

# FOLLOW UP REPORT

Tim Cholibois | MICHEL International Relations & Services

DAAD – Project Leader Conference  
'Educating tomorrow's leaders to pioneer  
sustainable development – the role of academia'

Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania | 22–24 July 2024



### SUMMARY

The DAAD's Project Leader Conference "Educating tomorrow's leaders to pioneer sustainable development – the role of academia", financed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), showcased the role Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play in shaping the leaders of tomorrow. The two-day conference took place in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania from 22 – 24 July 2024 and congregated almost 100 academics and project leaders from the Global South, predominantly the African continent. It focused on multilateral cooperation in HEIs between Africa and Germany funded by the DAAD. As such, the conference forms part of a recurring event series with different regional and/or thematic foci. Previous conferences took place in Costa Rica in 2023 and in Myanmar in 2019 for example. The constant evolution of project methodologies over the years and the increasing professionalisation of the project work itself was clearly visible throughout the conference.

Participants presented and discussed a total of 41 projects that aimed to contribute towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the United Nation's Agenda 2030 framework. Their work spanned a wide range of critical subject areas, such as alleviating poverty, fighting climate change, overcoming inequality and fostering social innovation. One of the principal objectives of the conference was to provide a space for collective learning from the leaders' past challenges and successes and to jointly reflect on how to maximise project impact.

Key themes that emerged during the conference included:

- the collective effort to anchor the SDGs in university curricula and the design of multilateral programmes and projects that advance the UN's Agenda 2030
- the inclusion of local communities in communicating and disseminating research findings (broad impact/knowledge transfer)
- the creation of virtual knowledge management systems that are easily accessible and ensure that project leaders learn from one another
- the importance of clear, honest and inclusive communication among project staff in order to guarantee lasting success and remove power imbalances

## DAY 1: OPENING REMARKS AND KEY NOTE



From left to right: Professor Dr Kihampa, Andreas Böhler, Dr Kenneth Hosea, Heike Heinen-Kritz, Ambassador Thomas Terstegen and Professor Esther Ishengoma

The conference started with opening remarks by representatives from the German and Tanzanian government as well as the DAAD. First, **Dr Keneth Hosea**, Director of Higher Education at the Tanzanian Ministry of Education, Science and Technology welcomed the participants from 25 nations and wished them a successful conference. He thanked the DAAD for the successful cooperation in the realm of higher education that has spanned various decades and emphasised the importance of multilateral partnerships the increasingly internationalising Tanzanian university landscape.

*“The technical and cultural exchange of resources such as this will greatly benefit our nations and the global research community.”*

**Dr Keneth Hosea | Director of Higher Education at the Tanzanian Ministry of Education Science and Technology**

Next, the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany, **Thomas Terstegen**, welcomed the guests. He talked about the value of multi-stakeholder approaches such as this conference in creating platforms for discussing and potentially solving some of the challenges faced in HEIs all over the world. **Marianne Knirsch** from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) further contextualised her predecessors’ contributions by highlighting the role of higher education and academic exchange in shaping a more sustainable and just future for all. She shared that every third partnership established by the DAAD between a university in Germany and abroad included Sub-Saharan African universities, thus reiterating the key role of Africa as a valuable partner for Germany.

*“Educating tomorrow’s leaders is not just a task for academia but a collective effort that spans multiple layers of society. We can use this conference to get started!”*

**Marianne Knirsch**  
Deputy Head of Division Education at the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

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**Andreas Böhler**, Head of Section 32 of the DAAD concluded the welcoming remarks and spoke about the universal language of science in bridging the gap between countries regardless of conflict or tensions. With **education as a central pillar in achieving the SDGs**, Böhler finished by stating that there was no development without education and invited all participants to actively contribute to this process of joint knowledge creation that this Project Leader Conference represents.

