trainings, workshops or dialogue programs, (participant) observation by the evaluators can take place. This tends to be easier in remote evaluations than in field phases, as a longer period of time is available for data collection and online conferences, seminars, workshops are often easy to integrate into the schedule.

3.3.7 Collection of quantitative data through surveys

Challenge | Surveys can also be a challenge in field evaluations if it proves difficult to obtain contact details of the people to be surveyed (e.g. cell phone numbers, e-mail addresses). In the case of field surveys, questionnaires can be distributed, for example, as a

component of events that are taking place anyway. This is not possible with remote evaluations.

Practical recommendation | Surveys can be used as stand-alone data collection tools. However, it is often beneficial to use them in combination with individual and group interviews. They then serve as preparation for targeted interviews or their follow-up. On the other hand, interviews can also be used to interpret quantitative data in order to validate data and expand the circle of participants.

Practical recommendation | If no contact details of the respondents are available, the link to the questionnaire can be shared, for example, on the website of the partner organization, in social media channels and at online events. Since the questionnaire is then openly accessible, interviewees should be asked to indicate whether or not they participated in the questionnaire or other tool, in order to be able to distinguish between users and non-users of the respective intervention in the evaluation.

Challenge | The response rate to online surveys is sometimes low. Some respondents are not willing to participate in the survey; others have to be reminded to fill out the questionnaire - for example, when surveying employees.

Practical recommendation | Prior to a large survey, the evaluators can record a video in which they explain their procedure. The video can then be published on a website and/or sent with the invitation to the online questionnaire. If the group of participants is limited and familiar with each other, the survey and/or further methodological steps of the evaluation can be presented in a short video conference.

Practical recommendation | If an e-mail distribution list or a list of cell phone numbers is available, reminders can be sent once or twice.

Practical recommendation | The following options for conducting questionnaire-based surveys remotely are available, and can be chosen depending on the context:

- Online questionnaires (e.g. SurveyMonkey, Limesurvey, Google Forms, Microsoft Forms, Sosci Survey, KoboToolbox, Magpi).
- Offline questionnaires (e.g. KoboToolbox, SurveyCTO), but in this case a person has to be on site, e.g. to provide a tablet with the questionnaire.
- Telephone surveys (e.g. CATI - Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews)
- Surveys via text message.

Practical recommendation | Where possible, survey results available electronically should be communicated to the respondents. In this way, survey participants receive feedback on the survey results. This is also feasible and recommended for on-site evaluations.

Report from the field: Closely accompanying a telephone survey

In a nationwide evaluation, assistants interviewed over 100 people via a telephone survey. The international evaluator received the quantitative and qualitative data every evening and was able to support the assistants with follow-up questions and with clarifications on the aim of the questions. This close supervision would not have been possible in an on-site evaluation due to time constraints. However, it is useful to ensure the quality of the data.

3.3.8 Ensuring data quality

Challenge | Quite often, important data and information turns out to be missing after the interviews have been completed because questions were misunderstood or could not be asked.

Practical recommendation | If information is still missing after a conversation, it is possible to follow up again later (e.g. via e-mail or phone call). This was also possible before, but the remote format makes it easier because the digital contacts are already available.

Practical recommendation | Interview transcripts can be shared with and corrected by respondents via e-mail, respondents (internal and external) are more involved, sometimes leading to greater ownership of the evaluation results.

Challenge | The process of data collection is no longer limited to the time of the field visit. The evaluation can thus become more time-consuming, because it is more difficult to draw a line (when is the data "good enough")?

Practical recommendation | Beware of perfectionism! If data is collected iteratively ('ping-pong' between evaluators and respondents), the process can become very time-consuming. It is therefore advisable to set a date for the end of data collection early on (see 3.1 and 3.2.6).

3.3.9 Evaluation of the data

The analysis of data is not fundamentally different for remote evaluations. The following possibilities arise through the use of digital tools:

- While national evaluators are carrying out the field visits, international evaluators could already start processing the collected data since they can be transmitted (almost) live.
- If video conferences are used for the presentation of results, the national evaluators and project leaders can also be included.

- If the data is stored in digital form in a central database that all members of the evaluation team can access, they can all be processed and maintained together in parallel. Likewise, the analysis of the data can take place in parallel.

