EXTERNAL EVALUATION – SHORT REPORT

Key evaluator: Lutz Neumann
Technical evaluator: Ajchara Charoensook

Support to the Development of Quality Infrastructure

Country | Region: Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan
Project No.: 2013.2219.7
Period: 01/2014 until 12/2016
Executing Agency: Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB)
Implementing Partner: Kazakhstan: RSE Kazakhstan Institute of Metrology, TOO National Centre of Accreditation (NCA)
Kyrgyzstan: Center for Standardization and Metrology under the Ministry of Economy of the Kyrgyz Republic (CSM), Kyrgyz Centre for Accreditation under the Ministry of Economy of the Kyrgyz Republic (KCA)
Tajikistan: State Regulatory Agency of Standardization, Metrology, Certification and Trade Inspection (Tajikstandard)
Uzbekistan: Agency for Standardization, Metrology and Certification of Uzbekistan (UzStandard)

PTB | Working Group: Q.51 Europe and CIS
PTB | Project Coordinator: Corinna Weigelt
Date: 28. July 2016
1. Project Description

The object of the evaluation has been the project ‘Support of the Development of Quality Infrastructures in Central Asia’ (abbreviated: QI-CA), which promotes the development of quality infrastructure (QI) with emphasis on metrology and accreditation in four countries of Central Asia.

The project is mandated by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany (BMZ) and jointly implemented by the Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB) with governmental
partners in the fields of metrology and accreditation, namely:

- Kazakhstan: RSE Kazakhstan Institute of Metrology and TOO National Centre of Accreditation;
- Kyrgyzstan: Center for Standardization and Metrology under the Ministry of Economy of the Kyrgyz Republic and Kyrgyz Centre for Accreditation under the Ministry of Economy of the Kyrgyz Republic;
- Tajikistan: State Regulatory Agency of Standardization, Metrology, Certification and Trade Inspection (Tajikstandard), and
- Uzbekistan: Agency for Standardization, Metrology and Certification of Uzbekistan (UzStandard).

The QI-CA builds on two previous BMZ projects between 2008 and 2013. The engagement of the PTB in international cooperation with Central Asia dates back even further to the days of the former GDR predecessor. Thus, the institutional and working relations appear to have strong roots in the bilateral relations of Germany with each of the four implementing countries.

The level of QI development as indicated in the outcome objective as well as the progress of implementation as indicated in the progress reports differs from country to country. Therefore, the project has been designed with an approach tailored to the needs of the specific country. This means that the concept of the QI-CA is not the one of a regional project, but of a project operating in four countries of a region. There is no regional entity to function as the regional counterpart matching the geographical scope of the project.

The project has a budget of up to 1,300,000.00 EUR. Instruments applied for the interventions are mainly short term expert assignments, trainings and to a limited extent procurement of technical equipment. Fact sheet available at: https://www.ptb.de/cms/en/ptb/fachabteilungen/abtq/fb-q5/ag-q51.html

2. Assessment of the project

The analysis based on the OECD-DAC criteria shows that the project achieved high ratings across all criteria. Efficiency is rated with highest marks. Owing to this number of points (1.8), the project is given an overall rating of “successful”.

2.1 Status of the change process

Relevance

In general, the evaluation has verified the hypotheses and support areas of QI-CA. However, the core problem could not be put in context with other challenges the target group has. For instance, QI services are certainly of some (to be specified) relevance to the export capacities of a Kyrgyz nuts or a Tajik dairy producer. But where QI services rank among other challenges those companies face (trained staff, financing, marketing etc.) and how much an improved QI level actually contributes to – for instance – consumer safety, reducing barriers to trade or increasing competitiveness of a sector or a product remains unspecified. The relevance is plausible, but supporting evidence is opaque. The relevance of the QI-CA approach was not disputed in any interview. In fact, throughout the interviews, high marks for relevance were given. However, in principle no evidence could be provided for the subjectively assessed relevance. “Evidence” that was provided by interviewees was either

- Activity related within the setting of the respective QI institution, e.g. showcasing the quality and internal demand of specific trainings. Whereas effects of these trainings with regards to the target group could not be measured, only explained with plausibility. Or
- Derived from policy papers of different government and non-government sources, without access to underlying data, analysis and processes that have led to the priorities in those policies.

Interviewees referred primarily to the export or development strategies of Central Asian countries and to
the German/EU international development cooperation priorities with Central Asia (dated 2007). **Value-chain analyses (VCA)** have been conducted in division of labor with other donors and partners in order to address **indicator 5**, but QI-CA could not actually derive orientation for the direction of implementation from the reports. The evaluators could not find any VCA in the documentation or identify during the evaluations counterparts that may have conducted such a VCA that would provide such guidance. The guidance QI-CA had given to non-PTB assigned staff when those VCAs had been conducted in division of labor among donors was of high quality.