**Professor Charles D. Kihampa**, the Executive Secretary of the Tanzania Commission for University, continued with an in-depth key note on the impressive development of the Tanzanian higher education sector over the last few decades and highlighted the value of academic freedom in moving us forward as a society. He showcased the impressive progress of that Tanzania's tertiary education sector has made over the years: Today, there are over 60,000 students enrolled in over 50 courses and the numbers are growing. However, Kihampa bemoaned that it is becoming increasingly difficult to integrate graduates in the labour market.

Not only did Professor Kihampa provide an informative and detailed glimpse into the inner workings of tertiary education in Tanzania and beyond, he also explained the role of universities in achieving the SDGs. He stipulated that one of the key functions of universities consisted in addressing specific societal challenges, which can be highly local and country-specific in nature. In Tanzania for example, learning about agriculture, forestry and conservation was an essential component in the process of fulfilling the SDGs. Professor Kihampa concluded by stating that **universities can only fulfil their critical role in society if they adopt the right curricula**. The review of these curricula is a direct outcome of continuous coordination efforts between a complex and intricate web of stakeholders, which requires the concerted effort and commitment by all parties involved, the international community being one of them.

As a former DAAD scholar himself, he positioned the organisation's highly successful work within Tanzania and beyond as a major contributor to shaping the future of higher education across the continent. The lively Q&A that followed Professor Kihampa's key note gave further testament to the invaluable contribution of international exchange to collective learning. Participants inquired how issues such as credit transfers, the taxing of universities, and the dissemination of research to local communities were handled in Tanzania. Their eagerness to learn from each other was apparent in the following discussion and it was clear that they wanted to bring the insights provided back home to implement them in their own countries.

## GETTING TO KNOW THE PROJECTS

Next, it was time to get to know the projects! Project leaders from Germany and their project partners from countries all over the African continent as well as other target regions proudly presented what they had achieved over the years. Quite inspiringly, the projects spanned a wide range of subject areas all centred around education: Biodiversity, microfinance, energy access, entrepreneurship, public health, urban development, decolonisation, to name just a few. The multiple hours spent getting to know the plethora of successful DAAD projects provided a unique opportunity for the project leaders to learn from each other, ask questions and come up with strategies to solve common challenges.



Dr Maud Mhlongo



Professor Dr Astrid Ley



Sarah Ouerghemmi

Globally, the creation of **transnational and transdisciplinary research and education networks** emerged as an ongoing theme in the 41 project presentations. On a more local level, many participants talked about their **efforts to engage with the communities that their research aimed to benefit**. Research methods that ensure the integration of traditional and indigenous knowledge (e.g. action research), as well as teaching strategies that aim at creating income streams for the communities affected (e.g. design thinking) were presented as key success factors for sustainable project implementation.

After the lunch break where participants were treated to a delicious buffet of international specialties, **Heike Heinen-Kritz**, Senior Desk Officer for Higher Education Partnerships with the Global South from DAAD provided an insight into the DAAD's ongoing project work under the topic "Partnership projects to strengthen teaching, research and transfer". Among other topics, she highlighted the prerequisites for successful partnership projects, which she illustrated in the following diagram:



Slide from Heike Heinen-Kritz (DAAD) to the conference

According to Heinen-Kritz, the **most important contributor to a project's success are partnerships at eye level and trust-based, open communication**. Further findings Mrs Heinen-Kritz presented showed how projects have improved teaching, research, and the establishment of regional networks. In this process, the SDGs are a vector to increase transferability of the project outcomes to society at large.

## PANEL: THE ROLE OF ACADEMIA IN EDUCATING TOMORROW SUSTAINABILITY PIONEERS.

Another highlight of the first conference day was the panel discussion on the event's main topic – the role of academia in educating tomorrow sustainability pioneers. The panel members unpacked the role of HEIs and the people working in them in equipping students with the necessary skills to assume leadership positions and dedicate their careers to working for the greater good. The panel consisted of **Professor Daniel Agyapong** from the University of Cape Coast in Ghana, **Melvine Otieno**, the Founder of Planetary Health Eastern Africa Hub from Kenya, **Professor Esther Ishengoma** from the University of Dar es Salaam Business School from Tanzania and **Professor Ayobami Salami** at Vice Chancellor at First Technical University in Nigeria. It was moderated by **Professor Kay Pfaffenberger**, the CEO of the Centre for Business and Technology in Africa at the Flensburg University of Applied Sciences.