Report from the field: Parallel data analysis with the help of a central database

Approximately 200 outcomes of an evaluation were stored and categorized in a GoogleSheet according to the *outcome harvesting* method (e.g. based on the occurrence of the characteristics in the countries studied, type of change observed, stakeholder type). The two evaluators from two European countries linked the same database once with the tool *Tableau* and once with *Microsoft Power BI* in order to visualize the data for themselves in parallel (e.g. type of results per country) and to analyze them according to the guiding questions they had to answer.

3.4 Reporting and follow-up

3.4.1 Reporting

Some of the following elements of reporting are no different for remote evaluations than for an evaluation involving field visits, while there are differences in some aspects which are mainly related to workshops (see below).

Regardless of whether the reporting is done as part of a remote or face-to-face evaluation, it should include the following process steps:

- Interpretation of the results
- Triangulation of the results
- (Participative) development of recommendations
- Formulation of the report (if necessary incl. limits and opportunities of remote evaluations)
- Presentation of results/final workshop
- Feedback

Challenge | The presentation of the report and discussion of the results takes place online. The exchange is limited in time and very focused. If not everyone involved in the presentation has read and commented on the report, the exchange is unable to go into depth; open criticism is rarely voiced. On the other hand, due to the familiarity with videoconferencing since 2020, the barriers to discussing points of criticism via videoconferencing are less high.

Practical recommendation | Particularly in the case of remote evaluations, the written comments on the report by the client should be sent to the evaluators before the presentation. This way, feedback is bundled; the participants can focus on important points during the presentation.

Practical recommendation | In the reporting phase, national evaluators and project staff can also be connected via video conference during the presentation of

results. Although such practices have been announced in the past, they have rarely been implemented due to the lack of videoconferencing technology.

Report from the field: Inviting project staff to presentations

People living in the project country can participate in online workshops like everyone else. In remote evaluation, the iterative approach to data collection means that there is usually more frequent and closer contact with project staff, and the use of virtual workshops becomes the norm. This makes it easier to invite these groups to virtual workshops where, for example, results are presented and initial conclusions are discussed, or recommendations are worked on in a participatory manner.

3.4.2 Follow-up

The following elements involved in communicating results are not fundamentally different for remote evaluations than for an evaluation with field visits. This concerns the following process steps:

- Communication of the results and recommendations to those involved in the evaluation
- Development of the management response
- Development of the implementation plan
- Implementation monitoring
- Carrying out meta-evaluations

Practical recommendation | The national evaluators can also be involved in the follow-up, and the project staff should also be involved. The latter can be involved especially in the preparation of the management response, in the implementation planning and the implementation monitoring.

4 Outlook

This last chapter offers an outlook on some aspects that will be important for the further development of (semi-)remote evaluations in the future. *Capacity building* is given special attention in the current considerations - in DeGEval as well. Initial approaches are presented here as a basis for looking at how these can be implemented in the future and what *capacity building* is necessary for which actors in order to continuously improve the quality of (semi-)remote evaluations.

Neither the developments in the field of remote evaluation nor the work on the topic in the Remote Evaluation Working Group have been completed. In 2022, we will certainly intensify our direct exchange with evaluators from the Global South. New developments and perspectives can then be incorporated into a new edition of the handbook.

4.1 Influence of remote approaches on evaluation in the future

There are already some signs that remote approaches will continue in the future:

- For example, inception missions or kick-off meetings, which previously involved on-site visits, are conducted remotely or semi-remotely;
- National evaluators participate more in the evaluation process
- Much greater use is made of online tools;
- It is emphasized that, in the context of the 2030 Agenda, country-led evaluations are aimed for in the long term and that evaluation capacity development (ECD) in partner countries is already being strengthened through (semi-)remote evaluations.

4.2 Strengthening capacity for remote evaluations

A look at the requirement profile of evaluators as well as the previous experiences with (semi-)remote evaluations can offer suggestions for the future in which areas further qualification is recommended. The strengthening of evaluation capacities in the context of (semi-)remote evaluations concerns two areas: Evaluators at home who are reshaping their role due to the changed context, and strengthening evaluation competencies in partner countries.

4.2.1 Strengthening evaluation competencies at home

Domestic evaluators face new challenges, first and foremost the need to learn and implement new methods, software and tools - new virtual instruments are required, primarily for data collection, but also for planning and communication (see also chapter 3.2). The role of the evaluator also changes, as conducting the evaluation from a distance sets new framework conditions: Evaluation work increasingly involves a **coordination role** (including legal issues, such as contracts with national evaluators), which necessitates competencies in terms of steering an evaluation - a role that is otherwise predominantly assumed by commissioning parties.