**The focus of the project on supporting key management and technical staff** responsible for the development of QI services addresses a core development problem. Only to a limited extent this (stand-alone) project can address problems that abstains staff from creating a better QI system: technical equipment, institutional frameworks, policy conditions and balancing interests between the different stakeholder groups, those were interested in reforms and those who are not, to elaborate and take decisions for change.

Overall, framework documents and interviews suggest, that the strategic approach of QI-CA in combination with a **flexible – human capital oriented – capacity development approach** through training of staff and stakeholders, and occasional organizational and network development, and policy advice is important and highly relevant.

The rating for relevance is based on the assessment dimensions that the project sets out to address a core development problem faced by the target group and that the project is in harmony with the relevant strategies.

- The relevance criterion is given the rating “**successful**”.

**Effectiveness**

The evaluators have scored the set of the five project indicators using the common **SMART approach**: Are the indicators specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound? The following table summarizes the results:

(0 = deficient indicator, needs adjustment; 1 = minor issue; 2 = adequate indicator)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Fulfillment</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Issues</th>
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<tr>
<td>(1) Each of the national institutes of metrology in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan offer at least 3 new, internationally recognized ranges of measurement which are relevant to the local economy.</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Relevance of target number ‘3’? According to KCDB website KAZ has 21 CMC. Dissemination: introduced on the high level, and on the secondary level in length and mass measurement through calibration certificates which are issued under the CIPM logo. Not disseminated fully to the industry and calibration certificates checked by the evaluators were found in the form of poverka; Sustainability (of new ranges of measurement after end of project).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) The national centers of accreditation in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan require traceability by internationally recognized calibration procedures in their assessment practice.</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Traceability: Formal/legalistic vs. international standards: in KAZ no evidence for traceability to the SI unit. KGZ recognition in ILAC is underway due to non-conformity of measurement traceability. Sustainability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) In Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the departments for metrology and accreditation apply international good practices that meet the demand of the private sector.</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No overall target value; Verification of data with regard to the demand of the private sector; Sustainability.</td>
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<td>(4) Tajikistan implements 2 requirements for</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Relevance of the target number of</td>
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concerning its quality infrastructure within the framework of the WTO.

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<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Baseline: deficit analysis done towards the end of the phase in 01/2016.</th>
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(5) At least 2 new customers from the private sector (e.g. SMEs, laboratories) show a demand for quality-relevant services in selected value-chains at no less than 5 metrology and accreditation institutions.

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<tr>
<th>Relevance of the target number of customers;</th>
<th>Definition of 'new customers', interchangeably used: new accreditation or new firm; Baseline (sector specific criteria for demand), no relevant VCA accessible. PTB takes the pragmatic approach to go for quality issues in value chains that are named as relevant by selected stakeholders. Verification of data: Asymmetry of information between partners and PTB.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1</td>
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The **indicators are achievable until end of phase.** The **major issues** with regard to the indicators are:

1. missing target values or the relevance of the target values,
2. the verification of data and
3. unclear measurement of sustainability of interventions.

QI-CA project management operates with an accurate, up to date and fully fledged **Results-Based Monitoring (RBM) Plan** (2016-02-04_WiMo_Zentralasien). The downside is, that this is only operated on the German side of the project (in German), and creates multiple work streams and correspondence with counterparts to retrieve input. And eventually puts the counterparts into a passive and reactive position when it comes to monitoring and steering. Interviews with project management and counterparts did not indicate an easy solution on how to harmonize or make better use of partner systems. The way it is operated is probably the best pragmatic solution, however, in perspective those responsibilities should involve counterparts and integrate RBM into their processes.

**Unintended negative results** have **not been discovered** by the evaluation.

The effectiveness criterion is given the rating **“successful”**.

**Impact**

The evaluation question on impact can be answered on a very basic level only, since the evaluation hardly could establish causal relations beyond the output level.

The **ratio of a) the volume of funding in relation to b) the number of interventions in the four mandated output areas across four countries** is by design too ambitious for broad results on impact level – given the conditions. Of about 40 intervention areas would rather fit to an orientation phase.

Despite that, the project has **contributed to broader impact** when for instance in certain time windows advice and expertise was rendered and in metrology and accreditation international standards have been adopted in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, or QI-related WTO requirements in Tajikistan, according to stakeholder interviews. Those changes cannot be isolated to the current phase but can be attributed to the PTB and long-term support by BMZ.