*“It is our job as leaders to challenge our youth to really think critically about the challenges we pose to the environment, to challenge them to focus on the practical issues that their communities are facing.”*

Professor Ayobami Salami | Vice Chancellor | First Technical University, Nigeria

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The answer to the first question the panel addressed – how to educate sustainability leaders in the context of the SDGs – was rather straightforward: Integrate the SDGs in every curriculum of the HEIs present and beyond, use practical examples from the real world, such as case studies on recent weather events, and support students in implementing the ideas they come up with in their studies via tailored programs.



From left to right: Professor Daniel Agyapong, Melvine Otieno, Professor Kay Pfaffenberger, Professor Esther Ishengoma and Professor Ayobami Salami

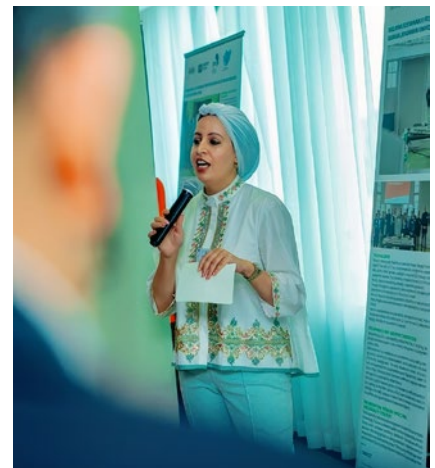
Technology was a further talking point. As most university students are extremely tech savvy and use online platforms and mobile internet in their day-to-day, researchers need to ensure to also make use of such tools when disseminating their findings. However, not only the channels used to publish research are important but also how and to whom it is communicated. Local events would be great occasions to work with community leaders, elders or religious figures to spread knowledge in the students’ communities. **The closer the research community positions itself to its local beneficiaries, the better.** Panellists emphasised the importance to see knowledge generation as a two-way street: Researchers and educators need to be open to being taught by the community which questions they would like to see answered and which methods are best used in their context. The panel ended with stressing that emerging talent needs to be promoted and supported at all costs so that Africa can realise the full potential of its rapidly growing, young population. Professor Pfaffenberger concluded the panel and thus also the first day of the conference with a heartfelt invitation to all participants: **“Inspire one youth to be better than you”**.

