KfW

⟫ Retaining the ability to act, achieving results and minimising risks in a context of fragility – including from a distance

One Pager

Management and administration of projects from a distance, known as Remote Management, Monitoring and Verification (RMMV), has increased in significance, not least due to the travel restrictions in place because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Methods that have previously been put to the test in fragile contexts are now also being used in other regions. What opportunities does RMMV offer and what risks does it carry?

The opportunities of RMMV

The potential of RMMV lies in the fact that better and/or more data are available and that they can be accessed remotely as well, meaning that projects can be prepared, reviewed and implemented better. It also enables results to be measured more precisely.

In order to develop RMMV approaches for projects, the following questions must be answered upfront:

– Who in the project needs what information remotely, and how good does the quality need to be? What limitations are there on remote access?

– Which stakeholders will take on new or altered roles and what information can they provide (remotely)?

– How can the stakeholders be supported in this from a technical perspective?

When it comes to practical implementation, RMMV relies equally on institutional approaches – meaning new or altered roles and responsibilities for those involved in the project – and modern technology. This might include evaluation of high-resolution satellite images,

monitoring via smartphone apps or virtual reality.

More target group participation

In addition to this, the rights of target groups are strengthened due to their increased involvement, for instance. One example of this is the use of apps or simpler technologies for mobile phones. For instance, in wildlife conservation projects these could be used to flag where wild animals are living or report cases of poaching, or they could enable parents to feed back via their mobile phones on whether a school has been set up as agreed.

Involving the target groups in project planning and monitoring increases transparency around progress and the impact of development projects.

Risks and limitations of RMMV

Nevertheless, RMMV does not only offer opportunities. It also carries risks. Essentially, the use of RMMV primarily requires data security, transparency and trust. First and foremost, this means that RMMV components need to be designed in a way that cultivates trust among the project's stakeholders. The actors must be able to rely on the fact that their data will be encrypted, stored and transmitted securely. The fundamental principle is that only data that are necessary for the project are collected; not just all additional data that could be of interest.

Everyone about whom data are collected must be informed of this and notified of the purpose of collection. Their consent to the processing must be obtained (informed consent). Donors are therefore called upon to exercise great care, both when collecting and using

data. Naturally, the legal frameworks must be considered for all aspects of RMMV, such as any local provisions regarding the use of drones.

Conclusion

With continued development of digitalisation, better access to the internet, including in partner countries, and increasingly fast data exchange, RMMV will be used more and more in development cooperation as it contributes to the following three objectives:

1. Maintaining the ability to act (especially in fragile contexts);

2. Minimising reputational and operational risks (including guaranteeing the safety of everyone involved in projects); and

3. Measuring, securing and improving results.

RMMV is by no means a cost-saving approach. Quite the opposite: RMMV can increase the budget and the amount of work required by project stakeholders, especially in the early phases of a project. However, in the long term it leads to greater efficiency and creates synergy effects.

RMMV will nonetheless be unable to replace visits to a project in person – the opportunity to see the project for oneself and have conversations with partners and representatives from the target group makes it easier to understand the culture and context and build a trusting partnership. Instead, RMMV in development cooperation will open up new ways to cooperate and redefine the roles of those involved.∎