Notwithstanding these achievements in the change processes, the **evaluators express their concern** that,

- **Different understandings of traceability and calibration** between PTB and counterparts will affect the outlook for impact. For instance, in Kazakhstan the QI institutions follow their formal national provisions, but no evidence could be provided that national provisions are in line with international definitions, like statements of BIPM or standards, like ‘metrological traceability requires an established calibration hierarchy’ and ‘metrological traceability to the SI’. This affects the QI service quality fundamentally, and as a consequence the use of Kazakh QI services by SMEs and eventually the customers (**target group**).
The results chain is overstretched: disjoint from capacitating the QI institutions to reaching the SME and customers (target group) in a demand-oriented way.

The anticipation of impact is high among stakeholders. Stakeholders also agree that the international recognition is the key objective of the joint endeavor with PTB, there are only differences about the way how to achieve it. In Uzbekistan international recognition seems to be primarily a political goal and expressed in policy papers, with no evident feedback from markets to policies—a feature that emerged in senior management interviews in the other three countries as well.

In conclusion, it is possible that Central Asian SMEs’ competitiveness and export abilities are plausibly improved through the QI system and customers will benefit from this development. Since there is no indicator for systemic sector development, the question whether QI-CA contributes to sustainable, developmental change processes in that respect cannot so far be answered and therefore requires further investigation. It comes down to the aspect, which sector in which country has the best prospects to help establishing a demand for a better QI system. The evaluation witnessed meaningful steps in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Maybe in future more data can be evaluated to establish the case for QI in practice, not having to refer merely to policy and hypothetical links to the target group.

The impact criterion is given the rating “successful”.

Efficiency

As of the beginning of the evaluation and according to a PTB project assessment sheet (2016-02-08_Projektdoku 95093) QI-CA has procured and conducted 47 international short-term expert missions to Central Asia, 17 assignments of local experts, and Braunschweig-based project management has been in the host countries for 16 times.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Missions of international experts (plus: missions of project management in host countries)</th>
<th>Assignments of local experts without translators</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>12 (6)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>29 (9)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016 (until 08/02/2016)</td>
<td>6 (1)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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Further activity outputs:

- 20 counterpart persons trained in Germany;
- 6 COOMET and ILAC meeting participations;
- 19 equipment devices (below EUR 10,000);
- More than 450 participants of in country trainings and workshops (double-counting of the same person at different events is possible).

In terms of the mode of delivery the project invests the funds in direct and associated costs for international and national staff, which includes advisory services to partners, and mostly short-term expert missions. The project provides few funds for direct contributions, but organizes and contracts key service deliveries (analysis, training, consulting QI etc.) through external consultants.

The evaluators had no insight into allocation of project funds, and the allocation and monitoring of project funds is not subject to project steering decision of partners. This is considered as the domain of PTB. Thus, access to the overall project cost calculation in combination to documents that specify the project’s (monetary) contribution to outputs would have been necessary for a detailed assessment of the efficiency performance and the appropriateness of the selected approaches and the way the project was implemented has been the most efficient way compared to alternatives.

The evaluators, however, noted during the field missions:

- an exceptionally lean organizational structure
- low logistics footprint.
- highest marks for “German PTB” efficiency in every partner interview.

The opportunity of coordinating with other donors and projects has been proactively sought and, wherever possible, implemented.

Especially with regard to the funds available, the number of lines of interventions, and the number of
activities, the efficiency criterion is given the rating “very successful”.

Sustainability

Regarding sustainability defined as long-lasting impacts after the end of interventions, all output areas related to international requirements and standards (area 1, 2, and 3) have good prospects for the possibility of durable sustainability. This is because once an accession to international standards has been achieved it is likely that not least for political and reputational reasons, domestic will and funding is available or will be made available before a suspension or delisting takes place. PTB has been supporting some of the accreditations directly, e.g. DAkkS accreditation for Kyrgyzstan. It is expected by PTB project management and partners that this Kyrgyz accreditation will be perceived in the region as an achievement. It would be an interesting topic for future investigation whether an outstanding achievement like that creates dynamics in other Central Asian countries and even with counterparts in Russia.

Measurement traceability and uncertainty of measurement are key to ensure that products and goods are in compliance with international standards. Cooperation between accreditation bodies and metrology institutes is not yet established to the extent that it enhances conformity assessment capability. The project management in consultation with counterparts has frequently considered sustainability issues against the criteria of ownership and financial resources as well as against the backdrop challenging political environment in the region. In addition, that domestic funding for accreditations needs to be observed, one way for the project to provide for more sustainability is certainly to engage the private sector in a more intensive way to ensure stability of financial means available for QI in Central Asia especially driven by technology and export oriented sectors, that would eventually institutionalize demand for QI services according to international standards. The sustainability criterion is given the rating “successful”.