*“Students don’t have to adjust to us, we have to adjust to them.”*

Professor Daniel Agyapong | University of Cape Coast, Ghana



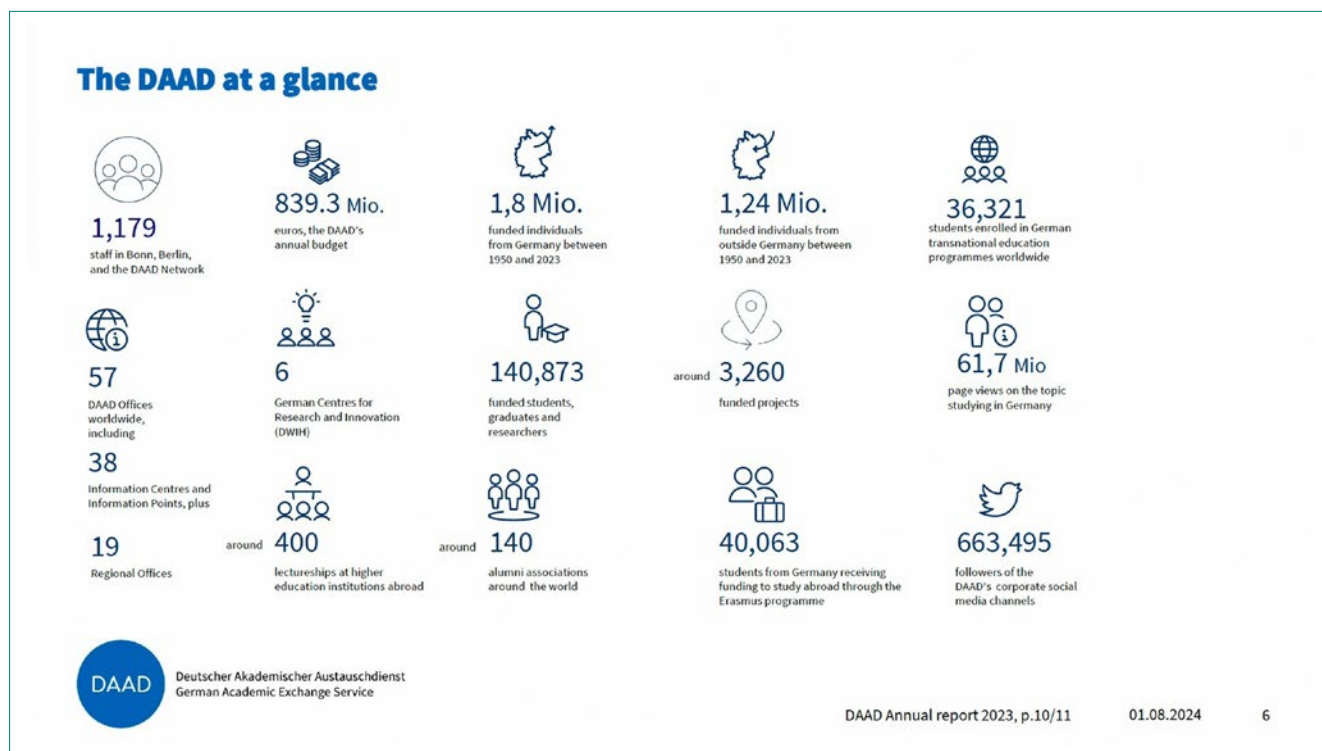
Dr Esther Nkhukhu



Dr Farah Alatrash

## DAY 2: THE WORK OF THE DAAD

Day 2 started with a quick recap by the excellent moderator **Martha Selwyn** summarising the achievements of the previous day and reminding participants of the crucial role the conference plays for the DAAD in maximising the impact of their funded projects. **Andreas Böhler** started the second day with a brief overview of its work: With a 2023 budget EUR 893.3 million, **the DAAD is the largest funding organisation for academic exchange in the world**. Mr Böhler presented the strategy 2025, which consisted in three main pillars: Promoting excellence, enhancing international collaboration and assuming global responsibility.



Slide from Andreas Böhler (DAAD) to the conference

Mr Böhler then continued to provide some context on the German regulatory system under which DAAD funds are distributed and spoke to the bureaucratic processes behind disbursing DAAD Grants to international partner organisations – a much needed insight for project leaders that had been vividly discussed in the breakout groups the previous day. He explained that the DAAD is currently being audited by the BMZ, and highlighted the importance of stringent documentation regarding hiring, tendering, reimbursements and event participation. He concluded his talk by providing an outlook beyond 2025 – the DAAD's new 2030 strategy that will involve more focus on the cross-cutting dimensions of diversity, sustainability and digitisation.