Since March 2020, there has been increased consultation and training on remote evaluation. This has resulted in a steep learning curve for the international evaluators. Nevertheless, there is still a need for further qualification on the part of the international evaluators - especially with regard to data collection via SMS and other tools.

4.2.2 Strengthening evaluation capacities in partner countries

Remote evaluations also provide an opportunity to strengthen evaluation capacities in partner countries. On an individual level, local evaluation competencies can be strengthened through the promotion of **evaluators in partner countries**. People who manage evaluations in partner organizations (**evaluation managers**) - often people from the organization itself - are also an important target group for strengthening evaluation capacities. This can be done in the following ways:

- Both target groups (evaluators and evaluation managers) should be involved in planning and decision-making processes from the very beginning and should not be called in for data collection alone. In terms of capacity development, the involvement should not only include agreements, but also precise introductions, explanations, checklists and discussions. Exchanges also enable mutual learning. Workshops and trainings are other important elements.
- Both evaluators and evaluation managers need to take on more responsibility in remote evaluations in order to carry out on-site activities independently, and should therefore increasingly be equal team members, as is already the case in some organizations. It can be of great benefit to the evaluation to support the on-site evaluators in the delivery of relevant training, if required, or to provide it virtually. Training might be appropriate for the following topics: on a survey (if relevant), on specific data collection methods, on facilitation, or on communicating with high-level people. Training is an excellent way to discuss potential stumbling blocks in advance and to signal that challenges are normal and absolutely must be communicated openly and transparently.

Evaluations also provide an opportunity to strengthen the capacity to manage evaluations in **partner organizations** on the ground. These should be involved in communication and planning processes from the outset, e.g. in the joint development of ToR, evaluation questions and ToC. Partner organizations could be involved in quality assurance and in the presentation of results and recommendations. A learning-by-doing approach such as this could be included in the ToR.

Junior evaluators often have little practical experience in conducting evaluations, but are well trained in innovative methods and instruments. They can therefore contribute and implement good ideas, especially in (semi-)remote evaluations. The development of junior evaluators' practical evaluation competencies in the field is an important prerequisite for creating expertise in the field for future evaluation projects. Through EvalYouth, contacts can be established with the respective local associations of junior evaluators. A

partnership between experienced evaluators and junior evaluators often makes more sense than working only with junior evaluators.

Although the focus in this chapter has been on capacity building for national evaluators, there is no doubt that international evaluators also learn through working in international teams, particularly in cultural terms.

4.2.3 Capacity building through local dissemination of evaluation results

Dissemination should be adapted to the different target groups, e.g. partner organizations, direct beneficiaries in the field, NGOs in the thematic area, evaluation networks, universities could be interested in presenting the results. What is new is that access for all stakeholders has been secured and tested in the context of remote evaluations, so that they can also be involved in this way in the final phase of the evaluation: the presentation and discussion of the evaluation results and lessons learned. Here it makes sense to prepare the results (graphically) in an appealing, easily understandable way and also in the local language.

4.3 Strengthening the usefulness of evaluations through remote elements

Experience during the Covid-19 pandemic shows that, in many cases, evaluations can be carried out remotely with sufficient results. Under the right conditions, the remote approach can even increase the quality of the evaluation. If evaluations can take place "classically" again, the opportunities of remote work should also be used. Some particular benefits of remote working include:

- The stronger role of national evaluators;
- CO2 reduction through less air travel (at least if some evaluations remain (semi-)remote);
- Contact with target groups and interlocutors who have not been reached in the traditional way;
- The participation of Northern partners in workshops in the Global South and the participation of Southern partners and national evaluators in workshops in the Global North.

For any evaluation, it is important to make a good assessment: What should be done at a distance, where is it important to be present in the field, and where is it sufficient to have a national evaluator present? The disadvantages and chances of an evaluation at a distance should not be underestimated. The combination of intensive face-to-face encounters as well as greater reach and more frequent, low-threshold encounters online can increase the quality of evaluations. Pure distance formats, on the other hand, will in many

cases lead to a lower quality of data and reflection and probably also of the implementation of evaluation results. Where the limits and opportunities lie here is worth further observation in practice and also systematic investigation.

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