2.2 Success factors for the observed results and change processes

The Capacity WORKS (CW) management model and the five success factors were new to the participants of the four self-assessment workshops, which have been conducted during the evaluation.

Strategy

The QI-CA strategy is flexible within the given mandate, i.e. opportunity driven. Basically, the project analyzed different opportunities with partners and major donors to achieve its objective and subsequently decides on the approach and the intensity with which a collaboration is sought with a partner, without having a pre-defined strategy with each of the QI-institutions or limited just to those institutions. This has different advantages and drawbacks. However, in terms of efficiency the assumption behind this is that within the dynamism of the political economy in Central Asia a high degree of decision making leeway on monetary resources is kept within the project management.

The project has successfully built an intervention strategy that allows achieving the indented results of the mandate, except reaching out to the target group. In the workshops and interviews organized in the four countries it became obvious that most partners and stakeholders were not aware of the actual complexity and ambition of the results framework, although a joint planning process was confirmed by stakeholders and is evident in the documentation including the signed cooperation agreements with the national QI-institutions.

Cooperation

A key characteristic is the demand-driven and flexible approach that allows the QI-CA to operate and adjust according to developments in the dynamic (political) environment. A further characteristic is the project’s strong cooperation- and process orientation in order to capture the sector regime and
governance processes within and surrounding the fields of metrology and accreditation. With regard to the reaching out to the target group as defined in the mandate, apart from amending the results chain by defining a target group within the reach of the project, the main option relates to seeking the engagement of the private sector. The project thus could act as an honest broker which holds the advantage for companies that their advances for QI are backed by an international partner like PTB. Supporting this in a broad manner would however exceed the means of the project. The project is working together with the most relevant stakeholders needed to achieve realistic results in the given context, but it was not found by the evaluators to be feasible to work with the relevant stakeholders to reach the target group or assess and monitor the effects of the project on the target group. Regarding other development partners and stakeholders in the country, the project takes the role (that was unanimously praised by other donor programs and embassies) to set up and broker cooperation as a success factor – i.e. providing the right system inputs in introducing or strengthening QI services. In principle, this role can even be extended to include the private sector more intensively e.g. in cooperation with the GIZ regional and bilateral programs. The field of the donors and implementing organizations including GIZ, ADB, EU and ITC is described in the mandate and progress reports and project documentation in that respect are satisfactory. Given the quite limited funds allocated per country, QI-CA has to and does embed and harmonize its activities in partner and donor programs wherever possible.

Steering structure

The project stretches over four output areas and three different levels (regional, national and local), in four countries (output area 4 just limited to Tajikistan). This is of about a potential 40 lines of interventions - to be observed and steered. With regard to steering, the project used different platforms in order to work together with partners. On the regional level this was done by seminars and workshops, on the national level with the signing of corporation agreements and discussions during missions of the project management or experts or via e-mail. The tool of the work plan was applied but for instance with regard to Kyrgyzstan not updated since 2014. The flexible approach taken so far during project implementation is in a nutshell: 1) discussion of a demand during a short-term mission; 2) project management offers training, 3) project management takes partner into the loop on the terms of reference of the consultant; 4) the partner assigns a counterpart for this activity; 5) the consultant works with the counterpart and 6) submits his or her report to PTB. Thus, overall steering was mainly done by the project management far-distance and on missions. In all four self-assessment workshops the topic was brought forward by the participants, that they perceive a lack that there is no in-group that drives the exchange with PTB. They blamed themselves, their own institutions and expressed this as a deficiency. Working with focus persons and a clearer steering structure did not, however, function in previous phase. For instance, not the relevant staff for the task was sent to trainings. If in the future, opportunities emerge to establish a clearer and more focused system for steering this would increase accessibility and transparency of decisions for the staff involved. Any successful measure that contributes to the organizational development and capacity building of a QI institution (if not to say of the entire sector) needs a gap analysis or needs assessment as a basis for an intervention orientation framework. Normally this should be done at the beginning and in a joint manner as a basis for a joint steering decisions. The evaluators found some space for improvement in that respect, as the gap analysis for Tajikistan was done rather late in January 2016 (2016-01-31_Defizitanalyse_TAJ), in German and not conclusive. Neither in Tajikistan, nor in the other three self-assessment workshops this was mentioned as an issue by the partner and should thus not be overstated.