Dr Anyway Mikioni



Dr Dong-Gill Kim

## BREAKOUT GROUPS

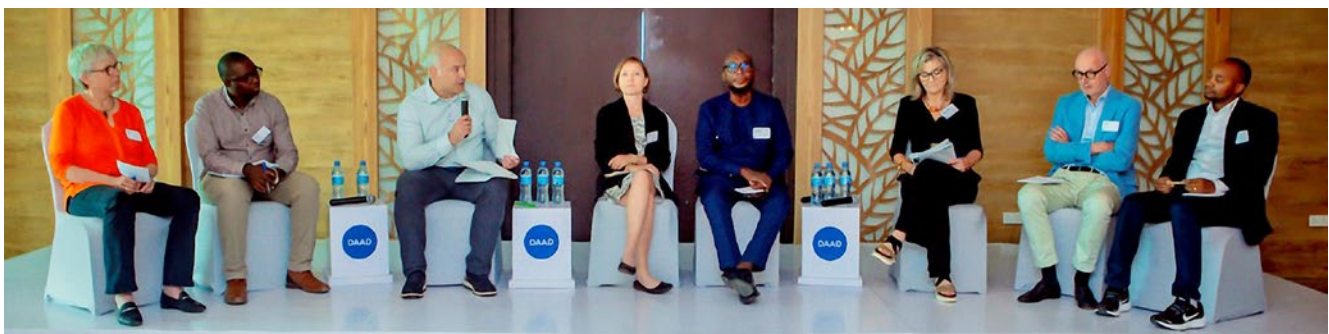
The next, highly anticipated point in the agenda was the presentation of the results from the breakout group sessions that the first day had ended with. The following learnings were presented by each group to the plenary:

- Group 1 debated how to best educate tomorrow’s leaders to pioneer sustainable development. The discussion focused on appropriate measures to change the mindsets of students and build the necessary skills – and also confidence levels – necessary to become future leaders. The solutions presented included the creation of nurturing ecosystems both within HEIs and in the communities the students come from with the objective to equip promising individuals with the right skills. Actively building relationships with their community leaders in order to catalyse change and provide role models was seen as a critical success factor going forward.
- Group 2 investigated the role of academia in times of global crises, namely focusing on climate change and political instability. Participants made a strong case for the inclusion of academics in the political sphere where participants currently saw their voices underrepresented. The critical role of researchers and scientists in disseminating knowledge to their communities and society as a whole was highlighted. The solutions proposed by the discussants included a more active involvement of academics in the process of policy implementation and a focus on clear and simple communication of research findings to local communities in a participatory and engaging manner.
- Group 3 explored how knowledge transfer from HEIs to society, politics, and industry could be enhanced. Before starting their presentation, they made clear that knowledge transfer must not be perceived as mono-directional (“to and from”) but a multilateral process “between” said actors. The group presented a detailed catalogue of potential measures and instruments that they saw as vehicles to increase knowledge dissemination and retentions. Their propositions included – among others – community-based experience reports, transdisciplinary network building, increased policy dialogue, the co-creation and co-design of academic programs, project-based teaching, and many more measures.
- Group 4 shared an extensive list of success factors that offer solutions to the question of how partnership projects can better benefit from each other in order to improve their impact. Among them: stringent monitoring and evaluation, transparency in setting up project frameworks, actively addressing power imbalances, and – most importantly – honest and regular communication about the expectations, needs and capacities of each of the partners involved. One of the ideas they suggested to DAAD was to create an AI-assisted project database that uses tags to classify past projects so that new project leaders can get a head start in informing themselves about the lessons learned and challenges faced by their predecessors.

*“Lasting sustainable partnerships must be equal. Unequal power dynamics between the Global North and the South can be balanced by honestly communicating which resources each partner brings to the table. These do not always have to be financial but can consist in technical knowhow, knowledge, and access to local resources.”*

**Cynthia Jepchirchir, Project Coordinator, University of Nairobi in Kenya**

## PANEL: LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE



Panelists from left to right: Dr Susanne Timm, Dr Christine Nyirama, Moderator Andreas Böhler, Franziska Rottig, Professor Emmanuel Danquah, Moderator Heike Heinen-Kritz, Professor Dr Harald Renz and Dr Francis Sakita



**The cross-cutting theme of this conference was collective and collaborative learning.** Peer-to-peer formats and methods that allow project leaders to enter into open dialogue with each other are crucial steps in the creation of knowledge networks such as this one that will benefit the DAAD community in the long term. The second panel of the event was dedicated to the topic of learning from each other. Three projects whose funding cycles were ending presented their achievements and challenges to the next generation of project leaders. Their discussion focussed on how to ensure longevity and continuity far beyond single funding cycles. The panel was chaired by the DAAD representatives **Andreas Böhler** and **Heike Heinen-Kritz**.

