

The Bremen Criteria guide collaborative projects between ZMT and its partners, with particular emphasis on partnerships in low- and middle-income tropical countries.

These criteria:

... aim to contribute to **sustainable development** across social, economic, and ecological dimensions, in alignment with the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs).

... reflect over 35 years of **collaborative experience** and a continued **commitment** to fair, responsible, and sustainable research practices.

... represent a **guiding document** that all ZMT employees need to conform to when signing their work contracts; they are being encouraged to uphold the Bremen Criteria negotiating and working with other international partners **throughout projects** as ZMT continuously works towards and monitors their implementation.

Under the Bremen Criteria, ZMT is committed that partnership projects:

Address local research priorities and foster scientific excellence,
contributing meaningfully to national and regional research agendas;

Align with regional and global programmes,
enabling both ZMT and its partners to contribute to international commitments and initiatives;

Foster long-term, equitable, and impactful partnerships
that are built on mutual trust, transparency, safety, reliability, sustainability, and societal relevance;

Pursue co-design and joint leadership,
recognizing the diversity of scientific and societal knowledge, norms, and interests. The active participation of all partner institutions is essential, while engagement of non-academic actors and early-career scientists is highly encouraged. Joint planning, project management and evaluation with various actors in the project process supports a plurality of perspectives and local relevance;*

Engage actors* ethically and responsibly,
undergoing both ZMT's Ethical Clearance process and local ethics reviews, following best practices such as obtaining informed consent, conducting risk assessments, aiming for benefit sharing (e.g. through compensation mechanisms) and safeguarding the rights and well-being of all involved;

Promote shared responsibility and local leadership,
through clear role definitions, inclusive communication, joint learning, and regular collective reviews to invigorate accountability by all partners;

Strengthen and share capacities with the host organisation, its network and local communities

preferably with long-term integration into the scientific infrastructures and educative frameworks of the host country, (see ZMT Capacity Development Strategy);

Strive for societal impact

by translating research outcomes into tangible benefits for people, communities, and ecosystems, while addressing societal challenges;

Facilitate knowledge exchange with non-scientific actors*,

using formats and language adapted to the (local) target audience, and pursuing inclusive communication throughout and beyond the project lifecycle;

Ensure open and ethical data practices,

by supporting the free exchange and storage of data in international repositories, guided by the FAIR (Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, and Reuse) and CARE (Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, Ethics) principles;

Encourage joint publications and participation,

particularly in international open-access journals, conferences, and workshops. Special emphasis is placed on the inclusion of young scientists and appropriate recognition of all contributors, supporting equal ownership and visibility. Rules of good practice should apply.

The Bremen Criteria build on the following guidelines, that we are supporting: the TRUST Code of Conduct for Equitable Research Partnerships, the DFG Code of Conduct "Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice", the FAIR & CARE principles, the Leibniz Association's Sustainability Mission Statement and Guidelines on Research ethics, and also ZMT's Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice, Principles for good teamwork and leadership and the Diversity Charter.



Picture: Anna-Katharina Hornidge, ZMT



Picture: Jan Meier, ZMT



Picture: Sonia Bejarano, ZMT

** We use the term "actor" instead of "stakeholder" as it has come under increased scrutiny in academic, development, and Indigenous contexts, and there are several reasons why its use is being reconsidered, above all, its colonial and extractive connotations.*