Processes

QI-CA’s main characteristic is its multidimensional and flexible approach that allows the project to operate and adjust according to developments in the dynamic (political) environment and within weak QI framework conditions. The project management has pursued:
- **Strong process orientation** to support reforms in the QI institutions combined with a structural approach to build cooperation with all relevant stakeholders around the project on different levels.
- **Emphasizing on timely advisory work** in different areas of metrology and accreditation pending on windows of opportunities for change.
- Continuation and deepening of **strong relationships** to a multitude of partner and stakeholders.

The evaluators considered the aspect of processes in the CW workshops from two perspectives:

1. **Internal management** of the project in order to *maximize outputs* and
2. **External processes** in terms of processes at the **QI systems level**.

In terms of processes at the **QI system level** the project is strongly process oriented and being commended from the perspectives of partners and other donors alike for this strength.

With regard to internal processes it became obvious from different statements and discussions that it has three centers:

1. Project management, perceived as highly cost-efficient and reliable,
2. (informal) group of staff from all four countries on a regional level that is involved in steering. The regional group bears similarities to a sounding board.
3. Senior management on the national levels which takes decisions (cooperation agreement, assignment of staff for trainings and missions).

**Learning and innovation**

The **evaluation report (abridged version) of the previous phase** had been shared with four staff per country.

The learning system of QI-CA centers on:

- **Mission meetings** with the management and working levels of QI institutions,
- Sharing of documentation, e.g. **mission and training reports** and
- Event or workshop **feedback evaluation forms**.

These instruments enjoy a *high priority in the workflow* of the project management, but **dissemination to the working level** in partner institution is an ongoing issue. It was *widely appreciated* that the project produces and provides documentation of activities that individually allowed the participants to draw conclusions from lessons learned. There is no evidence that lessons learned were not applied in the respective line of activity.

The Evaluators did not however find features of a learning system that goes **beyond the strict line of intervention/activity**. A systemic learning culture is new to the QI institutions and only emerging, for instance in Kyrgyzstan.

Regarding the learning on the **regional level** this largely depends on the stability of the group of participants: whether staff changes take place or not. It can be assessed as stable in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, while Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan used to change their participants according to the venue.

3. **Learning processes and learning experience**

The **evaluation** had the **full support of the QI-CA**, in terms of access to project documentation, access to resource persons and institutions as well as arranging the itinerary and the logistics. Thus, the evaluators were provided with the adequate conditions by QI-CA to fulfill their terms of reference.

4. **Recommendations**
### Strategy / Cooperation

1) **Ensure consistency of the target system in the mandate** according to BMZ requirements and international practice (example: one goal per objective).

   - PTB, Q51

2) **Do not overstretch the results chain** in the mandate to a faraway target group (e.g. consumers, SMEs) beyond the role and capacities of the key stakeholders.

   - PTB, Q51

### Steering Structure

3) Orientate the **steering of the project** towards ownership and clearer role of partners. This starts with a **joint** monitoring system and with joint decisions to be taken based on the collected monitoring data, and ends with a joint evaluation mission.

   - PTB project management
   - Implementing institutions
   - External evaluators

### Processes

4) **Continue to push the top** of QI institutions in Central Asia where actual reforms are intended and ongoing. Use regional trainers from those advanced QI institutions in order to allow others to follow (lighthouse effect). But rather **limit efforts to pull the bottom** of non-performers. Engagement to the extent only that there is a political demand to do so and to maintain availability. This requires a **demand-driven, flexible** but nevertheless measurable **results framework**.

   - PTB project management
   - Implementing institutions

5) Showcase QI by piloting **QI dissemination** to the local level and to SME, where applicable.

   - PTB project management
   - Implementing institutions

6) Ensure that **QI standards** are implemented meaningfully (not just formally and legalistically) with reference to international definitions, like statements of BIPM including metrological traceability to the SI.

   - Implementing institutions

### Learning and Innovation

7) **Use (and build) evaluation expertise from Central Asia** – for joint missions.

   - PTB project management
   - Implementing institutions
   - External evaluators

8) **Selected CW tools** should be applied during implementation of measures. Not least, this will train stakeholders in the thinking of the management model, upon which the future evaluation will be based.

   - PTB project management
   - Implementing institutions

9) **Review the CW questionnaire** that was provided in the guideline by PTB in terms of comprehensiveness for the target group, in particular, the questions related to strategic priorities (Annex II, 1.1-1.3), capacity development (Annex II 1.5.) and processes (Annex II, 4.4; 4.5).

   - PTB project management
   - Implementing institutions

10) Use the tool of CW self-assessment to **benchmark progress**.

    - PTB project management
| Provide assistance how to use and transfer CW tools and make them relevant for the work of the mediators. | Implementing institutions |