*“I would like to encourage everybody to think about broadening the nuclei of academic projects and bring in additional stakeholders from local communities and governments and provide them with different opportunities for exchange.”*

Professor Dr Harald Renz | Philipps University Marburg in Germany

**Dr Susanne Timm** from the University of Bamberg and **Dr Christine Nyiramana**, Vice Dean of the Faculty of Education of the Protestant University of Ruanda, presented the project: **‘Quality in Teacher Training and Educational Research through International Partnership’**. They concentrated on the crucial role of communication in a successful project delivery. Setting up open communication channels where face-to-face meetings are regularly planned and executed opened up spaces for creativity critical to project success. By involving multiple parties in managing said communication channels, ownership was transferred to the whole group of project partners and not just one individual, which greatly facilitated the establishment of a strong partner ecosystem. This ensured that the project would continue collaborating even after the DAAD funding cycle comes to an end.

The second project demonstrated the power of organisation and access to information. **Professor Emmanuel Danquah** from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Ghana presented the project **‘Biosphere Learning Laboratory Lake Bosomtwe’**. The learning laboratory was a project with a variety of different research activities that had sometimes lacked coordination. Professor Danquah explained how project leaders created a natural resource management database that all stakeholders could access to make it easier to communicate their findings. In order to spread the knowledge created in this bilateral cooperation with Eberswalde University of Sustainable Development, represented by project coordinator **Franziska Rottig**, the project also conducted international graduate exchanges and bimonthly meetings with the communities who lived around the lake.

## Achievements

- **Study visit** to BR Lake Schaalsee
  - Conduction of a comprehensive **desktop research, consultations** and **workshops**
  - Elaboration of a **research outline** with **7 priority areas for research and transfer**: e.g. forestry, biodiversity and fishery, sustainable tourism
  - Research needs taken up in **field work** by the **Ghanaian universities** & by **students from the University Eberswalde** (mobilities/research projects)
- The results are of **high interest for academia, public institutions** and the **local population**, aiming at the preservation of the vulnerable ecosystem



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Last but not least, **Dr Francis Sakita** from Kilimanjaro Christian Medical University College (KCMUCo) in Tanzania and **Professor Dr Harald Renz** from Philipps University Marburg in Germany spoke about their experience in **setting up a Master's course in emergency medicine at the KCMUCo** created as a blueprint for the Global South. The key word to remember in their success story is collaboration! They made sure to include the communities they wanted to build the rescue systems for right from the project's inception in 2018. Dr Sakita shone a light to the fact that it was not only important to train community leaders but to include all stakeholders that would be affected or benefit from this course in the process of setting it up. By building a network of universities and conceiving potential follow-up projects collaboratively, they ensured the continuance of the Master's course long after the DAAD funding cycle and thus achieved lasting success.

## WORLD CAFÉ AND NETWORKING

The World Café was the last point on the conference agenda. This interactive format consists in the participants splitting up into ten groups, each tasked to answer one of the questions spread out on different tables under a pagoda with a stunning ocean view. Within 10 to 15 minute intervals, the groups discuss and prioritise possible solutions together. At the sound of a gong participants move on to the next table where they debate another question in a different constellation of people.

The lively discussions were bursting with valuable ideas that the project managers either brought with them from their work at home or had picked up at the conference. The participants were highly motivated to develop strategies to increase the outreach of their project work, suggestions for extracurricular activities that strengthen the cohesion of their students and solutions for how HEIs can provide support in emergency situations, among others. The World Café captured the essence of this DAAD's Projects Leader Conference: The successful creation of a forum for knowledge exchange for a motivated cohort of curious young leaders that share the desire to use education as a catalyst for change in their home countries!



