

THE PUBLIC'S EXPECTATIONS OF DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Findings of the DEval Opinion Monitor for Development Policy 2021

Key findings

- High poverty, low corruption and a predominantly Christian population are decisive factors in predicting whether the German public supports development cooperation with a specific partner country.
- Development cooperation with countries in Sub-Saharan Africa receives the most support.
- Fragile states that cannot meet their populations' basic needs are viewed as particularly worthy of support.
- "Food security and agriculture" along with "peace and security" are the sectors that are perceived as most worthy of support.

Development policy requires the support of the general public. Although surveys have revealed that Germany's population is in favour of state involvement in development cooperation, many people doubt the effectiveness of development policy measures. They also fear that funds may be lost to corruption in the partner countries. In order to help shape public discourse on this topic based on evidence, decision-makers need to know what the public expects from development policy.

The DEval Opinion Monitor for Development Policy 2021 addressed this issue. It investigated which partner countries the general public perceives as particularly worthy of support and what socioeconomic and political characteristics of the countries are associated with this perception. To examine these questions, we conducted a choice-based conjoint experiment, in which 3,000 respondents representative of the German population chose between two hypothetical partner countries ten times. For the first five choices, selected characteristics of the countries were presented to inform the decisions (e.g. poverty, corruption,

fragility). For the second five decisions, respondents decided based on real country names (see Section 6, Box 13 in Schneider et al., 2021, for a detailed explanation).

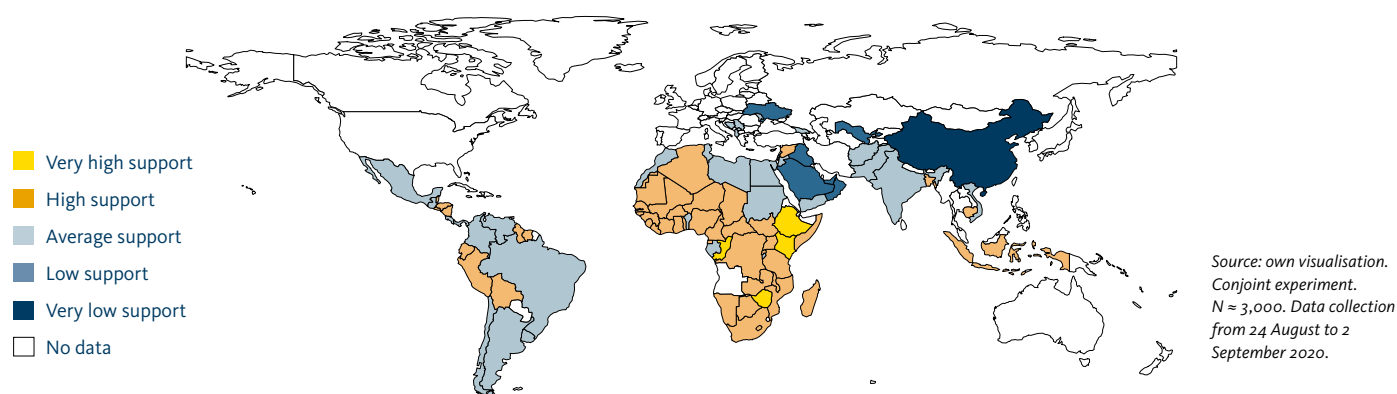
Development cooperation with countries in Sub-Saharan Africa receives particular support

Development cooperation with countries in Sub-Saharan Africa receives particularly high levels of support. By comparison, people are less supportive of development cooperation with Latin American, Asian and Eastern European countries. The general public views Ethiopia, Kenya, Zimbabwe and the Republic of the Congo as especially worthy of support. On the other hand, there is little support for development cooperation with China, Saudi Arabia and Ukraine.

High poverty, low corruption and a Christian population – decisive criteria for development cooperation support

High levels of poverty in partner countries are associated with greater support, while high levels of corruption predict less support. At the same time, development cooperation with countries where the majority of the population is Muslim receives less support than cooperation with countries in which the population is predominantly Christian. The level of state fragility is also important: Across the central dimensions of fragility, it is apparent that limited state capacities to meet the population's basic needs lead to stronger support for development cooperation with the partner country. By contrast, support is lower if the population of the partner country does not trust its government (low legitimacy) or if the country's government does not have a monopoly on the use of force (low authority).

Figure. Support for development cooperation partner countries



Greater support for “food security and agriculture” as well as “peace and security”

Regarding different sectors in development cooperation, the public particularly supports cooperation in the “food security and agriculture” and “peace and security” sectors. By contrast, the population perceives cooperation in the sectors concerned with “private sector development” and “climate change” as less worthy of support.

Implications for development policy and development cooperation

These findings indicate that there is tension between the public’s expectation of development cooperation and the self-image of many development cooperation actors. Whereas the former is shaped by a narrative of aid in the fight against poverty, the latter

focuses on partnership-based global development and tackling global challenges. At the same time, the public has reservations regarding development cooperation with countries that are affected by corruption. The same holds true for fragile states that show low legitimacy or low authority within their territory.

The task of development communication and education therefore is to create connections with the prevailing development cooperation narrative in the population without neglecting the objectives associated with the self-image of development cooperation actors. A potential starting point is to convey the complex and often long-term relationships between the fight against poverty on the one hand and meeting global challenges or creating stable rule of law/state structures on the other. This can contribute to maintaining public understanding of and support for development policy interventions in the long term.

Literature

Schneider, S. H., Eger, J. and Sassenhagen, N. (2021), *Opinion Monitor for Development Policy 2021 – Media content, information, appeals and their impact on public opinion*, Deutsches Evaluierungsinstitut der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit (German Institute for Development Evaluation) (DEval), Bonn, <https://bit.ly/2ToNn75>

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