



Deutscher Tropentag, October 9-11, 2002, Witzenhausen
“Challenges to Organic Farming and Sustainable Land Use
in the Tropics and Subtropics”

Impact Monitoring & Assessment — Instruments for Use in Rural Development Projects with a Focus on Sustainable Land Management

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Abstract

To what extent do development projects achieve their purpose and reach their goals? Are we doing things right and are we doing the right things? There is an on-going discussion among development agencies and their partners about how to determine the impact of development cooperation. “Impact Monitoring and Assessment” (IMA, Volume 1&2) is a contribution to this discussion.

IMA is designed for managers, staff and consultants in rural development programmes and projects who need to establish a monitoring system. Since there is no universal monitoring procedure, IMA provides some building blocks for the development of project-specific impact monitoring. Volume 1 contains a general description of an IMA procedure integrated into project cycle management (PCM). As part of a project’s self-evaluation, IMA is an instrument of reflection, learning and quality control throughout a project’s life cycle, in order to better adapt project activities to a changing context. Volume 2 provides additional tools, references, selected monitoring methods and examples from “sustainable land management” (SLM), an important component of sustainable development. These examples should also help projects in other sectors, such as health, education, infrastructure, etc., to adapt the basic IMA procedure to their needs. Whether an impact is considered positive or negative, sustainable or unsustainable, etc., depends on who assesses it (a farmer, his wife, a researcher, a policy-maker, etc.), and his or her interests (economic, social, ecological). Broad involvement by stakeholders during the entire IMA is therefore essential and can also play a central role in their empowerment. IMA is a contribution to local capacity building because it helps stakeholders to present their perceptions, analyse, negotiate and make joint decisions.

The present document takes constraints on time and money in development projects into account, and suggests only simple and therefore cost-effective tools and instruments that have already been tested in practice. The aim of IMA is thus to find plausible indications — and not scientific proof — of a project’s impact.

Keywords: Impact monitoring and assessment, participatory methodology, sustainable land management