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## An Understanding of Impacts and Quality Based on Dialogue

Where evaluations, impact analysis or the quality of development processes in the wider sense are concerned, a variety of stakeholders are usually involved, each with their own interests, ideas, strategies, preferences, affiliations, obligations and loyalties. The necessary processes of communication and negotiation amongst them can only be achieved through intensive, highly complex dialogue.

Dealing with this complexity demands qualities and attitudes on the part of the stakeholders which, outshaded by the dominant role of technical expertise, have been rather neglected for a long time:

- empathy, and an ability to understand other people's logics and other people's ways of relating to reality.
- respect and tolerance, enabling stakeholders to deal with experiences which they are unable to understand. Here, a productive understanding of alterity is called for.
- both empathy and understanding, and respect and tolerance, are constitutive elements of communication processes through which all stakeholders should be able to tread a joint path, in dialogue.

For those responsible within development organisations, and those to whom they are accountable, this means:

- The factor of (subjective) experience takes on key significance. Obviously, it is easier to develop a feeling for complex processes and their dynamics than it is to reconstruct and explain them on a logocentric basis.
- Attitudes drawn from experience therefore take on much greater significance than in conventional impact research. This is concretised for instance in the assumptions concerning impacts made by experienced staff.
- All actors should free themselves from a planning mentality based exclusively on [chains of cause-and-effect](#), and the interventionist attitudes often associated with such a mentality. They should just initiate and facilitate processes, then jointly review the impacts of those processes – everything else being in the hands of others.