Dr Naruemol Kaewjampa



Oghenekome Umuერი

After the World Cafe, the organisers reviewed the last two days. The participants had the chance to learn from and with each other about the most important issues currently affecting our society: Climate, education, social cohesion. The African continent emerged as a hotbed for community-driven social innovation that the attending leaders spurred through their work in the higher education sector. The valuable project insights, unique location and highly interactive formats led to the conference participants growing closely together over the three days they spent in Dar es Salaam. The curiosity, openness and kindness the participants exhibited led not only to the development of strong professional ties within and across the knowledge network this conference aimed to set up but also ignited personal connections and even friendships. Many a participant applauded the professional organisation and insightful content. On the last afternoon the project leaders were invited to a voluntary cultural programme that took them across Dar es Salaam's most important historic sights. After a successful conference all that remains to say is **Asante Sana na kwaheri ya kuonana** (“Thank you and see you next time!”).



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Highlights from the World Café discussions:

### **How can HEIs contribute to the discussions on the SDGs in society at large?**

- Package the SDGs in a language that is understandable and relatable
  - Include SDGs in curricula and create research projects that are directly inspired by them
  - Do not treat SDGs in isolation but look at their trade-offs by employing integrated and interdisciplinary approaches
- 

### **Linking partnership projects for an even wider outreach - what actions/ steps/ approaches are needed?**

- Exhibitions and presentation to the wider public, ideally in the local languages
  - Video-based social media campaigns (LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp)
  - Actively using students as multipliers to carry their learnings into their communities
- 

### **Do you know best practices from your own experience of how to ensure project sustainability?**

- Institutionalisation of project activities
  - Scaling up the project through internal and external support
  - Commercialisation of the project and its research
- 

### **Higher education in emergencies - ways to provide academic support in these contexts?**

- Online learning platforms, such as VLE and Google Classroom
  - Mental health support for students
  - Upskilling of staff to deal with emergencies
- 

### **What results does the higher education content provided in the projects produce at the level of students (in terms of skills acquired)? Which teaching formats have proved effective?**

- Fosters critical thinking and thereby innovation
  - Contextualises learning and makes it place-sensitive hence balancing theory and practice
  - Increases and along with it project management and problem-solving skills
- 

### **What results do extra-curricular activities produce at the level of students?**

- Activate different areas of the brain (through haptics, movement, music, sports, etc.) which helps to retain knowledge and increase creativity
  - Leads to a different level of identification with the learning institutions the students attend
  - Fosters group cohesion, which could lead to better classroom discussions
- 

### **What is the role of temporary stays of students in Germany (to study or to do an internship)?**

- Cultural exchange, broadening of horizons and shared experiences with peers
  - Access to further scientific materials and academic opportunities
  - Intensive learning in field-specific areas such as languages
- 

### **How do educational and extra-curricular activities complement each other?**

- Better mental health and balance decrease learning pressure
  - increased self-awareness
  - Increased soft skills: intercultural communication, leadership, etc.
- 

### **How to ensure a good fit between the skills taught in the projects on the one hand, and the needs of the private sector partners and the local labour market?**

- Internship placements for lecturers and students
  - Integrate stakeholder in curriculum design
  - Set up incubations labs (research → results → prototype → industry validation)
  - Solution oriented teaching for problem solving techniques i.e. with industry case studies
- 

### **Besides students, what other target groups are reached in the projects (e.g., teachers, PhD students)?**

- Communities in affected areas and community leaders
- Decisions makers and managers within business organisations
- Associations in the field: NGOs
- Policy makers and government representatives





# IMPRINT

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**Project Coordination**

Heike Heinen-Kritz

DAAD

[h.heinen@daad.de](mailto:h.heinen@daad.de)

[www.daad.de](http://www.daad.de)

MICHEL International Relations & Services

Xhejsi Faroz

[info@michel-irs.com](mailto:info@michel-irs.com)

[www.michel-irs.com](http://www.michel-irs.com)

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